THE MISSING LINK IN THE CHAIN OF OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE: LAST ERA OF KURDISH BANDITRY IN MODERN TURKEY, 1950-1980

AHMET ÖZCAN

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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AHMET ÖZCAN

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Ahmet Özcan, "The Missing Link in the Chain of Oppression and Resistance: Last Era of Kurdish Banditry in Modern Turkey, 1950-1980"

Referring to the denomination of the transitory period between the massive Kurdish insurrections suppressed in the early Republic and the organized armed struggle initiated in the late 1970s as 'the period of silence', the present thesis demonstrates that the period between 1950 and 1980 had been active both in the sense of State oppression and Kurdish resistance against it through the analysis of criminality in the Kurdish regions from the 1950s onwards. While the linkage between Kurdish criminality and the 'Eastern' question had instantly been forged, the rise of ordinary crimes was reconstructed either as one of the natural results of the 'underdevelopment of the Eastern regions' or as the overt sign for an upcoming Kurdish rebellion. Despite such discursive variations, all the Governments from the 1950s onwards applied mainly the same policies and technologies of power (i.e. (i) disarmament of the population, organization of (ii) massive bandit hunts, and (iii) a series of commando raids) against a perceived rise of criminality in the Kurdish regions. Detecting 'separatism' behind the ordinary crimes, the State used the Kurdish criminality to veil its penetration into the region in pursuit of suppressing the Kurdish ethno-political identity. While the massive emergence of banditry in the Kurdish regions from the 1950s onwards had been a spontaneous reaction of the traditional Kurdish society against the socio-economic transformation of the region, the inversion of the 'Western' political and moral values through the 'Eastern' bandit myth constituted the 'primitive' form of resistance against the penetration of the Turkish nation-state building process into the region.

ÖZET

Ahmet Özcan, "Zulüm ve Direniş Zincirindeki Eksik Halka:
Modern Türkiye'de Kürt Eşkıyalığının Son Çağı, 1950-1980"

Erken Cumhuriyet dönemi bastırılan kitlesel Kürt ayaklanmaları ile 1970'lerin sonunda başlatılan örgütlü silahlı mücadele arasındaki geçiş döneminin bir 'sessizlik dönemi' olarak adlandırılmasına atıf yaparak mevcut tez, 1950 ile 1980 arasındaki dönemin hem Devlet baskısı hem de buna karşı oluşan Kürt direnci anlamında etkin olduğunu, 1950'lerden itibaren Kürt bölgelerinde gerçekleşen suçluluğun analizi üzerinden göstermektedir. Kürt suçluluğu ile ülkenin 'Doğu sorunu' arasındaki bağ derhal kurulurken adi suçlardaki artış, ya 'bölgenin geri kalmışlığının' doğal sonuçlarından biri ya da gelişmekte olan bir Kürt isyanın açık göstergesi olarak yeniden inşa edilmiştir. Bu tür söylemsel farklılıklara rağmen, 1950 sonrası tüm Hükümetler, Kürt bölgelerinde algılanan suçluluğun bu yükselişine karşı aynı iktidar siyasa ve teknolojilerine başvurmuşlardır: Bunlar; (i) nüfusun silahsızlandırılması, (ii) büyük çaplı eşkıya avları ve (iii) komando baskınlarının düzenlenmesidir. Adi suçların arkasında 'bölücülüğü' tespit ederek Devlet, Kürt suçluluğunu, Kürt etno-siyasal kimliğini bastırmak amacıyla bölgeye nüfuzunu perdelemek için kullanmıştır. 1950'lerden itibaren Kürt bölgelerinde eşkıyalığın kitlesel düzeydeki ortaya çıkışı bölgenin sosyo-ekonomik dönüşümüne karşı geleneksel Kürt toplumunun kendiliğinden verdiği bir tepkiyken 'Batılı' siyasal ve ahlaksal değerlerin 'Doğulu' eşkıya miti üzerinden tersine çevrilmesi Türk ulus-devlet kurma sürecinin bölgeye nüfuz etmesine karşı gerçekleşen 'ilkel' bir isyan biçimini oluşturmaktadır.

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name of the Author: Ahmet Özcan
Place of Birth: Konya, Turkey
Date of Birth: 01 January 1982

EDUCATION

PhD, Dept. of Political Science and International Relations — Sept. 2009-October 2014
Boğaziçi University (Istanbul, Turkey)

Master of Arts in Political Science — Sept. 2006-Feb. 2009
Sabancı University (Istanbul, Turkey)

Bachelor of Science in Political Science and International Relations — 2002-2006
Yıldız Technical University (Istanbul, Turkey)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Western Conservative and Liberal Conservative Philosophy, Discriminative Language and Discourse in Turkey, History and Theory of the Kurdish Question, Political Mythology and History of Criminality in Modern Turkey.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

May 2012-Dec. 2014: Council of Europe, Human Rights Defender, European Youth Center, Project *No Hate Speech Movemen*t, Strasbourg/France, Budapest/Hungary, Istanbul/Turkey.

2012-2013: GENAR Research Center, Member of the Science Board, Istanbul/Turkey.

2011-2012: ARI Movement, Chief Advisor on the Middle East, Istanbul/Turkey.

2008-2009: Yıldız Technical University, Lecturer, Department of Principles of Kemalism and Modern Turkish History, Course *History of Turkish Revolution*, Istanbul/Turkey.

2006-2008: Sabancı University, Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Courses *Social and Political Sciences* and *International Political Economy*, Istanbul/Turkey.

2006 (July-August): Ministry for European Union Affairs, Intern, Department of Political Affairs, Ankara/Turkey.

2006 (Feb.-July): Prime Ministry of Turkish Republic, Volunteer Teacher, General Directorship of Social Services, Istanbul/Turkey.

2003-2005: Yıldız Technical University, Head of Politics and Int. Rel. Club, Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul/Turkey.

2003-2005: Yıldız Technical University, Editor and Writer, Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Journal of Politics and International Relations Club, Istanbul/Turkey.

AWARDS, GRANTS, HONORS

Sept. 2009-Sept.2014: TÜBİTAK, PhD Scholarship for Prominent Success, National Scholarship Programme for PhD Students.

Sept. 2006-June 2008: TÜBİTAK, MA Scholarship for Prominent Success, National Scholarship Programme for MA Students.

Sept. 2006-June 2008: Sabancı University, Tuition Scholarship, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Istanbul/Turkey.

June 2006: Yıldız Technical University, Honorary Award for Success, Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul/Turkey.

CONFERENCES, TRAININGS

Nov. 10, 2012: TEPAV, ARI Movement and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, Keynote Speaker, "Constitutional Checks and Balances in Turkey", Ankara/Turkey.

Sept. 16-19, 2012: Oxford University, Paper Presentation,"6th Global Conference: Multiculturalism, Conflict and Belonging", Mansfield College, Oxford/UK.

June 23, 2012: ORDAF, Conference Review, "Nomades Africains: Tuaregs", Istanbul/Turkey.

May 21-26, 2012: Council of Europe, Trainee, "Training Course for Young Bloggers and Online Activists", European Youth Center, Project *No Hate Speech Movement*, Budapest/Hungary.

April 6-9, 2011: European University Institute, Paper Presentation, "12 Mediterranean Research Meeting", Florence/Italy.

May 15-June 1, 2006: Harvard University, Paper Presentation, "World Model of United Nations (MUN)", Social and Humanitarian Committee, Beijink/China.

June 15, 2006: Ministry for European Union Affairs, Trainee Course *Project Formation for the European Union*, Ankara/Turkey.

Sept. 2004-June 2006: Galatasaray University, French Language Course.

PUBLICATIONS

Books:

- (2012) *Comparative Constitutional Checks and Balances and Turkey*, Istanbul: The German Marshall Fund of the United States with Collaboration with the ARI Movement and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation.

- (2011) *Edmund Burke, the French Revolution and the Enlightenment*, Saarbrücken: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.

- (2011) *Insanlığımız ve Jeo-Stratejik Gerçekler Işığında Somali (Somalia: Our Humanity and Geo-Strategic Factors)*, Istanbul: ARI Movement.

Book Chapters:

- (co-authored with Güney Çeğin) (2014) "Politik Şiddetin Kavranışına Dair Bir Soruşturma: 'Gezi Olayları' Weber'in 'Devletin Meşru Şiddet Tekeli' Tezinin Tahrifatından Gayrî Incelenebilir mi?" ("An Inquiry into the Comprehension of Political Violence: Could Occupy Gezi be Examined other than the Distortion of Weber's Thesis State's Monopoly of Legitimate Use of Force"), in Vefa S. Öğütle and Emrah Göker (eds.), *Gezi Eylemleri Karşısında Sosyoloji (Sociology vis-à-vis Occupy Gezi)*, Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, pp. 149 – 157.

- (2014) "Son Kürt Eşkıyaları: Kürt Meselesi'nde 'Adi' Şidddetin Olağanüstülüğü, Siyasallığı ve Yasa Yapıcı Mirası" ("Last Kurdish Bandits: The Political and the Law-Making Legacy of the "Ordinary" Violence in the Kurdish Question"), in Güney Çeğin and İbrahim Şirin (eds.), *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye'de Siyasal Şiddet (Political Violence in Turkey from the Ottoman to the Republic)*, Istanbul: Iletişim Yayınları, pp. 165 – 206.

- (2012) "Bir Istanbul Distopyası: İstanbul'un Sınıfsal ve Kimliksel Dönüşümü Bağlamında Karşı-Kentler, Folyo Yaşamlar ve Yok Mekanlar (Istanbul Dystopia: Anti-Cities, Gated Communities and Non-Places in the Context of Istanbul's Neo-Liberal Transformation), in Murat Şentürk (ed.), *Göç, Kentleşme ve Aidiyet Ekseninde Esenleri Anlamak (Understanding Esenler in the Axes of Immigration, Urbanization and Belonging)*, Istanbul: Esenler Şehir Düşünce Merkezi, pp. 105 – 128.

Articles:

- (2013) "Les derniers bandits kurdes de la Turquie moderne", in Ratiba Hadj-Moussa and Sophie Wahnich (eds.), Mondes méditérranéens: L'émute au cœur du politique, *L'homme et la société*, L'Harmattan, Vol. 187-188, January – July 2013, pp. 155 – 181.

- (2013) “Killing the Lernaean Hydra: the core, crust and promise of Occupy Gezi”, *Turkish Review*, Vol. 3, Issue 4, July-August, pp. 396 – 400.

- (2012) “Eşkıyanın ‘Adi’ Şiddetinin Siyasallısı ve Yasa Yapıcı Mirası” (“The Political Nature and the Law-Making Legacy of Bandit’s ‘Ordinary’ Violence”), *Kebikeç*, Vol. 34, pp. 7 – 23.

- (co-authored with Bilgesu Sumer) (2010) “Bir Sosyal Bilim, Ona Mütekabil Siyaset ve Nihai Eleştiri: Uluslararası İlişkiler”, “A Social Science and Its Critique: International Relations”, *Politik Sosyal Bilim*, Vol. 1.

Reviews:

- (2013) “Analysis vs. Prediction: Before and after the Arab Spring”, *Turkish Review*, Vol. 3/2, March – April, pp. 214 – 215.

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- (2012) “Uncharted Territory: Understanding the Tuaregs”, *Turkish Review*, Vol. 2/5, September–October, pp. 116 – 119.

- (2010) “Bay K ya da Modern İnsanın Yalnızlığı, Yabancılaşması ve Yok Oluşu” (“Mr. K or the Loneliness, Alienation, and Destruction of the Modern Individual”), *Birgün Kitap*, Vol. 71, February 6.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English: Excellent (Certificated by TOEFL in 2009)

French: Fluent (Certificated by Galatasaray University in June 2006)

Turkish: Native Language

WEBSITES

Ayrımcı Sözlük (Discriminative Dictionary)	ayrimcisozluk.blogspot.com
Writings	ahmetozcan.org

SKILLS

Computer Skills	Proficient User of MS Office, Blogging, Social Media, SPSS.

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In memory of my sister Ayça (Tanya) Özcan

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION……..……..1

A. Research Question……2

B. Sources and Methodology of Research……5

1. Novels…….5

2. Movies……6

3. Scholarly Researches……..7

4. National Printed Press…….8

5. Assembly and Senate Records……..11

6. Oral Sources: *Kılams* (Kurdish Oral Narratives) and In-Depth Interviews……..12

C. Hypotheses……..14

D. Limitations……..19

CHAPTER I. A CRITICAL APPROACH TO GLOBAL BANDITRY CONTROVERSY……...21

A. Social Banditry Thesis and Its Opponents…….……22

B. Beyond the Dichotomy of Social and Anti-Social Banditry: The Transformation of Ordinary Violence into a Political Myth……..30

CHAPTER II. INTELLECTUAL RECONSTRUCTIONS OF BANDITRY IN MODERN TURKEY……...……39

A. From the Primitive Social Rebel to the Enemy of the People: Banditry Controversy in Turkish Literature……..39

1. Re-Enchantment: Yashar Kemal's Noble and Social Bandits……..41
2. Disenchantment: Kemal Tahir's Criminal and Anti-Social Bandits……45
3. Unity of the Opposites: The State's Absence and the 'Absolute Agha' Type in Adverse Banditry Narratives……...……51

B. Bandit Romanticism in Turkish Cinema and Beyond……53

C. A Critical Review of Turkish Banditry Researches…….……..59
1. Turkish Banditry Researches Focusing in the Aegean Banditry……..61
2. The Missing Link in the Chain of Oppression and Resistance: Banditry and the Kurdish Question…….66

CHAPTER III: LAST ERA OF KURDISH BANDITRY IN THE NATIONAL PRINTED PRESS AND THE STATE DOCUMENTS...……..74

A. Historical Foundation: The Late Ottoman and Early Republican Background (1839-1950)……76
1. The Development of Judicial and Military Techniques in the Elimination of the Banditry Pandemic (1908-1923)……77
2. Cooperation and Conflict in Blood: The Ottomans and Kurdish Bandit Tribes (1839-1923)……...84
3. From 'Ignorant Turkish Peasants' to 'Mountainous Monsters': The Pragmatist Fluctuation of the State's Banditry Discourse over the Massive Kurdish Insurrections (1923-1950)……...92

B. Last Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press……103
1. The Rediscovery of the 'Eastern' Question in the National Printed Press…….....108
2. Banditry Discourses of the National Printed Press……119

a. The Reconstruction of the Historical Bandit Image……....120

i. 'Bandit cannot be the Ruler of the World': Ottoman Banditry Nostalgia and Banditry as the Catalyst of Ottoman Decay……120

ii. 'The Enemies of the Turkish Nation': 'Traitor Bandits' of the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Periods…….122

b. Misprediction: 'Eastern' Banditry as Sporadic Individual Incidents……...……125

c. The Corruption of Society Discourse: 'Banditry is Corrupted and the Age of Chivalry is Gone'……...……..127

d. The Death of the Bandit Myth: 'Love for Bandits is Shameful and Dangerous'……...127

e. The Explanations for the Massive Emergence of Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press……..……..129

i. Accusation: 'The Impotence of the Central Government'…….130

ii. Confusion: 'Why do Peasants Support Bandits Anyway?'…...136

iii. Proposition: 'Hang them all!'…….……...140

C. Discourses and Policies of the State over the Last Kurdish Bandity……147

1. The Democrat Party over the Kurdish Brigandage (1950-1960).….148

2. The Politics of the Bandit Hunt (1960-1970): The Disarmament of the Population, Establishment of Commando Units and Organizations of Massive Military Operations against Banditry…….……157

3. The State Penetration into the Kurdish Regions via Banditry: Commando Raids and the Aftermath (1970-1980)…….....179

i. Calm before the Storm……..…….188

ii. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!: The Transformation of the Kurdish Resentment from Bandits to Guerrillas and Terrorists…….....193

CHAPTER IV: KURDISH NATIONAL MEMORY OF BANDITRY …….....196

A. Kurdish Banditry Tradition from the *Mirs* to the *Roma Reş*: Banditry, Founding Myth of Kurdish National Historiography……...197

1. Rebelling against the *Mir*: Elo Dîno, the Archetype of Kurdish Banditry Myth…….....…198

2. Rebelling against the *Roma Reş*: The Tradition of Bandit Tribes in the Late Ottoman Empire…….....207

B. Memory Wars: The Adverse Reconstructions of Individual Kurdish Bandits……..212

1. Koçero: The Resurrection of Elo Dîno in Modern Turkey…….212

2. Hamido vs. Özbays: Bandit Wars and the State…….221

3. Hekimo: Banditry and Blood Feud…….233

C. From a *Mehkûm* to a *Cengawer*: Deconstructing the Historical Context of the Last Kurdish Banditry…….…..242

CHAPTER V: THE LANGUAGE OF RETICENCE: LAST ERA OF KURDISH BANDITRY AS THE CONTINUATION OF AN EVER-LASTING WAR AND THE REHEARSAL FOR THE UPCOMING ORGANIZED REBELLION……...252

A. Oppression: The State's Rehearsal……...254

1. The Logical Conclusion of the Discursive Shift: A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?.....…….……..257

2. The Law of Silence and Discursive Contradictions……..……262

3. From ‘the Ignorant Turkish Peasants’ to ‘the Kurds of Barzani’: The Political Background of the State’s Banditry Discourse…….....265

B. Resistance: The Kurdish Rehearsal..…….…...271

1. Banditry as a Lucrative Profession and a Spontaneous Mechanism of Resistance……...272

2. Kurdish Bandit Myth: The Expression of the Collective Will to Rebellion…….275

CONCLUSION…….…...…….279

APPENDIX I……284

APPENDIX II……...295

BIBLIOGRAPHY……...……..300

INTRODUCTION

The historical periodization of the Kurdish question in modern Turkey has been realized through distinguishing its three major successive phases: (i) the period of massive rebellions endured from the early 1920s to the late 1930s, followed by (ii) a period of relative calm lasted until the second half of the 1970s, and finally, (iii) the period of organized armed struggle pushed from the late 1970s onwards. Regarding the first, founding phase of the Kurdish *problem* of the modern Turkish nation-state, while only 3 of the total 23 rebellions against the resistance movement in Ankara during the war of Independence (1919-1921) involved Kurdish tribes, 16 of the total 18 riots against the new Turkish Republic in its establishment phase (1924-1938) were of Kurdish origin. (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 75) It was, therefore, self-evident that Kurdish resentment was concentrated against the modern Turkish nation-state building project whose main discursive pillars had already begun to crystallize as Westernization, centralization, laicism and Turkish nationalism. (Yeğen, 1999: 559)

After the State strangled these riots in bloodshed, it is as if the history of the Kurdish rebellion against the Turkish nation-state paused. From the suppression of the last Kurdish mass insurrection in Dersim in the late 1930s until the emergence of Kurdish organized movements in the second half of the 1970s, it is as if a period of inertia had predominated in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. Yet, the same period, which is sometimes defined as 'the period of silence' with reference to the lack of an overt struggle between the State and the Kurdish population, hosted from the 1950s onwards the massive emergence of Kurdish brigandage. In other words, the last Kurdish banditry – that emerged as a mass phenomenon in the 1950s, reached its

climax in the 1960s, and almost suddenly disappeared in the late 1970s – has largely been left out of the discussion over the history of the Kurdish question, despite the fact that it emanated from, and contributed to, the transformation of the region and had been one of the principal politico-strategic topics of the Turkish nation-state building process, that it had influenced the formation of the ground for the emergence of Kurdish organized movements in the late 1970s and left the legacy of the rebellious 'philosophy of mountains'[1] to these succeeding movements, which carried out its own demise. This study is, in this respect, an attempt to fill in the blanks of the history of the Kurdish rebellion in modern Turkey by pursuing the question: "In what sense, were the 'ordinary' crimes of the last Kurdish bandits extra-ordinary?"

A. Research Question

While banditry incidents had begun to proliferate in the Kurdish regions of Turkey from the late 1950s onwards in an unprecedented scale, various agents (from State officials and native Kurdish communities to the members of national printed press and intellectuals of various kinds) reconstructed the phenomenon of the last Kurdish banditry differently. As the link between the *ordinary* crimes of bandits and the highly sacred *political* status of the 'Eastern' problem of the Turkish nation-state was instantly and spontaneously forged, bandits acquired a wide range of symbolic status, including mutually exclusive ones, such as 'rebels', 'ferocious criminals', 'heroes',

[1] The term 'philosophy of mountains' is taken from the speech of one of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) guerillas to the journalist Kadri Gürsel, who was abducted by him and his comrades in 1995. Referring to the hardship of mountains that they embraced, the guerilla used the term as follows: "You will know that once you get sick, you will be discarded; you won't complain about even when you are sick; you won't say 'ah!'… Otherwise, everyone will reprove you… You will be excluded… This is the philosophy of mountains…" (Gürsel, 2004: 113)

'signs of rebellion', 'agents of foreign plot' and so forth. The present study, therefore, develops itself on the initial research question that aims to address *how distinct agents related with the given phenomenon reconstructed the last massive Kurdish brigandage in modern Turkey*.

From that major question on various, and often adverse, discourses on the last Kurdish brigandage, minor research questions pertaining to the distinct agents of the given phenomenon are deduced:

i. State Level: How was the last Kurdish banditry reconstructed in the State level and were there, if any, different kinds of discourses among the State elite in line with the existing State discourses on the 'Eastern' question of Turkey; and what were the propositions for the resolution of the Kurdish banditry epidemic within the existing State discourses and had those discourses undergone changes during the three decades of Kurdish brigandage?

ii. Media Level: How was the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon reconstructed in the national printed press and specifically, how were the banditry incidents in the Kurdish regions reported and reinterpreted in the national newspapers; and what were the propositions for the resolution of the Kurdish banditry epidemic in the national printed press?

iii. Native Level: How has the bandit myth been imagined within the traditional Kurdish oral history; and what was the symbolic status of the last Kurdish brigands in the native context or did the last Kurdish bandits serve a social protest function for their native communities?

iv. Intellectual Level: How were the last Kurdish bandits reconstructed in the intellectual level by their contemporary novelists, directors and scholars; and did the last Kurdish bandits serve a social protest function owing to such intellectual re-imagination?

The present analysis concentrating on different discourses among various agents on the last Kurdish banditry is extended by a non-discursive investigation of the spatial, temporal and social sides of the phenomenon, along with the related State's policies. Thus, the following research questions are to be addressed within the framework of the present study's resources of research:

i. Spatial and Temporal Level: Why had banditry incidents from the 1950s onwards occurred almost exclusively in the Kurdish regions of Turkey; could a rise be detected in the occurrence of banditry incidents in the region from the early 1950s to the late 1970s; why did the last Kurdish banditry epidemic disappear in the late 1970s; and were there specific sub-regions in which a concentration of banditry incidents occurred within the Kurdish regions of Turkey?

ii. Social Level: What was the humane background (age, gender, nomadic or sedentary origins) of the last Kurdish brigands; what were their activities (smuggling, murder, robbery etc.); and how were their relations with their native communities and the State?

iii. State Level: What were the policies of the State against the last Kurdish banditry epidemic; and had the State discourses on the related phenomenon served any practical functions for those State's polices in the Kurdish regions?

B. Sources and Methodology of Research

For addressing the aforementioned research questions, a series of resources are thoroughly investigated through the methodology of content analysis. Specifically, a wide range of resources (i.e. (i) novels, (ii) movies, (iii) scholarly researches, (iv) news reports, columns, interviews, photos, caricatures, letters and warning notices published in the national printed press, (v) Assembly and Senate records, and (vi) *kılams* (Kurdish oral narratives) and in-depth interviews) is investigated through the methodology of interpretative content analysis, which allows researcher to treat social action and human activity as "a collection of symbols expressing layers of meanings". While the main research question of the present study concentrates on the analysis of the related agents' discourses on the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon, the interpretations of the texts are realized through a phenomenological approach, which aims at identifying phenomena as they are perceived by the actors in the given situation. (Berg, 2007: 304) In this respect, a combination of the major elements of content analysis (i.e. words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, and semantics) is used in deconstructing the discursive meanings of the texts in question. (Berg, 2007: 312-313) Thus, the following resources are investigated through a phenomenologically-oriented interpretative content analysis:

1. Novels

As novelists launched the Turkish banditry controversy, the analysis of the literary banditry controversy realized between Yaşar Kemal and Kemal Tahir, which is supported by an introductory examination of other Turkish novels treating the

banditry theme, constitutes the first part of the present study.[2] Along with their imagination of the State, local-power holders and peasantry, the social, historical and/or moral arguments deriving from the related authors' stories on banditry and the type of fictionalization of their bandit protagonists in the spectrum ranging from the 'savior' to the 'enemy' of the people are compared. The content analysis of the Turkish bandit novels is supported by published interviews with the novelists in question and of articles on their literary productions and political thought. Thus, the investigation of Turkish banditry literature, which is mainly composed of the literary banditry controversy between Kemal and Tahir, enables the present study to lay bare how had banditry as a historical, social and philosophical topic been reconstructed in Turkish literature.

2. Movies

In line with Turkish literature, banditry theme had remained one of the most popular themes of Turkish cinema between 1950 and 1980. The adaptation of the folkloric *efe* (the Aegean bandit) myth into the cinema of the 1950s was followed by directors' increasing interest in their contemporary 'Eastern' bandits, and thus, the reproduction of the classical banditry controversy over the actuality of the bandit myth in cinema. Therefore, the second part of the present study concentrates on the examination of Turkish banditry cinema from the heroic *efe* movies of the early 1950s until the broadcasting of Yılmaz Turgul's *Bandit* in 1996, which represented the extinction of banditry in the rapidly urbanizing world.[3] Here, the aim is, again, to decipher the

[2] For the novels that are examined in the present analysis, see 'Novels' under the primary resources of the Bibliography.
[3] For the movies that are examined in the present analysis, see 'Movies' under the primary resources of the Bibliography.

historical, social and philosophical arguments of the related directors' bandit stories, the type of fictionalization of their bandit protagonists, along with their imagination of the State, local power-holders and peasantry. Within the analysis of Turkish banditry cinema, particular attention is paid to the movies of Yılmaz Güney, as they evolved from a mere reproduction of the bandit myth to forging a link between Kurdish banditry and the State's oppression.

3. Scholarly Researches

The third part of the present study is dedicated to the analysis of Turkish scholarly research on banditry in general and Kurdish banditry in particular. On the one hand, the existent Turkish banditry researches, investigating mostly the topic of the *zeibek* (the Aegean banditry) tradition, are analyzed within the theoretical framework of 'the dichotomy of social and anti-social banditry'. On the other hand, the slender scholarly researches on Kurdish banditry, which were mainly realized by Hikmet Kıvılcımlı in the 1930s and by İsmail Beşikçi in the 1960s, are examined in a comparative perspective. The major and minor arguments of the researches, along with their empirical bases, are submitted to a comparative re-evaluation. Especially, the studies of Kıvılcımlı and Beşikçi substantially contribute to the present study's understanding of the dependent (banditry) and independent (nomadic lifestyle, tribal kinship, smuggling, desertion, blood feud, honor murder, abduction for marriage and so forth) variables of the given phenomenon.

4. National Printed Press

The forth component of the present study's empirical body is constituted of a textual analysis of two mainstream national newspapers: *Milliyet* (Nationality) between May 3, 1950 - June 30, 2004 and *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) between January 1, 1930 - March 02, 2013. The issues of these two newspapers are scanned by the keywords of *eşkıya* (bandits), *şaki* (bandit), and *şekavet* (brigandage), three popular terms in the legal and political language of the related period, in addition to those of *Kürt* (Kurd) and *terör* (terror), terms that had rarely been used before the 1980s, and of the nicknames and legal names of individual bandits, such as 'Koçero' and 'Mehmet İhsan Kilit', 'Hamido' and 'Hamit Aldemir', 'Hekimo' and 'Hikmet Zeren' and so forth. The results appear in five different kinds of units of analysis: (i) news reports, (ii) columns, (iii) interviews, (iv) photos and caricatures, and (v) letters and warning notices.[4]

First and foremost, news reports constitute of a textual unit in which (i) ordinary criminal incidents of banditry, (ii) political incidents that were designated by the State officials as 'banditry', (iii) the State's policies, measures and military operations taken against banditry, and (iv) press statements and electoral speeches of politicians and meetings of the Assembly and the Senate over the issue of banditry are reported in a particular discursive way. Firstly, the analysis of these news reports enables the present study to decipher the established and institutional discourse of the national printed press by their way of reporting the ordinary criminal incidents of banditry. Thus, the usage of the terms in these news reports – such as the

[4] In addition to those textual units of the aforementioned newspapers, news reports and photos on major banditry incidents (such as the killing of Koçero in 1964) and flash interviews with bandits (such as Celalledin Çetin's interview with Hekimo in 1975), published in the newspaper *Hürriyet* (Liberty) between 1950 and 1980, are extensively used throughout the analysis.

denomination of bandits as ‘rebels’ or ‘ferocious criminals’ and soldiers as ‘heroes’ or ‘martyrs’ and reporting the deaths of bandits by the passive verbs ‘killed’, ‘annihilated’, ‘walloped’, ‘cleansed’ and so forth – plays a crucial role in this textual analysis. Moreover, when the headlines of the news reporting ordinary criminal incidents of banditry are gathered in a single empirical body[5], the temporal and spatial levels of the given phenomenon could, although roughly, be framed. Finally, these news reports provide, although limited, but daily-based knowledge on the activities and life stories of individual Kurdish bandits.

Secondly, the news reporting the political incidents that were designated by the State as ‘banditry’ enables us to analyze the political usage of the term ‘bandit’ by the State against its ‘foes’ in a historical perspective. In this respect, (i) the denomination of the Kurdish insurgents of the early Republic, the radical leftist militants of the 1970s, and finally the PKK guerillas of the late 1970s and early 1980s as ‘bandits’, (ii) the coexistence of the terms ‘bandit’ and ‘terrorist’ for the denomination of illegal organizations in the 1980s, and (iii) the disappearance of the term ‘bandit’ in the State discourse from the 1990s onwards are partly deduced from the analysis of such news reports. Thirdly, the analysis of the news reporting the State’s policies, measures and military operations taken over the issue of banditry contributes to the present study’s attempt to examine the State’s responses against the last Kurdish banditry epidemic. Fourthly, the analysis of the news reporting the press statements and electoral speeches of politicians and meetings of the Assembly and the Senate over the issue of banditry contributes to the analysis of different discourses on Kurdish banditry among the political elite.

[5] See: Appendix I.

On the other hand, the comparative textual analysis of columns mainly represents the subjective discourses of the columnists in the mainstream printed press on (i) ordinary criminal incidents of banditry, (ii) political incidents that were designated as 'banditry' by the related columnists[6], (iii) their evaluation of the convenience of the State's policies and measures taken for the elimination of banditry, and (iv) their propositions for the prevention of banditry incidents. In the same vein of news reports, the usage of specific terms in these columns exposes the particular way of picturing of bandits in the national printed press.

In addition, the analysis of interviews related with the Kurdish banditry phenomenon contributes to addressing the aforementioned research questions in various ways. First of all, the interviews on the theme 'Eastern region' reveal the discourses of the mainstream printed press on the Kurdish question in general and Kurdish banditry in particular. Secondly, the interviews with the State officials and native communities either on banditry incidents or on the State's military operations in the region both contribute to the analysis of the discourses of State officials and native communities on Kurdish brigands and give hints on the form and content of the State's military operations and bandit activities in the region. Thirdly, the published interviews realized directly with the bandits themselves not only expose their self-imagination and/or self-advertisement, but also give, although not-wholly reliable, clues on their activities and their relationship with the State, local power-holders and native communities.

The analysis of the photos of captured or dead bandits that were published in the national newspapers discloses the overlap between the discourses of the State and

[6] The usage of the term 'banditry' for political incidents may differ between the State officials and the columnists of the mainstream media. For instance, many columnists of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* have continued to use the term 'bandit', in conjunction with that of 'terrorist', to denominate the PKK's guerillas in the 2000s when the term is overwhelmingly disappeared in the State discourse.

the mainstream printed press on Kurdish banditry. In a similar vein, the evaluation of caricatures related with the given phenomenon contributes to the study of the political humor in the national newspapers realized through the theme of banditry.[7] In the textual analysis of both photos and caricatures over the issue of banditry, the captions written under the related texts are also included. Last but not least, the letters that were written by bandits, along with the official warning notices used by the State in the region, which were both published in the national newspapers, shed light on bandits' activities, their individual life stories, and their relationship with the State and contribute to the evaluation of the State discourses on the last Kurdish banditry epidemic.

5. Assembly and Senate Records

The scanning of the news, published in the national newspapers, reporting the meetings of the Assembly and the Senate on the public disorder in the Kurdish regions due to the rise of banditry incidents directs the present study to the analysis of those meetings through the official records of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (T.B.M.M). Specifically, the records of the T.B.M.M. between 1950 and 1960, the National Assembly, the Senate, and the National Unity Committee (MBK) between 1960 and 1980, and finally, the laws and decrees enacted between 1950 and 1980 are scanned through the keywords of *eşkıya* (bandits), *şaki* (bandit), *şerir* (evildoer), *haydut* (brigand), *şekavet* (brigandage), *doğu* and *şark* (East), *Kürt* (Kurd), and *terör* (terror). These records are fundamental in deciphering competing State's discourses on the Kurdish banditry epidemic, and thus on the Kurdish

[7] In this respect, the covers of the comics *Akbaba* (Vulture) on Kurdish banditry between 1962 and 1968 are scanned to contribute into the analysis of political humor of the related period over the last Kurdish banditry.

question per se. As almost all of these meetings were held after an official parliamentary question was raised either by an MP from the opposition or by a Senator against the existent Government, these documents not only include official records of the activities of bandits, but also detailed statements of the Governmental representatives, mostly the Ministers of Internal Affairs, on the adopted policies, enacted laws and decrees and taken measures by the State over the Kurdish banditry. Therefore, the textual analysis of these records both sheds light over the spatial, temporal and social sides of the phenomenon and enables the present study to analytically forge the practical link between the State's discourses and policies over the last Kurdish banditry epidemic.

6. Oral Sources: *Kılams* (Kurdish Oral Narratives) and In-Depth Interviews

In the analysis of Kurdish national memory of banditry, oral sources constitute the only accessible resources, in addition to the limited use of published interviews with native communities and a few numbers of written resources (from the classical works of Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, Bazil Nikitin and V. Minorski to recently published articles) on Kurdish banditry in the Ottoman Empire. Regarding the traditional Kurdish bandit myth, the legend *Elo Dîno* (the Kurdish Robin Hood of the 16th Century) is mainly investigated through *kılams* (Kurdish oral narratives) on the related myth. The similarities and differences between various kılams of different regions are comparatively analyzed in terms of their main themes, stories and portrayals of characters. In this respect, while the original *Cizîra Bohtan* version of the kılam on this 16th Century bandit is transcribed from the narration of Ramazanê Botî, a local historian from the region, the resultant narratives are studied in the light of written

resources. Among the numerous Kurdish bandit tribes of the late Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, the legend of Emê Gozê of the Elîkan tribe is put forward and analyzed through related kılams, as his myth clearly lays bare the reconstruction of banditry as a national rebellion in the Kurdish oral tradition.

Apart from the kılams, in-depth interviews are realized with five oral sources: (i) Ramazanê Botî, a local historian from the city *Cizîr*, (ii) Şemsettiné Iskender, a relative of the bandit Hekimo and a local wiseman from the village *Esê* of Kercews, (iii) Ezizé Iskender, a relative of Hekimo from Nusaybin, (iv) Hikmet Zeren, alias Hekimo in Istanbul, and (vi) Melé Necmettin, Hekimo's brother-in-arms in Diyarbakır. The interviewees were informed about the subject of the interview in advance, that it was about 'the last Kurdish bandits (Koçero, Hamido, Hekimo and the like)'. Because the study is interested in Kurdish national imagination of banditry, the questionnaire of the interviews is organized in four main directions: (i) language, (ii) memory, (iii) personal experiences, and (iv) independent comments.

In the first part, the interviewees were asked about the denomination of bandits in Kurdish both by themselves and native communities without offering any alternative options. After the interviewee came up with his answer, and in fact, more or less the same answer – *mehkûm* (convict), they were asked the reason behind that denomination in comparison to and in relation with the following related terms that are used in Kurdish with distinct meanings: *eşqiya* (bandit), *rêbir* (highwayman), *nijdevan* (raider), *firar* (fugitive), and *cengawer* (warrior). In the second part, the interviewees were asked about the memory of themselves and native communities on bandits. In this part, the interviewees exposed the Kurdish memory of banditry by providing unsystematic, but invaluable clues about the moral characters, life stories and illegal activities of bandits both in the memory of themselves and their native

communities. In the third part, personal experiences of interviewees about specific bandits of their region were acquired, in addition to the life story of Hekimo obtained through the narratives of the retired bandit himself, his relatives and brother-in-arms. Finally, the fourth part was constituted of independent statements of the interviewees, whether personal experiences or historical and theoretical comments, on the phenomenon of the last Kurdish banditry acquired without an orientation of the interviewer. Both personal experiences and independent comments shared with the interviewer contribute to the analysis of Kurdish national memory, theory and philosophy of banditry.

C. Hypotheses

The main hypotheses of the present study are partly built upon a critical reading of the global banditry controversy that the reader will find at the beginning of the text. Apart from a brief review of banditry researches in various contexts in the international arena, the global banditry controversy, and specifically the theoretical adversity between the studies of Eric Hobsbawm and Karen Barkey, is critically analyzed for revolving around the scholarly attempt to revalidate or falsify the universal folkloric bandit myth, which was theorized by Hobsbawm's 'social banditry thesis' propounded in 1959 by his *Primitive Rebels* and then refined in 1969 by his *Bandits*.

In the context of the Kurdish rebellion against the Turkish nation-state, the linkage between the last Kurdish brigandage and the Kurdish question cannot fully be grasped through the dichotomy of social and anti-social banditry that exclusively aims at understanding whether or not bandits, as the myth imagines, stand for the

oppressed in their communities through their actual role and status in power relations. Instead, in addition to the examination of the State's policies against the Kurdish banditry epidemic, the analysis of various agents' discourses on the related phenomenon clearly exposes their reconstruction of banditry and public disorder within the political, economic, and cultural framework of the Kurdish question. Therefore, the formation process of the Kurdish bandit myth is, in the double sense of the State's oppression and the native resistance, the story of the transformation of the bandit's 'ordinary' crimes into a law-making, thus political and extraordinary, violence.

Therefore, the historical analysis of various discourses, along with the State's policies, over the Kurdish banditry epidemic will shed light on the history of the Kurdish question per se. In this respect, the transitory period between the ultimate suppression of a series of massive rebellions of the early Republic and the initiation of an organized armed struggle against the State in the late 1970s is defined as the 'period of silence' in the scholarly literature on the Kurdish question of Turkey. From the 1950s onwards, it is argued, Kurdish local power holders were integrated into the hegemony, a particular discourse on the 'Eastern' question emphasizing the economic backwardness of the region emerged and the problem of military consolidation in the Kurdish regions had been achieved; hence a break in the struggle between the State and the Kurdish people and a focus on the economic integration of the region to the rest of the country. It is true that the rising political patronage between the State and local power holders and the popularity of the economic discourse on the 'Eastern' question from the 1950s onwards seemed to tame, although for a short while, the State's traditional coercion in the region; yet such a discursive shift was accompanied with a comprehensive transformation of the social

structure of Turkey's Kurdish regions that led to the massive emergence of banditry from the 1950s onwards. In a nutshell, the interrelated rise of (i) political patronage, (ii) industrialization of agriculture, and (iii) big landownership within the socio-economic phase of the given transformation led to (iv) the growth of landless peasants that in turn fueled (v) rapid urbanization, (vi) disintegration of tribal structure, (vii) seasonal employment and (viii) brigandage with economical motivations (smuggling, robbery, kidnapping for ransom etc.), while the State's policies of (i) disarmament, (ii) bandit hunts, and (iii) commando raids 'against' Kurdish brigandage, along with the construction of infrastructure and the State institutions in the region, concluded with the rising tension between the penetrating law of the State and the established norms of the traditional Kurdish society within the juridico-political phase of the transformation; hence, the emergence of banditry with cultural motivations from honor murder and abduction for marriage to blood feud and desertion.

Despite the discursive controversy over the reinterpretation of the 'Eastern' brigandage among the State elite either as a sign for the rise of Kurdism or one of the results of the region's underdevelopment, successive Governments from the 1950s onwards had applied exactly the same technologies and policies of State power as their predecessors in the elimination of the 'Eastern' banditry. It is, indeed, one of the main empirical inferences of this study that in the name of struggling against banditry, a series of massive military operations were realized throughout the 1960s in the Kurdish regions until the State oppression culminated in the commando raids in the early 1970s. In order to grasp the linkage between banditry, the Kurdish ethno-political identity and the State's 'bandit hunts', the two seemingly rival lines of discourses on the 'Eastern' brigandage are comparatively analyzed.

The economic discourse was merely a critical upgrade of the traditional security discourse of the State over its Kurdish problem, since the former was also an attempt to correct a particular contradiction stemming from the latter's 'Eastern' banditry discourse: Despite the fact that the traditional security discourse in the early Republican period reconstructed the Kurdish rebellions as political reaction, tribal resistance, foreign plot and/or banditry rather than a Kurdish rebellion (Yeğen, 2013: 109-154), it detected Kurdism or separatism behind the massive emergence of Kurdish banditry from the 1950s onwards and thus violated its own rule of silence on the ethno-political character of the State's Kurdish problem. As in the case of the State's discursive departure from the 'innocent Turkish peasants' to the 'mountainous monsters' during the Dersim Rebellion, such historical moments of discursive contradictions served certain practical functions in the State's struggle against present or prospective Kurdish unrest. Thus, according to the State elite, who were meticulously reconsidering the 'hazardous' developments in Northern Iraq along with the emerging national consciousness amongst the Kurdish youth, the 'Eastern' brigandage not only remained as the hard proof of the rising Kurdism in Turkey, but also the most suitable form of veil for the State's penetration into the region in pursuit of the suppression of the Kurdish population. The traditional political elite was, therefore, anticipating the emergence of a Kurdish national movement and, as usual, deciding to postpone it through repression. The contribution of the new economic discourse was, in this respect, restricted with its critique of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' that underlined the precipitation of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism by the very State policies of repression over the native population. Aside from its promise for the economic development of the region as the State's bribe for soothing the increasing Kurdish resentment, the economic

discourse, however, presented no alternative plan for the struggle against the re-emergence of the repressed.

State officials' plans of nipping the Kurdish national consciousness in the bud backfired when it was inevitably met with resistance. While the young Kurdish activists had begun to defend the Kurdish reality during the Eastern Trials of 1971 and signs of urban unrest against the rising State oppression started to develop, the traditional Kurdish society reacted and resisted against the socio-economic transformation of and the State's penetration into the region in the active and reactive forms of banditry. Culminated in the commando operations in 1970 – whose political language were framed and analyzed by the related Assembly records, published interviews, and reports – the oppression leveled against the Kurdish identity of the native people provided to its target the will to *resist against*; but the oppression, at the same time, spontaneously granted the cause to *resist for*. Consequently, the oppression that was supposed to humiliate the Kurdish ethno-political identity elevated it and granted its legitimacy. In this historical context, the social protest function of the Kurdish bandit myth within native communities was mainly constituted of a moral inversion of the Western perception of 'good' and 'evil', 'hero' and 'criminal', and thus, of a moral denial of the Western imagination of the 'Eastern bandits' and the State's self-incurred image of 'invincible'. Thus, the Kurds resisted by brigandage either in its spontaneous and reactive social forms of the rise of outlawry within the Kurdish population against the socio-economic transformation of the region or in its politically active and mythical meanings reflecting the process of a double nationalization of criminality both by the State and the native people.

The physical resistance against the State's oppression was, first, realized in the urban space. Indeed, more importantly than the Eastern Meetings of 1967 and the

succeeding hunger demonstrations, commandos' opening fire on the crowd to suppress an ordinary scuffle after a football match in Siirt in 1970 led to the initiation of a region wide, collectively felt social rage that could only be constrained by the declaration of a curfew. When the PKK had begun to monopolize and thus reformulate the Kurdish rage and resentment into an organized armed struggle, the State's discourse would move from 'the bandit rabble', 'separatist bandits' and 'a bunch of bandits' to 'terrorists'. In retrospect, while all of the necessary conditions for the emergence of a long-lasting political conflict had been ripening, not only the Kurdish banditry phenomenon provided the State the veil for covering its political penetration into the region in pursuit of suppression of the Kurdish ethno-political identity, but also the Kurdish bandit myth, which included both the ancient banditry tradition and their contemporary bandit figures, represented Kurdish people's perception of heroism, and thus, their awakening longing to rebel against the oppressive and high-handed State.

D. Limitations

In the present analysis of the last Kurdish banditry, there are certain limitations that emanate from the explanatory capacity of the examined sources of research. Although the discursive aspects of the given phenomenon and the State's policy responses to the last Kurdish banditry epidemic have extensively been analyzed by relying on a variety of resources, the spatial, temporal and social levels of the phenomenon call for further research. In other words, the density, rise, frequency and location of the occurrence of banditry incidents in the Kurdish regions of Turkey between 1950 and 1980 and the social background of bandits, along with their illegal

activities and their relationship with peasants, notables and the State, cannot fully be examined within the existent empirical framework of the present study, which provided insightful, but informal clues for such generalizations. For a full-fledged analysis of the spatial and temporal aspects of the given phenomenon, the State's annual security reports, in which any political and ordinary criminal incidents of the year in question are recorded without an internal classification, would have to be analyzed.

On the other hand, these records also have a limited explanatory capacity, as they do not cover the unrecorded aspects of the given phenomenon. Thus, the existent oral history of the present study could be advanced by in-depth interviews with other former bandits (along with their relatives, brothers-in-arms, and relatives) and native communities. In this respect, in-depth interviews with the native *Koçer* (Kurdish nomadic) communities, most of which have now been settled, would be particularly helpful due to their previously constant contact with the bandits.

The promise of such further research would certainly be framing a much more reliable picture on the spatial, temporal and social levels of the phenomenon in hand. In this respect, causes of one's 'taking to the mountains', incomes and activities of bandits, and their relationship with native communities and the State within different locations and time periods, and thus, the position of the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon in the history of the Kurdish question of modern Turkey, could be better explicated.

CHAPTER I

A CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE GLOBAL BANDITRY CONTROVERSY

The global banditry controversy has been launched by the publication of Eric Hobsbawm's thesis of 'social banditry' as a primitive form of peasant rebellion. Along with a hot theoretical debate over the social quality of banditry and the meaning of the universal bandit myth, Hobsbawm's social banditry thesis provoked the emergence of a new historical interest in the analysis of banditry in different contexts of the world from the Far East and Latin America to the Balkans and Middle East. Among these numerous researches, John S. Koliopoulos in his *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece (1821-1912)* analyzed the role of banditry in the modern Greek nation-state formation (1987)[8], while David Hart in his *Banditry in Islam: Case Studies from Morocco, Algeria, and the Pakistan North West Frontier* examined the relationship between banditry, political power, and anti-colonial resistance by rejecting Hobsbawm's model of social banditry within the context of the Middle East. (1987)

Phil Billingsley in his *Bandits in Republican China* (1988) and David Ownby in his 'Approximations of Chinese Bandits: Perverse Rebels, Romantic Heroes, or Frustrated Bachelors?' (2002) studied the historical process in China where the whole country had become a 'bandit nation'. Finally, Walter Laqueur in his *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical and Critical Study* analyzed banditry as the foundation of modern guerilla warfare.[9] (2009) Whether banditry researches embraced it or not, the social banditry thesis constitutes the initial theoretical

[8] Regarding the Balkans, Panaît Istrati's popular novel *the Bandits* had already proved the significance of 'haiduks' in the modern history of the Balkan nations. (1929)

[9] Also for researches on banditry in Corsica and Latin America, respectively, see: (Wilson, 2003) and (Slatta (ed.), 1987)

framework of the ongoing global banditry controversy amongst social scientists, and thus, requires a critical reconsideration.

A. Social Banditry Thesis and Its Opponents

Hobsbawm's *Bandits*, first published in 1969, constitutes the initial study that provoked an entire branch of history and a theoretical controversy over the nature of banditry.[10] Hobsbawm's motivation to develop a theory of social banditry derived from his curious observation that "the same stories and myths were told about certain types of bandits as bringers of justice and social redistributors all over the Europe; indeed, as became increasingly clear, all over the globe." (2000: ix)

Hobsbawm, in other words, argued that if it cannot not be a coincidence that all of the societies on the planet have their own Robin Hoods and if the bandit, by definition, is the out-law (i.e. the one 'placed outside the law'[11] by his very attempt to exercise illegal, but not necessarily illegitimate, violence) to whom law cannot be applied and thus who can be killed by anybody (2000: 14), banditry, indeed, emerges as a neglected, but an essential sphere where law, violence and power intersect. Hobsbawm argued, "*everybody* was entitled to kill the outlaw, because no authority was in a position to apply their law to him." (2000: 14) Thus, the existence of banditry, by itself, demonstrates the shallowness of the power system within which it operates. Notwithstanding its social or anti-social quality, Hobsbawm wrote, "bandits, by definition, resist obedience, are outside the range of power, are potential exercisers of power themselves, and therefore potential rebels." (2000: 12)

[10] In 1959, ten years before the publication of the *Bandits*, Hobsbawm had already put forward, although in a less systematic form, his social banditry thesis in his work *Primitive Rebels*. (1971)

[11] This is, Hobsbawm noted, the original meaning of the Italian *bandito* (*banned*). (2000: 12) Let's put aside, for the moment, the stark similarity between Hobsbawm's *bandito* and Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer*, i.e. "who may be killed and yet not sacrificed". (Agamben, 1998: 8)

From this point of view, Hobsbawm interpreted the historic significance of banditry as a simultaneous challenge to the economic, social and political order. In practice, as Karen Barkey would demonstrate in the 17th century Ottoman context, banditry, on the contrary, could turn into a stable component of an established order. Still, banditry constitutes, in the final analysis, a target for elimination for the central power if it has not yet been integrated, one way or another, into its system of law. Unlike the pre-modern state structures, such as the Roman, Chinese or the Ottoman empires, in which a certain degree of banditry was acceptable, the options of assimilation or elimination become all the more inescapable for the modern State for whom banditry can never be interpreted as a *normal* phenomenon with its existential claim on the monopoly of the legitimate use of force. It is curious that Hobsbawm immediately abandoned, and never touched again, this crucial relationship between law, violence and power in the definition of 'bandit' and instead rushed to develop his social banditry thesis.

Social banditry was, for Hobsbawm, such a universal and uniform phenomenon of peasant societies that the author decided to distinguish between its three major models that exist in popular memory:

(i) The *noble robber* or Robin Hood as the champion of the people, the righter of wrongs, the bringer of justice and social equity, whose principal characteristic is his moral approval by his image in peoples' mind (2000: 47),

(ii) the terror-bringing *avenger* as the agent of revenge and destruction whose ferocious cruelty demonstrates for the oppressed that the weak could also be terrible (2000: 63),

(iii) and the *haiduk* or the Balkan bandit as a primitive resistance fighter – who, unlike the noble robber, does not depend on personal moral approval; whose cruelty, unlike the avenger, is not his essential characteristic; but whose immoral acts could be tolerated only because of his services to the people. (2000: 81)

Moving on from this distinction, Hobsbawm's objective was to substantiate his principal thesis that banditry has a social protest function universally and uniformly in all peasant societies. (2000: 63) He, therefore, defined the social bandits as the

> "peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported." (Hobsbawm: 2000: 20)

According to Hobsbawm, social bandits were, therefore, those who were not *regarded* as simple criminals, but the heroes of the oppressed in the eyes of the native peasants. Now, it is true, on the one hand, that law, authoritatively, put the label of 'bandit' on the outlaw and his/her acts (whether in the form of blood feud, honor murder, smuggling, robbery or tribal conflict) were labeled as criminal only through the eyes of the law, not those of native people. Indeed, law, by taking one step further, had defined all outlaw actions as banditry, including social riots and organized armed struggles, without any discrimination, until it substituted the term of 'banditry', through a global trend, with that of 'terrorism' in the realm of political crimes – hence the historical decline of the bandit image after the second half of the 20th century.

Hobsbawm's definition, on the other hand, decides the criminal/ordinary or the social/political nature of banditry exclusively through its image in people's memory rather than its actual role in power politics. In other words, although

Hobsbawm defines bandits as 'political realists' operating in the universe of power and truly grasps the contradiction between the social bandit myth and the political history of banditry (2000: 17-18), he does still define the social bandit (in fact, the social bandit myth) as an expression of resistance to oppression of any kind (whether foreign, national or local) that the traditional peasant society encounters. (2000: 21-22) This is, clearly, his overall theoretical deadlock deriving from a specific methodological problem that is acknowledged by Hobsbawm himself. (2000: xi, 182)

In this methodological line of critique, the problem of Hobsbawm's thesis is that since he developed his social banditry model by relying exclusively on bandit ballads, stories, and legends, while the social protest function of banditry could be explained within his theoretical framework, the real political, economic, and social functions of banditry have, mostly, remained unaddressed. It is, therefore, argued that if there truly exists a primitive form of resistance in the phenomenon of banditry, Hobsbawm's sources are only capable of demonstrating its reconstruction in popular memory.

This is the point where Barkey in her *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* developed her counterargument of anti-social banditry[12]; the thesis claiming that bandits, far from being the rural rebels assisting the peasants, were the real malefactors of rural society and of its potential for rebellion and the very means of State centralization in the Ottoman Empire. (1994: 21-22) Barkey's thesis depends on an argument with four main pillars: In the 17th

[12] The anti-thesis against Hobsbawm's social banditry model originally belonged to Anton Blok, who presented the bandit as a force of terror exerted by a patron against his local people, see: (Blok, 1972) Barkey's originality, on the other hand, laid on her attempt to apply Blok's anti-social banditry thesis in the 17th century Ottoman context and had the substantial contribution of bringing the State back into the analysis. Still, for a recently published article that casts serious doubt on the validity of Barkey's theses in methodological terms, see: (Sheridan: 2012)

century Ottoman Empire, Barkey argued, bandits (i) were the by-products of State policies – neither an intentional invention of the State and/or the landlords nor the natural products of rural society; (ii) were appropriated for State consolidation and peripheral control; (iii) by no means constituted a threat to the State or order; and (iv) manipulated, rather than operated against, the interstices of the system. Thus they were simple opportunists, rather than redistributors of justice, who had no proclaimed ally or enemy or no significant ideology. (Barkey, 1994: 22) In other words, they were simply bandits, rather than being 'primitive rebels' as Hobsbawm described, i.e. 'the State's rambunctious clients', who were manipulated and controlled through patronage. (Barkey, 1994: x)

For Barkey, the main question was not, therefore, "did they constitute an abnormal form of social protest in the Ottoman peasant society?", rather "how did the officials and local power holders in the process of State centralization use them?"; hence, "how were they situated in actual power politics?". In the pursuit of the answers to those questions, Barkey argued that unlike European banditry, which was used innovatively by lords to disrupt the process of modern central State building, the Ottoman banditry was incorporated into the process of State consolidation through various policies ranging from confrontation to negotiation and bargaining. (1994: 5) Therefore, Barkey presented her analysis of the 17th century banditry in the Ottoman Empire as a substantial critique not only of Hobsbawm's social banditry model, but also of the theories of Turkish Marxist scholars and writers in which banditry has been interpreted as a type of popular rebellion in the face of the stark lack of substantial peasant riots in the whole history of the Ottoman Empire.

Regarding those Turkish Marxists, Barkey enumerated the literary names of Yaşar Kemal and Kemal Tahir as prominent examples within the context of Turkey. (1994: 180) As it will be explained below, it is, however, a clear mistake to juxtapose those two Marxist novelists who presented totally contrasting narratives on the issue of banditry. Indeed, if one puts aside the fact that the role of the State is mostly lacking in his perspective, Tahir's aim of rejecting Kemal's bandit romanticism echoes Barkey's opposition to Hobsbawm's *social banditry*. Marxism, moreover, actually evaluated those on the margins of society, such as bandits and robbers, who have escaped, been excluded from, or not yet subsumed into the industrial labor, as having the negative connotations of the lumpenproletariat. In *the Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels emphasized the counter-revolutionary potential hidden in this class:

> "The 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue." (Marx and Engels, 2002: 231)

If Barkey was looking for the political thinker that must have inspired Hobsbawm for his *social banditry* theory, she should have rather examined the political thoughts of the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, to whom Hobsbawm himself referred as the thinker that defined the bandit as "the genuine and sole revolutionary – a revolutionary without fine phrases, without learned rhetoric, irreconcilable, indefatigable and indomitable, a popular and social revolutionary, non-political and independent of any estate." (Hobsbawm, 2000: 120)

Still, Barkey's critique could be valid for the case of Turkish Marxists if Tahir is taken as an exception. Indeed, even before the publication of Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* in 1959, Hikmet Kıvılcımlı had already raised the social banditry thesis in the 1930s. Kıvılcımlı placed banditry in the category of the 'individual

rebellions' of peasants and defined banditry as "a kind of anarchism pertaining to peasantry that is among the fragmentizing middle classes." (1992: 289)

If the transcendental rebellion of peasantry against oppression was, according to Kıvılcımlı, religious sectarianism, its profane form was banditry. (1992: 289) Leaving the analysis of Kıvılcımlı's theory of banditry to the next chapter, Hobsbawm's social banditry theory was criticized in many other respects.[13] Pertaining to those criticisms, the following is substantially relevant for our own investigation on the last era of Kurdish banditry in modern Turkey: "The distinction between social and other kinds of banditry is wrong because all crime is in some sense social protest and rebellion." (Hobsbawm, 2000: 171)

In response to this criticism, Hobsbawm raised, first of all, his former argument that the distinction between the good/social and the bad/criminal bandit have been made within the common people's morality (2000: 176), for which one can merely claim that such a distinction in popular memory deserves an analysis, instead of asserting that this distinction genuinely exists. The author, moreover, argued that while social bandits share the 'straight' society of peasants, i.e. the moral economy of the crowd in Thompson's terminology (1971: 76-136), the criminals have the only option of rejecting the law; notwithstanding it is God's, the people's, the King's, or the lord's. (Hobsbawm, 2000: 180) However, Hobsbawm's resources on popular memory could not, without bias, elaborate the moral universe of the criminal, simply because they belong to the peasantry, the very myth creator. According to Barkey, on the other hand, Hobsbawm conceptually collapsed the two totally different social categories of peasantry and banditry onto each other: Bandit and peasant differ in terms of their social nature (mobile vs. immobile), political

[13] In the fourth revised edition of *Bandits*, Hobsbawm brought those criticisms together in order to respond to them one by one. For those criticisms and Hobsbawm's replies, see: (2000: 167-199)

economy (the former as a competitor of non-cultivating classes in the extraction of surplus from the latter) (1994: 184-186) and objectives (the former has no reason for the destruction of the oppressive system over the latter from which s/he benefits in the final analysis). (1994: 21)

Just like Barkey, Tahir also distinguished the morals of bandits and peasants from each other: In his narratives, while the formers despise and reject their own origins, the peasants' lifestyle, for being miserable and slavish, the latters envy the lives of bandits for being dangerous, but free. Even Hobsbawm admitted that the main aspiration of bandits is to be powerful and rich and their utmost goal is, therefore, being a landlord themselves. Still, according to Hobsbawm, banditry expressed peasant resentment. While peasants by their very nature resent, banditry makes this resentment, this implicit rejection of inferiority, explicit. (2000: 8) This same argument, however, could easily be raised for any type of crime without the need for a distinction between the ordinary and social types of criminality.

In short, Barkey strongly argued with reference to the 17th century Ottoman Empire that banditry (i) inhibited the potential of peasantry for collective action, (ii) plundered its social and economic resources and (iii) participated in its coercion by the State and the local power holders. (1994: 21) Yet, Barkey, who was more concerned with the interest of Turkish Marxists in the social bandit myth than that of peasants, seemed to neglect the fact that bandit is also a *symbol*, and only one among 'the heroes with thousand faces' in the mythical arsenal of *humanity*.[14]

[14] The phrase 'the hero with a thousand faces' constitutes the title of Joseph Campbell's study in 1949 that found through modern psychoanalysis a universal bond to identify an entity called 'humanity' behind the hero's journey across the myths of diverse cultures. (1972)

B. Beyond the Dichotomy of Social and Anti-Social Banditry: The Transformation of Ordinary Violence into a Political Myth

Max Weber defines the modern State as "a political enterprise of institutional character in which, and to the extent that, the administrative agency successfully claims, in enforcing its regulations, a monopoly of legitimate physical force." (1976: 29) In contradistinction to feudalism as a regime of private property in the instruments of violence and diffuse appropriation of the means of administration, two essential instruments of the modern State, according to Weber, were, therefore, the monopoly of legitimate use of force and a bureaucratic administration. Weber's definition has, however, been criticized in various ways. One particular vein of this criticism overshadows the others by concentrating on the implications of the definition by which the modern State is, indirectly, illustrated as a necessary evil in Hobbesian terms, which has brought about peace and order in society through monopolizing the legitimate use of force. As the modern State has become the only bird of prey in society "to prevent the weaker members of the community from being prayed upon by innumerable vultures, (…), it was indispensible to be in perpetual attitude of defense against his beak and claws."[15] (Mill, 2003: 73)

Bertrand Badie and Pierre Birnbaum, in their *The Sociology of the State*, argued against any attempt to construct a universal meaning for the modern State, which is, by no means, an inevitable and natural product of neither political nor economic development but a historical response to a specific crisis affecting one part of Europe. (1983: 135-136) Although they acknowledged that Weber "was the first to consider political phenomena as specific data with a logic and history of their

[15] John Stuart Mill defines the need for the limitation and regulation of State power as the first stage of struggle between liberty and authority, whereas the succeeding decisive stage derives directly from society, i.e. the tyranny of majority. (1983: 76)

own" (1983: 17) by displaying a firm stand against social evolutionist and universalist models, Badie and Birnbaum questioned the ongoing credibility of the monopoly of political power by the State:

> "Today, however, many signs seem to indicate the society has outgrown the state: separatist movements, the popularity of 'self-management', and the crisis afflicting many state institutions all suggest that the once necessary monopoly of political power by the state has lost its raison d'être." (Badie and Birnbaum, 1983: 136)

Moving from that criticism, which emphasizes the indigenous origins and the historical decline of the modern State along with its monopoly of political power, Hamit Bozarslan went one step further by describing the monopolist model of the State – apart from being too costly – as being an irrational, generally ineffective and certainly artificial solution. (2012: 87) According to Bozarslan – reinterpreting the State as an arena of political struggle of adverse interests, rather than a monolithic structure that reconciles them (2012: 85) – the autonomy of the State operates not through monopolizing the political power, but by the authority to determine the time and the place of intervention. (2012: 86-87) One of the clear reflections of this second reading of the State in the context of modern Turkey is the continuous existence of armed tribes in its Kurdish provinces. Indeed, one of the most consistent policies of the State in tackling its Kurdish problem has been the disarmament and suppression of the tribes that were perceived by the civil and military political elite as a threat for the Turkish nation-state building process; whereas the right to means of physical violence of other Kurdish tribes – those that are seen to be in line with or in favor of the nation-state building process through a patronage relationship with the central Government – has been acknowledged either tacitly or openly. In this respect, the village guard system – which was established in 1985 against the armed struggle

of the PKK – is the legal institutionalization of the central Government's share of its monopoly over the means of physical violence with the loyal Kurdish tribes.[16]

Still, Bozarslan admitted that the modern State is required to act in the Hobbesian way at times of foundational crisis in order to reproduce itself as the sole monopoly of political power. (2012: 87) Indeed, the significance of Weber's definition is its emphasis on the distinction of the modern State from all other types of power by its self-imposed obligation to define itself, at least at the discursive level, as the sole and unique source of the legitimate use of violence. Therefore, with his definition of the modern State, Weber – quoting Leon Trotsky's phrase "every state is founded on force" (1978: 212) – indicates the organic linkage between power, law and violence that also constituted the main theme of the political thoughts of Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin.

With the rise of the liberal constitutional State, the *rule of law* concept has been the quintessential symbol by which the modern State obsessively desires to identify itself. The aim has been a clear illustration of the modern constitutional age as the antithesis of all the previous ages, as the transformation from *rex lex* ('the King is the Law') to the *lex, rex* ('the Law is the King'). By declaring the law as the sovereign, it has been repeatedly argued that the modern constitutional citizen has been protected against the arbitrariness of personalized power. It has, therefore, been harbingered over and over again that no one is immune to law and everybody is equal before the law in the modern (thus impersonal and neutral) constitutional State. Here, Schmitt has broken the spell of 'the spiritual force of law' – which works objectively and automatically without any need of the subjective element – through his invocation of the concept *exception*.

[16] For a recently published article on the history of the village guard system, see: (Paker and Akça: 2013)

Schmitt's question was simple: 'Is it possible that the legal system can anticipate the exception and suspend itself?' (1988: 14) As every legal order requires a normal situation and every norm homogeneity and regularity, the state of exception will always be unrecognizable and unpredictable for the legal order, thus it will always require the decision of a subject on this concrete situation that cannot, by its very nature, conformed to the law. (Schmitt, 1988: 5, 6, 13) In other words, a decision that cannot depend on law in order to produce it acquires an independent and absolute status in the state of exception. (Schmitt, 1988: 12) Thus, sovereignty, according to Schmitt, is the monopoly to decide at the state of exception. Five years after the publication of his *Political Theology*, Schmitt would further develop his conception of sovereignty by defining the sovereign as the subject that decides not only whether an exception is taking place and the law should be suspended, but also who the (public) enemy is in this concrete situation. (2007: 45)

Schmitt's theory of sovereignty has also been subject to substantial criticism. His theory, however, becomes significant here not by its overemphasis on decision and subject, but through its basic perspective, which exposes the violence craftily hidden behind power by the veil of law.[17] Still, violence does not only make law – it also preserves it. The continuous existence of law is guaranteed by the violence that appears only when law is violated.[18] The law-making and law-preserving forms of violence should, therefore, be differentiated from each other. The political thinker that makes this ontological distinction and theorizes the outlaw violence is Walter

[17] For a recently published article that criticizes Giorgio Agamben's theory of sovereignty - which is, itself, built upon Schmitt's conceptions of exception, subject and decision – and that questions, with reference to the political thoughts of Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt, whether the law-making act should be designated as violence or power in contradistinction to the law-preserving violence (coercion) of the State, see: (Gambetti, 2012)

[18] For this point on law and violence, I am indebted to Abbas Vali's sociology lectures 'Power, Law and Violence' at Boğaziçi University.

Benjamin, who lays bare in his iconoclastic article *A Critique of Violence* the main motive behind law's existential obsession on the monopoly of violence.

Behind law, behind every contract and institution, according to Benjamin, violence stands hidden. Violence is not only the result of law, i.e. the right of appealing to violence in the case of its infringement, but also its very origin. After law has first been established, law-preserving violence

> "indirectly weakens the lawmaking violence represented by it, through the suppression of hostile counter violence (…) until either new forces or those earlier suppressed triumph over the hitherto lawmaking violence and thus found a new law, destined in its turn to decay." (Benjamin, 2007: 300)

The violence able to break through this vicious circle is the divine violence (which might also be called, for Benjamin, the sovereign violence), which neither makes nor preserves, but abolishes the law. (2007: 300) Benjamin, therefore, emphasizes that the law's interest in the monopoly of violence cannot be explained by the intention of preserving legal ends, but that of preserving the law itself: "Violence, when not in the hands of the law, threatens it not by the ends that it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law." (Benjamin, 2007: 281) Law's jealousy of any type of outlaw violence, for Benjamin, clearly explains why people admire and envy the great criminal:

> "The same may be more drastically suggested if one reflects how often the figure of the 'great' criminal, however repellent his ends may have been, has aroused the secret admiration of the public. This cannot result from his deed, but only from the violence to which it bears witness." (Benjamin, 2007: 281)

This is the point at which we need to turn back to the bandit myth and to the deadlock of the existing banditry controversy caged in the dichotomy of social and anti-social banditry, through which it struggles in vain either to validate or to falsify the bandit myth, as the ultimate question that this dichotomy enforces on the researcher is, to simplify, whether bandits were good or evil. It is, however, a

stillborn occupation, as a myth exists for neither validation nor falsification, but is an ancient type of expression of the will that acts, or prepares itself to act, on the present.

It was Georges Sorel, in his foundational study *Reflections on Violence*, who truly grasped the meaning of myths by integrating the phenomenon of general strike as a modern form of mythical violence into his eulogy to violence that is constructive, creative and virtuous. According to Sorel, myth that is, by its very nature, irrefutable is the antithesis of utopia. (2004: 28) A utopia is an intellectual product that exists for refutation, the model of perfection to which one compares existing societies to calculate the amount of good and evil they contain. It calls, by its nature, for reform. A myth, on the contrary, is a means to act on the present, the revolutionary praxis that allows us "to understand the activity, the sentiments and the ideas of the masses as they prepare themselves to enter on a decisive struggle; they are not descriptions of things but expressions of a will to act." (Sorel, 2004: 28) Thus, myths are about neither truth or falsehood nor past or future. It is the expression of the will of masses to act on the very present. Without the transcendental myth of the struggle with evil, without the heroic bandit myth of peasantry, without "the citizen of the Greek republics, the Roman legionary, the soldier of the wars of Liberty, and the artist of the Renaissance (…) the belief in glory (…) quickly fades away into rhapsodies." (Sorel, 2004: 27) It is not its inner logic or its consistency with outside reality that matters, it is, Sorel argues, the myth in its entirety that is alone important. (2004: 117) It provides us an intuitive understanding and picture of the acting will that becomes accessible only through images and symbols, instead of words.

Thus, the dichotomy of social and anti-social banditry approaches the bandit myth at an incorrect angle, as it aims at understanding whether or not bandits, as the myth imagines, stand for the oppressed in their communities by their actual existence in power relations. Yet, this debate is almost entirely futile, since a bandit, as the name implies, is a bandit, a thief, a robber, an extorter, and a murderer. He could stand, here, by his native peasants; he could be, there, the very integral component of theirs and many others' exploitation and oppression in concert with aghas, tribes and/or the central Government or a sui generis participant of a revolutionary wave or a struggle for national emancipation. In other words, the debate, in order to formulate a generalization, exclusively concentrates on the specific aims and means of bandits that could only be evaluated in their particular contexts.

The heroic bandit myth, however, cries out its general reason for existence by itself. Benjamin's interpretation of the great criminal underlines that the great 'ordinary' crime arouses the secret admiration and envy of peoples not by the ends it may pursue – which are often and unsurprisingly repellent – but by the outlaw violence that it displays. Indeed, the transformation of simple bandits into the heroes of the oppressed derives from their creation of a violence that is outside its law-preserving form and that, therefore, violates, without taking into account its means and ends, law's monopoly on violence. The mythologizing of the outlaw's 'ordinary' violence renders its nature an extraordinary and political one, leading to the emergence of Benjamin's divine violence, which threatens with destruction the vicious circle between the law-making and law-preserving violence.

It could be that no Robin Hood existed in the whole history of humanity; and what does the researchers' struggle to prove his existence mean other than their own admiration of the myth of outlaw violence? The actual non-existence of Robin Hoods

does not, on the other hand, falsify the bandit myth, as their images have already exceeded their own peasant contexts by reaching out and charming even us, the children of urban societies.

In the previous pages, it has been curiously noted that Hobsbawm, despite anticipating the importance of the origin of *bandito* – i.e. the one 'placed outside the law', to whom law cannot be applied and thus who can be killed by anybody – abandoned and never touched again this crucial relationship between law, violence and power in the definition of the bandit, and instead rushed to develop his *social banditry* thesis as a primitive rebellion whereas the similarity between Hobsbawm's bandit and Agamben's notion *Homo Sacer* was so blatant to be neglected. The similarity, here, is the existence of both *bandito* and *homo sacer* in a constant state of exception where violence appears naked without the veil of law. (Agamben, 1998: 8) Still, Hobsbawm could not restrain himself from moving outside of his *social banditry* model by defining banditry in general as the exception (i.e. individual rebellion) that proves the rule (i.e. general passivity):

> "Theirs is an individual rebellion, which is socially and politically undermined, and which under normal – i.e. non-revolutionary – conditions is not a vanguard of mass revolt, but rather the product and counterpart of the general passivity. They are the exception which proves the rule." (Hobsbawm, 2000: 41)

Thus, the individual rebellion of any type of bandit, notwithstanding his particular aims and acts, derives from his/her spontaneous violation of law's monopoly of violence. This exceptional violent activism proves the general passivity and earns, deservedly, its secret admiration. This is the point at which the myth injects an extraordinary political nature into the ordinary violence of the bandit. Until the emergence of the discursive label of 'terrorist' after the second half of the 20th century, the fact that every kind of outlaw violence, even in the forms of social riots (e.g. the Dersim Rebellion) or organized armed struggles (e.g. PKK), had been

denominated by the label of 'banditry' in the State discourse did not derive – as Sabri Yetkin simply supposed (1996: 8) – from the State's aim of underrating and disparaging those activities. By leveling any kind of outlaw violence, notwithstanding its organized and unorganized nature or its ends and means, in the common denominator *banditry*, the State sets forth the monopoly of violence as its raison d'être. The modern State perceives any kind of violence – regardless of its quality – that reproduces outside of its own hands as a threat, as it grasps better than anyone else its inherent law-making capacity. Therefore, the State could use and manipulate banditry but it does not, in the final analysis, compromise with the bandits, as it understands that even 'ordinary' violence, if mythologized, would stand against its law-preserving violence as the divine one.

Moving from this theoretical framework, the following analysis aims, in this respect, at explicating the political status granted to the ordinary violence of the last Kurdish brigands through differentiating between their adverse reconstructions by various agents. Instead of concentrating on their positions in power relations, the adverse imaginations of bandits among various agents shall not only decipher the social protest content of the Kurdish bandit myth, but also illuminate the practical link between the discourses and policies of the State over the last Kurdish banditry.

CHAPTER II

INTELLECTUAL RECONSTRUCTIONS OF BANDITRY IN MODERN TURKEY

In line with the rise of brigandage in the Kurdish regions from the 1950s onwards, the theme *banditry* had become a popular intellectual topic of the day. The intellectual reproductions of the folkloric bandit myth either in literature or cinema were immediately met with criticisms, and thus, the novels and movies that narrated the story of a heroic bandit fighting for the underdog in his/her community were countered by productions of intellectual sarcasm over the heroic bandit myth. The following is an analysis of this duality, along with insightful deviations from it, and its internal divergence and unity in the Turkish novels, movies and scholarly research over the issue of banditry.

A. From the Primitive Social Rebel to the Enemy of the People: Banditry Controversy in Turkish Literature

Beginning with the Ottomans, the heroic thief has always been one of the main themes of Turkish folkloric literature. The legend of Köroğlu, which reflected the moral universe of Ottoman peasantry, is the Turkish counterpart to the English Robin Hood or the Scottish Rob Roy. Following in the vein of folkloric bandit romanticism, novelists initiated the banditry controversy in Turkish literature. One of the first novels of this type was Ömer Seyfettin's classic story *Lonely Efe* (1910), which narrated the transformation of an ordinary peasant girl in the Aegean region into a heroic bandit through her struggle against oppression and cruelty; hence, a

reproduction of the classical *efe* (Aegean bandit) myth. (Seyfettin: 2012) Hüseyin Rahmi Günpınar's *In the Bandits' Lair* (1935), on the other hand, silently opposed Seyfettin's bandit hero. Through the story of bandits' kidnapping of two landowners, Günpınar described the late Ottoman Empire as 'the bandit age' when the power of the central Government in Istanbul was narrowed to such an extent that the Anatolian *reaya*, including the people living around the capital, were moaning with pain under the cruelty of bandits. (Günpınar: 2000) Due to lack of State protection, people, in Günpınar's narrative, had become the helpless victims of bandits' atrocious crimes. Just like in Günpınar's novel, bandits in Sabahattin Ali's narratives appeared as the true evildoers. The misfortune of one of his main protagonists, *Kuyucaklı Yusuf* – one of Ali's masterpieces published in 1937 – begins with the murder of his parents at the hands of bandits in Aydın in 1903. (2013: 7)

As a direct follow-up to Seyfettin's *Lonely Efe*, the folkloric *efe* legend of the Aegean bandits was popularized by Münir Hayri Egeli's short story *Uryan Efe*.[19] (1944) Similarly, Murat Sertoğlu wrote in the 1940s a series of three best-selling novels on the Aegean bandit legend *Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe*. (1965) Among those bandit novels, Cevad Ulunay's *Balçıklı Ethem: the King of Mountains,* published in 1955, had a special place. By narrating a former bandit's transformation into a *kolcu* (a salaried hunter of tobacco smugglers) of the infamous Régie Company in the late Ottoman State, Ulunay narrated the substantial role that bandits played in the complicated struggle between the State, the Company and the smugglers. (1995) Still, it would be the contrasting literary productions of Yaşar Kemal and Kemal Tahir in the second half of the 1950s that constituted the essential body of the Turkish banditry controversy.

[19] In the 1950s, Egeli would make the movie *The Blond Zeibek* from the same Aegean banditry myth, only then with a different scenario. (Sarı Zeybek, 1953)

1. Re-Enchantment: Yaşar Kemal's Noble and Social Bandits

When the outlaw rule of bandits in the mountains and highways of the Kurdish provinces of Turkey had begun to climb to its final climax, a special literary category, 'bandit romanticism' (*Räuberromantik*), was reintroduced to Turkish literature through the publication of Yaşar Kemal's first novel *Slim Memed* in 1955. German literary historians invented the term of 'Räuberromantik' (Hobsbawm, 2000: 142) to describe the global genre of novel that reconstructs banditry nostalgically as a bygone form of heroism of the lost chivalric ages. The Turkish counterpart of the legend of Robin Hood – the archetype of bandit novels (*Räuberromane*) – is, right after the old Turkish legend of Köroğlu, Kemal's *Slim Memed*. It is the story of the transformation of a peasant boy, who grew up in a desperately poor mountain village that was kept in virtual slavery by a local landlord, into a rebellious brigand. Although the triggering event of his revolt – his agha's forceful separation of him from his lover – was a personal injustice committed against him, Memed gradually transformed into a reformist, if not a revolutionary, who fights against the inequality of land distribution and the oppression of greedy landlords over their miserable peasants, and is hence a *liberator* to his people. The ensuing warning made by the villain Abdi Agha to one of his fellow men to get rid of Slim Memed as soon as possible is exemplary for displaying that Memed is not an ordinary thief nor murderer, but a genuine social bandit:

> "Today it's me, tomorrow it'll be you. That's what frightens me. Let there be as many brigands on the mountain as you will. What's a brigand anyway? But this frightens me, this land business. If it once gets into the heads of the peasants, there'll be no stopping them. (…) What he has done has been like putting a water-melon rind in the mind of a donkey." (Kemal, 1961: 310)

Kemal's *Slim Memed* is the quintessence of Hobsbawm's thesis of 'social banditry' as a primitive form of peasant rebellion.[20] In *Slim Memed*, a clear distinction exists between the *good* (noble and social) and the *bad* (criminal and anti-social) bandit. In most of the cases, bandits, in Kemal's narrative, are not only ferocious criminals – e.g. the character *Mad Durdu* who tortures innocents for pleasure (2006a: 122) – but also the enemies of the people who serve aghas and act as their primary means of oppression – e.g. the character *Kalaycı* who is used by landlords to suppress peasants and to seize their lands and products. (2006a: 314) As opposed to the ordinary criminal type of bandit, the noble bandit – e.g. the legend of *Koca Ahmed* – only takes from the rich to give to the poor, commits murder rarely and just for the greater good, and embodies both people's love and fear in his popular image.[21] In contradistinction, Slim Memed, as a social bandit, goes one step further through his decision to abolish the order of aghas itself by killing Abdi Agha in his native village. In *Slim Memed*, the malign alliance between aghas and anti-social bandits is, therefore, challenged by a benevolent counter-alliance between peasants and social bandits. Memed is both good and strong: "There is no Abdi Agha any more. The cattle in your hands belong to you. The fields, too, belong to you. Cultivate them as much as you can. It will go on like this as long as I am on the hills. If I will be shot, you will take care of yourself." (Kemal, 2006a: 304)

The rest of the story in the following three volumes is on Memed's dilemma that yet another agha, more evil and ruthless every time, succeeds the one he has defeated. The author solves this vicious circle of endless oppression and exploitation through hope, as peasants have begun to organize and act in solidarity against

[20] Berna Moran, a literary critique, has already pointed out that Kemal's Slim Memed and Hobsbawm's social bandit share a common structure. (1997: 81)
[21] "Love and fear keep the bandit alive. Love, alone, is weak. Fear, alone, is vengeance." (Kemal, 2006a: 68-69)

injustice through the inspiration radiated from the myth of *Slim Memed*. Memed is doomed to rebel, to sacrifice himself only for proving that the oppressed is, in fact, powerful and the oppressor is but a coward, thief and murderer. By describing his novel as the story of those that are forced to rebel, Kemal, in his conversations with Alain Bosquet, clearly displays that he fictionalizes banditry as a primitive rebellion:

> "These 'committed men' are the external manifestation of the consciousness of revolt that is found in each one of us. (…) In the first volume, Memed begins his career as a bandit by chance. The people, whose rebellion he expresses, take him for themselves in order to send him along the paths of their own choosing. Even without being aware of his destiny, he acts as a man forced to rebel." (Kemal, 1999: 134)

Kemal's bandit romanticism continued in his *The Life Stories of the Famous Bandit Çakırcalı*.[22] (1972) It is based on the true story of the bandit *Çakırcalı Memed Efe*, who had become through his fifteen-year reign in the mountains of Western Turkey the true representative of Aegean banditry or the so-called *zeibek* tradition, which persisted as one of the major public order problems up until the early Republican period. While the Ottoman State was falling apart, *zeibeks* were in their heydays. Most notably, Çakırcalı ruled his region for more than a decade by substituting himself for governmental authority, whereas state officials were struggling to eliminate him in order to protect the State's prestige as the sole sovereign body in its own lands.[23] In this respect, Kemal does nothing in his novel other than reproduce the already existent myth of Çakırcalı as a noble bandit, a robber with high principles (e.g. "he did not rape women", "he did not kill soldiers", "he was forced to be a bandit" etc.) that were in line with the moral universe of the

[22] Although Kemal had begun writing the book in 1956 right after the publication of *Slim Memed*, it could only be published in 1972 as the author had studied the story in depth through interviews with several living witnesses. For the writing process of the novel, see: (Kemal, 1990: 5-7)

[23] Kemal notes, rather curiously, that Çakırcalı had even become the subject of heated debates in the House of Commons, and as for whether or not the British government had supported him against the Ottoman State, he leaves the answer to historians. (1990: 62) It is curious to note that the historian Sabri Yetkin, who laid bare the fact that Çakırcalı was supported both by several English capitalists and arms dealers and by local landlords, would, nonetheless, present the Aegean banditry in general and Çakırcalı in particular as the quintessence of social banditry in Turkey. The contradictions of Yetkin's study will be analyzed below.

straight society; the champion of the poor, the oppressed and the enemy of the rich, the oppressors:

> "He turned his back to aghas and lords. He had never been their tool. No agha and lord could have used him, but he used them. (…) He took their lands and distributed to the poor. (…) He had become the enemy of the persecutors.[24] (…) He was within the people, the man of the people and the enemy of the court and the landlords." (Kemal, 1990: 115)

It was, therefore, a literary reproduction of the folkloric *zeibek* myth in which a *şaki* (bandit) is no simple thief or murderer, but a noble robber. However, unlike with the fictional character of Slim Memed, Kemal does not re-imagine Çakırcalı as a social bandit whose aim was to abolish oppression and exploitation altogether, but a noble robber that merely sympathized with the weak and the underdogs in his society. Kemal even admits that behind this sympathy, there lay a patron-client – and thus a mutually beneficial – relationship.

Despite this rather realistic acknowledgment, Kemal's aim was to re-create the folkloric bandit myth literarily, rather than to question its historical factuality in the Turkish context. Thus, his attempt was both in form and content the reproduction of the heroic bandit figure that has already been drawn as the hero of the oppressed in the oral sources of popular history, which have been told by the true masters of popular memory either in anonymous tales and legends, in the poems and songs of Anatolian folk singers (*aşık*) or in the narratives of Kurdish story tellers (*dengbêj*). Therefore, Kemal can rightfully be defined as the author of popular myths that skillfully used an ancient technique of narration aiming to re-enchant the world by turning simple but painful realities into legendary fantasias[25]: "Without this magic,

[24] In his novel *The Drumming-Out*, Kemal re-invokes the concept of 'mütegallibe' (persecutors), a widely used concept in the Turkish State Discourse, to describe the cruel order of aghas that was supported by their bandit gangs in Southern Turkey. (Kemal, 2013)

[25] In his novel *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, Kemal, for instance, used popular myths to re-enchant the peasant's life, which had lost its rural magic and become too real through the repression of power relations and heavy traditions. (Kemal, 2006b) For a recent application of this narrative technique into

would humanity be able to stand, with full realization, the pain and suffering it must confront? The human species creates myths, and in our desiccated world, what saves us if not the myths we introduce into our daily lives?" (Kemal, 1999: 141)

As banditry continued to grow in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey, bandit romanticism had become the popular theme of the day and thus many other authors followed the lead of Kemal's romantic hero.[26] The only apparent exception in all of Turkish literature was Kemal Tahir, who wrote a counter-history of banditry by turning the outlaw heroes into anti-heroes, or enemies of the people.[27] His aim was, simply, to disenchant the bandit myth by deconstructing its meaning and function in the moral world of the oppressed.

2. Disenchantment: Kemal Tahir's Criminal and Anti-Social Bandits

Kemal Tahir was a leftist novelist and intellectual in whose works the outstanding characteristic was always non-conformity with generally accepted perspectives. Although his legacy is still not fully appreciated, the influence of Tahir's ideas on political thought in Turkey is much more immense than one could expect from a 'mere' novelist. From his articulation of the Ottoman past – that is a rejection of his contemporary Kemalist discourse denying the Ottoman legacy with the *enlightened* concept of 'reaction' – to his reading of peasantry – which writes a history of continuity between the Ottoman and the early Republican periods, and from his

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cinema and a critique of the realist perspective, see the recent movie *Life of Pi* by the Taiwanese director Ang Lee.

[26] For instance, the short story *Shibil* (*Ince*) by the Bulgarian novelist Yordan Yovkov, which narrated the humane transformation of a Turkish bandit chief in the Balkans through love, was published in Turkish in 1968. (Yovkov, 1968) The life story of Koçero, one of the most popular Kurdish brigands of the 1960s, was written as a novel in 2004 by Mehmet Ali İzmir in his *Koçero: The Last Bandit* by relying on the narrations of witnesses. (İzmir, 2004)

[27] As a closer version of Tahir's imagination, Ömer Polat in his *Mahmudo and Hazel* pictured his main protagonist as a desperate and confused 'Eastern' bandit whose miserable reality was transformed by the people into a heroic cult. (Polat, 1973)

critique of Kemalism and his contemporary left[28] to his re-interpretation of the national struggle[29] and the modernization project of village institutions, Tahir stands as the very precursor to the ensuing development of the social sciences in Turkey.

The answer to the question, "how could a novelist exert such a deep influence on the future of the social sciences in Turkey?" lies in Tahir's understanding of the art and the craft of novel writing: He wrote that a novelist should be a historian and a sociologist in a society whose basic idea, social structure, psychology, sub-consciousness and historical past had not been illuminated properly. (Kayalı, 2008: 1096) His political imprisonment, which lasted for twelve years as a result of the so-called *navy trial* in which he stood alongside with Nazım Hikmet and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, enabled him to delve into writings on the historical and social structure of Turkey.[30] Almost all of his novels were, indeed, written in tandem after his 'graduation' from this prison school in 1950. In comparison to the lighter historical insights in Kemal's novels, Tahir's novels are loaded with iconoclastic theses on the main themes of the history and sociology of Turkey. His novels, moreover, concentrated on a particular historical period: the establishment of the modern Turkish nation-state between 1920 and 1938. When the current academic interest in this founding period and the scholarly critique of Kemalism after the 1980s are taken into account, it is possible that the significance of Tahir's novels for political thought in Turkey can, deservedly, be grasped and appreciated.

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[28] As the author's critical insights were indebted to a historical understanding of his society, Tahir interpreted the main representative of his contemporary left – TİP (Workers' Party of Turkey) – in a totally new light, as a variant of the Westernization movement in Turkey. (Kayalı, 2008: 1097) For a series of thorough reflections on Tahir's political thought, see: (Kayalı, 2010)

[29] *People of the Captive City*, *Prison of the Captive City* and *Tired Fighter* are all on the national struggle. Moreover, while *Law of Wolf* is written on the Independence Tribunals, *Fork in a Road* is on the Liberal Republican Party experience.

[30] Tahir's deep interest in the history and sociology of Turkey might also be observed in his manuscripts, published posthumously, in which the reader may find an extensive reading and a critique of the texts of Niyazi Berkes. See: (Tahir, 1993)

Tahir's non-conformity with generally accepted ideas can be best observed in his position towards the literary current of bandit romanticism, and in the way he almost immediately responded to Kemal's *Slim Memed* (1955) through his *Rain Closed the Roads* (1957). It's a counter-history: the history of the consolidation of the oppressive system of landlords through banditry. The popular mythologizing of a certain type of bandit as the hero of the oppressed in peoples' memory, according to Tahir, could only demonstrate the peasants' despair in the face of the repressive rules of their landlords. The novel, indeed, begins with a striking quotation by André Maurois in his foundational study *A History of England*: "A society whose moral order is tenuous and which cannot handle its robbers – by the pressure of the residual barbarism left in its soul – feels admiration towards its plunderers." (Tahir, 2011)

The story happens in several small Alewi villages of Çorum, a city of Central Anatolia, in an uncertain period long after the national struggle. For the region, at this time, the age of bandits was already gone. An old, poor peasant, Bektaş Emmi gives this historical insight: "In the old days, it was the bandit age." (Tahir, 2011: 16) Although the reader encounters him only once at the very beginning of the story, the character *Emmi* is crucial, as he represents both the wisdom and the misery of peasantry at the same time. Indeed, the initiative dialogue of the novel between him and *Maraz Ali*, the anti-protagonist, a young breadless fellow aspiring to be a bandit, is fundamental to grasping Tahir's understanding of banditry. While Emmi – who certainly knows that Ali's agha, the villain *Çerçi Süleyman* aims to abuse him for his own interests – tries to convince Ali in vain to give up his dream of becoming a bandit, he explains the causes of banditry, i.e. the inverse relationship between centralized power and banditry: "The bandit age occurs when the government is sick.

In fact, the government never dies, but occasionally gets sick. Just like a human! When the government gets malaria, bandit rebels." (Tahir, 2011: 22)

In the words of Emmi, Tahir presented his historical insight on the early Turkish Republic by arguing that when the government was at war, and thus when it was both vulnerable and busy, deserters took to the hills and became bandits.[31] Through the words of the old peasant, Tahir, in fact, mocked the folkloric bandit myth and instead argued that the present system of aghas was established through banditry during the period of national struggle. (2011: 31-32) However, Ali, who at this point is fed up with his agha's bandit stories, has already decided to be a powerful hero, a bandit of the folk songs – who is not a simple *thief*, but a true *man* that takes from the rich and gives to the poor.

Tahir's aim in his story of a robbery that was designed by cruel aghas for their own interests was, therefore, to disenchant the bandit myth by deconstructing its meaning and function in the world of the oppressed. Regarding the times when bandits ruled the mountains, Tahir narrated them as cruel people who extorted, tortured, raped, and murdered helpless peasants. So, to address the question, "why and how could these cruel robbers, who harmed the weakest and were used by the strongest, be described as the heroes of the oppressed?", Tahir provided the answer at the end of the novel.

The peasants immediately transform a simple and unsuccessful act of thievery – behind which there merely lies the aghas' internal competition – into a heroic legend. In his narration of this banditry incident to his fellow peasants, the character *Köse Hacı* illustrates the leader of the bandits, who is in fact no more than a cowardly thief (*Uzun Iskender*), as a prophet, the long expected *mehdi*, the true

[31] The same historical insight can be found in Tahir's novel *The Seed in the Desert*, which was published as a series in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in the 1960s. (Tahir, 1965: 2)

messiah of the Alewis – who is so divine that he has become invulnerable to bullets and has come to correct the world by "herding the sheep and the wolves together", taking from the rich and giving to the poor, punishing aghas, ending the State's exploitation and even reestablishing the moral order. (Tahir, 2011: 369-374) Many from the peasant audience, Tahir noted, are well aware that Hacı's narration is simply incorrect since it is a mere repetition of the well-known old bandit legends. The crucial point is that they still enjoy the narration, as watching and listening to the morally right and just (even in a fable) is always easier than actually doing it oneself. (Tahir, 2011: 369-370)

In short, the oppressed, Tahir argues, are so miserable, wretched, and desperate, so lonely and without any option for salvation that they transform banal evil into a liberator. Tahir's argument on banditry, in this respect, applies not only to the specific context of modern Turkey, but also to the universal context of all peasant societies, as the author implies the same argument for the myth of Robin Hood or the legend of Köroğlu. The notion of the noble robber, at its crux, is a common form of mythical self-deception of the oppressed masses.

The *Rain Closed the Roads* was not Tahir's only novel that brought the banditry question to the floor. In addition to his trilogy – *Seven Plane Tree Plateau* (1958), *The Hunchback of the Village* (1959) and *The Great Livestock* (1970) – in which he emphasized the organic linkage between the State, aghas and bandits in the early Republican period, and also to *The Defenders of Honor* (1974), in which he narrated the life stories of former bandits and honor killers with whom he had personally met in prison, *Tired Fighter* (1965) provides the author's ideas on Aegean banditry's role in the national struggle.

In the *Tired Fighter*, Tahir attempted to rewrite the history of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Republic through the eyes of an old soldier, who represents both the courage and despair of the Ottoman *millets* and of the former members of the Committee of Union and Progress in the turbulent and troubled times of 1919 and 1920. The author shed light on almost all of the key issues – from the participation of the Ottoman state to the World War, the Armenian genocide, the breakdown of the Committee of Union and Progress and the national struggle – in this historical moment that witnessed the fall of an old state and the foundation of a new one. As the leadership of the Ottoman State was, literally, caged in the occupied capital Istanbul and the national struggle against the occupying powers had begun in Anatolia in an unorganized and spontaneous manner, banditry had emerged as the last resort of the burgeoning resistance movement. This was the moment when the formerly simple gangs of thieves and murderers had turned into heroes and banditry into the initial stage of the national struggle against the occupying powers. Tahir – who described banditry in 1957 as the very means of oppression in the hands of landlords against peasant masses – questioned in 1965 the role of banditry in the historiography of the national struggle.

Although the author acknowledged the contribution of certain vagabonds (‘baldırıçıplak’) – e.g. Demirci Mehmet Efe who participated to the Kuva-yi Milliye or Çerkez Ethem who successfully suppressed the Anzavur Riot in 1920 – to the initial organization of resistance against the rebellious movements and the Greek invasion troops, Tahir underlined the disordered and cruel nature of bandits who would, in the final analysis, work for their own personal interests. The author speaks to the reader through the novel’s main protagonist, the tired fighter Cemil:

“When the Ottoman’s axe is freed from the log, what could this rabble do other than being walloped? Perhaps, they sense this. They understand that there are no remedies for them. They know,

for one hundred percent, that they will die in vain sooner or later. This belief dehumanizes those men. They turn into ferocious jackals." (Tahir, 2007: 451-452)

According to Tahir, therefore, in exactly the same way that the peasants' transformation of simple thieves and murderers into popular heroes that would protect the oppressed stems from their desperateness in the *Rain Closed the Roads*, the view of bandits as the national heroes that would save the motherland demonstrates in the *Tired Fighter* the despair and corruption of the country at that time. Tahir wrote: "If the people's hero perception in a country does not exceed the bandit, it means that most of the people in that country are prone to robbery." (Tahir, 2007: 445)

3. Unity of the Opposites: The State's Absence and the 'Absolute Agha' Type in Adverse Banditry Narratives

Despite the clear contrast between the banditry narratives of Kemal and Tahir, their readings, curiously, share two common grounds. Both of the authors, first and foremost, narrated banditry in the Southern and Central Anatolian regions between the 1920s and the 1950s – a time when it was disappearing. The succeeding period, however, witnessed the final rise of banditry in the Eastern regions of Turkey that would last until the late 1970s. Since both Kemal and Tahir did not substantially reconsider the banditry phenomenon in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey, the role of the State remained underappreciated in their literary narratives. Although the State was, indirectly, criticized for not preventing the oppression of peasants by introducing land reform, it was never analyzed to be the very agent of this oppression. Instead, the essential evil, in both of the authors' narratives, is the classical evil of the classical feudal world, i.e. the agha.

In *Slim Memed*, the State is mainly illustrated as an indifferent agent to the oppressive orders of aghas over their miserable peasants. The central Government, in Kemal's narration, appears in the rural context only through its tax collectors and the Gendarme. (2006a: 10) Although the author narrated, here and there, how the State security forces assisted aghas in their forceful seizure of peasants' lands (Kemal, 2004: 96) or how the Gendarme repressed peasants in bandit hunts (Kemal, 2006a: 391), aghas constitute the essential evil in Kemal's novels. In the author's imagination, therefore, the agha is both absolute and tyrannical:

> "To attempt to define them, we might speak of primitive capitalists. Their personalities were strange – tyrannical and cunning, they were not afraid to live on the fringe of traditions that might fetter them. (…) Their behavior toward their workers was always brutal, but if the workers showed themselves to be stronger, the ağas would pull back into their shells and become quite nice. (…) The ağas were petty tyrants." (Kemal, 1999: 136-137)

Tahir's reading of the State's role in the phenomenon of banditry and his illustration of aghas as absolute and tyrannical figures echo Kemal's imagination. Indeed, Tahir illustrated the State as an indifferent agent to the rural regions that were dominated by cruel aghas. In the author's narrative, aghas used both bandits and the State's self-security concerns to compete with their rivals for more power. In a similar vein, Tahir described how peasantry after the end of the national struggle was oppressed both by bandits and the Gendarme, and how powerful aghas always remained unharmed. (2011: 80)

In the following chapters, examining the banditry phenomenon in the Kurdish context shall enable us to not only bring the State back into the analysis as the principal agent of oppression, but also to question this tyrannical agha model in the context of the Kurdish nomadic tribes, in which aghas were, by no means, absolute rulers, unlike some other Kurdish contexts where big landowners developed a patronage relationship with the central Government in exchange of loyalty for

protection. Regarding the literary bandit controversy between Kemal and Tahir, on the other hand, the present analysis of the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon interprets the Kurdish banditry not as a primitive form of social rebellion, but a spontaneous resistance of the traditional Kurdish society to the socio-economic and juridico-political transformation of the region and the Kurdish bandit myth not as a sign of despair of peasantry, but a double-edged political means of struggle between the State and native communities within the historical context of the Kurdish question.

B. Bandit Romanticism in Turkish Cinema and Beyond

The bandit myth had remained one of the most popular themes in Turkish cinema between the 1950s and the 1980s. The first wave of bandit romanticism in cinema had begun in the 1950s with movies that focused on the historical or fictional figures of Aegean banditry. In the movies of various directors who applied the usual *efe* myth without critical reconsideration, the immutable conflict between a heroic bandit and a villain agha was a clear-cut summary of the eternal struggle between good and evil. In the narratives of those movies, an *efe* who took the mountains due to an intolerable injustice committed against him was, in general, killed at the end of the movie as a result of some kind of treason, caused either by his love for a woman or his assistance to the weak and the poor. From among these numerous movies, Şadan Kamil's *Efe's Love* (1948), Şakir Sırmalı's *The Efe of Efes* (1952), Muharrem Gürses's melodramatic *The Dark Efe* (1952), Münir Hayri Egeli's *The Blond Zeibek* (1953) and Semih Evin's *The Heartsick Efe* (1954) were the most prominent examples of this style. In a similar vein, Faruk Kenç's *How was Çakırcalı Shot?* (1950) and *The Treasure of Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe* (1952) and Metin Erksan's *The*

Legend of Nine Mountains (1958) narrated the legend of *Çakırcalı*, while Refik Kemal Arduman and Mümtaz Ener's *Köroğlu* (1949) and Faruk Kenç's *Türkan Sultan and Köroğlu* (1953) adopted the Anatolian Robin Hood theme into their cinema.[32]

As banditry incidents began to increase in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey and as the actual 'Eastern' banditry figures started to receive widespread media coverage from the 1950s onwards, Turkish cinema producers and directors turned their attention to the Kurdish provinces. This change in intellectual attention had a clear marketing rationale as it was directly derived from the increasing interest of the Western public of the given period in the 'dark' and 'wild' Eastern lands of the country, as blood feud, honor murder, smuggling, cruel aghas, heroic bandits, and ignorant peasants were believed to constitute the norms of the region. In this second wave of bandit romanticism in Turkish cinema, although the context had changed, the subject was more or less the same.

Among those movies, Yılmaz Duru's *Cruel* (1966), Hicri Akbaşlı's *Bandit* (1966), Alp Zeki Heper's *Brigand* (1968), Orhan Elmas's *Female Bandit* (1969) and Semih Evin's *Bandit's Love* (1969) commonly romanticized banditry as a form of struggle against the oppression of aghas, Ertem Eğilmez's *Miserable Bilo* (1979) cynically criticized the feudal order in the Eastern provinces through the themes of banditry and blood feud, and Orhan Aksoy's *Rebellion* (1979) narrated through the theme of 'smuggling' a peasant's revolt against his cruel agha; all treated the same banditry myth with Eastern motives. In this respect, Atıf Yılmaz's movie *Idiot* (1974), with its narration of the struggle between a cruel agha and a poor and

[32] For a recent article that reviews the *efe* trend of Turkish cinema in the 1950s, see: (Tanyer, 2012) Additional examples for the *efe* trend in the following years were Faruk Kenç's *The Veiled Efe* (1959), Muharrem Gürses's *Yörük Efe: The Hawk of the Mountains* (1959) and Memduh Ün's *The Black Veil* (1970).

innocent brigand with its references to the famous contemporary Eastern bandits has rapidly become the cult movie of this genre with its heavy sarcasm directed at the heroic bandit myth.[33] It would be, however, Yılmaz Güney who moved from the classic bandit legend to a full-fledged criticism of the Turkish State through the banditry phenomenon in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey.





While Orhan Aksoy in his *Rebellion* (1979) was treating the classical bandit myth with Eastern motives, Atıf Yılmaz was ridiculing it in his *Idiot* (1974).

Whether as the leading actor, the scenarist and/or the director of the movie, one of the most common themes of Güney's earlier movies had been the mediocre legend of heroic bandits in the form of a rebellion of an ordinary peasant against his cruel and wicked agha. Indeed, in addition to the classical themes of the feudal world, from the oppression of peasants by landlords to blood feud and honor crime, the main subjects of Güney's early career were bandits, along with urban bullies. In

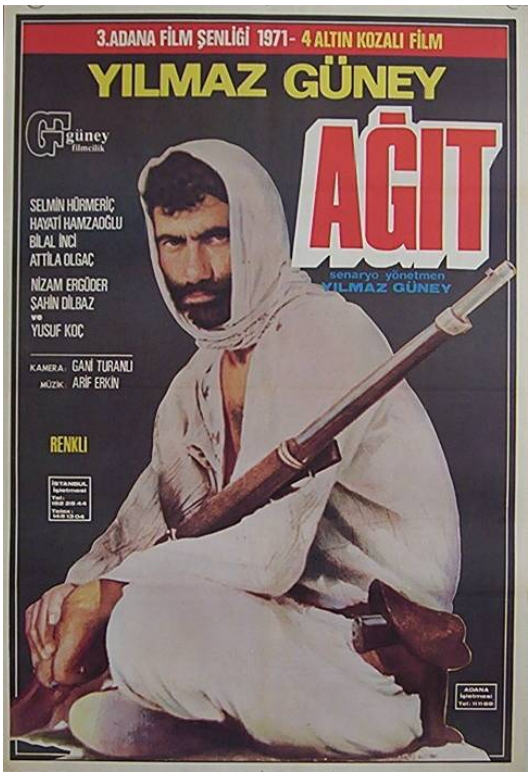
[33] A later movie featuring Kemal Sunal, which cynically mocked the heroic bandit myth, is Kartal Tibet's *Davaro.* (1981)

his movies *Koçero* (1964), *Davudo* (1965), *The Son of Mountains* (1965), *Kerimo* (1966), *The Law of Borders* (1966), *The Bandit Butcher* (1967), *Kozanoğlu* (1967), *Seyyit Han* (1968) and *The Hungry Wolves* (1969), Güney reconstructed the bandit myth through the legends of historical bandit figures and the images of contemporary Kurdish bandits.

With his first banned movie *Hope* (1970), the turning point initiating the mature political stage in his cinema, Güney had begun to present the harsh realities of Turkey in all their atrocious nudity. In his movies *Ugly and Brave* (1971), *Anxiety* (1974) and *Herd* (1978), Güney reconsidered the dynamics of the Kurdish regions by using a context-sensitive realism. Through the lens of Güney's neo-realist perspective, Kurdish banditry appeared in a totally new light as a part of the warlike struggle between the native people and the central Government, rather than a mythic expression of feudal contradictions. The first example of this kind was *Requiem* (1971), which exposed the political and sociological reasons behind 'smuggling' through the sad story of the bandit Çapanoğlu, the last fugitive of the mountains.

In one of his dialogues, Çapanoğlu cries that poverty and their mistreatment by the State forced them to violate the law and take to the mountains. He was a hero, indeed, who dressed in white like the samurais in Akira Kurosawa's movies but a lonely one who was neither supported nor admired. Their kind was, therefore, becoming extinct, since an ordinary peasant, rather than the Gendarme, would kill him for the bounty.[34] Still, *The Road* (1982) was the movie through which Güney would point at the resurrection of an unnamed war in the Kurdish regions through the theme of banditry and smuggling.

[34] According to Hamit Bozarslan, Güney's *Requiem,* which anticipated the extinction of banditry and was nourished by the anxious subjectivities of his contemporary left, can be read as an invitation from 'banditry' to 'revolutionism'. (2014b: 18)



The *Requiem* (1971) was the first Güney movie in which the director presented a critical outlook on the issue of banditry. The similarity between the outfits of Güney's bandits and Akira Kurosawa's samurais was self-evident.

The Road was one of Güney's last movies, in which the harsh realities of Turkey in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup were presented through the stories of five prisoners who were given a week's home leave and desperately struggled to adjust to a world from which they found themselves totally alienated. Although Güney wrote it, the movie was directed by Şerif Gören, who strictly followed the instructions of the director who was, at that time, in prison. Despite being one of the first Turkish movies that received several international awards, such as the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982, *The Road* was banned in Turkey until 1999, as it laid bare the State's repression in all its loathsome nakedness, both in the national and the local Kurdish context.

The banditry theme appears in the movie with the story of Ömer, who returned to his village at the border of the country. The village was in a struggle for

survival against the Gendarme due to 'smuggling'. Ömer's brother, too, was a 'bandit' who subsisted on 'smuggling' and the Gendarme eventually shot him and several others to death. At this very moment, Güney presents his deep insight into State oppression and the Kurdish resistance against it through a short scene in which the corpses of the 'bandits' were brought by the Gendarme to the village in the back of a truck in the name of identifying the bodies. As the peasants aligned at the center of the village take glances at the corpses one by one for identification purposes, they all utter 'No' silently and with empty eyes. The Gendarme knew that the 'bandits' were their relatives for sure; but the ritual was, in fact, not for identification, but for intimidation. As the mourning for their lost ones would begin only after the Gendarme had left the village, it was, indeed, a war scene between the State and the people. Without a rebellion or the taking up of arms, in other words, oppression and resistance in a never-ending war still goes on. Indeed, one cannot differentiate the images of those dead 'smugglers' from those of future PKK guerrillas, and this same scene would be repeated again and again for the following thirty years in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey. Güney's insight was both holistic and prophetic. Thus, it is possible to infer that Güney succeeded to go beyond the bandit romanticism and its artistic critiques in Turkish cinema by situating banditry within the social framework of the Kurdish question.

After the 1980s the bandit theme became extinct in Turkish cinema, along with the disappearance of the last Kurdish bandits. The only exception was Yavuz Turgul's influential movie *Bandit* (1996), which narrated the loss of the old chivalric times through the story of the alienation of a former bandit and his ultimate downfall in the modern urban world.[35]

[35] The same theme – a former bandit's struggle in a city – was already adopted by an earlier movie, *The Robbery* (1953), by Sami Ayanoğlu.

C. A Critical Review of Turkish Banditry Researches

As if banditry were an alien phenomenon to both Ottoman society and modern Turkey, banditry literature in Turkey is highly limited in its scope.[36] Not only was the entire history of the Ottoman State marked by an ancient banditry tradition from its original rural forms to its urban equivalents – the well-established tradition of the Ottoman urban bullies (*külhanbeyi* and *kabadayı*) – but the decisive late Ottoman period from the 16th century onwards cannot be understood without taking the banditry phenomenon into account. Indeed, regarding the latter point, few scholars took seriously the 16th and 17th century Ottoman bandits, who constituted one of the fundamental social dynamics of late Ottoman society and were branded by the State as *celâlis* – an intentional reference to the Alewi rebellion of Sheikh Celal in 1519 – to justify the urgent necessity of their elimination or assimilation under Ottoman law. (Barkey, 2008: 181) It is, in this respect, meaningful that Eric Hobsbawm's *haiduks*, the third type of the author's universal social banditry model, is based on the Balkan bandits turning into primitive resistance fighters through their struggle against Ottoman rule in their region, hence their name – *brigands with a cause*[37], the cause of establishing their own state. (2000: 77-90)

In a similar vein, few scholars thought that the banditry phenomenon in modern Turkey deserved an analysis, despite the fact that it stood as one of the foremost problems for law and order in the newly emerging Turkish nation-state. In

[36] The exception is, in this respect, the recent contribution of the historical journal *Kebikeç* towards Turkish banditry literature in its 33rd, 34th and 35th volumes, which are totally assigned to the examination of banditry in the late Ottoman and the early Republican context. For the author's article on the present theme, published in the 34th volume of the journal, see: (Özcan, 2012)

[37] The phrase 'brigands with a cause' is the title of a research paper on the 19th century Greek brigands by John S. Koliopoulos. (1987) In Greek history schoolbooks, these bandits have been reconstructed to be the national heroes who initiated the struggle for an independent Greek state by their sui generis contribution to the emancipation of the motherland from the centuries-old Ottoman occupation, hence "the *Klépthi* (thief) of Greek independence." (Tzanelli, 2002: 182)

the main reference books on the popular subject of Turkey's modernization, such scholarly negligence rings loud and clear: While Eric Jan Zürcher's comprehensive study *Turkey: A Modern History* did not reserve a sentence for either the banditry pandemic of the late Ottoman and the early Republican eras or the widespread usage of the term 'banditry' in the Ottoman and the Turkish states' security discourses (2012), Bernard Lewis, in his *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, briefly pointed to the correlation between banditry, nomadism and big landownership in the context of Republican State centralization. (2002: 450-451) While several studies examined the Aegean banditry epidemic, one of the major problems of public order in the early Republic, the Kurdish banditry phenomenon of modern Turkey, lasted until the late 1970s, was totally neglected, except from being analyzed in a few succinct notes by Hikmet Kıvılcımlı (1992: 441-443) and Ismail Beşikçi. (1969: 100-101)

This scholarly apathy obviously derived from a troublesome theoretical understanding of the basic question *What is political?*: As if bandits were not political actors and banditry itself not representative of a kind of political expression, the mainstream scholarly interest does not bother itself with the 'ordinary' (*adi*) crimes of bandits. Reminiscent of E. P. Thompson's note on the pre-French Revolution historians' non-acknowledgement of workers as political actors[38], the conventional definition of *the political* in the mind of the mainstream scholar does not include the individual and 'spontaneous' forms of political expression, especially those in the form of 'ordinary' crime. What is worse is the fact that the limited amount of Turkish banditry literature is, in general, caged in the dichotomy of social

[38] "(…) a spasmodic view of popular history. According to this view the common people can scarcely be taken as historical agents before the French Revolution. Before this period they intrude occasionally and spasmodically upon the historical canvas, in periods of sudden social disturbance. These intrusions are compulsive, rather than self-conscious or self-activating: they are simple responses to economic stimuli." (Thompson, 1971: 76)

and anti-social banditry, which forces the researcher to either revalidate or falsify the social bandit myth instead of understanding and explaining its *raison d'être*.

1. Turkish Banditry Researches Focusing in the Aegean Banditry

Regarding the Turkish banditry researches that do not cover the Kurdish context, the beginning theme should certainly be the legend of Köroğlu, the exact counterpart of Robin Hood in the Ottoman context. The researches that investigated the myth of Köroğlu had no other choice but to track his legend in the sources of popular memory. In line with Hobsbawm's historiography, those studies simply interpreted the classic heroic bandit myth as a primitive form of social rebellion without being able to question its historical factuality. Still, the insight presented by İlhan Başgöz, the author of *The Order of Köroğlu*, into the meaning of the bandit myth by his detection of the oppressed masses' underlying aspiration for a fairer world, is insightful:

> "We can call the bandit creation as the most primitive form of social rebellion. This is the first revolt against oppression, cruelty and poverty. (…) This rebellion holds no fundamental enterprise of establishing a new and different order. It just aspires to see the traditional order to be more for the poor and fairer."[39] (quoted in, Tamer, 2011: 26)

As mentioned before, the first political theorist that interpreted banditry, almost thirty years before the publication of Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* in 1959, as a form of individual rebellion of peasantry was Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, the sui generis Turkish Marxist. By defining banditry as the profane form of peasant anarchy against oppression in the 1930s, Kıvılcımlı differentiated the three enemies of peasantry as the major targets of its banditry: (i) *mütegallibe* (persecutors) – agha and usurer; (ii) financial capital; and (iii) the usurper Kemalist state. (1992: 290-291) By illustrating

[39] For two other studies on the legend of Köroğlu, see: (Boratav, 1984) and (Fuat, 2012)

every category through the real incidents that were published in the newspapers of the period, Kıvılcımlı conceptualized banditry as the individual and spontaneous rebellion of peasantry against the established order of the State, bourgeoisie and feudal lords.

While banditry had always been the last resort of peasants, the author argued that it emerged due to the disorganized structure of peasantry and only when the level of social oppression had no longer been bearable. The historical role of the Turkish proletariat was, therefore, bringing the peasantry from its disconnected anarchic movements towards collective and organized class warfare. (Kıvılcımlı: 1992: 292) Although Kıvılcımlı interpreted the relations between peasantry and banditry as a form of class solidarity without bothering to mention the threat posed by the latter against the former, he would, nonetheless, advocate the peasants' right to arms for protecting themselves from banditry by protesting against the State's policy of disarmament. (1992: 260) What is more, Kıvılcımlı made a distinction between the banditries of Anatolia and Kurdistan, which shall separately be analyzed below.

Apart from the highly underrated thesis of Kıvılcımlı, the classics of Turkish academia on banditry are, without doubt, the two monumental books by Çağatay Uluçay, a high school history teacher, that provide the State archive on the Aegean bandits in the province of Manisa (the Saruhan sanjak) from the 17th century onwards. (Uluçay, 1944, 1955) In addition, Ersal Yavi's *Zeibeks* studies the banditry tradition in the province of Aydın by questioning the transformation of *zeibeks* from the bandits in the Ottoman State to the national resistance fighters in the Early Republic. (1991: 5) Finally, a number of biographical studies were published on the life stories of several famous *efes* (the leader of a group of *zeibeks*), from Atçalı Kel

Mehmed, who led a rebellion against the Ottoman State in the province of Aydın (Uluçay, 2013) to Yörük Ali Efe, who has become a national hero by way of his participation in the resistance movement against the Greek invasion. (Burhan, 2012)

Apart from those empirical and biographical studies, Sabri Yetkin's *Bandits in the Aegean*, which examines the Aegean banditry endemic that had transformed into a massive epidemic in late 19th century Ottoman society, takes Hobsbawm's social banditry thesis for granted without bothering to present any reservation to, let alone any criticism of, Hobsbawm's model. The main endeavor of Yetkin's study is, therefore, restricted to prove that *zeibeks* constitute the perfect native example for Hobsbawm's social banditry model[40]:

> "The 'social bandit' type that can be observed in the social history of the whole world, who takes from the rich to give to the poor, and is, naturally, assisted by the people, is loud and clear in the example of Turkey. The person who is called 'zeibek' in the Aegean (…) is a 'native' example that suits well to the 'social bandit' type." (Yetkin, 1996: 6)

For the features that distinguish a social bandit from an ordinary one, Yetkin argued that the social factors behind a social bandit's push into the outlaw life outweigh the individual factors demonstrating that the Aegean region with its extremely unequal social stratification had become the source of the social banditry epidemic in the late Ottoman Empire. (1996: 5) This analysis, however, totally misinterprets Hobsbawm's understanding of banditry, as the latter argued clearly that the social factors behind a massive emergence of banditry *always* 'outweigh', in fact bring about, the individual ones. In other words, although Hobsbawm argued that the social banditry myth *might* be for real, he never denied the fact that social factors

[40] It is not surprising that Çakırcalı Memed Efe constitutes, for Yetkin, the quintessence of Aegean social banditry. Yet, the author's own historical narrative on this famous bandit is far from Hobsbawm's social bandit type. According to Yetkin's own narrative, as Ferdan Ergut noticed, Çakırcalı had been supported not only by the landlords in his region but also by several English capitalists (e.g. Whitaller) that had large investments in the Western Anatolia. (Ergut, 2004: 91-92, note 6) While those global and local power holders supported Çakırcalı, their competitors sponsored other *zeibeks* to eliminate him.

stand behind the massive emergence of not only banditry without any need for an internal distinction, but also of any type of crime. Later in his description of the main features and aims of social bandits, Yetkin came closer to Hobsbawm's model by re-illustrating the Robin Hood model, of course, without realizing that he merely rewrote the social bandit myth:

> "Those types of bandits try to right the wrongs, to avenge the injustices. While they do this, they bear the criterion in mind that the relations between humans, in general, and the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, in particular, should be right and just. Their objective is to prevent the rich's exploitation of the poor, the strong's oppression of the weak." (Yetkin, 1996: 10)

In perfect line with Kemal's narrative, Yetkin explained the 'secret' behind the social bandits' support to the oppressed: The alliance between peasants and social bandits is formed spontaneously, as the latters, in a totally pragmatic mentality, assist the formers in order to gain their support without which they cannot survive in their native environment. (1996: 12) They are, therefore, the primitive rebels, the pure activists that are totally unconscious of their own reason of existence, i.e. directly fighting for, rather than indirectly representing, the underrepresented interests of the oppressed. (Yetkin, 1996: 12 – 13) Writing the unwritten history, the history of the defeated, the masses, and the oppressed, as the author himself described the main objective of his study (Yetkin, 1996: 8), turns into a mere historical validation of the bandit myth. In short, Yetkin's study – apart from providing a detailed history of the State's responses, whether in the form of law or military operations, against the Aegean banditry in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries – is an uncritical reapplication of Hobsbawm's social bandit model, and thus of the bandit myth.

Another study on the Aegean banditry in Turkish literature is Halil Dural's *Bandits in the Aegean in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. One of the points that is worthy of consideration in Dural's book, which is totally composed of a study of oral history on *zeibeks*, is the author's basic conclusion that bandits were used by the rich and the

strong in their territories. Yetkin, who ensured the publication of Dural's study posthumously, wrote in its preface that Hobsbawm also referred to the reliance of local power holders on banditry and that *zeibeks* served *unconsciously* to the interests of the rich and the powerful in their regions. (Dural, 1999: xvi) The reader, however, will appreciate the fact that this empirical finding of Dural blatantly contradicts with the social bandit myth, notwithstanding that Hobsbawm accepts it or not, along with the further paradox that Yetkin's previous acknowledgment obviously contradicts his original thesis on *zeibeks* as *the unconscious heroes of the oppressed*, who now turn into *the unconscious servants of the oppressors*.

On the other side of the Turkish banditry literature, there are several studies that emphasize, in line with the theses of Tahir and Barkey, the anti-social character of banditry. In this respect, Behice Boran in her *Researches on Social Structure* – in which she discussed the results of her empirical studies on western Anatolian villages – described how peasants had to struggle against bandits relentlessly by organizing amongst themselves to defend their villages. (Boran, 1945: 46) On the other hand, Ferdan Ergut in his *Modern State and Police* demonstrated that bandits in the Ottoman Empire were first employed by *ayans* (provincial notables) as a police force in the repression of either competitors or peasants and that the State, until the beginning of the early 20th century, not only cunningly used particular bandit gangs as a type of police force, but also declared many bandit chiefs as the official governors of their regions where it had no adequate law-enforcement institutions in order to eliminate the banditry threat against the process of State centralization by their voluntary assimilation into the Ottoman regime. (2004: 92-93) More importantly, in the transitory period from the Empire to the Republic, Ergut argued that the Government in Ankara not only played bandit gangs against each other, but

also used the banditry pandemic as a discursive veil for the disarmament of the population. (2004: 307) In a similar vein, Serdar Öztürk in his article 'Bandits, Urban Bullies, and Disarmament' examined the relationship between the State's existential aspiration of having the monopoly on violence and its practice of disarming the population through the phenomenon of banditry and its urban counterparts of 'Külhanbeyi' and 'Kabadayı'. (2007) In the following decades, as will be demonstrated below, the State elite would resort to the banditry epidemic in the Kurdish context for the same goal of disarming and taming the Kurdish population.

2. The Missing Link in the Chain of Oppression and Resistance: Banditry and the Kurdish Question

Banditry literature in Turkey becomes all the more extinct as we move onto the topic of 'Kurdish bandits'. While the Aegean banditry had come to an end in the early Republic, the Kurdish banditry that had been an integral component of the region for centuries reemerged, for the last time, as a mass phenomenon in the 1950s. The only scholar to provide a sociological analysis of the political, economic and cultural significance of the last Kurdish banditry epidemic was Ismail Beşikçi. In the very beginning of his *the Order of the Eastern Anatolia*, Beşikçi presented the hypothesis that Kurdish banditry was compatible with the social banditry model: "Banditry is a form of resistance that emerges against the oppressive role of the agha institution." (1969: 26)

Despite the simplicity of that hypothesis, which was unable to cover the main features of Kurdish banditry, the hallmark of Beşikçi's analysis appears in its strong emphasis on the mostly neglected role of the State bureaucracy in the phenomenon

of banditry. Kurdish banditry, for Beşikçi, constituted a rebellion against not only aghas, but also the State:

> "The incidents, which are reflected as 'banditry' to the public opinion, are, in fact, not against the oppressed people, but against the aghas that repress people and against the State Bureaucracy that has always collaborated with and protected the interests of the aghas." (Beşikçi, 1969: 100)

Another significant aspect of Beşikçi's analysis is its consideration of regional discrepancies. According to the author, many incidents in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey that were labeled as banditry in the national press were, in fact, mere reflections of the internal struggle between big landlords and their armed men in the regions where the classical feudal structure had transformed into big landownership. Still, Beşikçi emphasized the oppression of State bureaucracy in the region by arguing that even this second type of banditry did not operate against the landless and oppressed peasants.[41] (1969: 101) Last, but not least, in order to reach a full-fledged analysis of Kurdish banditry, Beşikçi underlined the necessity of investigating the relationship between banditry, smuggling and blood feud thoroughly.[42] (1969: 101)

Yet, almost forty years before the publication of Beşikçi's *the Order of the Eastern Anatolia*, Kıvılcımlı – interpreting banditry as peasantry's anarchy, its individual, profane and spontaneous rebellion against the oppression not only of aghas, but also of the financial system and the Kemalist state – had already made an insightful distinction between the banditries of Anatolia and Kurdistan back in the

[41] If this second type of banditry emerged as a means of violence among aghas and tribes in the regions that were dominated by big landownership, the first type should have been composed of the individual type of banditry that emerged from classical feudal structures, such as the Kurdish nomadic tribes (*koçer)*, which were, by no means, dominated by 'absolute agha' types.

[42] We should add 'nomadic lifestyle', 'tribal kinship', 'desertion' and 'honor murder' to Beşikçi's list of independent variables that affect the dependent variable *banditry*.

1930s[43]: "The poor Turkish peasants of Anatolia were also going for banditry in their anarchic reactions; but the banditry in Kurdistan is, in terms of both quantity and quality, more ferocious than that in Anatolia." (Kıvılcımlı, 1992: 441)

According to Kıvılcımlı, that difference did not derive, as it was assumed in the State discourse, from the Kurds' natural inclination towards pillage.[44] The main reason was, for Kıvılcımlı, the intentional multiplication of the oppressive order of the Kemalist State, established with the financial bourgeoisie and the local feudal elements in Kurdistan. The more monstrous the oppression was, the more ferocious the reaction would be. Regarding the state's policies against the Kurdish banditry, moreover, Kıvılcımlı argued that the usual scanning activities by military forces aimed at both the disarmament and repressing of the Kurdish population, instead of capturing the bandits. Using the accusation of aiding and abetting bandits or hiding arms, Kıvılcımlı wrote, the Gendarme burned down villages (1992: 413), and beat and tortured peasants; hence, the systematic annihilation and oppression can be seen as being at the crux of the Kemalist State policy on Kurdistan. (1992: 442-443) Since all of the Governments (from diverse ideological backgrounds) from the 1950s onwards would consistently follow the same technologies and policies of the State's power against the massive emergence of Kurdish banditry with the same motive of repression, Kıvılcımlı's analysis emerges as an underappreciated and an insightful perspective into the Kurdish problem of the Turkish nation-state.

[43] If the reader reflects upon the fact that both Kıvılcımlı and Beşikçi served long years in jail (22.5 years and 17 years respectively) only to their writings, it can easily be understood that they came up with significant findings in an area where nobody had ever dared to trespass before.

[44] Kıvılcımlı exemplified such State discourses on Kurds with the state officials' description of Kurdistan as the lands of 'primitive men' whose "only talent is killing men, robbing the coming across villages, humans, caravans and submitting everything to the (...) sheik, sayyid" (1992: 385) or with the key words used in the speeches of Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of Internal Affairs, in the National Assembly either on the brigandage incidents or on the rebellious movements in Kurdistan: "rebels, brigands, gangs, bandits... bringing them to their knees, a merciless chase, annihilating them one by one, walloping each one of them until not even one remains." (1992: 409-410)

Apart from a few notes on the social rebellious roles of certain Kurdish bandits during the time of national struggle[45] (Bayrak, 2012: 56), literature on Kurdish banditry is almost non-existent. For instance, 'banditry' appeared in Mesut Yeğen's studies on the Kurdish question only as one of the several appellations that the Turkish State put on the Kurdish insurrections of the early Republic. (2009: 30) Such negligence of the actual Kurdish bandits could cause trouble for any analysis of the Turkish State Discourse (TSD), simply because the same State that labeled the Kurdish rebels of the early Republic as well as the PKK militants of the 1980s as 'a bunch of bandits' would openly find 'Kurdism' behind the 'Eastern' brigandage of the 1950s and onwards.

One of the exceptions, in this respect, is Muhsin Kızılkaya's *Old Time Bandits*, which can be interpreted as a first-hand witness account of the last bandits' era through its provision of an invaluable oral history on Kurdish banditry in Hakkari province.[46] (Kızılkaya, 1991) The significance of Kızılkaya's study derives from its emphasis on the organic linkage between tribes and banditry in the Kurdish provinces. Another exception is M. Emin Üner's *Tribe, Bandit and State*, which examines 'bandit tribes' in the Kurdish regions of the late Ottoman Empire. Üner's analysis is critical in the sense that the empirical inferences that the author draws from the Ottoman State archives succeed in categorizing numerous incidents of banditry in the context of tribal warfare and analyze the Ottoman State's pragmatist policies from reconciliation and cooperation to suppression against tribal brigandage.

[45] Most notably, the bandit figures 'Urfalı Nazif' or 'Ilhan Bey' in Urfa and 'Karayılan' in Gaziantep were integrated into the literature of the national struggle through their resistance against the French occupation. Theirs and many others' stories have become national legends in the folk literature and in the poems of Nazım Hikmet and Ahmed Arif. For the folk ballad on Ilhan Bey, for instance, see: (Bayrak, 1985: 187)

[46] For another book that inspired Kızılkaya's study, despite its silence on the banditry phenomenon, by providing first-hand information on the tribal structure of Hakkari region, see: (Erdost: 1987) In addition, although it is a novel, Mehmet Ali İzmir's *Koçero: The Last Bandit* can be counted within the slender banditry researches in the Kurdish context, as the author relied on oral witnesses in framing his novel over the famous bandit 'Koçero'. (İzmir: 2004)

(2010) Finally, a short but invaluable article by Uğur Ümit Üngör analyses the historical processes of de-pacification and re-pacification of the Kurdish regions respectively in the Young Turk and Kemalist eras through the policies of armament and disarmament of the Kurdish population. By examining the ever-changing relationship, from cooperation in the Armenian genocide to the conflict aftermath between the State and the Kurdish 'bandit tribes' during the period 1914-1937, Üngör concluded that the State used banditry and paramilitarism as the most appropriate tools to tackle the problem of popular resistance and to reconsolidate its regional military power. (2012: 767)

Paul J. White's study on the Kurdish national movement, finally, serves as a perfect example for exposing the scholarly apathy on Kurdish banditry. While the author analyzes the development of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey by posing a question on whether it is/was a primitive rebellion or a revolutionary modernization with a clear reference to Hobsbawm's social bandit model (2000: 1), White unintentionally confesses his lack of awareness on Kurdish banditry as he does not reserve a sentence, let alone a chapter, for banditry in a book that was exclusively written on the Kurdish rebellion against the Turkish nation-state. Even if banditry is reduced to a non-political and ordinary phenomenon, this unawareness becomes threatening for the explanatory capacity of White's historical narrative not only because Kurdish banditry had survived as a mass phenomenon until the late 1970s, but because the author would also not able to understand the transformation of the form and content of Kurdish rebellion, from bandits to terrorists/guerrillas, without taking the last era of Kurdish banditry into account. Otherwise, White should have been able to realize and consider the fact that the very code-names or *nommes*-

de-guerre of several former PKK guerrillas ('Koçero' etc.) with whom he held in-depth interviews were, in fact, the names of famous Kurdish bandits. (2000: ix)

An analysis of the massive emergence of banditry in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey from the 1950s onwards as a spontaneous and an individual form of indigenous reaction against the socio-economic and juridico-political transformation of the region could substantially contribute to the current literature on the Kurdish question, by filling the blanks in the history of the State oppression and the Kurdish resistance against it. As in Yeğen's thesis on the continuous reconstitution of the Kurdish question in the TSD (Yeğen, 2013), the present analysis investigates the puzzling fluctuations in the history of the TSD from the appellation of the Kurdish rebellions as 'banditry' in the early Republic to that of actual Kurdish banditry as 'Kurdism' in the late 1960s, and eventually from 'a bunch of bandits' to 'terrorists' in the case of the PKK. Regarding Fatih Yaşlı's concise definition of the Kurdish question as the inevitable and constant resurrection of the repressed (Yaşlı, 2005: 37), i.e. the resurrection of Kurdish resentment as a religious rebellion or a feudal insurrection here and a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla movement there, the 'ordinary' crimes of the last Kurdish bandits, behind which both the State and the native population would find 'rebellion', should certainly be an essential phase of the history of the Kurdish question in modern Turkey.

This analysis, however, does not merely aim at filling the blanks of the scholarly literature on the Kurdish question, which would be directly equivalent to a mere reaffirmation of its overall theoretical framework and eventual inferences. Indeed, any attempt to complete an already drawn picture spontaneously turns it into a new one: It is true, on the one hand, that many of those banditry incidents that had widespread media coverage between 1950 and 1980 were either a mere continuation

of an ever-existing phenomenon in the Kurdish regions or parts and parcels of tribal conflicts and internal struggles for power among big landowners. On the other hand, the ever-existing banditry endemic in the rural Kurdish regions had, however, turned into an epidemic through its classical form (i.e. smuggling, highway robbery, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, village raids etc.) between 1950 and 1980. The last Kurdish banditry epidemic was, in this respect, both the result of and an idiosyncratic form of resistance against the overall socio-economic transformation of the Kurdish regions and the penetration of Turkish nation-state building into Kurdish society.

While the State, under the veil of struggling against banditry, had begun to dissolve the Kurdish nomadic tribes and suppress the Kurdish peasantry not only to strangle the emerging Kurdish national consciousness at its birth but also to transform the region according to its nation-state building process, banditry had turned into a mythic symbol of resistance of the native people against not the order of aghas, but the Turkish state's imposition itself. From a different angle, therefore, the banditry epidemic between 1950 and 1980 – the period that has been defined as *the era of silence and inertia* by the scholarly literature on the Kurdish question – demonstrates that the Turkish nation-state's oppression continued in the region without any need for an uprising or armed organization and Kurds were always on the hills either against or due to the State oppression. Banditry was, therefore, a transitory stage of an ever-lasting war between the Turkish nation-state and its Kurdish population. The significance of the last era of Kurdish banditry within the aforementioned framework of the Kurdish question was succinctly explained by *the Encyclopedia of Socialism and Social Struggles,* published in 1988 as follows:

> "As the Kurdish peasants – who lived within the self-enclosed tribal life without any infrastructure and who were subsisting on 'smuggling', in addition to agriculture and animal husbandry – had continued to live according to their own laws by turning the whole norms of the established order upside down, they were becoming, by wrapping themselves up in the identity of 'social rebel', the principal obstacle in the face of the central power's attempts of control. Those

thousands of ‘rebels’ who lived in the mountains – (… e.g.) Koçero, Davudo, Kotto – had continued to keep the longing of ‘rebelling against the State’ alive that was awaking in the Kurdish people.” (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2117)

CHAPTER III

LAST ERA OF KURDISH BANDITRY IN THE NATIONAL PRINTED PRESS AND THE STATE DOCUMENTS (1950-1980)

As banditry in its classical rural form had re-emerged, almost as a global trend, after the 1950s in the rural regions of various countries – notoriously in Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey – the term 'bandit' had naturally become an overstretched classification of crime through its constant usage both by State officials and the press. Indeed, since the term had begun to be misused to describe any kind of outlaw activity, including political rebellions and new popular terms, with labels such as 'city bandit', 'street bandit', 'political bandit' etc., having been invented, the term 'bandit' gradually lost its original meaning, i.e. 'a member of a gang of armed robbers' (as it is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary) who operates on the highways, mountains and plains of the country.[47] (Soanes (ed.), 2002: 58) As was noted in the previous chapter, it is because of this popular misuse of the term that Beşikçi argued that many incidents, which were labeled as 'banditry' in the national press, were, in fact, parts and parcels of internal struggles between big landowners and their armed gangs. (1969: 101) Still, while the definition of banditry in Beşikçi's terminology – referring to criminal incidents (mostly robberies) in rural regions that were carried out by a relatively independent individual, or at most, a small group of individuals – was characterized by more positive content with a self-conscious bias towards the bandit myth, Beşikçi did not include in his definition the dependent armed gangs of big landowners or tribes that were put together for the purposes of

[47] In a similar vein, the online Turkish dictionary of the Turkish Linguistic Society defines bandits as *rural* brigands, "thieves, robbers that block the roads in *mountains*, in the *countryside*." (emphasis added) (TDK, 2013) If the robbery, therefore, occurs on the highways within a city it is called 'urban banditry', or if it occurs at sea, it is 'piracy'.

looting, smuggling, murder, robbery and intimidation. It should, therefore, be noted that in comparison to the original and widely accepted definition of banditry, if the popular usage was overstretched, Beşikçi's definition was over-squeezed.

The following analysis of the national printed press and the State documents emanates from tracing the political and legal usages of the term of 'banditry' in modern Turkey. First of all, the historical background of the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon between 1950 and 1980 is established through an investigation of (i) the development of judicial and military techniques in the elimination of banditry pandemic between 1908 and 1923, (ii) the cooperation and conflict between the Ottoman State and Kurdish 'bandit tribes' between 1839 and 1923, and (iii) the Republican State's banditry discourse over the massive Kurdish insurrections and its security policies in the Kurdish regions between 1923 and 1950. Then, the discourses of the national printed press over the 'Eastern' question in general and the 'Eastern' banditry in particular, and the State's discourses and policies in the Kurdish regions between 1950 and 1980 are analyzed through an examination of national newspapers, enacted laws and the meetings of the Assembly and the Senate over the issue of Kurdish public disorder. Including the discursive transition from banditry to terrorism in the State discourse, the following analysis, therefore, lays bare the historical linkage between the Kurdish brigandage and the Kurdish question.

However, the overstretched use of the term 'banditry' both by State officials and the press forces the researcher to reaffirm the empirical results of the following textual analysis by using other resources. In the next chapter, therefore, the empirical inferences of this chapter shall be reconsidered in light of a study of oral history with the principal witnesses and actors of the given phenomenon. Still, the following textual analysis not only enables the present study to deconstruct the discourses of

the related agents over the last Kurdish banditry within the historical context of the Kurdish question, but also guide and assist it in the analysis of the State's policies over the issue of banditry, in addition to providing significant clues about the spatial, temporal and social aspects of the given phenomenon.

A. Historical Foundation: The Late Ottoman and Early Republican Background (1839-1950)

From Ottoman heritage, one of the substantial social dynamics that Republican Turkey inherited was, without doubt, the banditry problem. The massive emergence of banditry had, indeed, been one of the fundamental dynamics of the late Ottoman Empire. The ever-existent banditry phenomenon turned, in this respect, into a pandemic in 16th and 17th century Ottoman society, to such an extent that State officials much of the time had no choice other than to negotiate with bandits in order to eliminate the threat they posed to the survival of the State. Through a complicated process of struggle, negotiation and bribery (including the redistribution of various official ranks), the State's bureaucrats succeeded in assimilating the banditry threat into the Ottoman hegemony by turning them into the very means of State centralization. (Barkey, 1994: 21-22, 2008: 178-181) The Ottoman State's success in turning the threat into an opportunity was, however, temporary, since banditry as a mass phenomenon was resurrected in the rural regions of 19th century Ottoman society while the State was fragmenting. Through a vicious circle, the breakdown of the Empire promoted the rise of banditry, whilst the latter was precipitating the process of the former's demise. Thus, one of the greatest social challenges that the bureaucrats of the newly ruling Committee of Union and Progress faced on July 23,

1908, right after the overthrow of their archenemy Sultan Abdülhamit II, was the elimination of the burgeoning bandit gangs in the Empire's various regions and the reconsolidation of public order.

1. The Development of Judicial and Military Techniques in the Elimination of the Banditry Pandemic (1908-1923)

By following one of the most common characters of revolutions, the Committee of Union and Progress had begun by forgiving both the ordinary and political criminal subjects of their predecessors. After three days of the Revolution, *Meclis-i Vükela*[48] decided on July 26, 1908 to forgive those that had been involved in banditry movements with the sole condition of submitting their arms to the Government and not participating in any other criminal acts. (Yakut, 2012: 140) Many bandit gangs made use of that amnesty law, including the famous Aegean bandit *Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe*, who submitted his arms on August 22, 1908 in Ödemiş in the province of Aydın. (Yetkin, 1996: 118) Like in the story of Çakırcalı, most of the bandit gangs, however, took the hills again after a few months since the irrevocable breakdown of the State at that time was presenting the optimum conditions for banditry to flourish. As Kemal Yakut demonstrates through citing the records of parliamentary speeches and local newspapers, there were two opposite lines of propositions for the resolution of the banditry pandemic in the given period: While the hard line was for the elimination of banditry by force, including the measure of declaring a state of siege, the soft line detected ignorance behind the banditry problem and was anxious about the State's prospective infringement upon peasants'

[48] Meclis-i Vükela was the late Ottoman assembly, a body that barely corresponds to the modern institution, the Council of Ministers.

rights.[49] (Yakut, 2012: 141 - 143) In those stormy days, the leaders of the Committee did not hesitate to apply the former, hard line of resolution by any means possible for their sacred aim of saving *Devlet-i Aliye* through their usual short-term, practical and valid-for-the-State measures.[50]

In line with its regulations aiming to curb the social and political movements in the Empire, the Committee made several laws for the elimination and prevention of banditry. Although each law was designed for a specific region, the same authoritarian spirit they all shared produced a number of judicial measures and military techniques for the elimination of banditry that would eventually be inherited by the new Republic itself. One of the most significant of those laws was 'Rumeli Vilâyatında Şekâvet ve Mefsedetin Men'i ve Mütecâsirlerinin Ta'kib ve Te'dibi Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat' ('Statutory Decree on the Prohibition of Brigandage and Mischief and the Chase and Correction of the Doers in the Rumelia Province') that was issued on May 09, 1909 for the region of Macedonia.[51] (Yakut, 2012: 143) As Macedonia hosted various nationalist movements which often cooperated with local bandit gangs, struggling for independence from the Ottoman State, the law aimed to annihilate the threat that they together posed against the unity and integrity of the Empire by denominating any outlaw action, whether political or 'ordinary', as 'banditry'. Still, the following measures that the law proposed for the elimination of banditry would soon be generalized to the entirety of the Empire: (i) the establishment of military tribunals (*Divan-ı Harp)* that did not acknowledge the right to appeal, (ii) the constitution of special troops for bandit chase that could also

[49] *Ahenk* (*Harmony*), the famous local newspaper of the province Aydın, initiated, for instance, an article competition with the theme 'the resolution of the banditry problem', in which these two oppositional lines competed. (Yetkin, 1996: 120 - 121)
[50] The bureaucratic rule of the Committee was, in this respect, not only a consistent continuation, but also the radical culmination of the Jeune Turks' political mentality. (Mardin, 2008: 16)
[51] Still, the first example of those bandit laws was the 'Serseri ve Mazinne-i Su-i Eşhas' ('Rogue and Malign People') law, issued on May 09, 1909. (Yakup, 2012: 143)

recruit volunteers, (iii) the appropriation of arms for disarming the population, (iv) the empowering of State officials to banish the families of bandits to the lands that they found proper, and (iv) to sentence those that participated in banditry activities to capital punishment, and to sentence those that aided and abetted bandits or acted unwillingly in assisting the State's armed forces to various prison terms. (Yakut, 2012: 143 – 145)

The 'Şekâvetin Men'i ve Mütecasirlerinin Ta'kip ve Te'dibi Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat' ('Statutory Decree on the Prohibition of Brigandage and the Chase and Correction of the Doers'), issued on October 18, 1909, was the application of the same measures in the province of Aydın.[52] (Yakut, 2012: 147) Those statutory laws demonstrated that in the face of the State's deficiency in dealing with banditry, the main policy of the Second Constitutional Era was making use of paramilitary groups – most notoriously the Albanian and Circassian voluntary troops that had become infamous by their cruelty and outlawry in the Aegean region – and creating a kind of 'collective responsibility' by holding all of the residents responsible for any banditry incident in their own region.[53] The usage of paramilitary groups against the banditry pandemic echoed the Régie Company's techniques of power against 'smuggling' in its seizure of surplus from the Ottoman State's tobacco revenues. The Régie Company was founded as a sister institution to the Ottoman Public Debt Institution and monopolized the Ottoman tobacco revenue from 1883 to 1925. It restructured the paramilitary *kolcu* institution as its own police force for hunting

[52] On October 17, 1911, two years after the proclamation of the statutory law in Aydın, the famous bandit Çakırcalı was eventually killed. (Yetkin, 2006: 172)
[53] For the concept of 'collective responsibility' in the history of the police institution in Turkey, see: (Ergut, 2004)

tobacco smugglers. Folkloric songs (such as the famous 'Çökertme Türküsü') mythologized the struggle of smugglers against the kolcus.[54]

After the end of World War I, the TBMM (the Grand National Assembly of Turkey) Government succeeded in monopolizing the leadership of the national resistance against the occupation of the country, while banditry was reaching its zenith with thousands of deserters joining its ranks. As the Law on Treason, issued on April 29, 1920, did not substantially decrease the number of deserters, a much more specialized law (the Law on Deserters) was issued on September 11, 1920. (Yakut, 2012: 149) Thus, the Independence Tribunals, established first on September 18, 1920, provided for legal State violence in the unyielding application of those laws, in addition to the elimination of opponents and rivals of Ankara. (Zürcher, 2012: 228)

The TBMM Government, on the other hand, issued amnesty laws first in July 1921 for the convicts that served in the national mobilization and then on January 21, 1922 for all convicts and fugitives. (Yakut, 2012: 150) The Resistance Movement, in fact, made use of bandits in various regions during the War of Independence. As the military force of the splintering Empire was in complete decay, bandits appeared as the last resort for the initial organization of resistance against the occupying forces. The following documents from the State's Republican Archive prove that suspension of punishment for bandits' crimes had become a common practice during the resistance period:

- "Kürt İsmail, who was a brigand in Kalecik, will serve on the Western Front in the case of his pardon, suspending his legal proceedings." (The Republican Archives, 1920)
- "Suspending the legal proceedings against Osmanoğlu Hamza of Haymana and his two friends who split off from the rebel Ethem's platoon and rendered good services." (The Republican Archives, 1921b)

[54] The number of people killed by Régie kolcus is estimated at around 50,000. For a recently written master thesis on tobacco smuggling in the Black-Sea region of the late Ottoman Empire, see: (Batman, 2013)

- "Suspending the legal proceedings against Ali of Aksaray, who is being dispatched to the front for national service while being a detainee at Niğde Prison for the crime of highway robbery (…)" (The Republican Archives, 1921c)
- "Suspending the legal investigation into Kara Ahmed of Aziziye, who is serving for the salvation of the motherland while having previously been a brigand." (The Republican Archives, 1921d)
- "Suspending the case that was opened against Necib Agha, the leader of the Sadyot Gang, and his friends who assisted the military forces during the Dersim events." (The Republican Archives, 1921e)

Eventually, the Ankara Government succeeded in assimilating several bandit gangs into its newly established regular army, while others that continued brigandage or supported the national resistance but refused to participate in the regular army, as in the famous case of the militia leader Çerkez Ethem, were proclaimed 'traitors' and treated as the principal enemies of the State. (The Republican Archives, 1921a) The Government also declared, on several occasions, states of siege in its struggle against banditry in various provinces of the country.

Still, one of the most significant and meaningful laws that the TBMM Government issued was 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu' ('The Law on the Elimination of Brigandage'), which was adopted on October 18, 1923. (Journal of Laws, 1339: 113-114) The 1st article of the law decriminalized the act of killing or wounding those declared as bandits by the Minister of Internal Affairs, while the 2nd article defined the term 'bandit' in detail:

> "Those that solely or collectively threaten and disturb safety and security by extorting money or goods, or conducting raids on districts (…) through assassination or breach of internal security, or killing men, or making robberies on roads or in the countryside, or kidnapping men, or wandering around armed after breaking out of detention houses or prisons while being a detainee or convict for committing one or several of the aforementioned deeds, are a Bandit (*Şaki*)." (Journal of Laws, 1339: 113)

The law allotted ten to thirty days for bandits' surrender (Article 3) while authorizing the Ministry of Internal Affairs to banish those that aided and abetted bandits to the lands that it found proper. (Article 4) Moreover, all legal proceedings concerning bandits cooperating with the State by killing (before their surrender)

other bandits or by informing against them or assisting the Government in their capture would be suspended for five years, and that suspension would turn into an amnesty if the indicted did not become involved any other criminal acts during those five years. (Article 6) Finally, the law promised bounties for the informers. (Journal of Laws, 1339: 113-114)

The 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu' was a constituent continuation of the Committee's techniques of power for the elimination of banditry, but with a substantial addition: The 1st Article that decriminalized the killing or wounding of a bandit officially turned the bandit into a *homo-sacer* that could be killed by anybody. What was at stake here had been not only, as Yakut assumed, the partial transfer of the State's legitimate monopoly of violence (2012: 154), but more importantly, a sharp zigzag in the history of punishment in Turkey. The bandit was turning into a harmful and dangerous creature without a criminal (and thus a citizenship) status that was being hunted by everybody and everywhere. The 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu' was, therefore, exposing the weakness of the State and society in the transitory phase between the fall of the Empire and the emergence of the Republic.

The law that remained valid, but infective in the following decades would eventually be abrogated on February 2, 1963 for its 1st and 4th Articles' violation of, respectively, the Articles 14th on the right to live and 18th on the freedom of travel of the Constitution of 1960 (Journal of Laws, 1963: 373), when banditry was on the rise in the Kurdish Regions of the country and while the State was, however, feeling confident in dealing with bandits who would then be denominated as 'the Criminal Citizen'.[55] In the late 1960s, in thousands of warning notes in Kurdish that were

[55] Regarding the genealogy of punishment, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote; "Whenever a community gains in power and pride, its penal code becomes more lenient, while the moment it is weakened or endangered the harsher methods of the past are revived." (1956: 205) Thus, the bandit, the former enemy of the nation, who was being hunted everywhere by everybody, turned into the criminal citizen

scattered over the mountains from combat helicopters before the beginning of bandit hunts by commando units, the State would, indeed, remind its 'criminal citizens' of its incontestable superiority and promise forgiveness and protection:

> "*Criminal citizen*, laws are *merciful* and just. Take refuge in the law and live without fear. The power of the State is great. You cannot withstand *the might of the State*. Commando troops with their superior arms and equipment have encircled you on all sides. You are engulfed in this circle. You will survive only if you submit yourself. Surrender. No matter how great your crimes are, it is in your best interests. Don't be afraid of just courts. You will benefit from amnesty laws. Surrender. Get rid of the mountains, *treason* and death. If you submit yourself, the State will *protect* you. If you don't, you will perish in the mountains. The mountains will be your grave. Surrender. Live like a human being; rejoin your wife, children and your warm home. This is your last resort. Use it." (emphases added) (Milliyet, 08.04.67: 1, 7)

Apart from those judicial and military measures used against widespread brigandage, from the *establishment of military tribunals* to the *making the penal code more severe* and the *introduction of collective responsibility*, the seemingly contradictory combination of *disarmament* of the population with *the usage of paramilitary groups* should be discussed. The case of Turkey's Kurdish regions in the late Ottoman and Republican periods both revalidates and challenges the perception of the policy of disarmament as an inseparable element of modern state formation. This is because the World War policy of the Committee of Union and Progress in Ottoman Kurdistan was the armament of Kurdish tribes against the Armenian population, while the Republic followed a process of 'selective pacification' in its Kurdish regions.

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by whom the State and community felt unaffected, and confident enough to 'forgive'. "Why should I bother about these parasites of mine' such a society might ask. 'Let them take all they want. I have plenty'." (Nietzsche, 1956: 205)

2. Cooperation and Conflict in Blood: The Ottomans and Kurdish Bandit Tribes (1839-1923)

If monopoly of violence is taken as a prerequisite for modern state formation, the policy of pacification through disarmament of the population must have been its hallmark. In the axis of tension between state and non-state violence, it is claimed in the sociology of pacification that the lower the level of non-state violence, the higher the level of state formation. (Üngör, 2012: 747) The theory of monopoly of violence, formulated in terms of the pacification and disarmament of the population, as a prerequisite for modern state formation is, however, poor at grasping both the complexities of the relations between the Ottomans and Kurdish bandit tribes and the succeeding Kemalist policy of 'selective pacification'[56] in the Kurdish regions. Apart from the cities and towns, the Ottomans had not established a functioning monopoly of violence in many of its regions, most notably those at the edges of the empire where order could only be ensured by the State's alliance with local armed forces. As Barkey demonstrated, the Ottoman State granted, in this respect, several Kurdish tribal leaders the position of governor (*sanjak beg*) and awarded their domains as family properties (*ocaklık* or *yurtluk*). (2008: 92) In exchange for those special privileges of autonomy, such as heritable land and status, Kurdish tribes, along with their superior resources and means of violence, could be integrated into the Ottoman hegemony. In times of crisis, such cooperation could be taken to a whole new level by the State's de-pacifying of certain communities/tribes towards others. Before the eruption of World War I, the Ottoman State had already begun to follow the policy of arming loyal Kurdish tribes against the Armenian population through the

[56] For the term 'selective pacification', see: (Üngör, 2012: 769)

institution of the Hamidiye corps. During the war, the alliance between the Community of Union and Progress and those armed Kurdish tribes established against the Armenian population in the Eastern regions would carry out the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Kurdistan. (Bozarslan, 2008: 37)

The rise of banditry in Ottoman society that plagued the empire between approximately 1550 and 1650 was located mainly in Ottoman Kurdistan and resulted from the State's policies of territorial consolidation and demilitarization after the war. (Barkey, 2008: 178) Still, Ottoman State documents demonstrate that brigandage reached its climax in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. (Üner, 2010: 117-212) Native complaints about various banditry incidents in the region reaching the Governmental center in Istanbul prove that brigandage had become so widespread and massive in the 19th century that local state officials, who were not able to solve the epidemic through the judicial and military tools at their disposal, were calling for urgent support from the center. It is possible to categorize these innumerous banditry incidents into three types according to the targets of the act of brigandage and pillage: (i) inter-tribal banditry that was organically related to tribal warfare, along with banditry movements targeted at (ii) settled communities and (iii) the State's mail carte and trading caravans. (Üner, 2010: 117) Before presenting examples for each type of banditry, it is imperative to lay bare three major historical developments in the 19th century that led to the massive emergence of brigandage in Ottoman Kurdistan.

Following the Tanzimat decree of 1839, the first turning point was the disintegration of the relatively autonomous Kurdish emirates by a series of military operations in the 1840s. The challenge that was posed by two Kurdish Mirs (i.e. Mir Muhammed, alias Kor Mir [Blind Mir] of Soran Emirate and Mir Bedirhan of

Bohtan Emirate) against the State centralization process in the Eastern borderlands, which had already been launched by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839), was eventually quashed at the end of the 1840s.[57] (Bruinessen, 2008: 268-278) The unexpected result of the disintegration of the autonomous Kurdish emirates was the decentralization of power in the region, since while large emirates turned into smaller tribes, tribal competition for power escalated, thus destabilized the region further. The second turning point was the polarization of the Armenian and Kurdish populations due to the internationalization of the Armenian question in the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin in 1878. (Üngör, 2012: 748-749) Due to the fear over Armenian demands for political power in the Eastern regions, Kurdish leaders, notables and local power holders radicalized against the Armenian elements of the region.

Finally, the establishment of the Hamidiye Corps in 1891, which was named after Sultan Abdulhamit II, led to severe de-pacification in Ottoman Kurdistan. The founding rationale behind the Hamidiye Corps was the idea of suppressing the emerging separatist Armenian activities and better controlling the Kurdish population through tribal chieftains. By officially granting Kurdish tribal leaders the right to pillage and brigandage, the State re-forged the Ottoman-Kurdish alliance in blood, hence the Kurds' Sultan Abdulhamit – *Bave Kurdan* (Father of Kurds). (Bruinessen, 2008: 286) Through the establishment of the Hamidiye Corps, a mass wave of unpunished radical brigandage blew over Ottoman Kurdistan targeting not only Armenian, but also Turkish and Kurdish villages. (Üngör, 2012: 749) Last but not least, the tribal chieftains that abused their official status in the Empire's army

[57] For the history of the Kurdish emirates' struggle against the Empire's centralization process and their ultimate disintegration written through Ottoman State documents, see: (Hakan, 2011)

through their own troops in the Hamidiye regiments exacerbated tribal warfare by disrupting the tribal balance of power in the region. (Bruinessen, 2008: 285)

The traditional tribal structure of Ottoman Kurdistan, therefore, constituted the social base of brigandage. The pillaging movement of one tribe against another was, first of all, a risky but lucrative source of income. The usurpation of a tribe's sheep herd by another had been, in this respect, a traditional occurrence.[58] Still, the strongest link that connected tribal warfare with tribal brigandage had always been the traditional institution of blood feud, simply because tribal vengeance included the usurpation of an enemy's material resources as the bounty for the winning tribe. On the other hand, blood feud between two or more tribes could itself be initiated by an act of brigandage. Tribal warfare that formed according to ever-changing alignment between various tribes was also related to the tribes' natural aspiration to extend their regions of influence. The Ottoman State, far from being capable of ending tribal unrest, was in one region involved in conflict as a conciliatory actor between warring sides and in another region as a biased actor supporting one side over the other. The State's support behind a warring tribe was being realized either directly through making an alliance with it or indirectly, as in the case of the Hamidiye regiments, by distributing various official ranks to its warlords.

One of the largest tribal conflicts in the late Ottoman Empire, accompanied by massive inter-tribal brigandage, occurred between the influential tribes of Reşkotan and Etmankî in the Xerzan valley[59], which was eventually won by the former and immortalized in Kurdish oral history through the battle of their famous *cengawers* (warriors) *Filîtê Quto* and *Mamê Emê*. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 66-82) Unlike

[58] In 1706, for instance, it was reported to the capital that the Beği tribe usurped 2,200 sheep from the Berâzi tribe in the region around Suruç. (Üner, 2010: 121)
[59] The Xerzan region covers parts of the contemporary Southeastern provinces of Diyarbakır, Batman, Siirt, Bitlis, and Muş. (Üngör, 2012: 747)

the conflict between the Reşkotan and Etmankî, in which the State seemed to be indifferent, Ottoman State officials mostly intervened in tribal warfare and did not always aim to end it by mediating between the warring sides. On the contrary, the State could seize upon tribal warfare as an opportunity to subjugate strong Kurdish tribes. For instance, in the war between the tribes of Zirkî and Mîlan around the northern parts of Diyarbekir, the State, which lined up with the former against the latter, subdued the Zirkî once after the Mîlan tribe was defeated. (Üngör, 2012: 751) The establishment of the Hamidiye Regiments turned, however, tribal warfare upside down. For instance, the war between (the Arab) Şammar and (the Kurdish) Milli tribes, which had been playing out in favor of the former, took the opposite course when the chieftain of the Milli tribe, Ibrahim Pasha, took advantage of his status as a commander in the Hamidiye Corps. After occupying a great deal of the Şammar tribe's lands in the province of Urfa and organizing massive pillaging movements in the region, Ibrahim Pasha defeated the Şammar's last resistance through the help of smaller tribes and local Ottoman State officials. The bounty taken by the victorious Ibrahim Pasha and the Milli tribe was immense both in material and political terms.[60] (Üner, 2010: 127-129)

Another source of conflict in the late Ottoman Kurdistan was the warfare between the Pençînaran and Elîkan tribes in the Xerzan valley. Indeed, the pillage movements realized by the chieftains of those tribes (respectively Yaşar and Şemşedînê Hesenê Osman) against each other or other (nomadic or settled) tribes and communities were well documented in the Ottoman State archives. The Ottoman State responded to the blood feud between the two tribes by organizing massive military operations aimed at pacifying the region and ending tribal warfare and

[60] For Ziya Gökalp's poetic account of İbrahim Pasha's brigandage and Hamidiye regiments, see: (Gökalp, 1976)

brigandage through arresting tribal warriors and warlords. (Üngör, 2012: 750) As the land and leaders' statuses were heritable as a right of Kurdish tribes acknowledged by the Ottoman State, Yaşar's two sons (Bişarê and Cemîlê Çeto) inherited the inter-tribal warfare between the Pençînaran and Elîkan tribes. One of the most popular *kılams* (Kurdish folkloric songs) was, in this respect, on the struggle of Emê Gozê, the famous *cengawer* of the Elîkan tribe, against the Ottoman State. When Emê Gozê attacked and pillaged the State's mail cart and trading caravans, the Ottoman State allied with Cemîlê Çeto of the Pençînaran tribe, along with several other tribes, and succeeded in suppressing the revolt he was carrying out in the form of brigandage. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 33-41) After a short break of alliance, the Ottoman State struggled in vain to eliminate the tribal brigandage of the Çeto brothers to such an extent that the struggle between the State and the Pençinaran tribe, along with the betrayal of Bişarê Çeto by his brother Cemîlê Çeto, constitutes one of the main themes of Kurdish oral tradition. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 95-101)

Tribal brigandage was not, however, restricted to tribal warfare. Nomadic communities – thanks to their mobile social structure – had been, by their very nature, prone to banditry more than settled communities were; hence banditry as an alternative source of income for nomadic tribes at times of drought and epidemic. As the major confrontation in the Ottoman Empire was unidimensional – as Şerif Mardin famously argued "always a clash between the center and the periphery" (1973: 8) – one of the founding tensions of center-periphery relations in the Ottoman Empire had been the nomadic lifestyle, which turned into a spontaneous challenge from the periphery against the center's aim of control. Thus, the forceful settlement of nomadic tribes became one of the main policies of the Ottoman State from the 17th century onwards. The aim of the Ottoman State was not only to increase agricultural

input and the amount of collected taxes, but also to control the periphery by reducing brigandage and making use of tribal military forces. As M. Emin Üner demonstrates with reference to the Ottoman State archives, the plain of Urfa, in this respect, had become the lands of exile for pillaging and nomadic tribes in the 17th and 18th centuries.[61] (2010: 118)

The settled communities in the region, in addition to the State's mail cart and trading caravans, had been the natural targets of (nomadic or settled) bandit tribes. Apart from the many pillaging movements exacted by various tribes against the peasants of the region, the illegal taxing of the (mostly Armenian) peasants, which was called *hafir*, constituted one of the permanent sources of tribal income.[62] For instance, it was repeatedly reported to the Ottoman Government that Bişarê Çeto of the Pençînaran tribe had been forcefully collecting *hafir* from the Armenian, Kurdish and Syriac populations of the Xerzan region. (Üngör, 2012: 751) Since the Ottoman State was incapable of eliminating tribal brigandage, the Armenian community responded to the non-State violence of the Pençînaran tribe with its own violence perpetrated by Armenian guerrillas (*fedais*), who were avenging brigandage by assassinating the Pençînaran tribesmen. From the 1908 Revolution until the eruption of World War I, the Ottoman Government tried to eliminate tribal brigandage in Ottoman Kurdistan by punishing the perpetrators, putting bounties on the heads of fugitive bandits and prohibiting the practice of *hafir*.[63] (Üngör, 2012: 751) By the time of the eruption of war, however, not only had many tribal bandit leaders, such as the infamous Çeto brothers, evaded persecution, but also the alliance against the

[61] The province Urfa served as a buffer zone first against the banditry movements of Arab tribes (notably the Aneze and Şammar) and then against the warlords of the Milli tribe, respectively Mahmud Agha, Timur Beg and Ibrahim Pasha. (Üner, 2010: 124)

[62] Another source of income for tribes was called 'baç', an ancient type of tax taken by force from those taking goods from one place to another. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 69)

[63] Like the other Ottoman measures against banditry, the already established institution *derebendlik*, which was promising safety on the roads and compensation in the case of robbery, could not ensure the security of trading caravans, either. (Üner, 2010: 149)

Armenian population established between the Ottoman State and Kurdish bandit tribes through the Hamidiye Corps concluded in the resolution of the Armenian problem in the form of the massacring and pillaging of loyal or disloyal Armenians in the region with impunity.

Through official Ottoman involvement in the World War, the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress' reliance on paramilitary violence – carried out by volunteers, convicts, Muslim refugees from the Balkans and Kurdish tribal cavalry – in Ottoman Kurdistan led to the re-emergence of banditry on a massive scale. (Üngör, 2012: 752) The military failures on the Eastern front, which were combined with the ruling elite's fear of total State collapse and an Armenian insurrection backed by foreign forces, led to the radicalization of anti-Armenian policy by the leaders of the Committee. Kurdish tribal involvement in the Armenian massacre could best be illustrated by the secret alliance between the Committee and the Raman tribe in 1914. From among the seven sons of Perîxan (the female chieftain of the Raman tribe), Ömer, who was battling against State forces in his pillaging forays before the eruption of the war, and Emîn, who was fighting alongside the Ottoman army by his own paramilitary troop at the Caucasus front, outshone the others. (Demirer, 2008: 63-64) According to Hüseyin Demirer, the son of Emînê Perîxanê, a secret deal was made between the fugitive bandit Ömer (together with his brother Mustafa) and the fanatical Jeune Turk nationalist Dr. Mehmed Reshid on the slaughter of the Armenian people. The bounty for the deal would be submitted by the latter to the former in twenty-three large rafts on Tigris. After Ömer and Mustafa had been rewarded by receiving half of the bounty allocated from the corpses of the Armenian people that they had slaughtered, Dr. Reshid ordered the execution of the

Raman brothers in the summer of 1915.[64] (Demirer, 2008: 75-89) Emînê Perîxanê, who had been fighting alongside the Ottoman State and remained loyal to the Republic afterwards, would be executed as well on April 9, 1933. (Üngör, 2012: 764) This came at the time when the Kemalist political elite was trying to re-pacify the Kurdish regions that were not only dominated by armed Kurdish tribes, massive brigandage and tribal warfare, but also shaken by the emergence of a series of Kurdish rebellions against the Turkish nation-state building process.

3. From 'Innocent Turkish Peasants' to 'Mountainous Monsters': The Pragmatist Fluctuation of the State's Banditry Discourse over the Massive Kurdish Insurrections (1923-1950)

In the early Republican period (1923-1950), banditry incidents had remained ordinary occurrences in various regions of Turkey. [65] But the Committee's armament of Kurdish tribes and the massive poverty emerging after the war fueled both tribal warfare and brigandage in the Kurdish regions of the new Republic.[66] Therefore, one of the substantial challenges that the Kemalist political elite faced was the urgent necessity to re-pacify the Kurdish regions by disarming their inhabitants. Still, the term 'banditry' was also systematically used both by the State and the national press to denominate the Kurdish insurrections against the Turkish State. The labeling of Kurdish rebels as bandit chiefs by the ruling elite was, however, a discourse that was

[64] The cooperation of the State with several Kurdish tribes in the Armenian massacre constituted only one phase of the Armenian genocide. In the in-depth interview with the bandit Hekimo (Hikmet Zeren), the interviewee told how his grandfather rescued tens of non-Muslim families in the city of Cizîr that took shelter in his house by refusing to submit them to the State officials and eventually assisting them to immigrate safely to the Syrian lands. (4th Oral Source)

[65] For the whole list of banditry incidents that had media coverage between 1930 and 1950, see: Appendix I.

[66] The disappearance of the traditional channels of reconciliation from the abolished Ottoman religious institutions to the deported Kurdish sheiks and notables by the Kemalist elite exacerbated tribal warfare further. (Üngör, 2012: 757)

inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, in the face of the rebellion of Bedirhan Beg, the Mir of Bohtan, the principal Ottoman State officials of the period (e.g. Osman Pasha) were defining the rebellious Mir and his thousands of followers as "four-footed dumb Kurds and their bandit leaders". (Kardam, 2011: 373-374) Therefore, the Turkish nation-state, which inherited the Kurdish problem from the Ottoman Empire, also inherited its banditry discourse over the Kurdish uprisings against its order, beginning with the Koçgiri (July 1920 - June 1921) and Sheikh Said Rebellions (February - March 1925).[67] For instance, the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* was reporting the latest news on the Ararat Rebellion (October 1927 - September 1930) as follows:

> "(…) Turks' iron eagles are cleansing the rebels' account. (…) The number of bandits exterminated in the (Zilan) operation was more than 15,000. (…) The Zilan stream is filled with corpses up to the brim." (Cumhuriyet, 16.07.30: 1)

Indeed, the national press described the Ararat Rebellion both as a massive pillage of the Eastern villages by armed bandit-tribes and as a movement of reaction against the Republican civilization project, but certainly not as a Kurdish uprising against the Turkish nation-state. Yunus Nadi, the founder of *Cumhuriyet*, wrote:

> "(A Kurdish Revolt?) According to our point of view, it is not permissible to put such a name to the incident. We are obliged not to forget that the people who live within the Republic of Turkey are, without any difference of race and religion, all Turks. (…) Accordingly, there has been no Kurdish revolt on our Eastern borders. (…) It is sufficient to call the bandit a bandit." (Nadi, 1930b: 1)

At the elbow of this official denial of Kurdish existence, a racist discourse that identified the Kurdish identity with murder, pillage and brigandage was paradoxically shining. The following quotation is selected from among the many similar statements made at that time:

[67] In 1925, the Minister of Internal Affairs announced the Sheihk Said Rebellion in the National Assembly as follows: "A bandit by the name of Sheihk Said has appeared in the province of Genç. With his followers, he has declared brigandage. Through the serious measures of our Government, it is, however, natural that he will be exterminated very soon." (Cumhuriyet, 19.02.25)

"I am convinced that it is not possible to break down the dark soul, the rough feeling and the bloodthirsty inclination of this Kurdish mass. Expecting this over the course of a long period of evolution would mean that they would be keeping the Government constantly busy and provoking the people to be continuously aggressive by rebelling from time to time or disrupting public order or else pillaging in the country." (Mazhar, 1930: 3)

The practical result of this contradictory combination of denying Kurdish existence in the country and degrading the Kurdish identity was the formula of assimilation: The discursive rationale was simply that since the native population was composed of Turks that had lost their national consciousness, the rebels should have been the Kurdish and the Armenian bandits of the neighboring countries that were manipulated by external powers against Turkey[68]:

- "Kurdish Bandit, Equipped and Prepared in Iran, Breaches our Borders and Eliminated" (Cumhuriyet, 29.06.30: 1)
- "Haco the Instigator Assaults Border: Military Forces Deployed against Bandit Inciting Kurds to Rebel" (Cumhuriyet, 07.08.30: 1)
- "Heroine Drives Away Bandits by Clashing with 50 Kurds around Erzincan" (Cumhuriyet, 30.09.30, p. 2)
- "Our friend Iran is dealing with the Kurdish bandits that appear here and there in its region and is protecting the security and safety of the situation in the South." (Cumhuriyet, 30.11.31: 3)

The equation of the Kurdish (and Armenian) identity with banditry was a forceful invitation of the native population into assimilation. Thus, the Ararat Rebellion was illustrated as an 'issue of brigandage', a 'reactionary snake/scorpion'[69], a 'network of treason and malice' and an attempt by Turkey's external enemies at establishing 'a Kurdish-Armenian Government in the East'[70],

[68] As the native population in Eastern Turkey was, according to State discourse, totally composed of Turks, here the term 'Kurds', who had been incited into rebellion, referred to people who resided in northEastern Iran, northern Iraq and northern Syria. The ruling elite's obstinacy to discriminate against the Armenian identity despite the extinction of the Armenian population in the country demonstrated, on the other hand, the centrality of the Armenian identity's reconstruction as 'the principal enemy of the nation' in Turkish nationalism. The ruling elite, when faced a Kurdish uprising or organized armed struggle, would continue to link those two identities to each other in the following decades.

[69] Rebels were described as barbaric beasts that were hostile to civilization: "Those men that eat raw meat with some wheat are no different from the African savages and cannibals." (Cumhuriyet, 13.07.30: 4) Thus, it was implied that the State's cleansing of their kind was more than necessary for a civilized Turkey.

[70] For instance, it was argued in *Cumhuriyet* that not only Iran and the Armenian organizations, but also Çerkez Ethem and E. T. Lawrence could have been the secret architects of the Ararat Rebellion.

while rebels were denominated as 'bandits', 'marauders', 'insects', 'evildoers', and 'celâlis'. (Cumhuriyet, 02,03.07.30: 1,3/09,12,13.07.30: 1,4) Nadi, in this respect, was exposing the State discourse on the Kurdish question in the 1930s by arguing that any law-violating action, whether in the form of 'ordinary' crime or political uprising, could be nothing other than banditry:

> "As a result of the Ottoman Empire's dissolution, a new Turkey with its national law and borders has emerged. Some marauders in some of our Eastern provinces are looking to oppose the national law and borders that this new entity – which adopted an entirely European lifestyle through the establishment of the Republican regime – has imposed on the whole world. What they are doing is nothing but brigandage and brigandage is exterminated by any means. (…) Now, the new issue that we call 'the Eastern question' for the Eastern provinces is nothing more than this, and you may reckon that it is redundant to call it – with this character – a question at all." (Nadi, 1930c: 1)

Those columns were, indeed, reproducing the official Turkish State Discourse (TSD) that reconstituted the Kurdish question either as a *political reaction* led by *sheiks* representing the resistance of the reactionary *ancien régime* against the progress and prosperity of the new order, or as *banditry* and *tribal resistance* led by *tribal chiefs* and *feudal landlords* against the Republic's civilization project aimed at the abolition of the Sultanate's defective system which had neglected the east to usurpers. Thus, the State's struggle against the Kurdish rebellions was reconstructed in the TSD as a war between the barbaric and the civil, superstition and rational, reaction and progress; in brief, the old and the new.[71] Yet, the denomination of the Kurdish rebels as 'bandits' would create bureaucratic deadlocks among the State's institutions in the upcoming decades. For instance, when the State Council approved in 1950 the cutting down of the disability pension of a veteran soldier wounded in the Ararat Rebellion by the Ministry of Finance due to the definition of the rebellion

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(Cumhuriyet, 10, 13.07.30: 4) Indeed, many articles blamed Ethem and many others on the list of 150 personae non gratae of Turkey for the Ararat Rebellion. (Cumhuriyet, 15.07.30: 1)

[71] The TSD on the Kurdish question was exhaustively analyzed by Mesut Yeğen, who mainly argued that the Kurdish question is reconstituted in the TSD by enunciating, instead of concealing, the Kurdish identity. See: (Yeğen, 1996, 1999, 2009, 2013) In the fourth chapter, the TSD on the rise of Kurdish banditry from the 1950s onwards will be analyzed in relation to Yeğen's thesis.

as ‘banditry’, the Supreme Military Court, in another similar case, would oppose the decision of the Ministry by re-defining the rebels not as ‘bandits’, but ‘foes’ of the State and the rebellion itself as a ‘war’. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950c: 227) Despite such bureaucratic disagreements, the laws no. 2591 and 4298, respectively issued in 1934 and 1942, had already defined the disability of soldiers during the skirmishes against banditry movements in Ararat or Dersim as war-disability in terms of certain financial advantages and immunity from certain taxes.[72] (Journal of Laws, 1934: 8, 1942: 886)

In any case, in stark contrast to its discourse, the fundamental policy of the Turkish nation-state from the 1920s onwards in controlling the Kurdish regions had been the usage of the social networks of tribal chiefs, landlords, and sheikhs who had been integrated into the Kemalist hegemony. Their loyalty derived from voluntary or forced disavowal of their ethnic identities and from presenting their material capabilities to the service of the ruling elite. For instance, Ali Saip (Ursavaş), who served in the Independence Court that adjudicated on the death sentence of Sheikh Said, was a Kurdish representative of Urfa and Adana between 1920 and 1940. Ibrahim Arvas, another Kurdish sheikh who had been the representative of Van between 1920 and 1950, wrote about Ali Saip in his memoires: “Regarding all of the father and son convicts, he first hung the son in front of his father’s eyes and then the father. In this respect, the outcries of the father did not affect his heart in the least.” (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110)

Those were not mere coincidences, but the dramatic reflection of the State’s policy on the Kurdish question. Contrary to its discourse, the Kemalist regime,

[72] In the 1950s, the MPs of the ruling DP and the oppositional CHP would make heated discussions over the suffering of a bunch of disabled soldiers in the military operations of Ararat and Dersim due to the vagueness of the aforementioned laws, while the topic over the suffering of the native ‘Eastern’ masses during those operations was being steadily postponed. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951h: 73-79)

instead of abolishing the feudal relations in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, reconstructed and reinforced them for the sake of building the modern Turkish nation-state. By turning the Kurdish sovereign classes into the 'secret agents' of the Turkish state, the Kemalist one-party dictatorship aimed to perpetuate the underdevelopment of the region by preventing any process of capital accumulation in the hands of disloyal feudal elements and of rent acquisition from natural resources by Kurdish peasants. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110) Thus, not only could the Kurdish regions of Turkey not have participated in the limited development drive of the country before the 1950s, but also the Kurdish sovereign classes' turning into the very agents of the Turkish nation-state prevented the resurrection of the Kurdish national movement.

After the suppression of the Ararat Rebellion, public order in the Southeastern regions of the country continued to remain one of the principal topics of discussion in the national press. As banditry incidents had been occurring everywhere in the country[73], the topic of public disorder in the Kurdish regions had been promoted to the forefront of public discussion through the theme of smuggling. For the columnists of the national press, since the southern border of Turkey constituted the core of the smuggling problem, the infamous Independence Tribunals should have been re-established in the region through mobile units:

> "(…) Our whole southern border displays a character and view that forms the doomsday of moral corruption. There, the movements that are hostile to law, morality, honor and the interests of the State and the nation have turned exceptional incidents into an actual lifestyle. (…) In brief, we return to the idea of the Independence Tribunals and we insist on this especially for our southern border." (Nadi, 1931: 1)

[73] Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of Internal Affairs announced in 1929 that there were no longer any armed bandits in the country. (Cumhuriyet, 25.09.29)



A photo of a smuggler group coming from the Southern border was taken by a reporter in 1937. (Cumhuriyet, 26.06.1937)

The re-establishment of the Independence Tribunals meant in practice the execution of those who violated the law immediately after a brief trial. Indeed, an Eastern merchant who was complaining about 'smuggling' in the region wrote in his letter, published in *Cumhuriyet*, that:

> "In order to save the lives and the future of sixteen million innocent people, it is not a sin, but a merit to behead not five to ten, but fifteen thousand evildoers, bandits and traitors." (Cumhuriyet, 17.12.31: 6)

Although the Independence Tribunals were not re-established, the Eastern regions of Turkey had already been governed under an unnamed martial law. In lieu of the state of emergency on the Eastern regions that expired in 1927, the first Inspectorate-General was constituted in January 1928 with its center in Diyarbakır.[74] As a legacy of the Ottoman statecraft, the Inspectorates-General that de facto lasted for twenty years in the Republic initiated the securitization of any issue of the country, from economy to daily life, by its institutional supremacy over the civilian, military and judicial institutions under its domain. In his parliamentary speech, Şükrü

[74] Three out of total five Inspectorates-General were directly concerned with the Southeastern regions of the country. For an archive study on the Inspectorates-General, see: (Koçak, 2010)

Kaya, the Minister of Internal Affairs between 1927 and 1937, praised the success of the Inspectorates-General in restoring public order in the Eastern regions through constructing military posts, exterminating bandit gangs and disarming the native population. (Cumhuriyet, 27.06.32: 5) Indeed, the campaign of disarmament in the Kurdish regions entered a new phase in April 1932, going from incidental to systematic, with the launching of a Five-Year Program for Security and Disarmament in the First Inspectorate -General region. Still, it was a policy of selective pacification, as certain tribes were left armed and free as long as they remained loyal during periods of crisis. (Üngör, 2012: 759)

The following selected headlines from the newspaper Cumhuriyet exemplify the many news items from the period that reported on skirmishes between the Gendarme and the armed groups in the region in the name of the struggle against banditry and smuggling and of disarming the native population[75]:

- "Gang of 42 Eradicated in the East" (Cumhuriyet, 04.12.30, p. 6) *(Diyarbakır, 1930)*
- "Clash with Bandits in Urfa: Officer Wounded, Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 06.06.31: 4) *(Urfa, 1931)*
- "Gang Eradicated, 3 Soldiers Dead" (Cumhuriyet, 22.08.32: 3) *(Elazığ, 1932)*
- "Two Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 06.09.33: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1933)*
- "Vicious Bandit Captured in Nizip" (Cumhuriyet, 10.03.34: 4) *(Gaziantep, 1934)*
- "Bandits Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.05.35: 12) *(Erzincan, 1935)*
- "Public Order in Tunceli Province: Bandits Surrender with Arms" (Cumhuriyet, 23.03.36: 3) *(Tunceli, 1936)*

In fact, those seemingly ordinary bandit news stories were veiling the State centralization process in the Eastern regions. As the Kurdish insurrections had strengthened the ruling elite's distrust in the Kurdish population, the State's main policy had been disarming the native population under the veil of struggling against banditry.[76] Just one year before the eruption of the Dersim Rebellion, Cumhuriyet

[75] For the whole list of banditry incidents in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces that received media coverage between 1930 and 1950, see: Appendix I.

[76] As will be examined in detail below, the successive Governments between 1950 and 1980 would loyally follow the lead of the one-party period by disarming the Kurdish population in the name of the struggle against banditry.

was celebrating the restored public order in that province achieved through the policy of disarmament and the surrender of bandits, fugitives and deserters:

> "Public Order in Tunceli Province: (…) The people of Tunceli, who have been suffering due to public disorder, are today and now everyday enjoying the limitless and continuous happiness of celebrating with a flourish of trumpets the new regime and the bandits' becoming civilized and honored Turkish citizens through their submission of themselves to justice along with their guns." (Cumhuriyet, 23.03.36: 3)

While Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of Internal Affairs, was announcing that highway robberies had disappeared under the leadership of the Republican Government; the Dersim Rebellion erupted in March 1937. The minister interpreted the rebellion as the resistance of "tribes that have gone astray" against the Government's reform programme, the sole aim of which was to civilize Tunceli and to enhance the State's authority in the region. (Cumhuriyet, 08.04.37: 1, 7) As the rebellion had occurred in the midst of the Hatay crisis with Syria and France, the minister argued that aghas' opposition against the reform programme emerged due to the influence of the agitators that were sent from abroad to weaken Turkey's position on her cause for Hatay. (Nadi, 1937: 1) In the following months of the rebellion, the emphasis of the State discourse moved from the external to the internal 'enemies' of the Turkish nation. According to the national press, instead of a popular revolt, the movement was a plot devised by aghas, sheihks and tribal chiefs, whose cruel order over 'the ignorant Turkish peasants' was threatened by the Republican civilization project and the ringleaders of the movement were the old 'agents of rebellion, brigandage and unruliness' in the region.[77] (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.37: 5) What is the most manifest was the sentencing of Seyid Rıza, the sacred leader of the rebellion, to

[77] This discourse can also be traced in the confidential Dersim reports that were prepared for State officials in 1933 and 1934 in which the people of Dersim were described as an ignorant mass that were being abused by tribal bandit chieftains. (Çalışlar, 2010) By comparing the insurrections led by Bedirhan Beg and Seyid Rıza, Ahmet Kardam argues that both the Republican State's discourse over the Kurdish insurrections and its measures of 'rehabilitation' in the Eastern regions were inherited from the Ottomans. (Kardam, 2011: 375)

death for being guilty of not incitement, reaction or separatism, but brigandage. Thus, it was, as Yeğen argued, the reconstruction of the Kurdish question in the State discourse of the 1930s as a problem of public disorder, the sum of the malign activities of *mütegallibe* (*persecutors*) – i.e. bandits, tribes, aghas, and sheikhs – that were incited by external powers against the civilization project of the Turkish nation-state (Yeğen, 2009: 29-30):

- "Inside the Movement in Tunceli: Work of not People, but Malefactors whose Interests Violated" (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.37: 5)
- "Brigandage in Tunceli in Throes of Death: Airplanes Bomb Last Refuges of Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 26.06.37: 1)
- "Perfect Tranquility Reigns in Mountains that used to be Bandit Plains: (…) Proud Scene of Advancing Civilization" (Cumhuriyet, 27.06.37: 6)

Contrary to the headlines of national newspapers, military operations had begun to fail one by one in the first phase of the rebellion. In order to suppress it, the State should have either realized a wholesale massacre of the native population or negotiated with the rebels. As the State could not negotiate with the bandits[78], the former choice had always remained the only option for the State elite. In order to legitimize such a massive massacre, however, the native population that had previously been described as 'ignorant Turkish peasants' now needed to be reconstructed as an exceptional mass of a barbaric race, the mountainous monsters:

"(…) There are those who suppose that *the people of Dersim* are *Turks*.. Don't ever suppose them to be Turks.. *Nomadism*, *primitivism*, *savagery*, *heartlessness* and *blood sucking* cannot exist as a character in a Turk. (…) They are, in my opinion, of *a specific race* that has taken shelter in those steep mountains since the beginning of history and that has not yet fallen, as no one could have touched them. (…) The thing that is called intelligence in them should not be deemed anything other than *the instinct possessed by monsters* for not missing their prey or else for escaping from the claws of their own hunters. (…) Even if we suppose that we can defeat by literacy the savage, bloodthirsty, primitive, and *atavistic* character of this *race*, still *no civilized man* could grow in this eagle's nest. (…) It would be making it work that our children would have to do *if we delay it*, just as it would be letting the places around the region live under the constant threat of *pillage*." (emphases added) (Mazhar, 1937: 1, 4)

[78] Seyid Rıza, the sacred leader of the rebellion, was summoned by the state officials for 'negotiations' and then arrested on September 13, 1937. To clothe the trap, the national press wrote that Seyid Rıza submitted himself to justice after he realized that he could not escape from the State's hunt. (Cumhuriyet, 13.09.37: 1) He was sentenced to death for being guilty of brigandage and hanged on November 15, 1937.

Thus, through a wholesale massacre of the native population, the Dersim Rebellion was totally suppressed in December 1938. Moreover, banditry incidents that used to take place in every region of the country had begun to decrease as a result of 'the steel will of the State', i.e. the harsh security measures of the one-party dictatorship. Peyami Safa, in this respect, praised the State's success in the reconsolidation of public order through eliminating banditry:

> "Turkey has been a country of perfect peace and order for years. (…) The air that fills it everywhere from the most remote mountain tops to the most secluded edges of the soul has eradicated the banditry nightmare, both from the Turks' land and their sleep. It seems that highway robbery, kidnapping, and home raids have disappeared." (Safa, 1938: 3)

During that 'peaceful order' in the Eastern regions, in the tragic 'incident of 33', thirty-two smugglers from the Milan tribe were executed by shooting on July 28, 1943 in the town of Özalp of the province of Van. (Özgen, 2011: 33) Still, the former Minister of Internal Affairs, Şükrü Kaya, was praising the success of the one-party period in the elimination of the banditry that had infested the whole country in the early Republican period. (Kaya, 1947: 2) It was, indeed, true that banditry incidents had begun to decrease in the Eastern regions and disappear totally in the rest of the country from the late 1930s onwards.[79] In the 1950s, however, banditry incidents would resurrect as a mass phenomenon in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey and would last until the emergence of the first Kurdish armed organizations in the late 1970s.

[79] For a comparison of the frequency of the appearance of banditry incidents in the national press between the Eastern regions and the rest of the country from the 1930s to the 1980s, see: Appendix I.

B. Last Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press

While the State was declaring its triumph over the suppression of the Kurdish insurrections, its Kurdish *problem* would resurrect in the 1950s, this time in the form of the massive emergence of banditry in the Eastern provinces of Turkey. Indeed, while banditry's de facto rule (which had continued for centuries on the Anatolian mountains) had been, by the consolidation of the Republican central Government, erased from the stage of history in each and every region of the country – including the Aegean region that had hosted the long-established *zeibek* tradition – it re-emerged in the 1950s, for the last time, as a mass phenomenon in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey. The following selected headlines and news items, which appeared in daily newspapers from the 1950s onwards, shocked the public by exposing the massive re-emergence of such an ancient outlaw profession in the Eastern provinces of modern Turkey[80]:

- "Vicious Murderer Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 22.07.51: 3) *(Malatya, 1951)*
- "Bus Hijacked" (Cumhuriyet, 11.06.52: 5) *(Gaziantep, 1952)*
- "Bandit Chief Surrenders in Malatya" (Cumhuriyet, 19.10.53: 3) *(Malatya, 1953)*
- "A bandit gang in Muş murdered 6 people during an ambush of a group of 15 people (…)" (Ulunay, 1953: 2) *(Muş: 1953)*

Indeed, newspapers reporting on the activities of Kurdish bandits – from murder, robbery, smuggling and kidnapping to their capture by the Gendarme dead or alive – had already turned into an ordinary part of daily life in the 1950s:

- "Gunfight with Bandits in Diyarbakır" (Cumhuriyet, 15.10.54: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1954)*
- "Bandit that Killed Gendarme Escapes" (Milliyet, 31.10.55: 5) *(Diyarbakır: 1955)*
- "Bloody Robbery between Siirt and Mardin" (Cumhuriyet, 16.05.56: 3) *(Siirt, Mardin, 1956)*
- "Hunt for Bandits in East" (Cumhuriyet, 27.07.57: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1957)*
- "Bandits on Mardin Road Sack 100 Travellers" (Ulunay, 1958a: 3) *(Mardin: 1958)*
- "Twenty-Two Bandits Captured in South: Twenty-two bandits, who were on the run after committing crimes of murder, highway robbery and rape in the Southern provinces, have been captured." (Milliyet, 08.12.1959: 1) *(Adıyaman: 1959)*

[80] For the whole list of the headlines in the national printed press on banditry incidents in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces of Turkey between 1950 and 1980, see: Appendix I.

Despite the news heralding the capture of the Eastern bandits dead or alive, there were further hundreds of brigands operating in the Eastern countryside:

"Four More Bandits Captured in Southeast: Many More Remain in Eastern and Southeastern Mountains" (Milliyet, 11.12.59: 3) *(Adıyaman: 1959)*

As if the news stories on the clashes between bandits and the Gendarme were reporting the individual skirmishes of an unnamed national war, local aghas were narrated as the principal abettors of the *rebels*, while the Gendarmes were reaching every day the sacred level of *martyrdom*:

- "Bandits of Salihli: Bandits, who had avoided capture by the Gendarme for 5 years in Diyarbakır, surrender after the arrest of leader Zülfü Agha" (Demirtaş, 1960: 3) *(Diyarbakır: 1960)*
- "Turkish Soldier Martyred in Clash with Syrian Bandits" (Milliyet, 28.06.61: 1) *(Diyarbakır: 1961)*

The headlines of the daily newspapers in the 1960s demonstrated indisputably that banditry incidents in the Eastern provinces were not of a sporadic and individual nature, but a massive phenomenon that had been turning from a seemingly temporary endemic in the 1950s into a permanent epidemic in the 1960s:

- "In the last three months, eight incidents of robbery occurred in the region around Diyarbakır, Siirt and Bitlis during which bandits hijacked 25 cars, robbed 113 passengers and stole 78 thousand Turkish Lira." (Milliyet, 30.12.1961: 5) *(Diyarbakır, Siirt, Bitlis: 1961)*
- "Bandit: No Surrender until Amnesty Granted" (Cumhuriyet, 31.12.61: 1) *(Siirt, 1961)*

While audiences in Western Turkey were feeling dizzy from the injection of raw violence into their moral veins by daily bandit news, the targets of bandits varied:

- "Bandits Begin to Rob Smugglers" (Cumhuriyet, 06.01.62: 1) *(Southeastern Borders, 1962)*
- "Head of Fugitive Bandit Crushed by Rock" (Milliyet, 03.02.62: 3) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Five Masked Bandits Rob Three Americans" (Milliyet, 06.03.62: 1) *(Diyarbakır: 1962)*
- "Three Bandits in Soldier Outfits Rob Wealthy Person" (Milliyet, 12.03.62: 3) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Bandit Robs Three Teachers" (Milliyet, 14.05.62: 7) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Six Bandits Hold 14 Peasants for Ransom in Mountains" (Milliyet, 27.06.62: 1) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Bandits Flee Towards Iraqi Border" (Milliyet, 01.07.62: 1) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Bandits in Bitlis, after raiding two villages and stealing 14 thousand Turkish Lira, set fire to the mills. (…)" (Milliyet, 11.07.62: 1, 7) *(Bitlis: 1962)*

- "Bandits in East Begin to Kidnap Children" (Cumhuriyet, 14.07.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- "Bandits Rob Three Highway Work Sites" (Milliyet, 17.07.62: 7) *(Hakkari: 1962)*

The security forces of the State, on the other side of the issue, appeared blatantly impotent in dealing with the rising banditry epidemic:

- "Despite constant pursuit by mobile Gendarme troops in the Siirt region, a group of ten armed bandits were able to carry out three robberies last night on the Tatvan-Norşin highway. (…) Bandit raids on villages that began one week ago in Bitlis (…) continue." (Milliyet, 18.07.62: 7) *(Siirt, Bitlis, Van: 1962)*
- "Robberies Continue in East: While Minister of Internal Affairs Meets with Governors in Tatvan, 4 Bandits Block Highway 7-8 km Away, Rob 60" (Milliyet, 29.07.62: 1, 7) *(Bitlis: 1962)*
- "15 Bandits Hijack Eight Trucks on Highway between Malatya and Elazığ" (Milliyet, 12.08.62: 1, 3) *(Elazığ: 1962)*
- "Petroleum Exploration Camp in Diyarbakır Raided and Robbed by Masked Brigands" (Cumhuriyet, 29.10.62: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1962)*
- "Convoy of 30 People Robbed by Two Bandits in Siirt" (Cumhuriyet, 02.11.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*

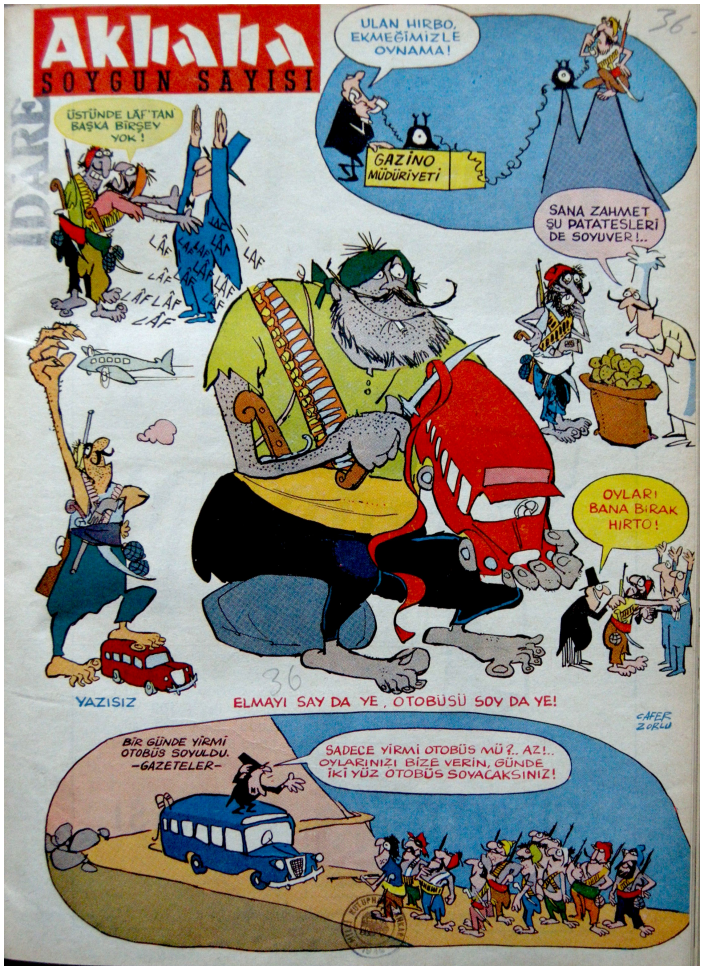
The news reported that bandits were indicted for being murderers, smugglers, robbers, rapists, fugitives, deserters, and/or assailants:

- "11 Bandits Captured in South East: (…) Three Indicted for Murder, Four Accused of Smuggling. (…) 120 Names on Gendarme's Capture List. (…) More than Half of Listed Bandits are Murderers, Fugitives, Robbers and Assailants." (Milliyet, 29.05.63: 1, 7) *(Van, Muş, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Mardin: 1963)*
- "Leader of Karagöz Gang Captured Smuggling Opium to Iran" (Milliyet, 31.07.63: 3) *(Van: 1963)*

According to news reporting on the region, bandits were clashing not only with the State forces and peasants, but also amongst themselves to share out the regions for control. As the epidemic spread from mountains to highways, moreover, everybody who traveled in the east, including State officials, had become natural targets for bandits:

- "Two Gendarme Soldiers Shot in Brigand Hunt" (Cumhuriyet, 02.11.64: 1) *(Siirt, 1964)*
- "Bandits Wanted for Robbery of Three Drivers Seriously Injure Commander" (Cumhuriyet, 09.09.65: 7) *(Batman, 1965)*
- "Two Bandit Gangs Clash" (Milliyet, 03.01.66: 1) *(Siirt: 1966)*
- "(…) Bandits hijack cars by blocking highway. The sad side of the incident is that the Gendarme commander of the province of Van (…) was among those who were robbed." (Ulunay, 1966a: 2) *(Bingöl: 1966)*

- "Bandits with Automatic Weapons Block Road in Broad Daylight: 50 People Robbed on Muş-Tatvan Highway"[81] (Milliyet, 02.07.67: 1, 7) *(Muş: 1967)*
- "10 Bandits in Gendarme Uniforms Rob 30 Passengers" (Cumhuriyet, 28.09.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Bandits Flay Agha" (Cumhuriyet, 12.09.69: 1) *(Bitlis, 1969)*
- "(…) 10 people were killed in the four-hour bloody skirmish between two bandit gangs." (Milliyet, 29.09.69: 7) *(Bitlis: 1969)*
- "Southeastern People Concerned with Abundance of Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 17.10.69: 5) *(Southeastern Regions, 1969)*



The popularity of the banditry theme was at its peak from the second half of the 1960s. The cover of the magazine *Akbaba* above is for its special 'Robbery Issue'. (Akbaba, 01.09.1965)

In the 1970s, once public order had been broken in the whole country in both the rural and urban realms, the banditry epidemic in the Kurdish provinces appeared to be on the decline due to daily military operations, regular state of siege announcements and the establishment of commando units. In fact, the 'ordinary'

[81] It was even claimed that the same bandits, who robbed 50 passengers along the Muş-Tatvan highway, threatened and mocked the State in their interviews with journalists. (Ulunay, 1967a: 2)

crimes of bandits were becoming less visible in the public sphere as the country was, itself, in the midst of wholesale chaos:

- "While Minister Announces, 'No Bandits Remain in Mountains', Two Buses Assaulted" (Milliyet, 18.07.70: 1, 9) *(Diyarbakır, 1970)*
- "4 Armed Bandits Hijack Two Trucks" (Cumhuriyet, 11.08.71: 7) *(Erzurum, 1971)*
- "Captured in Woman's Outfit" (Cumhuriyet, 09.02.72: 1) *(Mardin, 1972)*
- "3 Trucks Robbed" (Cumhuriyet, 14.08.73: 7) *(Elazığ, 1973)*
- "Samedo and Gang Return to Murder and Robbery" (Milliyet, 28.07.74: 5) *(Siirt, 1974)*
- "7 People that Robbed 15 Cars Captured" (Milliyet, 09.10.75, p. 1) *(Ardahan, 1975)*
- "5 Mounted Bandits with Automatic Weapons Raid Village in Erzurum, Kill 3 and Gravely Injure 2" (Milliyet, 22.09.77: 14) *(Erzurum, 1977)*

Now, all these various banditry incidents that received widespread media coverage provide a rough, but initial picture on the space and the time associated with the realization of the banditry phenomenon in modern Turkey. Regarding the spatial aspect of the phenomenon, all incidents that were nominated as banditry in the national printed press between 1950 and 1980 occurred almost exclusively in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey.[82] Within the region, moreover, the province of Siirt appeared as the heart of bandit activities and of the military operations of the State against them, not only due to its formerly larger borders as a province, but also because of its geographical position at the center of the intersection of various Kurdish provinces. Indeed, Siirt hosted the most notorious prison of the period and reporters competed with each other to interview the famous captured bandits (such as Davudo) who were kept in Siirt prison.[83] For the temporal side, on the other hand, the frequency of the appearance of news reporting banditry incidents demonstrates that the endemic of banditry, which had begun to appear in the 1950s, had gradually turned into an epidemic in the 1960s and suddenly disappeared in the late 1970s. The empirical data, in this respect, shows that the banditry phenomenon had reached its zenith in the first half of the 1960s. All those fundamental points relating to the space

[82] For the exceptions, i.e. the banditry incidents that received media coverage and occurred outside of the Eastern and Southeastern provinces of Turkey between 1950 and 1980, see: Appendix I.
[83] For such an interview, see: (Kılıççıoğlu, 1963: 5)

and the time of occurrence of the banditry phenomenon equally beg for an explanation.

Apart from the temporal and spatial aspects of the given phenomenon, the 'ordinary' crimes of Kurdish bandits published daily in the national newspapers were reconstructed in the national public opinion within the rigidly restricted framework of the 'Eastern' question. Thus, the discourses radiated from the columns of the national newspapers over both the 'Eastern' question and the 'Eastern' banditry should be analyzed in tandem.

1. The Rediscovery of the 'Eastern' Question in the National Printed Press

"Marginality, too, can become part of the heart of things, precisely because of its asserted marginalization in relation to the heart of things." (Green, 2005: 2)

The massive rise in banditry incidents in the Kurdish provinces from the 1950s onwards drew the attention of the Western public towards the Eastern regions in an unprecedented scale.[84] As reporters had begun to visit the region, their articles, interviews and photographs competed with each other to introduce those 'uncivilized', 'eccentric', 'underdeveloped', 'neglected' and finally 'totally forgotten' lands to the audience. In particular, the photo-interviews published in national newspapers by various novelists and journalists, such as Mahmut Makal, Yaşar Kemal and Fikret Otyam, were shaking the Western public by making the poverty of the region visible, thus introducing the Kurdish question to public discussion through only one of its faces – *hunger*. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110)

[84] One of the earlier examples of the interest of the Western press in the Eastern regions was the article series of Bahri Turgud Okaygün, published in *Cumhuriyet* in 1937. (Okaygün, 1937)

While the reporters of the Western national press traveled around the Kurdish regions, they wrote articles that were painting the East not only as an underdeveloped world in which Turkish was an unknown language, but also as a superstitious and wild one. Just like the stories of the 17th and 18th century European writers on the Far East or America, those articles were openly propagating a racist discourse and the authors' blatant ignorance about the region was, in fact, reflecting the existent alienation of the rest of the country from the Kurdish regions. A Milliyet reporter, for instance, was openly making Êzidîs a target for genocide by the Muslim majority by announcing that:

> "In Anatolia, Those Sacrificing Humans for Worship Still Exist: The prayers of Êzidîs who reside around Siirt begin with Satan-worship. For Êzidîs, sacrificing a Muslim is equivalent to acquiring a great merit in God's sight." (Deniz, 1955: 3)

In the 1960s, another reporter in a series of interviews that were published in the same newspaper narrated Êzidîs as those who sacrificed Muslim children for their Satan worship *back in the old days*. (Çapın, 1962 (I, II, III): 3) In a similar vein, a Cumhuriyet reporter introduced the Êzidî people to the Western Turkish audience as the demonists and the bandits of the East, a barbaric race that subsisted on pillage and brigandage:

> "Demonists: (…) The contradictory beliefs of the Demonists that were totally composed of trash have fallen behind for 1,000, 2,000 years simply because they have lived outside of civilization. The officials and the public servants of the region stated that Êzidîs are wild in nature, but largely harmless human beings. (…) The servants of Satan that resided in the mountains of Sincar, according to scientists, were, however, more bloodthirsty than the African Negros. And their means of subsistence have been banditry and highway robbery for centuries." (Çetiner, 1964: 6)

Those racist columns were, indeed, reflecting the mentality in the West of the country that was shared both by State officials and the ordinary people who were totally alien to the Kurdish regions. In this respect, a letter from several substitute teachers – who were working in the Southeastern regions in lieu of their military

service – in which they describe their adverse working conditions, exemplifies the hostile alienation of the Western audience towards the Kurdish people:

> "For the many of us who work in the villages at the frontier, we do not, as you stated in your notorious article, solely struggle against ignorance. We are fighting against a people who make smuggling and banditry their profession, who do not value the lives of humans as much as they do those of chickens, who take gunshots as their bedtime lullabies, and who, as a matter of their loyalty to their Redhead sect[85], condone the presentation of their wives and daughters to others. And this struggle, according to us, has a more vital significance than that against ignorance." (Ulunay, 1960b: 3)

Ulunay, the columnist that published the letter, replied that ignorance was the main cause of all those troubles in the Eastern regions and protested to those substitute teachers that they should have taken their duties as being an ideal opportunity for bringing enlightenment to a dark region, instead them of being an exile to hell. The responsibility to eliminate ignorance, the author continued, was on the shoulders of the State and of the educated people of the West. The fact that the 'Eastern' citizen could still not speak Turkish demonstrated, according to Ulunay, that the State had neglected the region for years. (1960b: 3)

Despite their conflicting standpoints, those two discourses, in fact, understood the region through a common, top-down, and alien interventionist attitude. Apart from their mutual denial of the ethno-political identity of the native population, their only divergence occurred in their understanding of the region's problems and the proposed methods of intervention to those problems. In this respect, while the former discourse blamed the very nature of the Eastern people for their own problems and implied the urgent need for a wholesale intervention of the Turkish society that would cover almost every aspect of social life, from economy and crime to religion and ethics, the latter was relying on an assimilationist, and thus

[85] Ulunay protested against these substitute teachers in his next column for their pejorative stereotyping discourse against the Alewi people. (1960c: 3)

an inclusive, discourse of intervention. Still, in this rediscovery of the Kurdish regions by the Western audience, the nuances meant a lot.



The popular theme of 'the golden years of Atatürk' as a period cleansed from all kinds of threats had frequently been used for political opposition against the Governent in the national printed press. The cover of the satirical magazine *Akbaba* (Vulture) above defined the troubles of the country at that time as (i) religious reaction, (ii) internal antagonism among politicans, and (iii) public disorder in the Kurdish regions represented here by a bandit figure: "Newspapers: 'August 30 Victory Day Celebrated in Whole Country'; 'Atatürk: 'Did I leave the homeland to you like this?" (Akbaba, 30.08.1962)

Another columnist also found the indifference of the State in the region as the main cause of the 'Eastern' people's troubles. As he called for public investment for the construction of the region's infrastructure, the author, however, argued that this indifference had begun with the death of Atatürk in 1938. (Onur, 1962: 3) While the author was declaring that the 'Eastern' people were more than happy during the rule

of this "greatest leader of the Turkish nation", he must have confused the tears of pain with those of joy, as it was, at least in its late history, the most bloody period in the recent history of the northern Kurdistan.[86]

Many articles continued to be published in the national printed press during the 1960s, the common ground between them being a strong emphasis on the social handicaps of, and the State's apathy towards, the region. Indeed, the daily newspapers of the period were full of personal stories that were appealing to the hearts of the readers to understanding the region and its dynamics. In one of those stories, a primary school teacher who worked in the Eastern regions was underlining the dangerous lack of educational institutions by expressing the 'sad truth' that the native people of his village knew neither Atatürk nor Turkish nor the Turkish flag. (Milliyet, 07.10.62: 5) Others were illuminating the Western audience on the Eastern regions by explaining how 'ignorance', 'smuggling' and 'banditry' had been ordinary parts of Eastern daily life.[87] Therefore, it was occasionally argued that for the resolution of the 'Eastern' problem, the two main components of which were ignorance and poverty, enhancing the national education and industrialization in the region should have been the main policies of the State. (Arslan, 1967: 2) In other words, while the Kurdish question was reconstructed as the question of 'the underdevelopment of the Eastern regions', it was repeatedly argued that the problems of poverty and ignorance were leading to the rise of the oppressive system of aghas, banditry and Kurdism in the region. (Tekin, 1967: 2)

[86] For similar praise of the one-party period as the golden age of the East, when bandits were eliminated with ease, see: (Beşer, 1966: 5)
[87] For several of those stories, see: (Milliyet, 13, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28.10.62: 5) (Çapın, 1964b: 5) (Dallı, 1962 (V): 7)



The ignorance of the upper classes living in the Western cities over the East of the country was satirized in one of the covers of the magazine *Akbaba* in 1966: "- Dear, where are the Eastern villages?', -'The Eastern villages… Kadıköy, Erenköy, Çengelköy, Vaniköy *(the district names of Istanbul included the word of village)*, all Eastern villages." (the phrase in italics added) (Akbaba, 07.09.1966)

In the 1960s the public interest in the Eastern regions was so immense, dense and curious that any article exposing the social dynamics and norms of the Eastern people had a tremendous impact on Western public opinion. In other words, if the topic of 'rural life' was the trend of the day, the 'Eastern' peasants and bandits were its most favorite subject. While Dursun Akçam's award-winning article *Our Mothers* was, for instance, displaying the grim reality experienced by 'Eastern' women (Akçam, 1963: 3), Western readers were commonly feeling bewilderment, embarrassment, guilt, and pity all at once. (Milliyet, 21.12.63: 1) Indeed, the advertisements for Akçam's following article series on the suffering in the lives of the 'Eastern' children were literally marketing one-hundred-percent guaranteed tears

for the reader. (Milliyet, 20.12.63: 1) (Akçam, 1964: 5) In the following years, Akçam would continue to document 'the suffering in the East' by exposing the desperate lives of the 'Eastern' peasants who had been caught in the crossfire between the Government's apathy, the Gendarme's oppression, the aghas' cruelty, and the bandits' pillage. (Akçam, 1965a, 1965b, 1968: 5)

For our analysis, the interest of the national printed press in the Kurdish nomadic communities (alias Koçers), which had been in a constant natural contact with bandits, is particularly crucial. After their first appearance in the public sphere as the native villagers of most of the famous and infamous bandits, Kurdish nomadic peasants were reconstructed as the innocent victims of darkness and ignorance by the national printed press. In the early 1960s, for instance, a series of articles were published in Milliyet that told of 'the heroic cultural war' initiated by three university students to educate and enlighten the nomadic tribes of the Eastern regions' wild and remote places. Apart from the subjects of total illiteracy, the immense influence of religion, the extreme gender inequality and the apathy of the State in the region (Milliyet, 21, 22, 23.12.64: 5), the unity and the conflict of those two discourses that were discussed above reappear here. On the one hand, the Directorate of National Education in Siirt was expecting at least two major successes from 'the cultural war' of those three volunteers: "First of all, absolutely teach them to 'go out' in a civilized manner by constructing a public toilet, and secondly, make them sing the Turkish national anthem." (Milliyet, 20.12.64: 5)

By adopting that politically correct discourse of the period – the main columns of which were the notions of civilization and Turkish nationalism – the national printed press was reproving the exclusionist one. The words used by the Gendarme in the region to discourage the volunteers from their visit to the nomadic

tribes were, in this respect, quoted in a disapproving tone: "They are the Kurdish *millet*, they come to no good. They don't speak Turkish, either. It would be better to make yourself comfortable here, instead of visiting them." (Milliyet, 20.12.64: 5)

Those words, as the volunteers later understood, were, in fact, confessions, as the Gendarme did not want them to get in contact with the nomadic peasants so as to hide their own daily oppression of the native villagers. It was, therefore, courageously concluded that the only role that the State had played in the region so far was to repress and exploit the nomadic tribes. The articles, however, were putting the responsibility of this crime solely on the shoulders of local State officials by reasoning that the representatives of the State in the region were exacting their revenge on those ignorant and defenseless peasants for their having to work in the most remote and destitute places in the country.[88] (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5) As it was argued in those articles, the villagers, furthermore, were also under pressure from the law, for the local authorities were forcing them to leave the lands on which they had been camping for centuries, as they had no official certificate of ownership. (Milliyet, 22.12.64: 5) When the nomadic communities expressed their desire to settle down, it was observed that the State officials were never convinced of their sincerity. The words of a local state official clearly reflected the State's view of those Kurdish nomadic tribes as hazardous wastes that should urgently be eliminated: "Don't listen to them, not one of them would like to settle down. Would they find a better livelihood than this? They do every kind of smuggling and on the top of that, they do not pay any taxes. Does the Government have any interest in aiding them?" (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5)

[88] The political elite was also from time to time blaming the local officials for the problems of the region: "The 'Bandit' Issue was Discussed again in the Senate Yesterday: The Officials in the East were Accused" (Cumhuriyet, 19.05.67: 7)

The authors, indeed, painted a radical world to describe the nomadic communities in which 'smuggling' had been one of the major sources of income (Milliyet, 24.12.64: 5) and honor murder had always been an ordinary occurrence. (Milliyet, 23.12.64: 5) To make matters worse, it was, moreover, observed that they were blatantly supporting their own bandits to use them in their intra-tribal conflicts. (Milliyet, 22.12.64: 5) According to those articles, finally, unlike the big landowners, the aghas of the Kurdish nomadic villages were by no means the absolute rulers of their communities. Indeed, almost all of the interviews conducted with the nomadic peasants commonly demonstrated that the main role of the agha in those communities was to implement the village's communication with the town and the State, and in return for this role they played for their community, they earned a relatively small amount of income. (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5) For our analysis, in this respect, one of the fundamental implications of those interviews with the Kurdish nomadic communities is that it is imperative to question the classical image of the agha as the traditional villain of the Kurdish rural world.

As the reporters, however, traveled from the nomadic tribes to the settled villages in the Eastern regions, the notion of big landownership reappeared. Through the blatant support of the central Government, it was observed, aghas were forcefully seizing the lands of peasants by relying both on the law and the security forces of the State. Aside from using the State apparatus, landlords were also using bandits as their own means of intimidation and suppression to seize the lands of peasants. In 1965, for instance, it was reported that 280 peasants were obliged to emigrate from their villages in Siirt due to the oppression of bandits that worked for a local landlord. (Milliyet, 13.06.65: 1)

Therefore, while most of the Kurdish peasants were becoming workers on their own lands, those who succeeded in holding on to their lands were destitute of any modern technological agricultural equipment. (Akçam, 1965a: 5) In addition to the extreme corruption of local State institutions – through favoritism, nepotism and bribery – that was working in favor of big landownership, the authors presented the image of the State in the eyes of the native population as a mere means of exploitation and oppression. The definition of the main functions of the Government in the Eastern regions given by one of the interviewed peasants was more than self-explanatory: "The Government writes papers, takes money, beats and imprisons men." (Akçam, 1965b: 5)

Apart from the mainstream media, new journals and newspapers that stemmed from the political dynamism of the 1960s dared to discuss 'the Eastern question' from a much more critical perspective. Until the arrest of many Kurdish notables on June 28, 1963, the groundbreaking ideas of Kurdish intellectuals on 'the Eastern question' had begun to appear in the public space through the journals *Silvan'ın Sesi* ('Voice of Silvan', 1962), *Dicle-Fırat* ('Tigris-Euphrates', 1962-63), *Deng* ('Voice', 1963), *Roja Newé* ('the New Day', 1963) and *Reya Rast* ('the True Path', 1963).[89] In addition to the journal *İleri Yurt* ('The Advanced Country') (1958-59) that published a Kurdish poem by Musa Anter and caused a national controversy in 1959, *Barış Dünyası* ('the World of Peace', 1962-71) could be designated as the first relatively free platform of discussion for the Kurdish question. Next to the articles representing the official State discourse on 'the Eastern question', the journal hosted the writings of Kurdish intellectuals and published the most radical perspectives of the period on the Kurdish question. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2120-

[89] The second wave of the proliferation of journals and newspapers published by Kurdish activists and intellectuals would occur in the second half of the 1970s.

2122) All of those journals and newspapers were banned in 1963, and any other attempt to discuss the Kurdish question was harshly suppressed.[90] Meanwhile, the racist discourse against Turkey's Kurdish population was reaching its climax in the nationalist media. In the newspaper *Ötüken*, Nihal Atsız was, for instance, openly threatening the Kurds to leave the country; otherwise, Atsız wrote, they would share the same destiny of the Armenians. In a similar vein, when İsmet Tümtürk in his article 'Remedy for the Eastern Problem' (National Path) published in the journal 'Milli Yol' proposed the settlement of Kyrgyz immigrants with their armed tribal structures into these provinces for the ultimate resolution of the 'Eastern' question (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2129), the Kurdish MPs would propose to open an investigation over that notorious article during the Assembly meetings. (National Assembly Records, 1962c: 445)

In the 1970s, when the Turkish reader encountered the iconoclastic studies of Ismail Beşikçi and Mehmet Emin Bozarslan on the 'Eastern question of Turkey', the columnists of the national printed press had begun to examine the problems of the East through a much more critical and courageous perspective. In their columns, the authors not only discussed the traditional characteristics of the Eastern regions, but also the State's repression of the Eastern people that had openly exposed itself during the commando operations launched 'against' banditry. (Yavuz, 1970a: 2) Indeed, in this reevaluation of the 'Eastern question', it was even claimed that the natural balance of power between local aghas, sheikhs and bandits had been broken by the enforced exile of hundreds of aghas and sheiks and that the State that could by no means restore the broken balance by using its security forces. (Yavuz, 1970b: 2) As the Eastern people were becoming more and more conscious of their constitutional

[90] For instance, the journal *Yeni Akış* ('the New Flow'), which reserved its first volume for discussing the Kurdish question, would be banned after the publication of its fourth volume. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2128)

rights, the columnists urged that there could be no further delay in the resolution of 'the Eastern question.' (Yavuz, 1970b: 2)

2. Banditry Discourses of the National Printed Press

One of the central themes of the columns in the national press from the 1950s onwards was the rise of banditry incidents in the 'Eastern' regions. Following the banditry trend of the period, many columnists had begun to write about the late Ottoman bandits first as a popular nostalgic theme, then as a scientific subject. While the bandits of the early Republic were being narrated as 'the enemies of the Turkish nation', the massive emergence of banditry in the Kurdish regions was interpreted as a temporary, sporadic occurrence. The ethical role that most of the columnists embraced had always been constituted from a nostalgic degradation of their contemporary bandits as mere criminals in comparison to their predecessors, an elitist disapproval of the people's admiration towards the bandits and an orientation of the common people towards admiring the Gendarme instead. To counter the transformation of the Kurdish banditry endemic into an epidemic, the columnists of the national printed press produced a threefold reaction by (i) accusing the Government of incompetence, (ii) getting confused about the native support base of banditry, and (iii) proposing harsher methods of combatting the phenomenon, from the sentencing of flogging and capital punishment for the crimes of brigandage to the organization of greater military operations.

a. The Reconstruction of the Historical Social Bandit Myth

The proliferation of banditry incidents in the Eastern provinces of Turkey motivated the publication of articles and stories on the history of banditry in the national printed press. The bandit legends of the Ottoman or the early Republican periods, therefore, gradually replaced the legends of the Ottoman urban bullies ('kabadayı', 'külhanbeyi') and wrestlers ('pehlivan') that had been one of most popular themes found in national newspapers in previous years.[91] In the following decades, the bandit figures of the Ottoman and the early Republican periods would remain one of the most favored subjects for columnists of the national printed press.[92]

i. 'Bandit cannot be the Ruler of the World': Ottoman Banditry Nostalgia and Banditry as the Catalyst of Ottoman Decay

From the 1950s onwards, a vast number of article series were published in the national press on the various bandit figures of the Ottoman Empire. For instance, the columnist Refi Cevad Ulunay, who repeatedly urged authorities to take harsher measures against the rise of 'Eastern' banditry, wrote a series of articles over the course of a year on the life story of Balçıklı Ethem, a famous bandit in the late Ottoman Empire. (Ulunay, 1954-1955) The series became so much popular that it was re-published as a book in 1955. Despite such nostalgic praise of certain Ottoman banditry figures, most of the bandits were, mainly, narrated as the principal enemies of peasants, whereas the officials of the Ottoman State were pictured as the heroes of

[91] For an earlier series of stories on the Aegean bandit theme, published in *Cumhuriyet*, see: (Sevük, 1944a, 1944b)

[92] For two examples of bandit legends that were published as a series of stories in the newspapers *Cumhuriyet* and *Milliyet*, see: (Koçu, 1962: 4) (Bayraktar, 1967: 3)

the poor in society, as was the case for the narratives on the famous bandit Saraçoğlu Ahmet in Konya. (Vural, 1952: 4)

Even when the columnists depicted certain Ottoman bandits as the friends of the people, the *Ottoman banditry nostalgia* in the national press at that time was emphasizing the predestined end of rebelling against the State. Regarding the life story of Katırcıoğlu Mehmet, a famous bandit of the 17th century Ottoman Empire, the bandit's ultimate appeal for mercy to the Ottoman Sultan and his acquisition of the flag office of Beyşehir as a reward for his conciliation with the State had always been the main theme of the articles about him despite the fact that he was narrated, just like Köroğlu, as the hero of the poor peasants and the cruelty of the Ottoman sultanate had repeatedly been emphasized as the main cause of his rebellion. (Samancıgil, 1950: 6) (Vural, 1951: 4, 1954: 4) (Milliyet, 19.06.53: 4) (Burak, 1970: 3) (Felek, 1976: 14) In line with the old Turkish idiom 'a bandit cannot be the ruler of the world', the common thesis of almost all the historical narratives was on the inescapable surrender, one way or another, of those who broke the law in the face of the supreme and eventually undefeatable state authority. The authors were, of course, implying the same inescapable destiny of death or prison for their contemporary bandits. (Ulunay, 1953: 2)

In the early 1970s, several historical articles examining the banditry pandemic in the chaotic 17th century Ottoman society had begun to be published. Bülent Daver, for instance, interpreted the Celâli Rebellions as idiosyncratic forms of revolt against the central power that were directly motivated by people's resentment of the existing public order. (Daver, 1966: 2) Taken from his book 'The History of Backwardness in Turkey', Ismail Cem, on the other hand, published a series of articles analyzing the Celâli Revolts both as the main result of and the principal

catalyst for the Ottoman decay that led, in turn, to the present backwardness of the Turkish society. (Cem: 1970: 7) According to Cem, the main reason for the Celâli Revolts was the emergence of unemployed masses that were directly stemmed from the population growth and the rise of landless peasants due to the corruption of the land order both by tax farming (*iltizam*) and usury. (Cem, 29.01.1970: 7) At the end of a series of rebellions by those unemployed masses, Cem argued, a new system of big landownership had emerged by which former bandits had become the principal landlords of the following period. (Cem, 31.01.1970: 7) In the handover of land ownership from the State to big landlords, Cem wrote, banditry, therefore, played a critical role. As opposed to the preceding articles and stories on the Ottoman bandits, the analyses of Daver and Cem on the Celâli Revolts, right after Uluçay's classics (1944, 1955), were among the first of their kind by their attempt to examine the role of banditry in the Ottoman Empire from a scientific perspective.

ii. 'The Enemies of the Turkish Nation': 'Traitor Bandits' in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Periods

The first historical bandit figure of the late Ottoman Empire that led to a heated debate in the national printed press was the well-known Aegean bandit Çakırcalı Mehmed Efe. While Yaşar Kemal, the author of the bandit myth, had begun to study the subject by conducting interviews with the key witnesses of the Çakırcalı event[93], several columnists were warning him not to turn this ferocious criminal into a hero of the people: "I hope that Yaşar Kemal, the author of *Slim Memed*, will display the

[93] Kemal's interview with Colonel Rüştü Kobaş, the leader of the military troop that killed Çakırcalı, was published in *Cumhuriyet* in 1956. (Kemal, 1956)

coin from both its two sides. He would not certainly glorify the murderer of 1019 people…" (Nureddin, 1956: 2)

Still, the national press columnists who were abrogating their contemporary bandits as ferocious criminals were able to embrace the heroic myth for the famous bandits of the past. A columnist, in this respect, narrated Çakırcalı Efe as a special, social type of bandit (instead of a simple criminal) that had become extinct. (Coşar, 1973: 7)

Regarding the founding period of the Republic, the controversy over the role of the Aegean bandits in the resistance movement had been one of the continuous topics of discussion in the national printed press. The contributions made by several of those *zeibeks* towards the resistance, it was commonly argued in the 1930s, led the new Republic not only to forgive their former crimes and treat them as national heroes, but also to transform them from barbaric bandits into civilized men. (Ince, 1936: 7) At the same time, several *efe* figures who had formerly been declared national heroes were, however, easily reconstructed as enemies of the Turkish nation at a time when any kind of opposition against the regime had been harshly suppressed. The famous Demirci Mehmet Efe, for instance, who was forcefully persuaded to participate in the regular army during the resistance, had easily been turned in the 1930s from a national hero into a traitor[94]: "Demirci Efe on Trial: Old Bandit Speaks Out Against Ghazi! Demirci, who formerly shed blood in Denizli, now justifies the reactionaries of Menemen." (Cumhuriyet, 20.04.31: 3)

Perfectly in line with the Kemalist historiography, Çerkez Ethem was reconstructed as a cruel and a self-interested persecutor in the national printed

[94] Another example is the controversy over the role of the Püskülsüz Gang in the national struggle over Bursa province. In this respect, an MP in 1934 blamed the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in his published letter for turning those marauders into national heroes. (Cumhuriyet, 13.09.34: 5)

press.[95] (Milliyet, 06.10.51: 4) For instance, the memoires of Kılıç Ali, Mustafa Kemal's principal military assistant, were published in *Milliyet*, and not only painted Ethem as a traitor for his blind passion for becoming the sole leader of the resistance movement and his selfish refusal to put his armed organization, Kuva-yi Seyyare (Mobile Forces), under the command of Ankara (Milliyet, 24 – 30.10.51: 1, 7), but also legitimized the Independence Tribunals as the nation's natural means of self-defense against internal and external enemies. (Milliyet, 09 – 14.12.51: 1, 7) Among those internal threats, Kılıç Ali particularly emphasized the harm that banditry, which was inflated by deserters and the indifference of the Government in Istanbul towards the persecution of peasants, inflicted upon the people and the resistance movement.[96] (Milliyet, 13.11.51: 7) This mainstream discourse, which claimed that the Independence Tribunals were a necessary evil for fighting against banditry in the founding period of the State, would echo even in the 1970s. (Velidedeoğlu, 1970: 2)

In a similar vein, İsmet İnönü, in one of his speeches in the National Assembly in the early 1960s, would defend the 'Takrir-i Sükun' law ('Procuring the Peace') that was behind the Independence Tribunals as the most appropriate measure against the banditry that had infested the entire country. (National Assembly Records, 1962a: 41) In short, it was repeatedly argued that the national struggle for independence was launched not only against imperialist powers, but also against banditry as an internal threat to the emerging Turkish nation. (Çölaşan, 1981: 5) In

[95] In the state discourse, Ethem had, for a long time, remained the central figure for treason. For instance, the newspaper Cumhuriyet, which had labeled Ethem in 1930 as one the covert architects of the Ararat Rebellion (Cumhuriyet, 10, 13.07.30: 4), wrote in 1935 that he was captured with his gang in Syria as he was preparing for an assassination attempt (motivated by Italian actors) against Atatürk. (Cumhuriyet, 27.10.35: 1) The accusation turned into a trial of various suspects in 1936. For the whole text of the indictment, see: (Cumhuriyet, 08.02.36: 7 – 13)

[96] It was, however, obvious that Ethem, the famous Aegean militia leader, was, for a certain period, the principal competitor of Mustafa Kemal for the leadership of the resistance movement and the Independence Tribunals had been used not only to suppress the Kurdish rebellions, but also to intimidate or eliminate the personal competitors of Kemal for the leadership of the emerging state. (Zürcher, 2012: 255)

the State discourse, the term 'banditry' was, however, referring not only to the ordinary crimes of brigands, but also to the political rebellions of the early Republic.

b. Misprediction: 'Eastern' Banditry as Sporadic Individual Incidents

"The age when governors were primarily occupied with the security of a province and hunted for bandits with the Gendarme has long gone." (Felek, 1951: 3)

In the beginning of the 1950s, many columnists in the national press misinterpreted the increasing 'Eastern' banditry incidents as being sporadic and individual in nature. According to these authors, banditry as a mass phenomenon was eliminated through the organized struggle of peasants, as the Republican government – in contradistinction to the Ottoman state's apathy towards the Anatolian *reaya* – had already brought about self-conscious peasants.[97] Under those Republican circumstances, henceforth, banditry could only occur as exceptional sporadic incidents. (Pençe, 1950a: 2) Since highway robbery incidents had continued to appear in the national press, another columnist argued that bandits had changed their methods: As peasants had become, thanks to the Republic, part of self-conscious communities, bandits cunningly decided to move from the mountains to the highways in order to target passengers, instead of the peasants, who had become difficult targets for banditry thanks to their organized nature. (Nevruzoğlu, 1951: 4)

[97] This discursive denial of the Ottoman past was originally indebted to the Republican elite of the one-party period. Yunus Nadi, for instance, was defining the Ottoman State as 'a gang of bandits' that was hostile to people. Only through the Republic, Nadi wrote in 1930, had the State and the people become the same entity. (Nadi, 1930: 1) Indeed, the founding elite of the Republic announced Ankara as the capital of the new state not only to emphasize their rupture from their predecessors, but also to use the ancient adversity between the *askeri*'s Istanbul and the *reaya*'s Anatolia for their own advantage. (Şengül, 2001: 71) Indeed, the hostility towards the Ottoman legacy was intensified in the 1930s to such an extent that the Celâli rebels of the 17th century were described not as ordinary bandits, but 'real Turks revolting against the cruelty of the Ottomans'. (Musa, 1934: 6)

Those ideas were, in fact, clear mispredictions, since banditry had rapidly turned in the following years into a mass phenomenon that would infest all of the Kurdish rural regions. Indeed, banditry had become Turkish cinema's most popular theme of the period, while State officials had begun to either ban or censor such movies for inciting the youth towards banditry. (Kemal, 1961: 3) In his critique of the State's censorship of Turkish cinema, a columnist wrote rather sarcastically:

> "Today, the fact is that there is far more censorship in cinema than there is in theater. Above all, try to make a film with a banditry scenario. Your scenario would immediately be ruled out for creating a desire for imitation. In fact, this idea is justified by the fact that there have been no banditry incidents in the country due to the absence of banditry movies. After all, before the beginning of the 20th century, when cinema had not been invented, banditry was neither heard of nor seen in this country." (Başkut, 1959: 2)

Censorship could not veil the fact that banditry incidents in the Eastern regions were on the rise. In fact, 'run with the bandit and hunt with the Gendarme' had become the most popular kids game of the period and even columnists had begun to convey their political and social messages to their readers through the favorite bandit themes. The adverse working conditions experienced by schoolteachers, for instance, were ridiculed by bandit fables in which bandits give all their money to teachers, instead of robbing them. (Pulur, 1969: 7) While many columnists portrayed politicians or businessmen as bandits in monkey suits (Milliyet, 06.08.62: 2), another one found women, half-mockingly, more dangerous than bandits: "Women are more than dangerous than the bandit, since the bandit demands 'your money or your life.' The woman, on the other hand, demands both your money and your life." (Cem, 1956: 3)

c. The Corruption of Society Discourse: ‘Banditry is Corrupted and the Age of Chivalry is Gone’

In the articles of various columnists who were dedicated to reproducing ethical norms in society, a classical nostalgia existed that disparagingly labeled the present as the doomed corruption of its golden past. Indeed, several authors embraced the bandit myth by narrating the bandits of the past as the heroes of the oppressed, while they denied their contemporary counterparts as mere ferocious criminals; hence, they collectively cried out that ‘the age of chivalry is gone.’ (Felek, 1973: 2)

The corruption of banditry was particularly demonstrated through the portrayal of a change in bandits’ behavior towards women and death. Many columnists wrote that the true bandits of the past touched neither the body nor the money of women, while their contemporary counterparts were evil murderers, robbers and rapists that had not even the lowest ethical standards. (Pençe, 1950b: 2, 1951b: 2) (Nevruzoğlu, 1952a: 3, 1952b: 3) (Ulunay, 1958a: 3, 1962c: 3) In a similar vein, it was repeatedly argued that the formers had become legends in the eyes of the people due to their chivalric welcome of their own death, whereas the latters were coward criminals. (Ulunay, 1958b: 3)

d. The Death of the Bandit Myth: ‘Love for Bandits is Shameful and Dangerous’

As banditry incidents, whether in Turkey or abroad, continued to be reported daily in the national press, many columnists questioned people’s love and admiration towards bandits. They found this popular admiration towards brigands, like the Aegean Çakırcalı or the Sicilian Giuliano, shameful and dangerous, since it demonstrated not

only the secret envy of ordinary men for those that had accomplished extraordinary things, but also the anarchic longings within people for rebellion against public order and for the degradation of the Government along with its security forces. (Pençe, 1951a: 2) (Ulunay, 1953: 2) (Altan, 1961a: 2) Burhan Felek, for instance, wrote on the bandit myth that "we amplify bandits in order to degrade the Government." (1964: 4)

When a parent wrote a letter of complaint about the negative effects of the legend of Köroğlu on his children, the authors of the column 'Voice of the People' in the newspaper Milliyet agreed: "How is it possible that an immoral bandit could be a hero, let alone a national one?" (Milliyet, 12.10.51: 2)

It was, however, obvious that the columnists of the Western printed press could in no way understand the meaning of the banditry myth for peasants. An author in Milliyet, for instance, plainly confessed his elitist confusion about the existence of the wealth of legends on simple criminals, whereas the holiness of the Gendarmes, the heroes par excellence, who were martyred everyday for the peace, law and order of the country, had always been neglected. (Ulunay, 1957: 3, 1958b: 3, 1959: 3, 1960a: 3) As the State's struggle against 'Eastern' banditry was an unnamed national war, Ulunay defined the Gendarme, those 'unknown heroes', as "the constant lions of a war in which there can never be armistice or tolerance." (1964c: 3)

Peyami Safa, in a similar vein, declared that the Gendarme had become the true, but unacknowledged heroes of peasants by eliminating the banditry pandemic in the early Republic. (Safa, 1959: 2) Indeed, the author's praise of the one-party period for its success in restoring public order relied on an old argument of the early Republican elite. For instance, the columnist Yusuf Ziya wrote back in the 1930s that

the Gendarme, which was equated with cruelty, suffering and torture in the popular memory of the Ottoman Empire, had become the true heroes of the people in the Republic through its struggle against banditry: "The Republic that turned the slave nation into a master has also saved the high honor of the Turkish Gendarme." (Ziya, 1932: 3)

The Western elite's image of the Gendarme as 'the guardian of order' was juxtaposed with that of 'oppressor' for the Kurdish peasants. Kıvılcımlı brilliantly illustrated the opinion in Kurdistan through citing the native appellation 'yumurtacı' ('egg stealer'), which the peasants traditionally ascribed to the Gendarme. (1992: 412-413) The term was referring to the fact that the Gendarme repressing the Kurdish peasants on any occasion had also expected to be hosted generously, as the tortured and beaten peasants had been required to serve their eggs, milk, bread and sheep to their shameless oppressors. In a similar vein, the heavy taxes that had been taken from the Kurdish peasants after movements of rebellion or incidents of brigandage was called by Kıvılcımlı 'the teeth rent', since the State, having attacked the region like a wolf pack assaulting a herd of sheep, had also charged them with the expenses of its own attack. (1992: 407-408)

e. The Explanations for the Massive Emergence of Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press

Addressing the rise of banditry incidents in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, the reactions of columnists in the national printed press were made up of three main pillars: (i) accusations of impotence against the central Government, (ii) confusion

over banditry's native support base, and (iii) the proposition of harsher methods of struggle.

i. Accusation: 'The Impotence of the Central Government'

In the early 1960s, while the representatives of the Government were underestimating, in their public statements, the true magnitude of the banditry epidemic in the Kurdish provinces in order to avoid criticism from oppositional parties, they had already begun to realize numerous military operations in the region. In contradistinction to those public statements, local authorities were, on the other hand, openly emphasizing the breakdown of public order caused by banditry in the Eastern provinces. Moving on from this obvious contradiction between the public statements of Government officials and those of the local authorities, Çetin Altan argued that banditry was flourishing in the Southeastern regions due to the economic crisis and that the State was neither capable of nor willing to consolidate public order and peace by protecting the lives and properties of the native people, let alone providing humane living conditions in the region. (Altan, 1962a: 2)

Indeed, while various headlines, news stories and columns of the daily newspapers of the period were exposing the impotence of the central Government in the elimination of banditry incidents in the Eastern provinces, they were spontaneously laying bare the true magnitude of the epidemic:

- "By the End of the Railroad, Regions Where Bandits' Rule Begins." (Çapın, 1962 (V): 3)
- "Spreading Terror in East: Mountains Full of Bandits" (Çapın, 1962 (VII): 3)
- "The new Government should take the initiative and tell the persecutors that the secluded roads and mountains are within the borders of the State." (Güresin, 1962a: 1)
- "Today, men of honor, with their hands tied, have fallen prey to malign people; this beautiful country has become the heaven of bandits, robbers and thieves." (Ulunay, 1962a: 3)
- "There is no domestic public peace and order. Bandits in Anatolia kidnap and prey on people." (Ulunay, 1962b: 3)
- "It has been said that 12-year-old kids in the east have started up gangs for highway robberies. As our Government cannot deal with the banditry at the level of Koçero, banditry

has descended, in doing so showing courtesy, to a level that the Government can cope with." (Milliyet, 15.09.62: 1)

- "Rule of Bandits Persists in Eastern Mountains (…)" (Selçuk, 1963: 2)
- "Now, not only the famous bandit Koçero, but also the Minister of Internal Affairs, cannot be found." (Milliyet, 17.10.63: 1)
- "Eastern Provinces Swollen with Bandits: Every day highways are being blocked and buses are being robbed." (Ulunay, 1964b: 3)
- "Brigandage Invades Anatolia (…)" (Ulunay, 1965a: 2)
- "Two Bandits in East Clash for Mountains" (Milliyet, 06.04.66: 3)
- "Ihsan Turunç, a 34-year-old truck driver, who was robbed in Van by bandits, said that he would quit his job, if the activities of the bandits could not be prevented." (Milliyet, 23.10.66: 7)



The magazine *Akbaba* was criticisizing the State's bandit hunts in the East while the rising 'urban banditry' in Istanbul had remained unresolved: "Newspapers: 'Gendarmerie Launches Bandit Hunt in Siirt Mountains'; 'Agha, mountains' comfort is lost... Let's turn back to Istanbul, again!.." (Akbaba, 05.01.1962*)*

In the 1960s, the spread and proliferation of banditry incidents in the Eastern regions was so massive and intensive that the newspaper Milliyet announced at the end of 1966 that the general breakdown of public order had been the main issue of the passing year: "There has been no other year in which public disorder has been

spoken and worried so much. In 1966, bandits are running rampant around not only the mountains and the Anatolian highways, but also the cities." (Milliyet, 01.01.67: 5)



In the magazine *Akbaba*, the Government's impotence in the elimination of banditry was satirized by the allegedly rising juvenile delinquency in the Eastern regions of the country: "Newspapers: 'Kids in East Begin Blocking Highways as Well'; 'Congratulations Haso, your wife has given birth to a bandit." (Akbaba, 26.09.1962)

In the 1960s, columnists had increased their level of criticism against the central Government. Altan, for instance, relied on local testimony when stating in his writing that both the mountains and the highways of the Eastern regions had come under the control of bandits, instead of the Gendarme. (Altan, 1963: 2) Another columnist interpreted the need for a Gendarme escort for safe travel in the Eastern regions as the 'sad truth' of Turkey. (Çapın, 1964a: 1, 7) Indeed, reporters from the

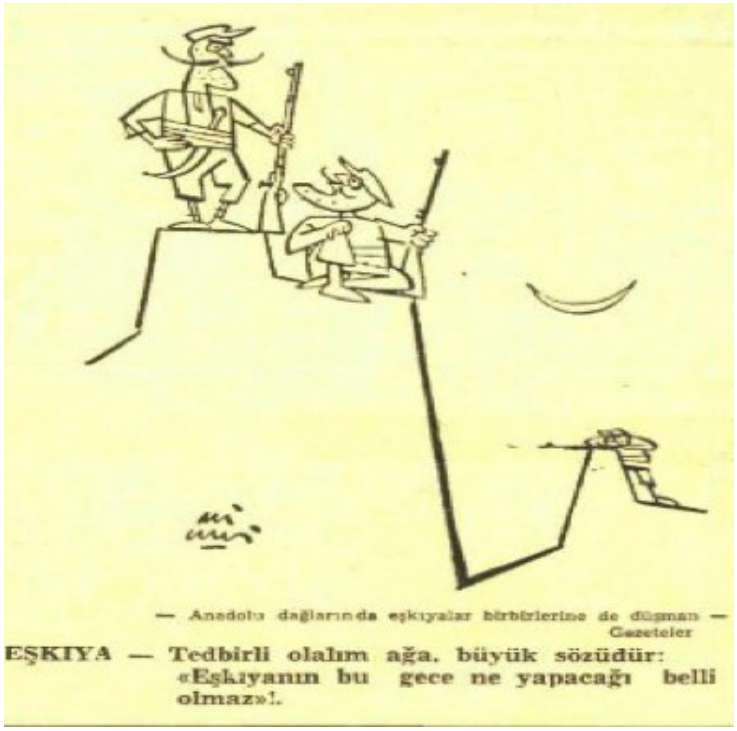
national and international press were occasionally becoming the very victims of banditry incidents in the region. (Milliyet, 04.09.63: 5)

In face of the rising criticism, state officials had begun to search for the usual internal and external enemies whose constant aim was to degrade the authority of the Turkish State. For instance, four bandits carried out a series of robberies in a single day while Kemal Sahir Kurutluoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs between June and October 1962, was only 7-8 km away in a meeting with the governors of the region to discuss measures for the prevention of banditry. The Minister, who found meaning in the time and place of this robbery, declared that this incident, instead of being a simple robbery, was a show of strength against the State that had been designed by the enemies of Turkey. (Milliyet, 29.07.62: 1, 7)



The magazine *Akbaba* (Vulture) was ridiculing the bandit hunts of the Minister of Internal Affairs in one of its covers in 1962 by illustrating him as a hunter singing joyfully after a successful hunt: "Newspapers: 'Minister of Internal Affairs Sahir Kurutluoğlu Turns Back from Bandit Hunt" (Akbaba, 16.08.1962)

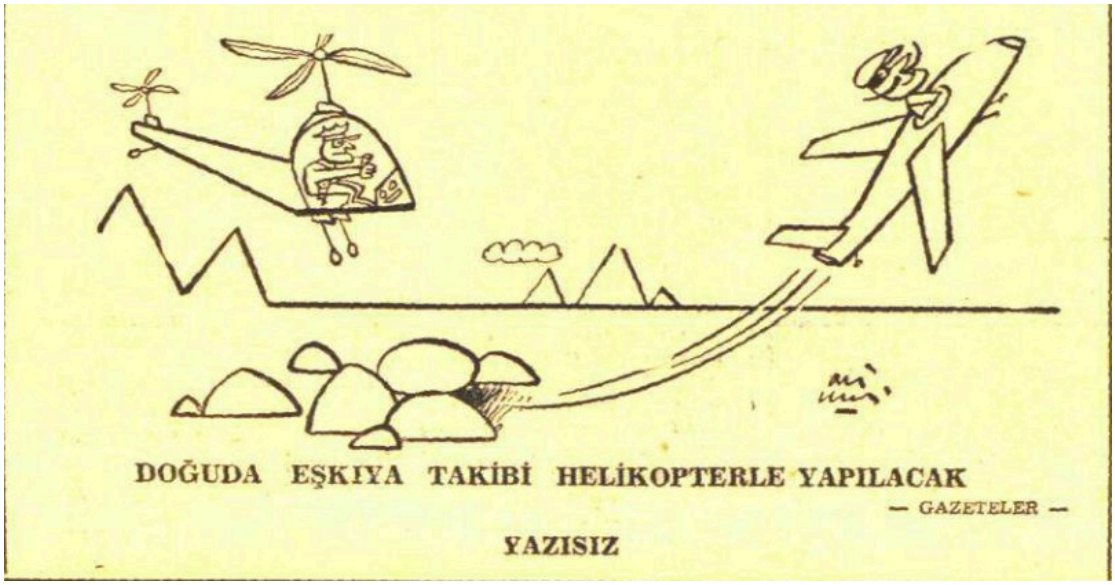
Those individual incidents blatantly demonstrated the impotence of the central Government in dealing with the 'Eastern' banditry epidemic. It was, therefore, proposed by the reporters and columnists of the national printed press that the military forces in the region should be strengthened not only by increasing their numbers, but also by equipping them with the most advanced technical skills and tools. (Cumhuriyet, 18.07.62: 1, 5) Resolving the technical shortcomings of the military forces, according to many columnists, would suffice to eliminate banditry and to consolidate public order in the Eastern regions. (Milliyet, 04.07.62: 3) In addition to the military measures, other columnists emphasized the economic underdevelopment of the region as the main cause of its banditry problem. (Güresin, 1962b: 1, 5) The reconstruction of the Turkish nation-state's Kurdish problem as either a security or an economic problem was self-evident.



The State's impotance in the face of the Eastern brigandage had been criticized in the caricature above emphasizing the internal rivalry among bandit gangs for territorial influence: "Newspapers: 'Bandits in Anatolian Mountains, Enemies of Each Other', 'Bandit: 'Agha, let's be cautious, it is the elder's adage: You will never know what bandit will do tonight!" (Cumhuriyet, 13.12.1966: 1)

Indeed, in 1965, at a time when it was rumored that the Governor of Siirt had been threatened by local brigands to remove the military outposts in the region, columnists announced that banditry in the Eastern provinces should have been dealt with as an act of rebellion against the Republican Government.[98] (Ulunay, 1965b: 2) As the banditry epidemic had remained intact in the late 1960s despite the military measures undertaken by the State, Tarık Zafer Tunaya would accuse the ruling Justice Party (AP) of incompetence in comparison to the qualities displayed during the one-party period of the Republican People's Party (CHP):

"It is imperative to ask to ourselves: In 1924 and thereafter, when there were nothing like as many highways or highway crossings, so many rebellions were suppressed in Atatürk's Turkey. How is it possible that two bandit gangs cannot be suppressed at a time when we have attained much more advanced facilities and equipment in terms of technology, transportation, and communication?" (Tunaya, 1969: 2)



Another caricature emphasizing the impotence of the State against the banditry epidemic tells: "Newspapers: 'Bandit Pursuit in East Realized by Helicopters" (Cumhuriyet, 18.03.67: 1)

[98] In his letter to Ulunay, the Governor of Siirt wrote that the rumors about bandits' threats towards himself were mere fabrications and that banditry incidents in Siirt province had decreased to a large extent not only because of their irreconcilable struggle against bandits, but also because of their drive to develop the region. (Ulunay, 1965c: 2) The reader must have realized that the Governor was integrating into his statement the two lines of State discourse on the Kurdish problem, by defining it both as a security and an economic problem.

ii. Confusion: 'Why do the Peasants Support the Bandits Anyway?'

Apart from stating the impotence of the central Government, many columnists emphasized the support of the native population for the stubborn existence of bandits in the Eastern mountains despite the State's innumerous military operations. Indeed, military officers in the region were particularly underlining such environmental support, whether objective or subjective, to explain the continuation of banditry incidents. A lieutenant commander made the following sincere confession for the newspaper Milliyet which perfectly echoed his successors' statements on the State's disadvantages in its struggle against the PKK:

> "The truth is scary, but they are superior to us. It is imperative to accept that they are superior in physical terms, in the knowledge on the region, in espionage… The environment is not with us, not with the law… They have the authority to shoot the Gendarme readily; we, on the other hand, do not have that authority to shoot them with ease." (Çapın, 1964a: 7)

Through the Western point of view it was understandable that local landlords and smuggler gangs, who had always used bandits to their own advantage, were their principal supporters. (Cumhuriyet, 26.12.61: 1) Indeed, reporters in the region were particularly emphasizing the arrests of aghas for their secret support of bandits. (Milliyet, 21.11.60: 3, 04.07.62: 3) The attitude of peasants towards bandits, however, constituted the principal puzzle for the national printed press: "Riddle: People both Feed and Fear Bandits" (Tokatlı, 1962: 5)

It was truly a puzzle, as those Eastern peasants – who petitioned the central Government innumerous times for them to take action against bandits and even supported the establishment of voluntary troop units that were supposed to be composed of local peasants[99] (Cumhuriyet, 28.12.61: 5) – were the same people that

[99] For an interview presenting the calls by native peasants for help against bandits, see: (Bilgi, 1962: 1, 5)

had begun not only to support the bandits, but also to mythologize some figures among them as their heroes. The explanations varied, but only a few of them concentrated on the State's policies against the banditry epidemic.

Many columnists, in this respect, interpreted peasants' support for bandits as displaying an ignorant and pragmatist attitude, since they both admired the courage of bandits and expected their protection and aid. Others found the support of the native peasants for bandits not a voluntary choice, but forced and inescapable. Otherwise, the reporters argued, they would simply be killed (Milliyet, 08.08.62: 5): "In fact, the people of the southeast stand forthright with the bandits, rather than the Government and the Gendarme; this is because of people's fear of the bandits and their belief in the weakness and incompetence of the security forces in the region." (Cumhuriyet, 28.07.62: 5) In order to sever native support for banditry, the authors proposed, the State should have displayed the bandits as they were – miserable and servile creatures:

> "The bandit copes with a huge State; the peasant reads this movement first and foremost as a great courage. Then, the bandits that fully follow the principles of banditry avoid confrontation with, and even assist as best as they can, the peasant with whom they must always stay in touch. (…) As they will be captured and put in handcuffs, you would see how they are miserable and servile." (Ulunay, 1967a: 2)

Mehmet Mercan, a reporter for Cumhuriyet, who conducted interviews in the province of Siirt in 1967, on the other hand, presented a much more context-sensitive perspective on peasants' support for bandits. According to Mercan, the patronage relationship between aghas, bandits and peasants had for centuries been the main norm of the 'Eastern' provinces where the State scarcely appeared and when it did only through its security apparatuses[100]:

> "Here, peasants give taxes to aghas and bandits that they did not give to the Government. Here, agha is dependent on bandit, bandit on agha, and peasant on both of them. (…) The bandit that

[100] For a similar article, see: (Selçuk, 1967: 2)

cannot protect his peasant can no longer shelter in his region. (…) Bandits were living peacefully in the mountains and the lands that they rule until a short while ago." (Mercan, 1967(I): 5)

For the question 'how did this peaceful coexistence and patronage relationship between aghas, bandits and peasants turn into a wholesale class struggle?', Mercan rightfully indicated the social transformation of the region through urbanization that led to resistance of the old social structure through the massive explosion of banditry incidents:

"Recently, banditry has proliferated to such an extent around Siirt that bandits have begun to attack each others' regions of extortion, burn down villages, abduct peasants and take them to the mountains and to kill them. (…) The 'Immigration of Fear' has begun, from village to town. (…) There are at least three hundred such families in Siirt. Unrest wreaked havoc in Siirt; on top of that unemployment, beggary, robbery, smuggling, prostitution… (…) Officials call this 'urbanization'." (Mercan, 1967(I): 5)

Despite his accurate analysis on the causes of the massive emergence of the banditry phenomenon in the Eastern provinces, Mercan could not present any explanation for the reconstruction of those ferocious criminals into heroic cults in the collective memory of the native population, simply because the State was totally lacking in his analysis except a few notes on the Gendarme's oppression. (Mercan, 1967(II): 5) In contradistinction to their confusion over the peasants' support for bandits, columnists rarely succeeded in distinguishing the native resentment against the State behind people's admiration towards bandits. According to Çetin Altan, in this respect, people's aloofness towards the State, which was displayed in peasants' admiration of criminals, derived from the ruling officials' inability to transform the State into the state of the people, at least by providing their basic rights of security. (Altan, 1962c: 2) Similarly, Ilhan Selçuk interpreted the banditry epidemic in the Eastern regions as a major social, political and economic issue, rather than a mere security problem, whose explanation required wholesale sociological research as it covered almost every aspect of the region from the social struggle between peasants,

aghas and the State to the traditions of blood feud, honor crime and tribal conflict. According to Selçuk, peasants' support for bandits derived from the absence of the State in the region except by its coercive apparatuses. (Selçuk, 1970: 2) For the meaning of the bandit myth, Selçuk wrote: "Whenever wrongs and injustices increase in a country, the tendency to see as heroes those who oppose the law increases as well." (1964: 2)

While commando operations were launched to reconsolidate the broken public order in the Eastern provinces, Ismail Cem was one of the few that warned State officials to grasp the true meaning of the banditry epidemic in the East: "(…) Bandits are not the cause, but the result of the unrest in the East. What needs to be changed are the conditions that create those bandits." (1964: 4)

According to Cem, the main motives behind the Eastern banditry epidemic were (i) unemployment and poverty in the region, (ii) the native population's desire to rebel against the order, (iii) smuggling as an illegal, but a lucrative source of income, (iv) contract killing due to tribal conflict, honor crime and blood feud, (v) lack of education, (vi) the alienation of the native population to the country as a whole through its own culture and language, (vii) low income, (viii) unjust land distribution, (ix) the absence of the State, and (x) underdevelopment. (Cem, 1964: 4) Thus, the State's Kurdish *problem* resurrecting in the form of the 'Eastern' banditry epidemic was reconstructed as either a security or a sociological problem of the region.



The impotence of the AP Government in the elimination of banditry was being criticized in one of the covers of the magazine *Akbaba* in 1966: "Demirel: 'Our Country Shall Live without Fear'; 'Bandit: 'If the Edict Belongs to Demirel, then the Mountains Belong to Us" (Akbaba, 12.10.1966)

iii. Proposition: 'Hang them all!'

For the elimination of the 'Eastern' banditry epidemic, one of the main discourses of the national printed press emphasized the necessity to restructure and resolutely apply the penal law. For many columnists, the search for sociological incentives behind the rising level of banditry incidents in the Eastern provinces was futile, since bandits were the most ferocious criminals that could not be eliminated as long as the State was not able to grasp its criminal citizens in its iron hands. (Felek, 1962a: 3)

A columnist in the newspaper Milliyet, for instance, compared the banditry epidemic of modern Turkey with the period of Sultan Murat IV, when public order was on the brink of total breakdown. The author argued that the Republican

government should have responded against those rural and urban brigands with the full force of law, just like Sultan Murat, who reconsolidated public order by executing 20 thousand men without hesitation. (Danişmend, 1950: 3) Another author, in a similar vein, wrote that democracy could not prevent the taking of measures necessary for eliminating such malign people for the sake of the 'straight society', by associating the rise of a corrupted form of banditry in modern Turkey with the degeneration of the Janissary institution of the Ottoman State. (Milliyet, 06.09.50: 1) Indeed, those propositions for the escalation of punishment by applying capital punishment for incidents of banditry were legitimized through reference to the 'developed' democratic countries of Europe where punishment, it was argued, had always been certain and direct. (Ulunay, 1955: 3)



In one of the covers of the magazine of *Akbaba*, the constitutional compassion over the rising crimes both in the rural and urban regions of the country was being criticized: "Newspapers: 'Expelling Landlords in East and Street Bullies in Beyoğlu to Other Provinces is Unconstitutional'; 'Constitution – Mother Compassion" (Akbaba, 08.02.1962)

Ulunay, in this vein, supported the bill of a law presented by a Member of Parliament (MP) – Fahri Ağaoğlu of the ruling Democrat Party (DP) – which was sought to introduce corporal punishment for "thievery, fraud, stealing fruit, pillage, highway robbery, restriction of freedom, beggary, and abetting in beggary." (1956: 3) Ulunay supported the given bill from his heart, as the author, by no means, found corporal punishment incompatible with democracy and if a democracy like England had systematically been using it, he asked, why could Turkey not appeal to it to cleanse its society from malign people. The author even criticized Ağaoğlu for making corporal punishment lighter and less effective through his proposition of *falanga* (foot whipping); for major banditry offenses, Ulunay instead proposed flogging. (Ulunay, 1956: 3) In the discourse of the national printed press, 'neutralizing' bandits by capturing them dead or alive was not, therefore, the ultimate solution. In order to eliminate banditry not only by hunting bandits one by one, but also by presenting an object lesson for everybody, "the law should be applied with all its force and even with all its terror." (Ulunay, 1962c: 3)

By reminding people of the efficiency of the Ottoman State's usage of capital punishment for highway robberies (*Kuttâ-ı-tarîk*) in the elimination of banditry, Ulunay was openly calling for the most suppressive methods available to the State, even if innocents would inescapably be harmed along with the criminals. (Ulunay, 1962c: 3) Indeed, in 1966, the same author would propose capital punishment for the crime of highway robbery (Ulunay, 1966a: 2) and the establishment of military units specialized in bandit hunts, like those in the late Ottoman and the early Republican periods. (Ulunay, 1958c: 3) (Ulunay, 1966c: 2) As Gendarme causalities increased over the following years, Ulunay would encourage the security forces to shoot bandits on sight and confess that he could find no rational grounds for capturing

them alive. (Ulunay, 1967b: 2) As opposed to those authors advising harsher punishments for the crime of brigandage, only a small number of authors emphasized the significance of reintegrating criminals into society through discipline. According to a columnist, in this respect, punishment, as a medicine, should have been aimed at curing the criminal, instead of seeking his/her destruction. (Ferdi, 1953: 2)



The rise in the possession of firearms especially in the Eastern regions, along with the politicians' attitude, was being satirized in the cover of the magazine *Akbaba* above: "Newspapers: 'MP in Assembly Says 'Turks Use Guns like a Watch'; '- What is this?, - Nothing, this is a pocket watch and that is a wall clock." (Akbaba, 07.02.1968)

For the resolution of the banditry epidemic, another columnist proposed the harsh methods used by Sultan Abdülhamit, who ordered captured bandits to be exposed to the public audience with chains around their hands, feet and neck, in order to falsify the bandit myth by presenting them in their most miserable states, thereby minimizing the chance that people would dare to rebel against the order of

the State again. (Nevruzoğlu, 1951: 3) State officials must have, by no means, interpreted this proposition as an extreme one, as photos of captured bandits would be published in the national printed press over the following decades. For instance, the corpse of a bandit in Sivas was put on public display at the Gendarme station in 1959. (Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, 07.11.59: 5) Likewise, the corpse of the famous bandit Koçero would be displayed in the first pages of national newspapers. (Milliyet, Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet, 05.07.64: 1) In fact, it seems that the Republican political elite truly grasped the meaning of this Ottoman legacy as providing unique occasions to reconstruct the State's incontestable authority over its subjects by degrading and unmasking their heroes as mere miserable slaves. Apart from the extraordinary states of civil war, the struggle against banditry, therefore, constituted rare occasions for the State to display itself as the ultimate master in very ordinary daily life and to reaffirm the concrete reasons behind its mastery in all its atrocious nudity. The ritual is, therefore, the very source of new blood for the reconstruction of power.



Soldiers posing with the corpse of Mustafa of Tosya, the famous Aegean brigand
(Cumhuriyet, 02.09.1933: 6)

Here, the State's ritual of exposing the dead or alive bodies of captured bandits to the public audience should be differentiated from an ancient ritual of rural communities in which the corpses of wolves that were shot by villagers were exposed at the center of the village.[101] The spitting of villagers at the dead wolves in this ritual representing the war between the village and the wolves is, in fact, a manner of celebration of the public enemy's doom. It is true on an abstract theoretical plane of discussion that the bandit is, by his very nature, a wolf that preys on peasants and the organized struggle of the latters against the former perfectly fits into their war on wolves. In contradistinction to this ancient ritual through which the community gains self-confidence against its enemy, the State's ritual aims to spread terror and fear among its subjects not for the bandits, but for itself. It aims to display the tragic endings of rebellion against the State (the greatest and only Wolf on its lands) without any censure or courtesy.



Captured bandits in Diyarbakır
(Cumhuriyet, 02.09.1933: 6)



Posing with the corpse of a local brigand in Düzce
(Cumhuriyet, 04.05.1935: 10)

The terror and the pain that the audience was able to witness first hand without putting itself in jeopardy produces the 'sublime' that was defined by

[101] For the connection between the exposition of captured bandits and this ancient ritual of rural communities against wolves, I am indebted to Ulaş Ataseven.

Edmund Burke as “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.” (1844: 51-52) Since danger or pain is terrible only when it presses up close, it becomes awe-some at certain distances and with certain modifications. Thus, the power of the State reproduces the fundamental emotion that is necessary to make its subjects kneel by their own consent. The sublimity of the State’s power is, therefore, ensured by the modified exposition of its terror and pain on the *banned* bodies at a certain distance. The sublime would, however, soon be lost, as the targets of the State’s coercion had *exclusively* become the Kurdish peasants themselves and the systematic threat it posed to the survival of the Kurdish population had become unbearable by its trespassing into the necessary distance between the act of violence and the audience. When the social feeling of sublime was lost, there solely remained *fear* that expected to be challenged and defeated.



Accused of brigandage and murder, bandits in Bursa are seen chained to each other by their necks. The person on the left is Laz Mustafa, the leader of the gang. (Cumhuriyet, 16.01.1934: 1)

C. Discourses and Policies of the State over the Last Kurdish Banditry

The rise of brigandage in the Kurdish regions of Turkey from the 1950s onwards, first and foremost, meant for the State elite that the military consolidation of power had not yet been achieved in the 'Eastern' regions. Indeed, the ordinary crimes of bandits who had infested the region were proving for the political elite the weakness of the State in a region where it should have been the strongest due to the ever-perceived threats the region posed against the survival of the State. Thus, despite the discursive controversy that interpreted the rise of the 'Eastern' banditry either as the exposition of the hidden Kurdism or one of the results of the region's underdevelopment, successive governments from the 1950s onwards applied exactly the same technologies and policies of State power 'against' the rise of banditry in the Kurdish provinces: (i) disarmament of the native population and strengthening the penal code, organization of (ii) massive military operations and (iii) commando raids under the label 'bandit hunting'. Yet, the applications of these measures reached its climax in 1970 by escalating throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It is, indeed, one of the main contentions of this study that the massive emergence of Kurdish banditry served for the State elite as not only the proof positive for the rising separatist movements in the region, but also the perfect camouflage for strangling the emerging Kurdish national consciousness at its birth.

The following textual analysis aims at deciphering the discourses and policies of the State over the last Kurdish banditry through differentiating three phases of an escalating process of conflict and resistance in the Kurdish regions between 1950 and 1980: (i) the Democrat Party period between 1950 and 1960, (ii) the politics of bandit hunt between 1960 and 1970, and (iii) the State's penetration into the Kurdish

regions through commando raids from the 1970s onwards. Including the concluding 'calm before the storm' in the region and the State's discursive transition from 'bandits' to 'terrorists' in the late 1970s, the following analysis, thereof, lays bare the making of the political foundation of the upcoming overt struggle between the State and the Kurdish people.

1. The Democrat Party over the Kurdish Brigandage (1950-1960)

At the beginning of the multi-party democracy in 1950, the fresh political power of the Democrat Party (DP) was enthusiastic about drastically changing the traditional security policies of the one-party period, which were overwhelmingly concentrated in the Eastern regions, through a developmentalist economic discourse. Indeed, when the DP's program was criticized in the Assembly for not reserving a distinct topic for 'the Eastern development' (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950a: 53, 72-73), Zühtü Hilmi Velibeşe, the Minister of Economy and Trade between 1950 and 1951, emphasized their determination to resolve the economic underdevelopment of the region by treating the country as one without discriminating between the West and the East and by eliminating the mass feeling of exclusion of the Eastern citizens due to the former State policies and discourses in the one-party period. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950b: 200-201) Indeed, the officials of the DP would often emphasize the stark difference between the discourses and policies of themselves and their predecessors over the 'Eastern' question, despite the fact that the ethno-political identity of the 'Eastern' people continued to be assimilated within the 'Turkish' identity. Referring to an alleged confession of a former Minister in the one-party period on his reluctance to assist the 'Kurds' in the case of an agricultural drought, Kemal Yörükoğlu, an MP of

the DP from Gümüşhane, for instance, claimed: "Those citizens, who were despised by that Minister, are more loyal to the country than him. They are nobler and more solid Turks than him. (Bravos and applauses.)" (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950g: 178)

Thus, the DP's political promise for the 'Eastern' people was their assimilation within an equal conception of 'Turkish citizenship', as it was formulated by Nazım Önen, an MP of DP from Diyarbakır, in the Assembly in 1950. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950h: 37) In short, the DP's discourse over the 'Eastern' question stood on three main political and historical arguments: (i) 'the duality of the West ('Garp') and the East ('Şark') was null and void[102]; yet (ii) the East was left underdeveloped during the one-party period[103]; and thus, (iii) the main goal of the DP was to develop the Eastern regions into the equal level of the Western regions.

While the DP had begun in the early 1950s to transfer financial resources, supported by Marshall Plan, towards the Eastern regions for agricultural mechanization and various major and minor infrastructural investments, including the construction of dams, schools, a university in Van, and especially community health centers for the treatment of an ongoing leprosy endemic[104] (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950j: 133, 1950k: 339-342, 1951b: 175, 177), one of the first paradigmatic changes of policy realized during the DP's political power was the abolishment of

[102] Indeed, in the face of each and every parliamentary question referring to a topic within the context of the Eastern and Southeastern regions, the representatives of the DP, first of all, opposed the dichotomy of the West and the East and then addressed to the related topic by steadily emphasizing the equal unity of the country's various components. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950i: 110) Yet, Yusuf Ziya Azizoğlu, the DP's MP of Diyarbakır, opposed such assimilationist discourse for its inability to resolve the Eastern problem as a distinct sociological question. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951d: 299)

[103] Among innumerous criticisms targeted the one-party period for the underdevelopment of the Eastern regions in the budget meeting of 1951, Hakkı Gedik, the DP's MP from Kütahya, for instance, claimed that the Eastern problem was a 'national sin standing on the shoulders of the CHP'. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951d: 276-277)

[104] Although public investments for the Eastern regions were announced in the budget discussions (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951e: 365-366), the budget of the 2nd legislative year was criticized in the Assembly by the MPs of both the CHP and the DP for not reserving a distinct fund for the urgent problem of the Eastern development. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951c: 247, 1951d: 301, 326) In this respect, Yusuf Kamil Aktuğ, the DP's MP from Diyarbakır, remarked the extremely low rate of Turkish speakers in the Eastern regions (24%) in 1951. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951d: 327)

the administrative forbidden zones in the Eastern regions, heralded by Samet Ağaoğlu, the deputy Prime Minister between 1950 and 1952, in the Assembly on June 28, 1950. These zones were formed during the one-party period to prevent the re-occurrence of 'banditry' and 'malign movements' and located in a region of 2970km^2 covering the Eastern provinces of Sason, Ağrı, Zilan and Tunceli, all of which constituted the heart of the suppressed Kurdish insurrections. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950d: 292) By abolishing the administrative forbidden zones, the DP was allowing their former residents, who were subjected to a forceful immigration due to the Settlement Law in 1934[105], to return to their villages. In addition, the DP enacted a special amnesty law, published in the official gazette on July 15, 1950, that forgave the perpetrators of the crimes committed before May 15, 1950 except certain major offenses stated in its 2nd Article.[106] (Journal of Laws, 1950: 68-69) With reference to the Assembly meetings over the draft law, the amnesty was more of a political nature celebrating the DP's coming to power and the end of the one-party dictatorship than of a general nature.[107] (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950e: 602-681, 1950f: 690-722) Finally, the Inspectorates-General, the State's pivotal means of control over its Kurdish regions that were effective between 1928 and 1948, were abrogated on November 21, 1953. (Journal of Laws: 1952: 2)

The first occasion in which banditry incidents in the Eastern regions had come to the attention of the Assembly occurred by two parliamentary questions

[105] For an analysis of the Settlement Law, (Yeğen, 2009: 64-67)

[106] Among those crimes that could not be absolved, murder, rape, kidnapping, highway robbery and raiding for robberies were excluded from the scope of the amnesty, while the crime of 'kidnapping a girl' would be forgiven only if the crime was committed with a motive of marriage and was not succeeded by the crime of rape. (Journal of Laws, 1950: 68) The same legal rationale would be applied in the succeeding amnesty laws as well.

[107] In this respect, hot debates occurred during the Assembly meeting over the amnesty draft law in which Osman Bölükbaşı, the oppositional leader of the Millet Party (MP), objected the draft for forgiving the former State's officials' role in various massacres of civilian people in the East, including the execution of 33 peasants in Van and the military operation in Dersim. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1950e: 652-653)

addressing the increase of livestock theft in the Eastern regions.[108] (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951a: 131-133) Yet, Refet Aksoy, the DP's MP of Ordu, claimed that apart from the occasional livestock theft, the threat of banditry was eliminated in the Republic for good: "The event that is established by the Republican age in this country and that makes us all proud is the extinction of banditry." (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951a: 133)

In the Assembly debates over the rising livestock theft, the assimilationist discourse of the ruling DP sometimes fluctuated towards racism, especially in the speeches of its Central Anatolian MPs. For instance, Yusuf Karslioğlu, the DP's MP of Yozgad, 'explained' the linkage between the rise of livestock theft and 'Kurdish' and 'Gypsy' settlers in their assigned regions of settlement:

> "Livestock theft continues in the villages. The reason is that some Kurds do not reside in the assigned villages, but aiding and committing thefts by building shacks here and there. Villagers are suffering from these situations. It is necessary to settle them to their assigned villages and then the Gypsies, who do all sorts of harm." (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951f: 662)

While the CHP's MPs had begun to raise criticism over the rising public disorder and the DP's representatives were blaming the tribal chieftain Hasan Oral, the CHP's MP from Urfa, for aiding and abetting bandits and smugglers in his province (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951g: 196), Fevzi Lutfi Karaosmanoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs between 1951 and 1954, argued that the rise of skirmishes between 'evildoers' (*şerir*) and security forces demonstrated not the rise of crime, but the determination of the security forces in the elimination of outlawry. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952a: 862-864)

[108] In this respect, Celal Yardımcı, the DP's MP from Ağrı, remarked that Iranian bandits stole two thousand sheep in the district of Doğu Beyazıt in the city of Ağrı in 1951. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1951f: 698)

In this context, two oral parliamentary questions on the broken public order in the Eastern regions were submitted to the National Assembly on May 1952. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 102-103) Those parliamentary questions, posed by the MPs of the ruling party DP, targeted directly at a controversial anonymous letter, published by MP Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın of the CHP in its official newspaper *Ulus* (Nation). In his leading article of the journal, Yalçın was implying the re-emergence of a Kurdish revolt with reference to that anonymous letter, which was, in turn, claiming, "the Eastern peasants around Erzurum and Ağrı have been armed as an army that is ready to move forward." (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 104)

As the letter also underlined the increasing trend of smuggling and public disorder in the Eastern regions, Yalçın was posing the sarcastic question as to whether democracy referred to anarchy in Turkey. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 105) In his reply to those parliamentary questions, deputy Prime Minister Ağaoğlu emphasized their success in the disarmament of the Eastern population by citing statistical data that displayed the increase in the number of appropriated arms in the region. Ağaoğlu further argued that although they were struggling against it, smuggling did not emerge with the DP's coming to power. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 105) To oppose the assertion that public order had been broken down in the Eastern regions, İzzet Akın, the DP's MP of Van, claimed that the Eastern regions had been developing rapidly under their political power and that those provinces had become the most ordered and peaceful regions of the country.[109] (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 105)

The details between the lines of this crucial parliamentary discussion on 'Eastern' public disorder hide invaluable clues for deciphering the Turkish nation-

[109] Indeed, E. Hayri Üstündağ, the Minister of Health between 1950 and 1954, would even argue in his speech in Van that banditry had been totally eliminated in the Eastern provinces thanks to the DP's political power. (Milliyet, 14.08.52: 1, 7)

state's discourses and policies in the Kurdish regions in the upcoming decades. Yalçın's depiction of the Kurdish peasants as *an army that was ready to move forward* did not merely derive from his obvious intention of narrating the country under the leadership of the DP as an anarchic society that was on the brink of collapse. It was, essentially, a blatant confession of the Kemalist political elite's distrust in the Kurdish population of the country. Indeed, Ağaoğlu, in his parliamentary speech, intentionally asked Yalçın to explain openly "towards where is this army of the armed Eastern peasants moving?" and argued that there wouldn't be another '31 March Incident' in Turkey.[110] (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 106) Although he did not hesitate to talk directly about the heart of the subject, Ağaoğlu, nonetheless, preferred to refer to the somewhat irrelevant 31 March Incident instead of the obvious historical reference to the Sheikh Said Rebellion. Besides, as Ağaoğlu himself argued, the DP was proud of advancing the State's policy of disarmament that was initiated by the one-party rule of the CHP. In other words, this heated debate between the political elite of the ruling DP and the opposing CHP was clearly demonstrating that the State's aim of disarming the population in the Eastern regions was directly derived from the State officials' distrust of the 'Eastern' population and all discussions on public order and banditry were serving to legitimize and veil the self-security concern of the State, itself.

Still, the MPs' of the ruling DP continued to emphasize the difference between the Eastern policies of the DP and the CHP. In the same parliamentary discussion, for instance, Kemal Yörükoğlu, the DP's MP of Gümüşhane, protested

[110] Frequently used to denote the threat of the religious reactionary resurrection against 'the laicist Turkey', the '31 March Incident' was the counter-revolutionary attempt of rebellion, realized mainly by the subgrades of ulema and tariqa sheikhs (especially Derviş Vahdeti and his followers from the Naqshbandi Tariqa), and supported by the oppositional 'Ahrar Fırkası' (Party of Ottoman Liberals) against the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress rose with the Constitutional Revolution of 1908. For more information, see: (Zürcher, 2012: 149-154)

the CHP's MPs for ever-expecting a revolt in the Eastern regions and declared with applauses that the DP would treat the Eastern people as 'citizens', rather than 'enemies', as the CHP did in the one-party period by attempting to resolve the problems of the Eastern regions through oppression and bloodshed. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1952b: 105) Yet, in the face of the increase of criminal incidents, while the Assembly spent a series of long sessions on June 1953 for the aggravation of punishments especially for the ordinary crimes within the existent penal code (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953c: 5-28, 1953d: 169-191), the DP Government enacted the 'Law on Firearms and Knives' on July 10, 1953 for regulating and restricting the ownership of firearms (Journal of Laws, 1953: 881-883). Since this law would be enforced by a following campaign of 'voluntary disarmament', several MPs in the Assembly were opposing such restrictions for strengthening the hands of brigands and evildoers, who could only have submitted their arms by force. In this respect, the ownership of unregistered firearms in the domestic space was fervently supported by several MPs during the Assembly meeting over the related draft law. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953e: 32-33, 1953f: 73-74, 1953g: 505-508)

The discourses of the columnists in the national newspapers over the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon echoed in the State level. Specifically, the discourses over the themes of the corruption of society and the death of the bandit myth also took place in the Assembly debates over the public disorder in the Eastern regions. For instance, Burhannetin Onat, the DP's MP of Antalya, argued that the bandits of the past, that is the Aegean bandits

> "have become national heroes. As when they were bandits, they were fighting honestly and protecting the poor. *(After telling the good deeds of some zeibeks for the national independence…)* the bandits today are confronting us as treacherous and corrupt masked gangsters." (the phrase in italics added) (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953a: 534)

Furthermore, the ordinary crimes of bandits had begun to be turned into one of the preeminent problems of the State, as they concentrated in an extraordinary region that was, according to the State elite, politico-strategically vital for the State's regional interests and sociologically vulnerable against internal and external plots. The Kurdish paranoia that has rooted in the political psychology of the State elite after a long experience over the Kurdish insurrections had sporadically been expressed both in the State level and the national printed press. In this respect, the occasional protests of the Kurdish MPs of the DP over the rising racism against the 'Eastern' people in the printed press had remained unheard in the Assembly. For instance, the parliamentary question of M. Remzi Bucak, the DP's MP from Diyarbakır, over the 'İstiklal' (Independence) newspaper's headline on November 18, 1952 – which presaged a Kurdish revolt from the publishing of a 'controversial' poem ('Anzelha') of Halim Yağcıoğlu in a local newspaper of Urfa[111] – had remained unaddressed by the Assembly. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953b: 104-108)

Yet, the paranoia of Kurdish revolt continued to be expressed in the printed media. In this respect, Yusuf Azizoğlu, the DP's MP from Diyarbakır, raised a parliamentary question over those columns published in Hürriyet, Ulus and Dünya (World) in 1953. By calling for an inquiry over those publications, Azizoğlu asked

> "(…) Are these incitements that disrupt the unity of the country, that define a large mass of citizens as Kurd, Kurds, Kurdistan, and thus, that make other citizens turn against the Easterners and that sow discord in the country considered among harmless or permissible movements? (…) Is there a sign or possibility of a rebellion in the East?" (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953h: 261-262)

[111] Indeed, most of the MPs in the Assembly could not even endure listening to the reading of the poem in question in the parliamentary speech of Bucak. One of the most controversial lines of the poem questioned 'Have you ever searched for your country in the country of the citizens speaking another language?' (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953b: 105) Rather than being an invitation to or a prophecy of a rebellion, the poem was, in fact, protesting the existent underdevelopment in the East through a Western point of view: "This land unawakened and unstirred / Still lives in the fifth century, Anzelha / And you live in the twentieth century / Is this how you absorbed civilization? / Shame. / Shame on you, Anzelha / In endless thoughts / Nights tortures the sleep / Is this where the East starts, Anzelha / Is this Islam/ Steeped in filth so deep?" (quoted in Halman, 2007: 178)

In his reply, Ethem Menderes, the Minister of the Interior between 1952 and 1954, claimed that although the Government strictly opposed the division of the country into East and West, the columns were remaining within the borders of freedom of expression. By ensuring the audience about the non-existence of any malign internal force capable and courageous enough to oppose the State, the deputy remarked: "According to us and in deed, there is no citizen mass, rank or element as Kurd in existence neither in the West and East nor in the South and North of the country." (T.B.M.M. Records, 1953h: 262)

The statements of the oppositional MPs and the Government's representatives in the Assembly meetings demonstrated that the DP's political power could not prevent the rise of banditry incidents in the Eastern and Southeastern regions. In 1960, Mehmet Hazer, the CHP's MP from Kars, claimed,

> "Robbery and livestock theft incidents have increased in the country, especially in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces. This is a fact. (…) In such an extent that two bandits in a province forced the citizens in the highlands to turn back to their villages from July onwards." (T.B.M.M. Records, 1960: 485)

According to Hazer, the one-party period that had harshly been criticized by the ruling party succeeded to eliminate brigandage and consolidate public order and peace. Addressing the CHP's criticisms over the Eastern public disorder, Namık Gedik, Minister of the Interior between 1956 and 1960, confessed in his parliamentary speech that the Government could not take the necessary measures until 1959 against the rising banditry in the Eastern regions due to financial impossibilities. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1960: 486) However, the Minister claimed that in addition to the measures taken against smuggling in the Southern border, the Government had been on the tracks of bandit fugitives operating within the regions of Mardin, Adıyaman and Diyarbakır through special intelligence units. According to the statistics of 1959 presented by the Minister in the Assembly, the aforementioned

fugitive hunt concluded with the capture of 98 convicts in murder from among 231 fugitives wandering around Mardin, the capture of 47 fugitives, including 37 convicts in murder, in Adıyaman and the capture of three notorious brigands, one dead, in Sivas. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1960: 487-488) Meanwhile, in December 1959, five months before the military coup, 52 Kurdish intellectuals and students were arrested for being involved in separatist and communist activities. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2111-2112) This pivotal event, known as 'the incident of the 49s', was one of the proof-events ensuring the fact that the political anxieties of the State elite (primarily the President Celal Bayar, the PM Adnan Menderes and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatin Rüştü Zorlu) about the emergence of Kurdish nationalism was also lying behind the rising bandit hunts in the late DP period. Yet, the trial will be realized under the supervision of the military junta that would end the lifetime of the DP in Turkish politics on May 27, 1960.

2. The Politics of the Bandit Hunt (1960-1970): The Disarmament of the Population, Establishment of Commando Units and Organization of Military Operations against Banditry

After the DP's fall from power by the military intervention of 1960, Turkey's faltering democracy had entered into a new stage of hope and fear. In this context, many columnists in the national newspapers had begun to blame the DP's political power for any of Turkey's major problems, including the public disorder in the Eastern regions. In line with the discourse of the National Unity Committee (MBK) of the coup d'état, several columnists defined the political power of the DP as an 'organized banditry' whose sole aim had been plundering the resources of the

country. (Altan, 1960a: 2, 1960b: 2) (Tokyay, 1960: 5) (Tanyol, 1960: 2) Faruk Demirtaş, on the other hand, turned this allegoric linkage between the DP and banditry into a concrete one. Demirtaş wrote that Zülküf Karındaş, 'a cruel agha in Diyarbakır' – who was reported to be one of the ringleaders of Sheikh Said and had recently been arrested for patronizing a bandit gang in the region – had been backed by the DP for a decade. In this axis of evil, Demirtaş claimed, the bandit was the most innocent party, as he was patronized by an agha that was, in turn, supported by the DP's officials in exchange for political support. (Demirtaş, 1960: 3) In other words, according to Demirtaş, the illustration of the DP as an organized banditry institution was not a mere allegory, but the most appropriate expression of the fact that banditry that had previously been eliminated during the CHP's rule had re-infested the Eastern regions, simply because those that ruled the State were the greatest bandit chiefs who plundered the resources of the country and established a criminal network throughout the society.

Meanwhile, in the 87th Session of the General Meeting of the MBK in 1961 over the constitutional draft, the newly elected President Cemal Gürsel, the symbolic leader of the coup d'état, opposed the omission of 'nationalism' as one of the defining characteristics of the State in the new Constitution. By underlining the State's ongoing struggle against 'Kurdism' and calculating the number of Kurds (as '70-80 thousand') in Turkey (MBK, 1961: 5, 8), the President strongly argued that 'nationalism' must have been the predominant characteristic of the new Constitution in order to 'remind' the Turkish people of their Turkishness, which had so far melted in the pot of Islam. (MBK, 1961: 8) While the Committee adopted the inclusion of 'nationalism' among the defining characteristics of the State, the term 'Turkish nationalism' would appear both in the prologue of the Constitution as its driving

force and in its 2nd Article with the concept of 'milli' (national) as one of the main characteristics of the State. (Constitution of 1961)

In the face of banditry's spread in the early 1960s, a fresh wave of military operations had begun to be launched in the Kurdish regions in search of fugitives, bandits, arms and contrabands. Yet, the State officials were in their public statements denying the true magnitude of the epidemic. For instance, when Siirt had openly become the main area for the activities of Kurdish bandits and for the realization of hundreds of military operations against banditry, Ahmet Topaloğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic's first coalition Government of the CHP and the Justice Party (AP) between 1961 and 1962, was announcing in order to soothe public opinion that the bandit chases were simple military operations and there was no extraordinary situation in the region around Siirt.[112] (Milliyet, 29.12.61: 5) Despite Topaloğlu himself stating that crimes of extortion had risen to a large extent in Siirt province, the Minister would, nonetheless, conclude that banditry had remained the oldest crime in the region and thus the Gendarme's bandit chases were 'normal occurrences'.[113] The Minister was, therefore, criticizing the national press for exaggerating the banditry issue and displaying the State as being an incapable agent. (Milliyet, 04.01.62: 1, 5)

In a clear contrast to the public statements of State officials, the news reports in 1961 and 1962 about the reinforcement of the armed forces and the organization of massive military operations in the region were demonstrating that the State was

[112] In contrast to the Minister's announcement, the public prosecutor of Siirt, according to a columnist, confessed that public order had totally broken down in the province due to the economic crisis and the impotence of the State's security forces in the region. (Altan, 1962a: 2)

[113] Yet, the Eastern regions of the country had long been governed by extraordinary laws and when a 38-year-old decree restricting the foreign people's freedom of travel and residence in the East of Euphrates was, for instance, brought to the Assembly by the New Turkey Party's (YTP) Senator Cevdet Gebeloğlu from Bitlis in 1962 for its reconsideration, the Government's spokesman Topaloğlu would show no interest in its abolishment by merely stating that those restrictions had already been softened through other legal regulations. (Republican Senate Records, 1962a: 278-279)

taking the issue of public disorder in the Eastern regions much more seriously than it allowed it to appear:

- "728 Gendarmes in Pursuit of Bandits: (…) As a result of the bandit pursuit covering Diyarbakır, Siiirt and Bitlis, 12 bandits have been captured so far. (…) Due to the eager chase, most of the bandits escaped over the Iraqi and the Syrian borders." (Milliyet, 30.12.61: 5)
- "Twelve More Bandits Captured around Siirt: (…) Hunt in Siirt, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Bingöl and Bitlis Continues" (Milliyet, 04.01.62: 3)
- "Massive Search and Scan Operation in Eastern Region" (Milliyet, 29.06.62: 1)
- "Gendarme Undergo Guerrilla Training To Consolidate Order and Security in East and Capture and Eliminate Bandits" (Milliyet, 30.12.1962: 1)

Moreover, news reports on Eastern banditry incidents in 1961 and 1962 indicate the province of Siirt as the center of both the bandits' activities and the State's bandit hunt with its formerly larger borders that geographically interconnected various Eastern provinces to each other through its mountain chains:

- "Brigand Hunt in Siirt Province" (Cumhuriyet, 22.12.61: 1)
- "Operation 'Criminal Hunt' in East (…): Siirt mountains have become the plain of the most vicious murderers and brigands of the Southeastern region. (…)" (Cumhuriyet, 24.12.61: 1)
- "Operation 'Criminal Hunt' Continues in East / Gendarme Forces on Trail of Four Major Siirt Gangs: In fear of bandits, many peasants take refuge in Siirt, abandoning their villages." (Cumhuriyet, 25.12.61: 1)
- "Syrian Border Closed to Prevent Bandits from Escaping: In Fear of Bandits, Life Ends at 3 pm in Siirt Province" (Cumhuriyet, 26.12.61: 1)
- "Cowered or Fled: (…) Due to eager pursuit, while most of the bandits have cowered, others have fled to Iraq and Syria. The center of the bandit pursuit by the Gendarme troops in the Southeast is Siirt." (İlhan, 62: 3)
- "Brigands in Military Uniforms Proliferate in Siirt" (Cumhuriyet, 09.06.62: 5)
- "600 Gendarmes Cordon City to Capture Bandits in Siirt" (Milliyet, 04.07.62: 3)

Despite the launch of a series of military operations in the region, banditry incidents kept occurring at a rapidly increasing rate. State officials, therefore, occasionally argued that measures of force, i.e. the security forces and the law, could not, *by themselves*, be effective against banditry. For the reconsolidation of public order in the East, Kemal Sahir Kurutluoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs between June and October 1962 in the succeeding CHP's coalition Government with the YTP (New Turkey Party) and the CKMP (Republican Villagers Nation Party), argued for economic development, expansion of national education, investment in

infrastructure, and a land reform in the Eastern regions. According to Kurutluoğlu, banditry was a result and reflection of this overall problem in the region. (Milliyet, 07.08.62: 1, 7) One month later, indeed, the Minister announced that the Government had put the development of the Eastern regions at the top of their political agenda. (Milliyet, 12.09.62: 1) The Minister's discourse, which was being expressed in the 1960s by various actors, was a mere continuation of the overthrown DP's discourse that reconstructed the Kurdish question as that of 'the underdevelopment of the East'.[114] One of the functions of that discourse – which followed the traditional law of silence on the ethno-political aspect of the 'Eastern' question more loyally than the traditional security discourse that set the law in the first place and then detected 'Kurdism' behind the Kurdish banditry – had been soothing the State's classic security concerns in the region, which derived directly from the its traditional distrust of the native population.[115] Indeed, in his same announcement, the Minister was heralding the establishment of special commando units that would be much more effective against bandits as a result of their guerrilla training. (Milliyet, 12.09.62: 7) It would soon be understood that this was not good news for the native population, as the main targets of those commandos would not, in fact, be the bandits, but the Kurdish peasants, themselves.

As banditry news had turned into a constant of daily life in the 1960s that could no longer be denied, the discourse of State officials became enveloped by a much more threatening tone. İsmet İnönü, the CHP's Prime Minister between 1961 and 1965, declared in a public statement that the results of military operations against

[114] In this respect, Talat Oğuz, CKMP's MP from Mardin, defined the 'Eastern cause', in his speech for the annulment of the Forced Settlement Law in 1962, as that of 'developing the economic, social and trading sides and the educational field of the East'. (National Assembly Records, 1962b: 391-392) In a similar vein, Yusuf Azizoğlu, YTP's MP from Diyarbakır, urged the Government to defy the traditional security measures in dealing with the Easterners. (National Assembly Records, 1963e: 213)
[115] The Turkish State discourse on the rise of Kurdish banditry shall be analyzed separately in the fourth and final chapter of the study.

banditry in the Eastern regions would soon be so certain that everybody would fully understand the object lessons of the State; thus, İnönü was one of those leading State officials who detected rebellion behind the Kurdish brigandage. (Cumhuriyet, 16.07.62: 5) After noting that certain border gates were closed to assist the bandit hunt in the region, İnönü announced that the existent, but non-applied law 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu' (Law on the Prevention of Brigandage) would be activated by banishing those who aided and abetted bandits and by shooting on first sight those who were known to be bandits. (Milliyet, 17.07.62: 1, 7) Meanwhile, A. Kemal Yörük, the CKMP's Minister of Justice between 1962 and 1963, was publicly supporting the application of capital punishment for crimes of brigandage. (Milliyet, 01.09.62: 1, 7) The Council of Ministers, moreover, announced that those who informed on bandits would be rewarded in cash. (Milliyet, 07.09.62: 1) Indeed, for the Prime Minister, who was promising to construct military bases in the most remote lands of the Eastern regions, and for the Minister of Internal Affairs, who was weighing the region down with additional thousands of Gendarmes and personally realizing numerous security inspection tours in the region, any incident of banditry had become a source of shame for the State. (Milliyet, 08.08.62: 5)

Seeing as one of the most consistent policies employed by the State for controlling the Eastern provinces had been the disarmament of the population, several columnists urged the new Government to decisively apply the policy, as it had been fundamental to the Republic. Altan, for instance, wrote of the urgent necessity for the resolute application of this policy in the Southeastern provinces, which were populated by an armed people and infested by bandit gangs. (Altan, 1961b: 2)

Not all of the columnists of the national printed press, however, agreed with the policy of disarmament. Ulunay, for instance, strongly argued on various occasions the adverse effects of this policy on the nation's struggle against banditry. According to the author, since only an armed population can defend itself against malign people, the arms should have been given back to their owners as natural means of self-defense. For Ulunay, the armament of the population was, therefore, one part of the resolution of the Eastern banditry epidemic. (Ulunay, 1962d: 3) In fact, in the early 1960s, State officials seemed to be convinced by the idea of re-arming the Eastern population to reinforce the State's struggle against bandits. Kurutluoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs, in this respect, gave his promise: "The honest citizen is defenseless while the bandit is armed. This is unfair. The arms will be given back as soon as possible." (Cumhuriyet, 02.08.62: 5)

It would rapidly be understood that the idea of turning the arms back to their owners was an empty promise, as it was in conflict with the State's well-established distrust in the Kurdish population, which had been refreshing itself daily due to the increasing public disorder in the region. The State's Kurdish paranoia was, in fact, stemming from the combination of the emerging Kurdish national consciousness, which had found its expression in various mobilizations of the Kurdish youth and the recent developments in Iraq in favor of the autonomy of the Kurdish regions. The native demand for arms had immediately turned suspicious:

> "Aghas' Demand for Arms in East Found Purposeful / Commander of Gendarme Forces Explains: The officials confirmed that they demand arms to enroot their influence in their region and to increase their oppression over the peasants, rather than struggling against the bandits."[116] (Cumhuriyet, 24.11.62: 1)

[116] Thus, when the Minister of Internal Affairs recommended to the citizens in 1966 that they courageously struggle against the bandits, Ulunay would go on to naively repeat his demand for the armament of the population without realizing the magnitude of the State's perception of threat from the Kurdish population. (Ulunay, 1966b: 2)

While parliamentary questions over the rise of Eastern brigandage had begun to be raised in the Assembly (National Assembly Records, 1962b: 377), news reports on the region had begun to reflect the increasing resentment felt by the native population by pointing out that the forceful disarmament of peasantry, accompanied with no serious success against bandits, had rendered the native population vulnerable and that the region had ironically become more and more insecure for its inhabitants due to the security policies of the State. Disarmed peasants were, in fact, literally caught in the crossfire between the bandits and the Gendarme: "Citizen in East Demands Either Arms or Peace and Security: (…) The citizen demands their arms back to protect their security and peace. They have no confidence in the Gendarme." (Tokatlı, 1962: 5)

Despite the native resentment, the policy of disarmament was of irreplaceable significance for State officials. Indeed, in a Republican Senate meeting on September 1962, Senator Buhanettin Uluç, who brought forward the security problem in the Eastern regions, posed in his out-of-agenda speech the following question:

> "Banditry movement in the East is a subject matter that must be thought and dwelled upon thoroughly. Are these movements really an ordinary robbery? Or else, are they ideational movements? (…) In any case, the State should completely show its strength and might in all respects in the districts of brigandage and public security should certainly be ensured." (Republican Senate Records, 1962b: 487)

Thus, the retired general Uluç's speech was reflecting the same official distrust in the 'Eastern' population by his search for a 'rebellion' behind the rising brigandage in the region. In the same speech, the Senator protested also the aforementioned promise of Kurutluoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs, on returning the appropriated arms to their owners for treating the State as an incapable agent that was unable to defend its citizens against malefactors. (Republican Senate Records, 1962b: 487) In his reply, Kurutluoğlu argued that brigandage in the Eastern

regions was an issue that had been going on since 1955, the year when the Turkish public heart, for the first time, the bandit names of 'Koçero', 'Agit', or 'Selim the Fox'. Regarding the reason behind the continuation of brigandage in the East, although the Minister emphasized the ongoing bandit hunts that he was personally supervising, Kurutluoğlu argued that the 'Eastern' problem was not a mere security issue, but a socio-economic one which was enforcing 'the necessity to implement a distinct type of policy' to fight against the economic decay, administrative corruption and mass feeling of exclusion in those underdeveloped provinces of the country. (Republican Senate Records, 1962b: 488) Despite such difference of view over the 'Eastern' question, the Minister was still proposing various security measures (including the construction of a highway with military control points along the 1000-km-long Southeastern borderline of Turkey) not only to eliminate the economic base of the Eastern brigandage, i.e. the illegal opium trade that was flowing from Iran to West via Turkey, but also to ensure the security of the 'Turkish' people from malign ideological intents going in and out the borders of the country freely. (Republican Senate Records, 1962b: 489) Indeed, regarding his previous statement on turning the arms back to their owners, the Minister argued that his statement was covering only the registered arms and completed his speech by ridiculing the attitude of expecting an ideational movement from mere banditry incidents. (Republican Senate Records, 1962b: 489-490)

Despite the rising banditry incidents, the National Assembly repealed the 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu' ('The Law on the Elimination of Brigandage') on February 2, 1963, which was a valid, but an ineffective law for decades, due to its violation of the basic Constitutional rights by decriminalizing the act of killing or wounding those declared as bandits. (Journal of Laws, 1963: 373) During the Assembly debates

over the annulment of the İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu, after Rafet Aksoy, the AP's MP from Ordu, questioned the Government's motive behind the annulment in the context of the rising brigandage in the Eastern regions, Reşit Ülker, the AP's MP from Istanbul, argued that the Government was required to eliminate banditry within the bounds of the rule of law. (National Assembly Records, 1962d: 330) It was not, however, the last occasion that the related law would come to the Assembly meetings, as a new 'bandit law' would be enacted, in comparison to the İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu, in 1972 when the country was being dragged into a wholesale political chaos.

While the rise of Kurdish brigandage in the 1960s was being accompanied by the emergence of a radical leftist movement committing crimes of political kidnapping and bank and highway robberies, the term of *eşkıya* (bandit) had begun to be extensively used in the denomination of the latter as well. In this respect, the coalition Government led by the CHP was frequently blamed for the rising banditry not only in the Eastern countryside, but also in the Western cities, while the latter was designated as 'the communist brigandage' by the oppositional MPs of the AP. (National Assembly Records, 1963a: 69, 77-78, 1963b: 137) In his reply to the criticisms, Suphi Baykam, CHP's MP from Istanbul, reminded that the Eastern bandits took to the mountains before the 1960s and the Government was trying to re-establish the public order, which was temporarily shaken by 'the Revolution of 1960', within the bounds of the State's possibilities. (National Assembly Records, 1963a: 81)

Thus, the 'Eastern' bandits in the 1960s had become one of the favorite topics of not only the national newspapers, but also the Assembly and the Republican Senate. The symbol of the phenomenon was Mehmet İhsan Kilit (alias 'Koçero') in

the early 1960s. Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, the Minister of Internal Affairs between 1962 and 1963 of the CHP-led coalition Government, argued in the Assembly that Koçero had been on the mountains since 1956. With reference to the State's security records, Bekata claimed that although the crime rates increased in the 1960s, most of the criminals were brought to justice. (National Assembly Records, 1963a: 84) While the Minister was blaming the overthrown DP for the breakdown of public order in the Eastern provinces, the oppositional AP would continue to press on the Government throughout the year of 1963 over the rising brigandage in the East[117] and the despair of the State's security forces against Koçero, an individual bandit. (National Assembly Records, 1963c: 52)

Apart from being a common line of opposition, the political elite's interest in the Kurdish banditry epidemic in the 1960s was, in fact, deriving from their obstinate search for a rebellious or a separatist intent behind the Eastern public disorder. For instance, Ekrem Özden, the CHP's Senator from Istanbul, in his parliamentary question addressing two recently committed crimes (i.e. the murder of a peasant kidnapped by the gang of Hakim Yılmaz (Hakimo) and an attempted highway robbery in Diyarbakır) in the Eastern regions questioned whether Hakimo held peasants to ransom for assisting Barzani. (Republican Senate Records, 1964: 211) In his reply, Orhan Öztrak, the Minister of Internal Affairs between 1963 and 1965 of the CHP, claimed that while most of the crimes committed in the Eastern regions were rapidly being resolved, the majority of crimes had been committed by a certain number of bandit gangs constantly going in and out of the Southern border. (Republican Senate Records, 1964: 212) Unsatisfied with the Minister's reply on the lack of evidence over Hakimo's cooperation with Barzani, Özden suggested the

[117] For instance, Necmettin Akan, the AP's MP from Iğdır, argued in his out-of-agenda speech in the Assembly that banditry incidents proliferated in the provinces of Iğdır, Kars and Muş on a large scale. (National Assembly Records, 1963d: 289)

Government to further investigate the relationship between the Eastern bandits and the Northern Iraqi Kurdish leader:

> "We took the words from the Minister's mouth that many convicts assembled by the crime of murder have established platoons and verily attempted to realize movements for violating the public order in the Southeastern regions. (…) The necessity to take the measures that would prevent these bandits, who particularly come from the South in an organized manner, from entering inside our borders and preclude their political intentions is manifest. It is understood (…) that they are not only in pursuit of disrupting the public order in the country, but also a part of a scheme against the regime." (Republican Senate Records, 1964: 213)

Despite the banditry news items coming from the region every day, Faruk Sükan, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the ruling AP between 1965 and 1969, announced on May 1966 that banditry incidents had decreased as a result of their determination to advance the State's struggle against the Eastern bandits.[118] (Milliyet, 30.05.66: 1) Yet, while the Minister was informing the MPs in the Assembly that 123 fugitives were captured in the province of Siirt in 1966 (National Assembly, 1966a: 693), the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* reported that 32 villages were abandoned in the province due to fear of bandits. (Cumhuriyet, 06.03.67: 1) It was, in fact, calculated in 1966 from the Gendarme's records that at least nine hundred bandits operated on the hills and highways of the province of Siirt. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2122) A reporter from Cumhuriyet described the centrality of Siirt for the banditry phenomenon through the daily life of the province:

> "For years, the bandit has existed everywhere and in everything in Siirt. In the cafes, restaurants, shops, schools, State offices, and houses, the bandit is discussed. The bandit's life is narrated and every day a new subject to do with bandits is spoken about. (…) The bandit even influences the market of Siirt. (…) If they allow the peasants to hit the town, prices become cheaper. Otherwise, everybody needs to bow to his/her fate. (…) The bandits settle in the mountains of Siirt by sharing out the region amongst themselves." (Mercan, 1967(I): 5)

Along with the soaring bandit hunt in the region, the Gendarme's oppression over the native population had escalated as well. In this respect, Tarık Ziya Ekinci,

[118] Meanwhile, Ethem Erdinç, the Minister of Public Works between 1965 and 1967, for instance, was promising to construct highways that reached the most remote lands of the region in order to assist the State's struggle against banditry. (Cumhuriyet, 28.01.66: 1)

the TİP's MP from Diyarbakır, claimed in his parliamentary question that the Gendarme had systematically repressed not only the relatives, but also the native peasants of fugitives during the bandit hunts in the Eastern regions. (National Assembly, 1966: 692) While Ekinci questioned whether or not the fellow townsmen of a fugitive in Diyarbakır had to leave their villages due to the Gendarme's oppression, the Minister of Internal Affairs Sükan argued that the villagers in question emigrated due to the cruelty of bandits in the region and the alleged Gendarme's oppression had remained sporadic individual incidents. (National Assembly, 1966: 693) In his reply to the Minister's speech, Ekinci argued that the agha institution lied behind the rising brigandage in the Eastern regions in the sense that the bandits backed by powerful landlords, who were in turn patronized by the State, had a long criminal career, while unaffiliated fugitives or those that were loyal to relatively weaker landlords remained the exclusive targets of the State's bandit hunts. Instead of trying to put the Eastern people into discipline through the Gendarme's oppression, Ekinci called for a comprehensive land reform and an economic and cultural development in the region. (National Assembly, 1966: 693-699)

As opposed to the aforementioned Marxist interpretation of the economic discourse over the 'Eastern question', the traditional security discourse could best be illustrated from the speeches of natural members of the Senate about the issue of 'Eastern brigandage'. When the rise of banditry incidents in the Eastern regions had again become the main topic covered by the Senate in 1966, Senator Kadri Kaplan, one of the colonels participated to the night raid of the coup d'état in May 27, 1960 and the ordinary MBK member of the Senate, described the Eastern banditry as a deep-rooted problem of the country and urged to the Government for taking the

necessary measures for its elimination for the sake of 'our kins' in the region. (Republican Senate Records, 1966a: 338) By moving from the 'ferocious' crimes of bandits reported daily in the national newspapers to the political dangers hidden within the region, the Senator stated that such a hot topic could not completely be discussed in an open session, since nobody could be sure about the secret aims of certain external powers over the 'Eastern' people. (Republican Senate Records, 1966a: 338-339) For the reconsolidation of public order in the East, Kaplan proposed the establishment of a 'general Governorship' that would single-handedly supervise the operations of disarmament and bandit hunts, which would, in turn, be realized by special military units trained in guerilla warfare. (Republican Senate Records, 1966a: 339) As the issue at hand was a 'delicate subject' with its economic, social and humane sides, the Senator continued, the Eastern people should not, however, be held responsible for the rising crimes in their region. (Republican Senate Records, 1966a: 339-340)

In the same meeting, Suphi Batur, Senator from Sinop, argued that brigandage had predominated the region of Siirt since the 1930s and Barzani could be the supplier of arms for the bandits in Turkey by implying that the burst of brigandage in the region could be the secret design of external powers over the 'Eastern' people.[119] (Republican Senate Records, 1966a: 340) Thus, the Senate was urging the Government and the Assembly to forcefully and rapidly reconsolidate public order in the East before the ordinary crimes of bandits could mutate into a full-fledged separatist movement.

Due to the climbing curve of the Eastern brigandage, the oppositional CHP would call for the resignation of Sükan due to his feckless and incompetent attitude

[119] Regarding the image of Barzani as the supporter of bandits in the Eastern Turkey, *Cumhuriyet*, for instance, would present bandits' crossing over the Iraqi border to escape from the State's bandit hunts as follows: "400 Bandits in the East Take Refuge in Barzani" (Cumhuriyet, 07.02.68: 1)

towards the Eastern bandits. (Milliyet, 04.11.66: 1) In a similar vein, the CHP's representatives presented on December 1966 a motion of general debate in the Republican Senate about the Eastern public disorder in which the Government was being accused of laxity over the security of its Eastern citizens:

> "(…) it is a truth that the bandits – who virtually subject to taxes especially the large masses of people residing in the Southeastern regions, and thus, who perform the role of the Government within the Government – carelessly continue to commit serious crimes, such as extortion, murder, highway robbery, raiding and smuggling." (Journal of the Republican Senate Records, 1966b: 511)

In his speech in favor of the given motion, Ekrem Özden, Senator from Istanbul, blamed the AP for abandoning the 'Turkish' citizens in the Eastern regions to the bandits' mercy. According to Özden, the military forces, and thus, the might of the State should rapidly be reconsolidated, as raids on military posts had become one amongst the 'daily issues'. ('umuru adiye') By quoting the recent banditry events from the national newspapers, such as the robbery of thirty cars and four tracks realized by seven bandits in the highway of Midyat, Özden defined the problem of Eastern brigandage as the most important topic of the day (Journal of the Republican Senate Records, 1966b: 512). According to Özden, in contradistinction to the AP's political power, the early Republican Governments eliminated the banditry threat by steel force, which in turn brought about 'peace' and 'order' in the East:

> "The region of Dersim that was once upon a time accessible for none, a battlefield of tribes annihilating each other (…) was rehabilitated by essential measures taken by the State and the public order was re-established. Today, that region in complete peace (…) has become an adorable nest of citizens that are feeling themselves secure." (Journal of the Republican Senate Records, 1966b: 513)

In his speech against the motion, Fethi Tevetoğlu, the Government's spokesman, argued that the banditry incidents in the East were normal occurrences, which were being dramatized by the opposition to discredit the AP's political power. Although the motion in question was rejected in the Senate by the AP's votes (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 520-521), the next session on December

22, 1966 would almost totally be assigned to the Kurdish banditry epidemic. In this session, Sükan, the Minister of Internal Affairs, argued that the issue of Eastern brigandage should be analyzed prudently, instead of being 'exaggerated' and 'aggrandized' as a political investment of the opposition. While the Minister was quoting the news reports of the national newspapers demonstrating the rise of banditry incidents during the political power of CHP in 1962 and their decrease in 1966, Sükan was, at the same time, confessing the State's impotence in the region: "Today, the West of the Hakkari-Van highway, the Wast of Bitlis-Siirt province and the Southern region of Van are outside of the complete control of the State's forces." (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 529)

According to Sükan, the issue at hand was not a mere security problem, but a multi-dimensional one that was inherited from the State's previous apathy towards the region. (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 529) Thus, the problem could only be resolved by a multi-dimensional attitude, in addition to the urgent need for strengthening the State's then-insufficient security forces. According to Sükan, as the banditry incidents in the Eastern regions were overwhelmingly realized by four major bandit gangs that took to the mountains during the years between 1955 and 1962 – i.e. the gangs of Tilki Selim, Ömer Bezek, Hakim Yılmaz (Hakimo) and Hamit Aldemir (Hamido)[120], the main goal of the Government was their elimination through a massive winter hunting. According to the Minister, as the minor bandit gangs and the perpetrators of banditry incidents were being apprehended immediately, the real problem was, therefore, the elimination of the aforementioned

[120] While Koçero was eventually killed during his attempted robbery of the Turkish Petroleum Cooperation in Batman on July 7, 1964, these new bandit figures had rapidly come to the front of the public discussion.

gangs.[121] In this respect, Sükan not only announced the fortification of military forces in the province of Siirt, but also heralded the establishment of commando units. (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 531) By criticizing the suppressive policies of the previous Governments in the Eastern regions, the Minister was announcing that the elimination of banditry would be achieved through law and democracy: "We are resolute in eliminating the banditry movement that has continued for many years. We shall deal with this issue with a democratic mentality, not with repression and terror." (Milliyet, 25.12.66: 1) (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 532)

In short, as opposed to the preceding State policies on the Eastern regions, the Minister of Internal Affairs was promising that the Justice Party (AP) would reconsolidate the broken public order in the East through law, rather than suppression, terror and discrimination. (Cumhuriyet, 23.12.66: 7) This democratic mentality, however, referred to, as the Minister himself explained in the same announcement, winter bandit hunting, the fortification of the security forces and the establishment of commando units. (Cumhuriyet, 23.12.66: 7) Yet, the MP's of the oppositional CHP had continued to blame the ruling AP for its incapability to eliminate the Eastern brigandage. Fearing from the mutation of bandit gangs into separatist political platoons, Kenan Esengin, the CHP's MP from Zonguldak, protested the Government for 'the sad truth' that the bandits were freely giving interviews to journalists with reference to a series of interviews with the Kurdish brigands published in the newspaper Hürriyet on December 1966. According to Esengin, the State's weak presence in the region that manifested itself in those

[121] In this respect, the Minister announced that the perpetrators of the recent highway robberies in Batman and Van were apprehended, a three-year-old bandit gang in Adıyaman was eliminated, and four members of the gangs of Hamido and Hakimo were detained in the province of Siirt. (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 532)

interviews with the Eastern fugitives could lead to the emergence of malign movements in the most 'delicate' region of the country. (National Assembly Records, 1966b: 393)

The topic of the Eastern public disorder was on the front of the budget discussions in the Senate in 1967 as well, while the Government had already taken extraordinary measures in the region, including the recent installation of an additional squadron of commandos in Siirt (Republican Senate Records, 1967a: 615) and the 24-hour control of the Eastern provinces by the Gendarme units. (National Assembly Records, 1967: 451) In this respect, the establishment of commando units had already been heralded in 1964:

> "Bandits, Watch Out! Commandos are Coming: Those trained in the Gendarme Commando School, established at Foça, will not show mercy for the bandits in the east. You Hamo, you Mehmedo, you Halimo, and you… you… you… All bandits… The uncrowned kings strolling around the Eastern mountains!.. For your information, six months later, the Gendarme commandos shall be your angels of death. (…) Those of you, who lay down their arms and submit themselves to justice, will be much more lucky. Have no doubt about that!.." (Milliyet, 22.07.64: 1, 7)

The military operations of the commando units in the Kurdish regions had, however, begun in 1967:

- "Commando Troop Launches 'Bandit Hunt' in East" (Milliyet, 10.03.67: 3)
- "720 Commandos Go for Bandit Hunt in East" (Milliyet, 03.04.67: 3)

In another session in 1967, the news reports on the ferocious massacre of four people by the Özbay Gang and the establishment of a military post in the village of their rival bandit gang led by Hamit Aldemir (Hamido) became one of the main topics of the Republican Senate. In this session, Mehmet Hazer, the Senate member of Kars from the CHP's group, argued that the Republic, which inherited the country with banditry pandemic, successfully consolidated the public order and peace despite its technical inferiority, while the present Government's weakness in the face of the Eastern banditry could by no means be tolerated. Regarding the gravity of the

Eastern banditry problem, the Senator described how had the various bandit gangs shared out the regions amongst themselves and proposed the elimination of the native people's support for the bandits either due to fear or their partnership in crime. (Republican Senate Records, 1967b: 248-249)

The bandit war between the gangs of Hamido and Özbay brothers in a small village of Siirt and the negotiation process between the Government and Hamido the bandit were, again, on the front of the Senate's discussion on December 1967. Bekata, the CHP's Senate's member from Ankara, blamed the Government for not being able to protect the townsmen of Hamido against the gang of Özbay, and thus, not keeping the promise given to the bandit in exchange for his surrender. (Republican Senate Records, 1967: 447-448) In his reply, Sükan, the Minister of Internal Affairs, informed that after the gang of Özbays kidnapped and murdered four peasants from Hamido's village, a special commando platoon had constantly been active in the region since June 15, 1967. Thanks to that commando squadron, the Minister claimed, the criminal incidents had decreased in the region on a large scale, while 10 members of the gang of Özbays (including the brother of the bandit chieftain Mehmet Emin Özbay) were captured. (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 446-447) Yet, the Minister refused the allegation over the Government's negotiation with the bandit Hamido: "The strong Turkish State does by no means cooperate with the bandit and the outlaw. (…) As the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Government, we have never been in such a negotiation." (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 448)

Referring to his press statement on May 17, 1967 promising to annihilate the murderous gang of Özbay brothers, the Minister underlined that only 10% of the crimes committed in the Gendarme's areas of responsibility had remained unsolved

(Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 449), but that the State's struggle against banditry should have only been realized within the rule of law and the Eastern public disorder was a multidimensional problem of the region:

> "The forces of the 32-million Turkish State know to give an object lesson to those violating and opposing the law. Yet, this should be achieved via the way of law. (…) The issues of public order and security cannot solely be dealt with police and punitive measures." (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 448-449)

According to the Minister of Internal Affairs Sükan, the objectives that the Government aimed at achieving in the Eastern regions through military operations had been (i) absolutely evoking the power and the authority of the State everywhere and through every incident, (ii) demonstrating that the Turkish citizens were under the protection of the State only, and (iii) presenting an object lesson for the criminal citizens, especially in the Eastern regions. (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 447)

Still, in the beginning of 1968, when the representatives of the ruling AP were claiming that the Eastern brigandage was almost totally eliminated and it had become a thing of the past (National Assembly Records, 1968a: 371), the oppositional political parties intensified their criticism of the Government for the ongoing Eastern public disorder. For instance, Muzaffer Özdağ, the CKMP's MP from Afyonkarahisar, proposed a vote of no confidence for the AP Government for its failure to ensure the security of life and property of citizens on November 15, 1968. According to Özdağ, (i) the Eastern brigandage in the form of armed robbery, highway robbery, murder, kidnapping, raids and burning down of villages had become prevalent and effective, (ii) brigands with superior arms had their own regions of influence and domination in the Eastern countryside, (iii) the security of the Eastern highways was almost totally lost, (iv) 'mütegallibe' (persecutors) were patronizing their own brigand gangs, and (v) the Government was patronizing the persecutors and cooperating and/or negotiating with the Eastern brigands. (National

Assembly Records, 1968c: 44-45) With reference to the news reports published in the national printed press, Özdağ enumerated the crimes committed by and the villages of tribute of various bandit gangs of Hakimo, Selim the Fox, Ömer Bezek, Seyro, and Çubukçu Ökkeş. Referring to Hamido's letter published in the national newspapers that called for the Government's assistance for his struggle against the Özbay gang, Özdağ underlined the incapability of the State's security forces in the region and the covert alliance between the Government and Hamido the bandit. (National Assembly Records, 1968d: 129) Finally, Özdağ claimed that while Hakimo was patronized by the AP in exchange of votes in the region of Eruh in Şırnak, Selim the Fox was supported by the CHP. (National Assembly Records, 1968d: 130) In the next session of the Assembly, the other oppositional political parties (CHP, TİP and YTP) would raise the same criticisms against the Government, while Kadri Eroğan, the AP's MP from Sakarya, claimed with reference to the official statistics of public order that banditry incidents had been decreasing from 1964 to 1968 and refused the allegations over the Government's cooperation with the Eastern persecutors and brigands. (National Assembly Records, 1968e: 164-165) According to the AP's spokesman, the establishment of commando units with their superior equipment and special trainings strengthened the security forces in the Eastern regions, and thus, the Eastern brigandage was on the brink of extinction. (National Assembly Records, 1968e: 172)

While public disorder in the Eastern regions had become the principal topic of criticism of the oppositional political parties against the ruling AP in the second half of the 1960s (Milliyet, 19.11.68: 1, 7; 17.09.69: 4, 27.09.69: 11) and letters of complaint about the public disorder in the Eastern regions continued to be published in the national printed press (Milliyet, 05.08.69: 7), the Minister of Internal Affairs

Sükan stated that the 'Eastern' people, in the absence of the State in the region in terms of the lack of both development and advanced security forces, submitted themselves to cruel aghas and their bandits. (National Assembly Records, 1969: 460) (Milliyet, 31.07.69: 1, 11)

In the 1970s, thousands of arms were appropriated and hundreds of peasants were arrested for possession of unregistered firearms in the East (Milliyet, 08.08.70: 3), but more importantly, the ever-existent Gendarme's oppression in the region rapidly culminated in the village and city raids conducted by the newly established commando units. In the name of struggling against banditry, the State aimed to penetrate into the region and strangle the emerging Kurdish national consciousness at its birth. According to the State elite, the massive emergence of banditry in the Eastern provinces was, therefore, both the hard proof of rising Kurdish separatism and the perfect opportunity and veil to eliminate it. While the emerging Kurdish organizations were being dealt with through the suppression of their leading figures – notably 'the arrest of the 49s' in 1958, 'the exile of the 50s' in 1960, 'the incident of the 23s' in 1963 and the massive 'Eastern Trials' in 1971 (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110-2133) – the means for breaking down the national morale of the Kurdish people, which was seen as being on the rise due the recent events in the Northern Iraq, was the systematic suppression of the ordinary Kurdish people and the humiliation of their socio-ethnic identity. But, the State officials' plan of strangling the Kurdish national consciousness at its birth would backfire due to resistance: While the arrested Kurdish youth in the Eastern Trials of 1971 would, for the first time, systematically and openly defend the Kurdish reality (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2304-2307), the Kurdish bandit myth was hiding in itself the native people's

longings to rebel against the State. A new period in the history of Kurds, the period of resistance, was on the horizon.

3. The State Penetration into the Kurdish Regions via Banditry: Commando Raids and The Aftermath (1970-1980)

"Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms?" (Saint Augustine, 2003: 139)

News reports in the 1960s demonstrated not only that bandit activity in the region did not decline, but also that the reinforced Gendarme, instead of achieving to eliminate banditry, was mainly oppressing the peasants of the region. Several columnists, critical of the State's policies in the Kurdish regions, had already turned public attention towards the Gendarme's oppression. For instance, Altan argued in the early 1960s that since the State was not able to deal with the banditry epidemic due to its underdeveloped military forces, peasants had been beaten every day by the Gendarme under accusation of aiding and abetting the bandits. (Altan, 1962b: 2) In 1967, Metin Toker, another columnist for the newspaper Milliyet, accused the ruling AP of condoning the Gendarme's oppression in the region. According to the author, the Gendarme's torturing of peasants was preparing the perfect ground for the spread of dangerous movements (i.e. Kurdism) along with the expansion of banditry. (Toker, 1967: 2) Indeed, after the mid 1960s, peasants' complaints about the Gendarme's repression had begun to appear daily in the national printed press:

- "Complaint in Assembly over Gendarme Beating" (Milliyet, 17.05.65: 1)
- "Village of Hakkari Emigrates to Iraq due to Gendarme's Oppression" (Milliyet, 13.12.66: 1, 7)
- "Gendarme Raid on 17 Villages to Locate Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 13.08.69: 5)
- "A peasant who attempted to escape while being taken to police station was shot to death by the Gendarme." (Milliyet, 29.09.69: 7)

The revelation of repression suffered by the native population at the hands of the State's security forces led several columnists to criticize the Government harshly. Kemal Bisalman, for instance, quoting a letter of complaint that was written by a woman in Urfa who had been regularly beaten and tortured by the Gendarme to get her to confess the hideout of her fugitive son, wrote that commando units were raiding innocent villages under the pretext of bandit hunting. (Bisalman, 1970a: 2)

In the 3rd period of the Assembly, Haldun Menteşeoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs between 1969 and 1971, explicated in his reply to a parliamentary question over the ongoing brigandage in the province of Siirt the new military strategy of the Government – sliding the military forces throughout the region – in dealing with the Eastern brigands, and as a result, the Minister announced, the gang of Hakimo was totally pacified. (National Assembly Records, 1970a: 696-698) When Mehmet N. Oktay, the Reliance Party's (GP) MP from Siirt, warned the Government for not solely relying on military measures by remarking the commandos' oppression in the region, Menteşeoğlu underlined that the share of the Eastern regions from the overall budget of the State's public services increased from 10% to 25% during the AP's political power. (National Assembly Records, 1970a: 697-698) Yet, the commandos' oppression had remained unaddressed in the Minister's reply to that parliamentary question. One month later, however, Oktay brought the commandos' repression of the native people through remarking that the Eastern banditry problem could not have been resolved merely by military measures, as that problem was, in fact, deriving from the State's apathy and hunger and ignorance in the region. (National Assembly Records, 1970b: 442-443) The MP warned about the prospective repercussions of the application of such coercion over the non-criminal population:

"If the individuals, who are unrelated with the fugitive, uninvolved in any sort of crime, innocent, are exposed to movements that are illegal, incompatible with human dignity, the commando and the officials who are obliged to consolidate peace disrupt, rather than protect, the tranquility of that country and will cause the coming of the regrettable incidents that we genuinely desire not at all." (National Assembly Records, 1970b: 443)

In his reply, the Minister of Internal Affairs Menteşeoğlu embraced the commandos for re-establishing law and order in the Eastern regions and that the non-criminal population in the region were, in principle, treated respectfully and gently. (National Assembly Records, 1970b: 456) Contrary to the Minister's argument, İbrahim Öztürk, an independent MP from Maraş, claimed that the banditry epidemic, along with the following commandos' repression in the Eastern and Southeastern regions, had begun to spread towards the West and had already rooted in Maraş, a province that was considered within the Southern regions. (National Assembly, 1970c: 184) The State's coercion in the Kurdish regions would, however, peaked in the systematic village raids realized by commando squadrons.

The massive commando operations in the Kurdish regions were initiated by the decree 'Mass Village Searching', which was declared by the Council of Ministers on August 18, 1969. The two main objectives of the decree, which covered seven Eastern provinces, were stated as the capture of bandits and the appropriation of arms and contraband. (Cem, 12.06.1970: 7) News reports in the 1970s after the launching of the commando operations, however, demonstrated that the operations' main goal was not the elimination of banditry but the suppression and humiliation of the Kurdish population. In those military operations and village raids, the aim of the State was not a mere forceful disarmament of the population, but to humiliate the ethno-political identity of the native population and inject terror and fear into peasants, not for sake of bandits, but for the Sate itself. In an allegorical narration, as

if it was being argued that no *Kurdish shrew* should have forgotten that if it was the age of banditry, the State was the greatest *bird of prey*.

A series of interviews conducted by Ismail Cem with the native peasants and the local authorities of the region, the DDKO (Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearts) report on the commando operations, which was composed of first-hand witnesses testimony from the victims and presented to President Cevdet Sunay in April 1970, and Mehmet Ali Aybar's speech over the operation asking for a vote of no confidence for the Prime Minister Sülayman Demirel in the Assembly are invaluable for grasping the State's rationale behind the commando raids on the Eastern villages. According to Aybar, the TİP's MP from Istanbul, the massive commando raids had begun on April 4, 1970 in the districts of Silvan and Bismil. According to the witnesses, Aybar claimed, 4,000 commandos and Gendarmes supported by several motor vehicles, six helicopters, and several artillery scout planes encircled the center of Silvan district at 4 a.m. After the district was isolated, men and women of the town were gathered and divided into two main bodies, while each and every house in the town was being heavily searched without any search warrant. During that 17-hour long searching, the citizens were physically and mentally tormented. Aybar claimed that in the following days the same courses of events were reproduced in Diyarbakır, Bitlis, Van, Siirt, Muş and Hakkari. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 663-664)

Regarding the villages, both Cem's interviews and the DDKO's report also demonstrated that a standard procedure of suppression was being applied during each and every commando raid. The DDKO's report begins with the observation that: "Every village is being raided on the same hour and in the same way, while the same

procedures of torture are being applied in every village." (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 495)

During an ordinary commando raid, which always occurred at dawn and lasted for more than fifteen hours, the villagers were forcefully aligned at the center of the village where men and women were separated into two main groups. After the commander demanded the arms of the villagers, the victims argued, all of the village's residents, including women, children, and elders, were first undressed and then beaten one by one.[122] According to Cem's interviews, the witnesses spoke of various incidents where beatings led to permanent disabilities and even deaths. (Cem, 14.06.1970: 7) The DDKO report, examining the commando raids in Silvan, Bismil, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Siirt, disclosed five murders by beating (Dursun Yanardağ in the village of Düvel in Diyarbakır, Mahmut Öztaş in the village of Kavsar in Mardin, a pregnant woman in the village of Tizyan in Mardin, a peasant in the village of Dara in Mardin, and a pregnant woman in the village of Sive in Siirt). (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 495-496) The interviewed peasants claimed that they were also insulted during beatings as follows:

> – "Bring your hidden guns, you, the dogs of Barzani!"[123] (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 669)
> – "You, son of a Kurd, go away, go to Barzani!" (Cem, 12.06.1970: 7)
> – "You are a Kurd, go away to Iraq, to Barzani!" (Cem, 14.06.1970: 7)
> – "You will take those arms to Barzani!" (Cem, 14.06.1970: 7)
> – "You killed our fathers, our uncles!" (Cem, 14.06.1970: 7)
> – "You, the tailed Kurd, go away to Barzani!" (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 666)
> – "You are the servants of Barzani, we shall oppress you until we dismiss you from these lands. You can complain to whoever you want, we have the order to kill you." (Cem, 15.06.1970: 7) (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 496)

The reference to the ethnic term 'Kurd' demonstrates that the State elite was betraying its own law of silence on the Kurdishness of the 'Eastern' people, simply

[122] When Aybar remarked the incidents of undressing of women in certain cases, the ruling AP's MPs interrupted his speech with the cries 'You lie!'. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 663)
[123] When Aybar mentioned in his controversial parliamentary speech the aforementioned insult remarked during the commando raids, the AP's MPs shouted 'you are the dog!". (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 669)

because in order to humiliate their ethnic identity, it should have been elucidated. The necessity for the humiliation of the Kurdish identity of the 'Eastern' people could be, in turn, deciphered from the unerring references to Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The political proceedings in favor of the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish Government in the Northern Iraq from 1958 onwards, and the increased national morale of the Kurdish people as a result, constituted one part of the State's threat perception from the Kurdish population of Turkey. The commando operations were, in this respect, preemptive strikes against this perceived threat at its birth.

The head of one village confessed in the interview that they deeply regretted sending petitions of complaint about the rise in banditry incidents in their region to the Government, as the State immediately responded to their petitions by disarming, beating and torturing them. (Cem, 12.06.1970: 7) Cem was also quoting the villagers' original complaint petitions in which the torture and murders committed during the commando raids were reported to the President. (Cem, 13.06.1970: 7) In those petitions, not only were different kinds of torture described[124], but it was also stated that many villages, which were raided more than five times consecutively, were forced to emigrate altogether either to Iraq or Syria. (Cem, 15, 17.06.1970: 7) In this respect, the DDKO report, which described in detail the various kinds of torture and humiliation, stated that one hundred families from the village of Sive in Siirt emigrated from their lands in Turkey due to the oppression of the commandos. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 496) Indeed, according to those petitions and interviews, the main message of the State was the same everywhere: "You leave!"

According to the interviewed peasants, moreover, the policy of disarmament made them vulnerable towards aghas and their bandits in their struggle to protect

[124] While Aybar narrated those tortures in the Assembly, such as flogging of a village headman naked or tying up of a village imam from his private parts, the AP's MPs interrupted in each case with the shout 'you lie!'. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 664)

their lands.[125] As blood feud and banditry infested the region and most of the villagers were subsisting on 'smuggling', Cem stated, arms had become the natural means of self-defense for the 'Eastern' peasants. (Cem, 13.06.1970: 7) An interviewed landlord who was also the mayor of a village of the ruling AP was, however, praised the commando operations for preventing the illegal land occupation by peasants and reconsolidating peace and order in the region. (Cem, 13.06.1970: 7) Local State officials, in a similar vein, interpreted the commando raids on the Eastern villages as inevitable intervention by the State for the reconsolidation of public order in the region. (Cem, 13.06.1970: 7)

Finding the present order and peace in the Eastern regions that emerged after the commando operations temporary and artificial, Cem concluded that the State was, in fact, creating by force an uncontrollable longing to rebel in the 'Eastern' people: "The commando operations that were launched to reconsolidate public order and that succeeded in this respect, have been implemented, after a certain point, for the benefit of some aghas and of those that aim to cause trouble in Turkey by dividing it." (Cem, 12.06.1970: 7)

Cem argued that State's distrust in the 'Eastern' people led it to treat them as second-class citizens and to keep the status quo in the region – which only worked in favor of the continuity of the feudal landlords' hegemony and the underdevelopment in the region – intact. The enemies of Turkey, Cem claimed, were abusing the State oppression over the 'Eastern' people to propagate Kurdism in the region and to hide the 'true' social contradiction between aghas and peasants. By publishing his interviews as an urgent warning to the Government on the ongoing hazardous

[125] Cem also noted the peasants' complaints about the unjust application of the policy of disarmament in the region, since the arms of aghas could not be appropriated in village raids, as they hid their arms in towns in advance. (Cem, 14.06.1970: 7) In a similar vein, the DDKO report underlined the fact that all of the villages of Silvan were raided by commandos except for those belonging to the aghas of the ruling AP. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 495)

developments in the Eastern regions, Cem meaningfully concluded that "the south-east of Anatolia is an unfortunate and poor region that must be approached with roses and flowers, instead of an enemy territory that is to be raided with rifle butt strokes and swearing." (Cem, 18.06.1970: 7)

As opposed to Cem's analysis of the State oppression as an unconscious propagation of 'Kurdism' distracting the native population from the 'true' contradiction of the region, i.e. the feudal class struggle, many found the escalating level of State terror in the region to be the most appropriate policy for curtailing the rise of separatism. For instance, Necmi Onur in his article series "What is Happening behind the Mountains?" which was published in the newspaper *Yeni İstanbul* ('the New Istanbul') was praising the commando operations as the most appropriate policy of 'cultural imperialism' that had to be implemented in the Eastern regions. Aside from the commando operations, according to Onur, the State had to follow the main policies of cultural imperialism by empowering the judicial and administrative departments of the State with extraordinary authority, disintegrating the tribal structure and the authority of the aghas through an educational mobilization, cutting the linkage between the new and the old generations through primary boarding schools, bribing the native population with the proliferation of public services and reactivating the Settlement Law in the region. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2132)

On the other hand, during the Assembly speech of Mehmet Ali Aybar, the AP's MPs, including the Minister of Internal Affairs, did not accept the occurrence of any kind of torture, death or beating during these commando operations. Indeed, as Aybar's speech was frequently interrupted with personal and anti-communist insults by the AP's MPs, it could easily be inferred that the ruling party adopted a strategy in advance through which the related subject could not wholly be discussed

in the Assembly. For instance, as soon as Aybar claimed that a discriminative, hostile attitude towards the Easterners had been infused into the soldiers in the commando schools, Ahmet Budanlı, the AP's MP from Muğla, accused him of defamation of the army. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 668) According to Aybar, if there was no situation, no rebellion in the Eastern regions that required these kinds of massive military operations, which were meticulously kept under wraps from the Western public, the aim of the State in the region was to menace its 'Kurdish speaking citizens'. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 663) Remarking the recent events in the Northern Iraq in favor of Barzani, Aybar argued that these commando operations did not only violate the basic rights of the Eastern people, but they were also detrimental for Turkey's national interests. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 663) According to Aybar, the Government must have been oriented to that 6-month long operation series, which concluded with the seizure of 1590 firearms and 185 sharp objects and the capture of 4,965 fugitives[126], in which big landlords and their bandit gangs remained untouched, through covert forces within the State. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 667-668)

In addition to classical anti-communist phrases and accusations of Kurdism towards Aybar, Menteşeoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs, interpreted the allegations about the commando operations as 'slanders' and 'lies' and argued in his reply that a successful military strategy had been applied in pursuit of brigands and fugitives in the Eastern regions within the strict framework of law. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 679-681) From the CHP's group, MP Melih Kemal Küçüktepınar from Adana claimed that although the condemnable allegations should have certainly be investigated and the oppositional political parties must have been

[126] According to Menteşeoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the number of appropriated firearms during this period was 15,602. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 683)

informed, 'the sovereignty of the law and the State' should be re-established by eliminating the Eastern brigandage. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 670-673) At the end, Aybar's vote of no confidence for the Prime Minister Demirel with the allegation over the anti-constitutionality of the commando movements in the Eastern regions was rejected in the Assembly. (National Assembly Records, 1970d: 684)

From a whole new level of perspective, the DDKO report was, however, interpreting the commando operations as a new phase of the State's ever-lasting oppression over the 'Eastern' people under yet another veil *Wanted Bandits*:

> "According to us, that movement of repression-cruelty-genocide launched against the people that live in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey is the result of an illegal, inhumane mentality. What is the meaning of these operations that are being realized in the name of 'Wanted Bandits'? If the history of Turkey is examined a little bit, it can be seen that this suppression, which was imposed over the people in this region, is neither the first nor will it be the last. In these recent events, the label of 'Wanted Bandits' has been put forward. Despite all of these proceedings, bandits are still rambling around and have been backed by the influential aghas of the region." (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 496)

i. Calm before the Storm

The Kurdish resentment that had been rising against the Gendarme's oppression in the region found its clear expression in the massive 'Eastern Meetings' held in the fall of 1967. The demonstrations, organized by the 'Eastern group' within the TİP, were held as a reaction both to the increasing racist discourse of the national printed press over the Kurdish identity and to the Gendarme's oppression in the region in the name of struggling against banditry. The Eastern Meetings were the first of their kind through their creation of a causal relationship between the economic backwardness of the region and the oppression of the 'Eastern' identity. Its mottoes were self-explanatory:

> "Civilization to the west, ignorance to the east, why?"; "We demand teachers, not Gendarmes!"; "We demand schools, not military outposts!"; "Factories and highways to the west, commandos and military outposts to the east"; "We demand factories, not bazookas!"; "The Easterner shoots in war and is shot in peace!"; "We demand security of life!"; "Respect our language!"; "Petrol,

copper, chrome we have; living you have!"; "Caves for us, villas for them!"; "Look at me friend, unity achieved only through equality!"; "One day, we shall laugh too!" (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2129)

The Eastern Meetings were followed by a number of protests in the Kurdish regions in 1969 that were held against hunger in the region. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2126) The native resentment against hunger and oppression could best be represented by the mottoes of a similar demonstration in 1970: "Hunt for the bandit or menace to the poor?"; "For sorrow and hunger, the remedy is a Commando?"; "There is hunger, not bandits in the east!"; "We are unemployed, not bandits!" (Cumhuriyet, 30.04.70: 7)

In the beginning of the 1970s, the repression of the commando units in the Eastern regions and the people's resentment towards the security forces of the State had intensified to such an extent that in order to suppress a simple frenzy after a football match in Siirt, commandos opened fire on the people, murdering two young fans and grievously injuring 50 people. (Milliyet, 04.05.70: 1) After the eruption of massive demonstrations due to this tragic incident, the Governor of Siirt declared a curfew (Milliyet, 04.05.70: 11), while Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel belittled the incident as a mere sporadic clash and an ordinary hooliganism event. (Bisalman, 1970c: 2) The columnists Bisalman, however, openly warned the Government to take the events in Siirt more seriously, as they openly demonstrated the 'Eastern' people's resentment. According to Bisalman, the 'Eastern' resentment against the State had become all the more dangerous with the prospective emergence of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq (Bisalman, 1970c: 2):

"If the accumulation of antipathy that is created by commandos, who raid villages and beat peasants under the pretext of bandit hunts, did not exist in the region and the region, like a chemical that is about to blaze, was not one in which people are treated as second-class citizens, could a football defeat, even the murder of two people by the State's forces' opening fire, lead to the emergence of such massive and continuous events?" (Bisalman, 1970c: 2)

This incident was, indeed, only a snapshot of the State's repression over the native population and the increasing rage and resentment of the people against the State. The third pages of daily newspapers throughout the 1970s were full of similar news stories reporting on the bloody encounters between the Kurdish people and the State's security forces.[127] It would soon be clearly understood that in those encounters, neither the State's repression nor the people's resentment were of an ordinary nature; on the contrary, those 'sporadic' incidents would soon prove the fact that the all of the necessary conditions for the emergence of a long-lasting political conflict had been ripening.

The broken public order in the Eastern regions was, according to the national press, forcefully reconsolidated first by commando operations and then by the announcement of martial law during the military coup of March 12, 1971. It seemed, according to the reporters of the national press, as if both banditry and mass resentment had disappeared in the East. (Duru, 1971: 1, 9) Haldun Menteşeoğlu, the Minister of Internal Affairs, boasted; "there are no longer bandits in the mountains." (Cumhuriyet, 18.07.70: 1) Despite the asserted 'calm and peace' in the region, the State oppression had actually been escalating. On December 11, 1974, after their surrender in the Syrian border town of Viranşehir, nine smugglers were executed by the Gendarme. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2308) The newspapers would, however, report the execution as a clash between the smugglers and the State's security forces without mentioning the smugglers' surrender. (Milliyet, 12, 16.12.74: 10) Throughout the 1970s, complaints about the commando repression in the Kurdish regions would continue to appear in the Assembly and Senate meetings. (Republican Senate Records, 1979: 977)

[127] For instance, a commando lieutenant arbitrarily murdered Abdullah Acar, a Kurd in Nusaybin, in January 1970. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2131)

Meanwhile, a new law of public order – 'Asayişe müessir bazı fillerin önlemmesi hakkında Kanun' ('Law on the prevention of some deeds harmful for the public order') – which eased the State's security forces' right to use arms against those violating the law and thus disrupting the public order was adopted on August 8, 1971.[128] (Journal of Laws, 1971: 488-489) Although this law was enacted in lieu of and in comparison to the annulled 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu', which was turning the criminal subject into a 'homo sacer' under the label of 'bandit', and the rising political crimes had begun to be denominated as 'political brigandage', the term 'bandit' wasn't used in the language of the new law. Instead of concentrating on the doer of the crime, the law targets the criminal deed itself and the MPs speaking in favor of the law in the Assembly and the Senate underlined that although the struggle against banditry, whether ordinary or political, would be realized within the framework of democratic principles, the related law rightfully strengthened the hand of the State's security forces in their struggle against banditry. (National Assembly Records, 1971a: 207-208) (Republican Senate Records, 1971: 133-134)

Inspiring from the Eastern banditry, the term 'political brigandage' referring to escalating leftist and rightist political violence had become a popular term in the Assembly and Senate meetings. For instance, Osman Bölükbaşı, Nation Party's MP from Ankara, blamed the ruling AP for patronizing rightist 'political brigandage'. (National Assembly Records, 1968b: 516) In a similar vein, the members of illegal political organizations had begun to be denominated as 'urban' and 'political bandits'; and exclusively for the rightest and leftist organizations, respectively, as 'fascist' and 'commando bandits'; and as 'communist', 'separatist', 'red', 'Marxist-

[128] The aforementioned Law no. 1481 would be amended in 1987 by the addition of an article allowing the Minister of Internal Affairs to announce monetary awards for those assisting the security forces in the crimes 'disrupting the indivisible integrity of the State and the people, putting the existence of the Turkish State and Republic into jeopardy, and opposing the Constitutional order and general security'. (Journal of Laws, 1987: 257)

Leninist', 'guerilla', 'extreme leftist' and 'anarchist bandits', especially from the late 1960s onwards, while this discourse peaked in the second half of the 1970s. (National Assembly Records, 1974a: 395, 1974b: 483, 1976a: 27-31, 1976b: 341-342, 1978: 358)

In 1971, for instance, both the AP's MPs and Senators defined the leaders of radical leftist student movements (including most notably Deniz Gezmiş) as 'bandits', while they were pressing the Assembly and the Senate to approve the hanging of Gezmiş and his comrades. (National Assembly Records, 1971b: 440) (Republican Senate Records, 1972a: 130) In a similar vein, after a series of sensational kidnappings by Mahir Çayan, one of the leading figures of the radical leftist youth in the 1970s, while the national printed press introduced him to audiences as a 'bandit', Süleyman Demirel, the President of the AP, urged the State not to show mercy and tolerance for such 'city bandits'. (Milliyet, 05.06.71: 1) Indeed, when Çayan would be documented as a 'bandit' in his trial in 1971, he would raise an objection against the trial's language by making the correction that he was a 'revolutionary', not a 'bandit'. (Cumhuriyet, 02.10.71: 7) From this moment onwards, while the terms *şaki* (bandit sing.) and *şerir* ('evildoer') were disappearing from the political language, the term *eşkıya* (bandits pl.), along with the supportive term *şekavet* (brigandage), had become a term *à la mode* of the period for describing any of the armed actions of illegal (notably leftist) political organizations either in the cities or in the countryside, until the term 'terrorist' would eventually substitute it.[129] Thus, the oppositional CHP in 1976 would continue to criticize the AP Government for 'the continuation of urban and rural banditry'. (National Assembly Records, 1976a: 27-31)

[129] Necmettin Erbakan's MSP (National Salvation Party) would use "Bandits will perish, Saints will triumph" as its main electoral motto in 1977. (Milliyet, 13.05.77: 7)

ii. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!: The Transformation of the Kurdish Resentment from Bandits to Guerrillas and Terrorists

Back in the 1950s, the term of 'terrorist' was an elite word that had rarely been used even in the Assembly, and when used in phrases like 'terror regime', the preacher always referred to its original meaning, i.e. 'extreme fear'. (T.B.M.M. Records, 1954: 590, 1956: 549) From the 1960s onwards, the rising political violence, and especially the radical leftist organizations, had begun to be denominated commonly as 'banditry' or 'brigandage', and much less often as 'terrorism'. As the radical Turkish left was approaching its ultimate demise, which would occur almost suddenly after its meteoric rise in the 1970s, a new radical Kurdish national movement was just taking its first steps under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan. State officials of the period meticulously differentiated those two types of 'banditry' from each other by denominating their members, respectively, as 'anarchist' and 'separatist' bandits.[130] After public order was forcefully reconsolidated by the military coup on September 12, 1980, the President Kenan Evren would declare that they would re-establish the democratic Government as soon as 'the anarchist bandits' had been totally eliminated, as if grasping the difficulty and longevity of the latters' elimination. (Milliyet, 15.10.80: 6) On the first anniversary of the military coup, Evren introduced the term 'terrorist' into the Turkish context by using it in conjunction with the term 'bandit' to legitimize the continuation of the military rule. (Milliyet, 13.09.81: 12)

[130] For instance, see the press statement of Hasan Fehmi Güneş, the Minister of Internal Affairs, on the Apo movement ('Apocular'): (Milliyet, 28.08.79: 1, 9) For a series of articles describing the rising PKK as a cruel banditry organization, see: (Birler, 1981: 7)

In one of the warning notes that were posted on walls or thrown out from combat helicopters from 1985 onwards, the State urged the native people to assist in its struggle against the PKK, 'the bandit rabble':

> "(…) The bandit rabble talk to you about 'the national war of independence' [and] freedom, desires to break up your unity and integrity. Do not be deceived by these traitors, the front of cursing! The order that this traitor bandit (…) desires to establish is the order of cursing. (…) Assist the security forces that struggle for you!" (Beşikçi, 1990: 169)

In the following years, while the national press continued to define the PKK as 'separatist bandits' (Milliyet, 02.08.86: 7), President Turgut Özal would infamously define it as "a bunch of bandits". On August 20, 1986, Özal would, for instance, announce the result of the air operation over the PKK's camps in Northern Iraq with the statement "150-200 Bandits Killed". (Milliyet, 20.08.86: 13) As the war of the State against that "bunch of bandits" lasted for more than thirty years, various columnists would argue that Özal's discourse was, in fact, reflecting the State's underestimation of the true magnitude of the emerging separatist threat in the 1980s. The head of the snake, they sighed, should have been crushed at its birth. (Çetinkaya, 2011: 7) According to those authors, however, the problem with the definition of the PKK as "a bunch of bandits" derived from the slang 'a bunch of', certainly not from the term 'bandit' that was, according to the columnists of the national press, perfectly applicable to the PKK in addition to the new term 'terrorist'.

Following the global decline of the term 'bandit' in the states' security discourses, the urban concept 'terrorist' has gradually replaced its rural counterpart 'bandit' in the Turkish State Discourse. Still, even in the 2000s, politicians and columnists alike continued to use those two terms in conjunction to describe the militants of the PKK whereas the pro-Kurdish party denominated them as 'guerrillas' and 'freedom fighters'. In this extreme social polarization, one's choice of words

clearly displays his/her side of the given struggle.[131] A columnist in Cumhuriyet, in this respect, succeeded in using all those definitive terms in one sentence: "According to the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the bandit in the mountains is not a terrorist, but a *guerrilla*." (Arcayürek, 2013: 1)

Indeed, it is conspicuous that many columnists in the Kemalist-oriented national newspaper *Cumhuriyet* continue to use the term 'bandit', in addition to the term 'terrorist', to denominate the PKK's militants in their criticism of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) Government here for an MP's kidnapping by the PKK's militants (Birgit, 2012a, b, c: 7) and there for the policy of paid military service. (Coşkun, 2011: 2) In a similar vein, in order to condemn the ongoing negotiation process between the PKK's imprisoned leader and the State, another columnist cited İsmet İnönü's famous words when he referred to a hijacking incident about forty years ago: "No bargaining with the bandit." (Acar, 2013: 12)

Apart from the columnists, it is meaningful that politicians, too, such as Bülent Arınç, the Vice Prime Minister of the AKP, occasionally choose to use the term 'bandit' along with that of 'terrorist': "They are bandits, we are the State, not bandits. The State realizes its struggle against terrorism within the framework of law." (*Cumhuriyet*, 16.09.12: 5)

On the other side of the coin, although the PKK continues to define itself as the leader of the first organized armed revolt of the Kurdish peoples against the Turkish nation-state, and its militants as guerrillas, it does still embrace the legacy and the myth of the last Kurdish bandits representing both the form and the content of rebellious longings within the Kurdish peoples.

[131] Indeed, it is easy to tell one's side of the given struggle even through his/her Turkish pronunciation of the letter *K* in the abbreviation *PKK*.

CHAPTER IV

KURDISH NATIONAL MEMORY OF BANDITRY

"Tales should be taken from taletellers, ballads from singers. Provisions for tandoori fables should be asked from old women. In short, people with specific knowledge of any kind of tradition should be found and consulted." (Gökalp, 1992: 16)

The law had rarely been meticulous in its definition of banditry and authoritatively put that label on any outlaw action, whether it came in the form of blood feud, honor murder, smuggling, highway robbery, tribal conflict, or even political rebellion. As the only valid criterion was, for the law, the criminality of the action, any outlaw was defined as a *şaki.* In Kurdish, however, the term *eşqiya* is an alien word that was used by the law, not by the native people.[132] Instead, several terms have been used in Kurdish to differentiate between different kinds of outlaw activity as opposed to the law's over-stretched use of the term *eşqiya*.

First of all, while the term *rêbir* (*rê* -road, *bir* -cut) refers to the classical definition of bandits as highway robbers, the term *nijdevan* (*nijd* –raid, *van* – er) describes those that raid villages for pillage. In addition to those terms differentiating between forms of bandit activity, the most commonly used Kurdish terms are *mehkûm* (convict) and *firar* (fugitive) when compared to the usage of the term *eşqiya*. The main reference point of those terms is the law, as the term *mehkûm* implies that the person in hand has become a prisoner of the (*mecbûr* – doomed to, *neçar* – helpless against) the law due to a previous outlaw action that may not be seen as illegitimate in the eyes of the native population, as in incidents of honor crime, blood feud, desertion or smuggling. While a person runs from the law, s/he

[132] The term *eşkıya* is the plural form of the Arabic word *şaki* and descends from Ottoman times. Resources of the Ottoman State also used the terms *harabê* or *kuttau't-tarik* for highwaymen and also *celâli* (rebel), *eşirrâ* (malign), *harâmi* (robber), *haramzâde* (ill-getter), *türedi* (rogue) and *haydut* (brigand) interchangeably in lieu of *eşkıya*. (Üner, 2010: 67)

remains a fugitive, but s/he is neither a *rêbir* nor a *nijdevan* as long as s/he does not conduct robberies on highways or raid on villages.

Still, the abovementioned Kurdish terms hold a neutral nature and whether or not an individual bandit is good or evil for their people can only be determined by their own story. In oral Kurdish narrations, only those *eşqiya* who harmed the poor, worked for aghas, kidnapped and raped women, and collaborated with the *Roma Reş*[133] (i.e. the Ottoman and the Turkish states*)* against their own people were evil. All the rest are called *cengawer* (warrior) – who by their very nature raided other tribes for pillage, robbed the caravans of *bazirgan* (merchants) and the mail carts of the Roma Reş. Their loot was, therefore, seen as a natural pay-off, a by-product of their courage. It is, in this respect, necessary to analyze the ancient oral Kurdish banditry tradition to examine the images of the old bandits of Kurdistan held in the eyes of their native people before moving to the individual histories of the last Kurdish bandits of modern Turkey.

A. Kurdish Banditry Tradition from the *Mirs* to the *Roma Reş*: Banditry, Founding Myth of Kurdish National Historiography

When the existence of Kurds was altogether denied, their collective memory turned into their national shelter, an abstract space for the expression of their repressed longings for resistance and rebellion. They both remembered and forgot, and thus reconstructed, their past through their own collective memory; thus, resistance went

[133] Kurdish people speak of the Ottoman and the Turkish states with the term 'Roma Reş' (Black Rûm*)*. While the term 'Reş' describes the oppressive rules of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic over the Kurdish people (Kevirbirî, 2004: 31), the term 'Roma' comes from the Kurds' referring to the Turks as Rûms, which is originally used to denote the Greek orthodox and catholic communities of the Middle East. The best example for such usage could be found in Ahmed-i Xani's famous *Mem û Zin*. (Xani, 1990)

on in their national consciousness. When all the means of social communication were abolished, the ancient tradition of oral narrations served to keep the collective memory alive by a self-construction of their popular history. *Dengbêjs*, the tellers of *kılams* (Kurdish folkloric songs), were, in fact, mobile popular historians, the very oasis, in Mazlum Doğan's words, of a culture that was forcefully turning into a desert. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 10) In the language of those kılams bandits turned into national heroes, expressing people's desires to resist authority through their actual or imagined revolt against the Mir here and the Roma Reş there. Thus, banditry has become one of the founding myths of emerging Kurdish nationalism, which has already constructed a national historiography through the Kurdish oral tradition.

1. Rebelling against the Mir: Elo Dîno as the Archetype of Kurdish Banditry Myth

In the valleys of the Gabar Mountains, at the Tigris's elbow and in the face of Elo Dîno's pavilion that was around 15km away from the ancient city Cizîr, Ramazanê Botî[134], a local researcher of Kurdish history and culture in the region of Cizîra Bohtan, begins narrating the story of Elo Dîno, the famous 16th century Kurdish bandit:

Elo was from one of the villages in the western area Cizîr-Idil of the region of Cizîra Bohtan.[135] Before the beginning of his banditry career, he was already known and called by the nickname 'Elo Dîno' (Ali the Mad). His famous hospitality for his

[134] 1st Oral Source.
[135] The borders of the region surrounded by the rivers Tigris from the north and Bohtan from the west contain Eruh, Şırnak and Cizîr by reaching out into the mountains of Hakkari in the east and the river Habur in the south. (Öğün, 2010: 4) According to Altan and Kardaş, Elo was a member of the Sinikan tribe from the region of Cizîra Bohtan. (2011)

guests despite his extreme poverty earned him the epithet 'Dîno' in the region.[136] Hospitality has remained one of the fundamental themes of the popular narratives in Kurdistan in general and in the region of Cizîra Bohtan in particular, to such an extent that the guest (*mêvan*) has always been treated as the guest of God (*mêvanê xwedê*) and those that cannot host their guests honorably feel disgrace.[137] Still, generous hospitality was seen as madness when it came, as in our case, from a poor fellow. When Elo eventually had nothing left to serve up for his guests, his mother cried: "What will we do? Go to the Mir of Bohtan, maybe he will find a job for you and save us from this disgrace."

Despite his desperate situation, Elo held his pride in such high esteem that he didn't want to beg for help from the Mir or an agha in the region. While he was searching for a solution, Elo's attention turned to the *keleks*[138] on the river that were used to carry goods from Diyarbakır to Mosul and Baghdad on the Tigris. Then, he returned to his home with joy and told his family: "I've found a great job for myself. I will close the Tigris with a chain and take my *baç*[139] from every kelek that passes down the river." Elo's wife burst out laughing: "Then, the Mir of Bohtan will take our heads. Don't you know that only the Mir takes baç from every kelek in Cizîr?"

Elo didn't listen to his wife and began constructing his pavilion on one side of the river. When the villagers saw the construction work and learned of Elo's intentions, they also tried to convince him to give up on his quest; "otherwise", they

[136] In the narration of Ramazanê Botî, representing the original Cizîra version of the legend, the emphasis both at the beginning and the tragic end of the story is on Elo's hospitality. According to Dilşad Muti, however, the epithet 'Dîno' derives either from his lively mood or from a transformation of the name 'Aladdin', which could be his original name, or from the village of Dinowa, which could possibly be Elo's village due to its closeness to his pavilion. (Muti, 2008: 105 – 106)

[137] That the term 'mêvan is a common first name in Kurdish revalidates the fact that the people in the region cherish their guests. In this respect, Nikitine wrote: "All of the travelers living among the Kurds frequently (…) remark of their hospitality." (1991: 148)

[138] Kelek: A type of primitive boat.

[139] Baç: An ancient type of tax that was taken by force from those carrying goods from one place to another. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 69)

warned, "the Mir will be your angel of death." For the villagers, opposing the Mir was madness even for an agha or a whole tribe, let alone for a poor peasant. Elo didn't listen to the villagers, either, and soon completed his pavilion. Then, he blocked the Tigris with a chain that ran between his pavilion and a big rock on the other side of the river. Whenever a kelek came to the pavilion, Elo raised the chain and did not allow it to pass until he had taken his baç. As the merchants had no other choice but to give their baç twice – first to Elo Dîno and then to the Mir of Bohtan – they decided in time to appeal to the Mir and complain about Elo Dîno. They cried: "We are giving baç not only to you, the Mir of Bohtan, but also to a man named Elo Dîno whom we don't know at all. Now, we cannot make profit from our trade." The Mir was both bewildered and furious. He shouted: "Who is that mad man? Who can dare to oppose his Mir? I will take his head for sure."

Although the Mir sent an envoy to warn him about the consequences of his actions, Elo didn't care and continued to tax the merchants. He was making a name for himself, while rumors about how the Mir was refraining from taking action against Elo were spreading all around Cizîra Bohtan. As soon as those rumors reached the Mir's ears, he sent a regiment of fifty elite warriors to capture Elo Dîno and destroy his pavilion. Elo's imprisonment was not, however, achieved easily, as he was only captured after a half of the Mir's warriors had lost their lives. He was put in chains and brought before the Mir's *divan*[140] in his castle Bırca Belek.[141] Mir commanded: "How could you oppose me, the Mir of Bohtan? I could kill you, but I would rather inflict on you exemplary punishment. Take him to the dungeons,

[140] Divan: The main hall in which the Mir sat and any decision of the tribe or the emirate was taken. (Erdost, 1987: 225-226)

[141] According to another narration of the story, a trap that was set up by the cooperation by the merchants and the Mir of Bohtan led to Elo's capture. In this less-persuasive narration, merchants deceived Elo into believing that the Mir had sent a concubine in a kelek as a gift and when Elo fell asleep, the boat reached the Mir's castle down the river after it had been set free by the merchants. (Altan & Kardaş, 2011)

enchain his arms and legs, make holes in his shoulders and put candles in them; so that no one will dare to oppose the Mir again!"



Elo Dîno's pavilion in Cizîr (Photo is taken by the author)

As the Mir's orders were being carried out, Elo didn't try to defend or explain himself. He neither moaned nor begged for forgiveness; Elo was, on the contrary, proudly silent. Then, the candles in his shoulders were lit. Elo was already heavily wounded and the wax that dripped down the sides of the candles had begun to penetrate inside his body. After one day of torture, the Mir finally ordered his vizier to check on the prisoner's condition. When the vizier saw Elo in unspeakable pains, he asked: "Elo, do you see the situation you are in? Do you see what happens when you oppose the Mir of Bohtan?"

"I can't complain, this is the situation of a warrior [*cengawer*]", Elo replied, "and it is not the worst." "Could there be", the vizier asked in confusion, "any other situation worse than this?" Then, Elo uttered his famous final words that would turn

into an idiom around the region: “The worst situation is not having anything to serve up for your guest, feeling ashamed of yourself and not knowing what to do while looking at your wife. That situation is worse than this.”

As the vizier didn’t know about hunger, he thought that Elo was making fun of his painful situation. Thus, he said, “It’s not for nothing that you are known as Elo Dîno.” As soon as the Mir learned from the vizier about Elo’s words, he, however, ordered his immediate release. But, it was too late, as Elo was already dead. At his funeral, which was organized by the Mir himself, he told the crowd: “I take an oath on my ancestors that if I only knew that Elo was taking his baç because of his hunger and hospitality, I would never have had him killed.” “This is the end of Elo’s legend”, remarked Ramazanê Botî narrating its original Cizîra Bohtan version. Before analyzing the meaning of the myth, it is crucial to examine its historical context.

First and foremost, the existence of a great number of oral narratives and folkloric songs (kılam) and the historical ruins of his pavilion prove that Elo Dîno was a real historical character, rather than a flight of imagination. In the narration of Ramazanê Botî, the name of the Mir is not given; but in the other versions of the legend, he is said to be Mir Muhammed of Bohtan. (Altan & Kardaş, 2011) Mir Muhammed must have belonged to the *Cizîra Begs* dynasty, which ruled their region independently as the Bohtan Emirate from its foundation in the second half of the 13th century by Mir Süleyman bin Halid (Sharaf Khan Bidlisi: 1975: 147) until 1517, when it came under Ottoman domination in its external affairs while protecting its autonomy in its internal affairs with the family name *Azizan*, and then on to the second half of the 19th century when the dynasty was altogether abolished. (Öğün, 2010: 9-22) According to Altan and Kardaş, the Mir Muhammed of the legend must

have been Emir Muhammed, the son of Mir Bedil, who ruled Cizîra Bohtan between 1571 and 1578, as he was known as the most cruel and greedy Mir among all the four Mirs of Cizîr that bore the name 'Muhammed'. (Altan & Kardaş, 2011) Indeed, Sharaf Khan described Emir Muhammed as the wealthiest Kurdish Beg of his time with his sole ambition being to accumulate an ever greater fortune. (1975: 165, 168) As a banditry pandemic and riots against authority, known as the Celâli Rebellions, spread to the remotest lands of the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th centuries, it is, therefore, reliable to infer that Elo Dîno lived in the second half of the 16th century and most probably during the reign of Emir Muhammed.

In light of his actions, on the other hand, Elo cannot be interpreted as an ordinary bandit. He was, without doubt, neither a *nijdevan* (raider) nor a *mehkûm* (convict) nor a *firar* (fugitive). Although he could be denominated as a *rêbir* (highwayman) or even a pirate that operated on Tigris, Elo was not mobile. As he was residing on a pavilion near the Tigris, Elo was lacking the mobility of ordinary bandits that enabled them to avoid direct confrontation with the regular forces of authority. In this respect, a recent study also based on oral resources illustrated Elo Dîno as the leader of a good number of warriors who turned into a local power-holder, instead of a lonely bandit, and who had begun to control the region by capturing Sulak castle to the north of his pavilion on the shore of the Tigris. According to those authors, the pavilion was always protected and controlled by a number of guards and Elo also established a suspension bridge on the Tigris from which he taxed villagers wishing to cross the river to sell their products in the city of Cizîr. The authors, moreover, noted an incident that is repeated in the narratives on Elo Dîno in which Elo returned goods that he had stolen from the Mir by his

request.[142] (Altan & Kardaş, 2011) Still, such oral narratives that illustrate Elo as the leader of a gang who turned into a local power-holder do not damage his image as a social bandit in the popular memory.

Apart from these inferences on the factuality of the legend, the only resources available for research are, in addition to oral narratives, kılams on Elo Dîno. In the anonymous kılam from the province of Hakkari, Elo was described as a friendly agha:

> "Elo Dîno, Elo Agha
> Friendly with his long and thin moustache
> Elo Dîno, Elo Agha" (Altan & Kardaş, 2011)

According to this kılam, while fighting bravely outside of his pavilion Elo was killed by a sword:

> "Elo's pavilion is all in marble
> All in marble, Elo's bastion
> He had prepared himself
> They struck the poor Elo right over there (…)" (Altan & Kardaş, 2011)

In another anonymous requiem that is supposed to have been sung by Elo's daughter *Seyran*, Elo is described as "the owner of chains and gates." Seyran's kılam refers not only to Sulak Castle and Mir Muhammed, but also to the Governor of Mosul as the Mir's principal accomplice:

> "The Sulak Castle is on the top of the hill (…)
> Those merchants came from Diyarbakır in their keleks
> Their snares are in the pavilion of poor Seyran's father (…)
> God, ruin the Governor of Mosul and the Cizîra officials
> Muhammed, the Cizîra Beg
> How did you kill the father of poor me?
> My father, the owner of chains and gates" (Altan & Kardaş, 2011)

In Seyran's requiem, Elo's tragic end is also narrated:

> "How did they kill the father of poor me,
> Put candles on his arms?" (Altan & Kardaş, 2011)

[142] For bringing this short, but invaluable article to my attention, I am indebted to Ömer Zeren from Cizîr.

In another Kurdish folkloric song on the legend, it is particularly emphasized that Elo was not a greedy looter:

> "Next to water, next to water
> Elo's pavilion is next to water
> Over the beams of sunlight
> Not pillaging Elo is after" (Altan & Kardaş, 2011)

Just like the narrations of Elo's legend, all of those kılams bear the tone of a requiem for the lamented hero. Those sources of popular memory, therefore, make the audience feel sympathy towards Elo Dîno, as he became a bandit by necessity. The first reference is, in this respect, to hunger and starvation, a universally acknowledged reason for banditry across different cultures. Phil Billingsley brilliantly illustrated starvation as a powerful impetus for outlawry in the Chinese banditry context of the 19th century:

> "A bandit captured in Sichuan, for example, told his army interrogator that the reason for his becoming a bandit could be found in his stomach if they cared to cut him open. The intrigued official did just that after the execution: the stomach was found to contain nothing but grass." (Billingsley, 1988: 16)

Still, hunger became the main impetus to outlawry in Elo's legend only when it led to social disgrace for his not being able to host his guests properly; hence, the cultured concept of *hospitality.* Then, Elo began taking from the rich to give to the poor through his generous hospitality. Between the lines of the legend, he was, moreover, not a bandit at all, but a 'mad' fellow who was courageous enough to do exactly what the Mir was doing – taxing the rich. If that deed is to be called banditry, then the Mir should have been the institutionalization of legitimate banditry and legitimacy to power. Elo's deed was, therefore, a local infringement of the Mir's monopoly over taxation; thus, the latter read the former as a revolt and suppressed it with his iron hands. At the end, the legend turns back to its very beginning and transforms Elo's defeat into a victory by proving that he did not, unlike the Mir,

aspire to power. Instead, he was solely in the pursuit of his honor by being able to host his guests properly. Elo ended up so innocent, according to the oral narrations, that even the cruel Mir was filled with remorse for torturing and killing him. Thus, the legend turns him into an immortal and victorious hero of the oppressed, while the Mir of Bohtan, who represented authority over the people, is being remembered only for his cruelty, to such an extent that even the name of the Mir has mostly been forgotten.

As in the legend of Robin Hood, notwithstanding the historical factuality of the legend, the myth of Elo Dîno, therefore, reproduces the same social banditry theme in the 16th century Kurdish context: In this respect, it is, first of all, narrated that Elo began his outlawry career as a result of pressure from a social injustice appearing in the form of starvation and social disgrace. Moreover, his outlawry career is itself seen as heroic: Elo mainly robbed the rich and shared what he gained with the poor. Thus, his deeds can only be criminal and illegitimate in the eyes of authority, not in those of popular memory. Indeed, Elo was only seen as a 'ferocious murderer' in the memory of the rulers. By referring to the narration of Prince Süreyya Bedirhan – one of the exiled members of the influential Bedirhan family, the last chain of the Azizan dynasty – Nikitin wrote that Elo, as the murderer of countless people, was sentenced to be burned at the stake and uttered his famous final words while he was on fire. (1991: 161-162) Finally, despite being an ordinary peasant, Elo, according to popular memory, rebelled against injustice even when he faced the most formidable power, the authority of the Mir. Thus, as the final theme of the myth, Elo's tragic and painful death serves to fill the heart of the oppressed not only with pity for the one that was lost but also with rage against the cruel. The legend of Elo Dîno is, therefore, the Kurdish Robin Hood, the initiation of the social

banditry myth. Likewise, the succeeding bandit heroes of Kurdistan would never be seen as 'bandits' in popular memory. When asked about the old bandits in Cizîra Bohtan, Ramazanê Botî, in this respect, reaffirmed the social banditry myth in the popular memory of Kurds:

> "Our Kurdish *nijdevan* [raider] was somewhat different. They took the hills due to the oppression of aghas, Mirs or the law. They did not kidnap and torture women. Even when they did a robbery, they only took a certain amount. As they blocked the paths of caravans, they did not dishonor, beat or torture people. They could harm aghas, but not people."[143]

2. Rebelling against the *Roma Reş*: The Tradition of Bandit Tribes in the Late Ottoman Empire

In the late Ottoman Empire, the existence of the Kurdish tribes raiding on other tribes for pillage, taking their baç from the passing caravans of bazirgan by force or robbing the State's mail carts was no extraordinary phenomenon. In this respect, Nikitin rightfully wrote: "Pillage and brigandage is not seen as a crime; on the contrary, it is, according to their own view, a deed that suits best a *cengawer*. Besides, in no other tribe had those deeds become attached to the character, lifestyle and customs of a tribe in such a rigid manner." (1991: 148)

In a similar vein, Sharaf Khan Bidlisi in his monumental *Sharafnama* (1597) found open bravery behind the Kurdish tradition of highway robbery:

> "Most of the Kurdish communities have been known for excessive courage and fury, for being all out chivalrous and generous. Besides, owning a great patriotism from genesis, they are enormously honorable and extremely proud. By going to the extreme in this respect, they prefer being known for blocking the roads and extorting openly in the mountains and plains to stealing and raiding; which requires a great deal of daring and a rare courage." (Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, 1975: 22)

Thus, in the Kurdish national memory, the usual Robin Hood theme was merged with the tribal bandit motive to constitute a primitive form of national

[143] The reader must have noticed that Beşikçi has already raised the same thesis on Kurdish banditry as that of social rebellion. (1969: 26)

rebellion in both the Ottoman and the Persian Empires. In his classical work *Kurds,* written in 1915, Minorski, in order to analyze the Kurdish character, provided such a historical figure: Cevhar Agha, the chief of Şekak tribe and the brother of the famous Simko in Iran. While narrating the story of his assassination by the Iranian State due to a despicable trap, Minorski wrote:

> "He wasn't bowing down to the Government of the Iranians. From time to time, he was coming down from the mountains and launching pillage movements. The poor peasant people loved him so much, as he was taking from the rich to give to the poor. Since it could not solve this problem by force, the Iranian Government resorted to an old, well-known method: (Trap)" (Minorski, 1977: 63)



Kurdish Tribal Cavalry on the Caucasus Front in World War I (New York Times, 24.01.15)

In the late Ottoman Empire, it is stated in sources of Kurdish oral tradition that Kurdish *cengawers* put a great amount of fear into the heart of the Roma Reş, as trade caravans and the State's mail carts could not travel in Kurdistan without getting robbed. While the Ottoman State could not deal with those rebels by itself, it had no other choice than to organize the tribes of the region against them. In this respect, the

notorious struggle of the Ottoman Empire against Emê Gozê and his pillaging tribe in the late 19th century exposes unerringly not only the State's policies and means against its Kurdish banditry troubles, but also the reconstruction of banditry as a national rebellion against the Empire in the Kurdish oral tradition.[144]

Emê Gozê was a young *cengawer* from the Remo family that belonged to the Elîkan tribe, whose chief was the famous Şemşedînê Hesenê Osman. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 31) Together with other valiant youngsters, Emê Gozê moved from the plain of Garzan to Geliyê Belîsê (the valley of Bitlis) to ambush the trading caravans and the mail carts of the Ottomans. After a fierce gunfight, the Ottoman soldiers were defeated and Emê Gozê seized the Ottoman goods as his rightful loot. In despair, the Ottoman State officials assembled the other tribes of the region, including the powerful Pençînaran tribe of Cemîlê Çeto that was the archenemy of the Elîkans, the sheihks of Geliyê Zîlan (the valley of Zîlan), the mountainous tribe of Eliyê Ûnis and the Remiyan tribe, along with other local power holders, and released them with the forces of the district governors on the tribe of Hesenê Osman. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 31-32) The chain of treason, according to the kılams on Emê Gozê, even reached his own tribe, as Sîmê Ozman – the son of Emê Gozê's uncle – from the Dibo family of the Elîkan tribe joined the ranks of the Ottoman forces. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 32) As they faced the assembled troops of the enemy, Emê Gozê together with two other *cengawers* (Hesenê Sêxo and Mihê Emer) from his family took an oath not to leave

[144] The history of the struggle between the State and the rebellious Kurdish tribes or intra-tribal conflicts in the 19th century Ottoman Empire exceeds the borders of this study. The conflict between the Ottoman State and the Elîkan tribe, in this respect, constitutes only one aspect of the given phenomenon. Indeed, as the intra-tribal conflict between the Reşkotan and Etmankî tribes conducted by their famous *cengawers* Filîtê Quto and Mamê Emê or the Ottoman State's struggle against the Pençînaran tribe of Cemîlê Çeto, similar conflicts are not only narrated in the Kurdish oral tradition (see: Kevirbirî, 2004), but also massively documented in the official State archives of the Ottoman Empire. (Üner, 2010) (Üngör, 2012) For a brief history of the changing relationship between the Ottoman State and Kurdish bandit tribes in the late Ottoman Empire, see the part "Cooperation and Conflict in Blood: The Ottomans and Kurdish Bandit Tribes (1839-1923)" of the chapter "Last Era of Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press and the State Archives (1950-1980)".

the battlefield and fettered their ankles to each other to prove their determination. At the end, they would be slaughtered along with tens of Ottoman soldiers. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 41)

Although the activities of the tribal chief Şemşedînê Hesenê Osman of the Elîkan tribe were well documented in the Ottoman archives, the clash of Emê Gozê with the Ottoman forces could only be found in sources of the Kurdish oral tradition. Indeed, the story of Emê Gozê turned into one of the most famous kılams of the Kurdish people. The kılam, narrated by the dengbêj called Salihê Qûbînî[145], begins with the words of Bişarê Çeto inviting Emê Gozê to surrender in a threatening tone:

> "Shouted Bişarê Çeto and stated:
> Emê Gozê, Hesenê Sêxo, Mihê Emer, hey!
> Give away the goods of the merchants and surrender, hey!
> If you don't, I will level Qesra Baxemsê to the ground, (…)
> To Baghdad, I will expulse your brood. (…)"

Emê Gozê refused, since surrender, rather than death, meant in the eyes of the other tribes the true fall of his family and his tribe:

> "Shouted Emê Gozê with all his power and stated: (…)
> If I surrender and submit the goods of the merchants today,
> Destitute I will be beside the great tribes, as long as I stay alive.
> My legs are chained (…)
> I gave my word to the family of Hesenê Ozman
> Today dying there is, but no turning back in Kozika Kolanê"

When the armed struggle had begun, the scene was narrated through the words of the mother (Gozê) and the sister (Sîsilê) of Emê Gozê. The war scene was, however, filled with betrayal, since the leaders of the greatest tribes of the region took their sides with the Roma Reş. Still, his mother called on her son to fight until death:

> "Shouted Gozê with all her power and stated:
> Shoot Emo, hey!
> Hold no fear from the soldier of the State; he is in foreign lands, son of a stranger.
> When rifles are fired and blood is shed,

[145] For the whole kılam, see: (Kevirbirî, 2004: 33-41)

Betrays brother his own brother.
Hold no fear from the soldiers of Eliyê Ûnis, the mountainous clan.
Hold no fear from Bişar, Cemîl and Gênco, the three sons of Çeto,
And also from Mihemedê Derwêş,
the brother of Meysê, the father of Şemsedîn, brave and valiant he is.
Hold no fear from Emînê Ehmed, the son of Perîxan
He has eyes for pillage of beds and quilts. (…)"

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned tribes that are described in the kılam as collaborators with the Ottoman State in its struggle against Emê Gozê would also be narrated in the Kurdish oral tradition for their later rebellion against and/or their betrayal by the State.[146] Still, the betrayal of Sîmê Ozman to his cousin Emê Gozê constitutes the real drama of the oral narrative:

"Shouted Emê Gozê with all his power:
Gozê, mama, hey!
I hold no fear from the soldier of the State, son of a stranger
I hold no fear from the men of Eliyê Ûnis, the mountainous clan
I hold no fear from the predatory Emînê Ehmed, the son of Perîxan
I hold no fear from the men of Bişarê Çeto, the father of Şebo
My fear is of the damned Sîmê Ozman
Knows the treacherous son of my uncle our place and position."

If one puts aside the authenticity of the oral narratives on Emê Gozê, the meaning of his kılam is self-evident. In contrast to their denomination as 'bandits' by the law, the members of the pillaging tribes were narrated as the Kurd's true warriors (*cengawer*) by the Kurdish oral tradition. When the State forces retaliated against their pillaging by cooperating with other tribes, their armed struggle was reconstructed as a national revolt against the Roma Reş and the internal collaborators of the State, the traitors. It was a counter-historiography through which bandits

[146] The mountainous clan of Eliyê Ûnis would, for instance, be the main architect of the Sason rebellion against the Republic in the 1930s. For the kılam, see: (Kevirbirî, 2004: 83-89, 102-105) and for a novel on the rebellion, see: (Kaya, 2010) The struggle between the Ottoman State and the Pençinaran tribe, along with the betrayal of Cemîlê Çeto to his brother Bişarê Çeto, constitutes one of the main themes of the Kurdish oral tradition. For the kılam on the Çeto brothers: see: (Kevirbirî, 2004: 95-101) Finally, the cooperation between the Ottoman State and the Raman tribe on the Armenian genocide and their ultimate struggle, along with Emînê Perîxanê's betrayal of his brother Evdilê Birahîm, constitute one of the controversial topics of the Kurdish national historiography. For the related kılam, see: (Kevirbirî, 2004: 57-65) and for the life story of Emînê Perîxanê, see: (Demirer, 2008)

turned into national heroes and brigandage into a pure national rebellion. Therefore, beginning with Elo Dîno of the Bohtan Emirate up to the pillaging tribes of the late Ottoman Empire, banditry has been one of the founding myths of the emerging Kurdish nationalism that constructed a national historiography through the Kurdish oral tradition.

B. Memory Wars: The Adverse Reconstructions of Individual Kurdish Bandits

In the early 1960s, Kurdish bandits, who were previously pictured as mere unnamed criminals in the national press and were degraded in the face of superior State forces, had gradually transformed into heroic cult figures with a full name and *nom-de-guerre*, a typical story of a desperate pre-criminal life that ends by the force of an injustice, an image of a warrior of the golden past and a legendary popularity among the native population. The national press was illustrating them as ferocious criminals, while several among those Kurdish bandits – most notably Koçero, Hamido, Hekimo – had rapidly become legendary heroes in the imagination of Kurdish peasants.

1. Koçero: The Resurrection of Elo Dîno in Modern Turkey

"As if it was the time to climb over the mountains,
To freak out the democratic-tragedy, was it the time? (…)
Koçero is a constant bareness in these lands
A constant hunger, injustice, exclusion
Koçero is a renunciation, an indifference"
(Korkmazgil, 1988)

It is true, as Hobsbawm noted at the very beginning of his study, that the best way to penetrate into the subject of banditry is through the career of an actual bandit. (2000: 1) For our case, there is a prominent figure, stepping forward among others, which

appears through his mythical image more than appropriate for the model of 'social banditry': Mehmet Ihsan Kilit, alias Koçero.

Mehmet Ihsan Kilit was born in 1933 in the small village Helin (Silim) of the district Silvan of Diyarbakır, belonging to the Elîkan tribe. (İlhan, 1962: 3) According to the story told by his relatives and townsmen (Çapın, 1962 (VI): 3), Mehmet was a decent, 18-year-old land laborer from that nomadic village, as he had a child from his 16-year-old wife. As soon as he heard the gossip about the molestation of his wife by Halil (Kartalkanat), the son of an agha, Mehmet decided, so as to avoid getting into trouble, to emigrate from his village to a far-away town along with his wife and his newborn daughter. Before he left, Mehmet warned Halil not to follow him or his family; "otherwise", he said, "I'll shoot you down." One month later, in 1951, Halil's corpse was found riddled with bullets.[147] From this moment onwards, he was a *mehkûm* (convict) who had no other choice but to become a bandit in the mountains[148]; after a while, he took his family to Syria. He was then an 18-year-old bandit who would rule the mountains for 13 years until his death in 1964 with his famous nom-de-guerre 'Koçero'. His nickname derives from the term 'koçer' (which means 'nomad' from the Kurdish word 'koç' – migration) that has been used to denominate the Kurdish nomadic tribes.

Although he had been on the hills for years, the national press introduced him to the public audience in the early 1960s when it discovered the State's everlasting hunt for Koçero: "Murderer Koçero Killed: Koçero, murderer of twenty innocent

[147] Mehmet Ali İzmir, the author of the novel *Koçero: The Last Bandit*, narrates Koçero's murdering of Halil Kartalkanat in a different way. In İzmir's narration, Mehmet – who was not yet married and living with his parents – killed Halil in a village where they had recently settled, as he was trying to deceive and dishonor his family. After this murder, İzmir continues, Koçero had to leave his family to take shelter in his own tribe in Beşiri. (2004: 9-14)

[148] Honor murder, which is not seen as an illegitimate act within local communities, had been one of the initial acts through which many bandits had begun their outlaw life. In this respect, an old peasant that murdered his wife and her lover said in an interview in 1962 that "I was right, otherwise I would have taken to the hills. If I knew that they would sentence me to 24 years, I would have rather taken to the hills and become a bandit." (Çapın, 1962 [V]: 3)

people, was killed in a skirmish with the Gendarme. In the same skirmish, one soldier reached the stage of martyrdom. The Gendarme had been in pursuit of Koçero for twenty years." (Milliyet, 28.06.61: 1)

The report above, which drew Koçero as a ferocious murderer, was an example of the misinformation about the famous bandit that was published in the newspapers of the period, as he was, in fact, not killed. Moreover, Koçero was known in 1961 to be a bandit who could not be captured for ten years and was wanted by the law for making innumerous robberies and murdering three, instead of twenty, people. (İlhan, 1962: 3) In contrast to this anti-image, Koçero was a hero for the native Kurdish peasants. He was neither a vicious murderer nor a simple robber. He was a good, handsome and strong man who turned into a bandit by the force of his unfortunate destiny:

> "27-year-old tall, brunette and handsome bandit, who has managed to escape from all of the Gendarme's hunts for six years, continues his rule in the mountains. (…) Those who know Koçero feel offended if you revile against him. (…) They assert that Koçero is no murderer." (Çapın, 1962 [IV]: 3)

In interviews, his native peasants were always stating that Koçero was a harmless fellow, instead of a ferocious robber or murderer. For the native population, his acts were anything but illegitimate:

> "[For his acquaintances], Koçero, as others say, did not kill 10 to 12 people. He also does not either rob whoever he encounters. All in all he killed two people: The first one was Halil, the reason for his taking to the hills and the other was Alo, who murdered Koçero's closest friend from behind while he was praying. After Koçero killed Alo, he took his ear to his friend's sister as proof of Alo's death."[149] (Çapın, 1962 [VI]: 3)

According to one of his former brothers-in-arms, Koçero did not shoot at the Gendarme and in exchange for loyalty, he looked after the poor and protected them from harm. (Çapın, 1962 [VI]: 3) For his native peasants, Koçero's main activity was

[149] Koçero's killing of Alo to take revenge for the death of Şerifo, his brother-in-arms, is also narrated in İzmir's novel. (2004: 97 – 119)

smuggling or robbing other smugglers. Peasants told interviewers further that he earned all of his income from opium smuggling on behalf of certain people in Siirt and he lived in the province for years with the help of those people.[150] (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5) Regarding his attitude towards poor peasants, it was said that he never robbed them, except on one occasion when he stole the sheep of his native peasants as revenge for their extortion of his land after his forced departure from the village.[151] (Çapın, 1962 [VII]: 3) He was, it was said a man of extraordinary skills, but also with a good heart:

- "It is said of Koçero that he is a man who moves more swiftly than a horse (…) For him, there is no notion of distance." (Çapın, 1962 [VII]: 3)
- "Koçero does not harm those who do not harm him. He does not even do wrong against those who harm him. (…) He kidnapped and took to the mountains a man who informed on the peasants who supported him. After a couple of days, he set him free." (Çapın, 1962 [VIII]: 3)



A rare photo taken while Koçero was in a meeting with the Gendarme commander of Siirt to negotiate his conditions for surrender. After promising to submit himself three days later, Koçero disappeared. (Hürriyet, 23.10.62: 1)

[150] In his novel, İzmir revalidates that Koçero mainly relied on smuggling for his living. (2004: 51) On one occasion, İzmir wrote, Koçero robbed a smuggling caravan and acquired 1.5 tons opium. (2004, 138)

[151] Koçero's theft of the sheep of his villagers for revenge is also shared in İzmir's literary narrative, who for his novel relied on in-depth interviews with Koçero's relatives and townsmen. (İzmir, 2004: 38 – 41) For another novel on Koçero's legend, see: (Yıldırım, 2006)

For the people, one of the most airtight pieces of evidence of his benevolent nature towards his native peasants was Koçero's attitude towards women: "It has never been seen that he committed adultery or laid his eyes on women in the villages he visited. He only hails women as 'sister' and when he misses his wife, he goes to Syria for a while and turns back" (Çapın, 1962 [VI]: 3) Thus, Koçero turned into a legend:

> – "Koçero the Vicious a Legend in the Eyes of the Ignorant" (Dallı, 1962 [I]: 1)
> – "Kocero Becomes Legend and Lover of Young Girls" (Milliyet, 30.12.62: 1)

Despite being encircled by the Gendarme on many occasions, Koçero always succeeded in breaking the siege. In one of those skirmishes, Koçero was reported to have fled after killing his own brother-in-arms, İsmail Can, who was gravely wounded in the skirmish (İlhan, 1962: 3): "Brigand Koçero in One-Hour Clash with Gendarme Yesterday" (Cumhuriyet, 28.12.61: 1) / "Surrounded Bandit Manages to Escape: Famous smuggler, robber and fugitive murderer Koçero (…) manages to abscond." (Milliyet, 28.12.61: 3)

With each and every ambush that Koçero escaped from, the State's image as *the* undefeatable and omnipotent power was being damaged, while Koçero was turning into a legendary figure of an invulnerable and extraordinary nature. In order to protect the State's prestige, officials not only took various measures (from organizing greater bandit hunts to embarking on diplomatic and financial initiatives) but also raised the level of the Gendarmerie repression in the region to cut off his native support. Regardless, he remained elusive for the following three years:

> – "The number of peasants beaten because of Koçero is countless." (Çapın, 1962 [VI]: 3)
> – "Koçero Identified, but not yet Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.03.62: 5)
> – "Koçero Again Escapes Gendarmerie Ambush" (Milliyet, 24.03.62: 1)
> – "Koçero, Hiding Out in Siirt Mountains, Tracked by 500 Gendarmes" (Cumhuriyet, 20.07.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
> – "Koçero Breakes Cordon with Great Skill and Vanishes Without Trace, Again Leaving Officials, Notably Governor, in his Wake" (Dallı, 1962 [III]: 1)

– "Koçero Martyrs Sergeant, Escapes from Circle"[152] (Milliyet, 30.08.62: 1)
– "New Troops Sent to Capture Bandit Koçero" (Milliyet, 04.09.62: 3)
– "Those that Inform on Koçero to be Rewarded in Cash" (Milliyet, 07.09.62: 1)
– "Koçero Alive and Launching Smuggling Operations" (Cumhuriyet, 30.09.62: 1)
– "Syrian Authorities: It's our Duty to Capture Bandit Koçero" (Milliyet, 09.11.62: 1)
– "Koçero Accomplice Elected as Village Head" (Cumhuriyet, 12.12.63: 7)

Koçero, as the most popular symbol of hundreds of Kurdish bandits, had occupied such widespread media coverage in 1962 that Milliyet announced him, along with Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, as the man of the year. (Milliyet, 01.01.63: 1) As the bandit could not be captured for a decade, the oppositional political parties in the early 1960s used Koçero's case to criticize the CHP-led coalition Governments for the ongoing public disorder in the Kurdish regions. In one of those occasions in the National Assembly, CHP's Minister of Internal Affairs Bekata reminded the opposition that Koçero had been on the hills since 1956. (National Assembly, 1963a: 84)

In 1964, Kocero, the father of five children, was eventually killed, not by the Gendarmerie however, but by one of his friends who shot him mistakenly:

- "Kocero Killed in Batman during his Attempt to Rob Camp of Turkish Petroleum Corporation: During the altercation with the Gendarmerie, which prepared an ambush for him in advance, Kocero was shot by his friend. His body was founded 3 km away from the camp, where he bled to death." (Milliyet, 05, 06, 07.07.64: 1, 7)
- "Koçero Killed" (Hürriyet, 05.07.64: 1)
- "Predestined End" (Cumhuriyet, 07.07.64: 1)
- "Bandit Ali Selim, Accidental Killer of Kocero, Captured." (Milliyet, 14.07.64: 1, 7)

The anti-image of Koçero as a vicious murderer had been radiated throughout the news, while reporters and columnists of the western printed press were painting his image from the State's security perspective, i.e. a robber and a murderer of the highest order. (İlhan, 1962: 3) According to Ulunay, for instance, Koçero was an antipathetic and charmless bandit whose form of death in an ambush prepared by a

[152] According to the news report published in Milliyet, after a one-hour skirmish between Koçero's gang and the Gendarme, one of Koçero's accomplices was captured wounded and a sergant (Veli Eroğlu) was killed. (Milliyet, 30.08.62: 1, 7) (Republican Senate Records, 1963: 365)

simple watchman demonstrated that he would never be a legendary bandit like Çakırcalı or Sandıkçıoğlu. (Ulunay, 1964a: 3) Another columnist who found Koçero to be an ordinary bandit blamed the press for exaggerating his case. (Felek, 1962b: 3)



National newspapers celebrated Koçero's 'predestined death'. (Cumhuriyet, 07.07.1964: 1) Koçero is seen in a soldier's outfit, following the bandits' traditional technique of camouflage in Turkey.

While the national press was celebrating the death of this fugitive bandit who had mocked the entire State structure, the Eastern peoples were mourning for the death of their hero:

> – "Hundreds of Peasants Visit Grave of Famous Bandit: They say that he was not a robber and he became a murderer for honor." (Milliyet, 07.07.64: 1)
> – "Belief in Diyarbakır: Koçero Alive" (Milliyet, 13.07.64: 1)

Thus, his death turned him into a mythical creature for all native peasants, from Muslims to Êzidîs, making him a man who walked the Earth for the oppressed and the good:

> "(For Êzidîs) Koçero is the Prophet of Satan: (…) It was being said everywhere that he was, as the prophet of Satan, laying low among the villains and the ill-gotten gainers, protecting the poor and the good and annihilating those that intruded on the honor and chastity of women." (Çetiner, 1964: 6)

For the 'Eastern' people, the State had killed their hero, an innocent man. Furthermore, the power vacuum that emerged after his death, it was commonly believed, would lead to chaos in the region until it would eventually be filled by other bandits from whom nobody could guarantee a chivalric attitude such as that of Koçero:

- "Nobody Believes that Koçero Killed: In the famous Koçero story, almost all Eastern people accuse the Government. According to the story, he killed two men because of an honor issue and the landlords, abusing his fame, attributed all of the region's crimes to Kocero." (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5)
- "Conflicts Begin in Siirt Mountains after Koçero's Death: When Koçero was alive, nobody would dare to attack each others' region or to oppress peasants." (Mercan, 1967(I): 5)

It is remarkable that such a positive image of Koçero is still alive in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. In one of the in-depth interviews that the author realized in the village Esê of Kercews in June 2013, Şemsettiné Iskender – a local wise-man who personally met Koçero for several times and is a relative of the bandit Hekimo – stated that Koçero was the most prominent bandit that is still remembered as a good fellow by all.[153] The main reason for the longevity of Koçero's banditry career was, according to Iskender, the support of villagers. He was supported not only by his own villagers due to the protection that Koçero provided to them in turn, but also by all of the region's villagers, as he was admired as an honorable person.[154] Iskender also underlined, in this respect, his attitude towards women through a popular story that lays bare Koçero's difference from Davudo, another famous bandit of the region, who was Koçero's brother-in-arms for a short period:

"For a while, Koçero and Davudo were wandering in the mountains together. One day, they took shelter in the tents of Koçers [the Kurdish nomadic tribes]. After welcoming his guests, the chief of the tribe apologized: 'I have to go to the town, spend your night here, make yourself at home in my tent and my daughter will be at your service.' Thus, the chief, who had great confidence in Koçero, left his 16-year-old daughter alone with two bandits. While the chief's daughter was serving the meal,

[153] 2nd Oral Source.
[154] In this respect, Koçero was, İzmir argued, admired and supported by villagers to such an extent that they did not inform against him even in the face of the increasing Gendarmerie brutality in the villages of the region. (İzmir, 2004: 51-52)

Davudo, however, caressed her cheek. Then, Koçero sprang to his feet and told Davudo, 'I can no longer walk with you and if I see you again, I'll shoot you down!"[155]

In order to clarify the reasons for the peasants' support for Koçero, Iskender compared him with a notorious bandit of the region, Osmané Gevré, who wandered around the villages of Hasankeyf for a short while. As opposed to Koçero, Iskender said, Osmané Gevré is remembered as being a corrupt bandit without any honor. Apart from harming the peasants of his region, Osmané Gevré was known as the bandit who kidnapped and raped a *married* woman. At the end of the peasants' struggle against him, Iskender reported, Osmané Gevré was eventually wounded by one of his own villagers (Ameré Reşé) and then killed in a skirmish with the Gendarmerie in another district; hence, the short banditry career of Osmané Gevré. Still, the support of peasants towards a bandit that they favored was not by itself sufficient to ensure the continuity of the bandit's rule in the region. Indeed, most bandits were obliged to leave their regions and cross borders (in the face of the increasing number of State bandit hunts) into Binxetê[156], the Syrian Kurdistan, where they required a patron for taking shelter and replenishing their equipment. According to Iskender, Haco agha was the most famous Binxetê patron to open his door to the bandits and smugglers of Northern Kurdistan.

Now, as the contrast to the opposite images of Koçero in the national printed press and the memory of the native population demonstrates, while the newspapers were illustrating the Kurdish bandits as vicious criminals, the Kurdish peasants transformed many of those bandits into heroic cult figures. Within the wider society, solely the leftist community, through novels and movies, re-imagined the bandit

[155] In the folkloric song that was written by Aşık Ökkeş from Maraş in 1964 as a requiem for Koçero's death, the bandit's attitude towards women is underlined: "Koçero, they used to call me / Girls and women, I wasn't laying my eyes on / The world, I couldn't get enough of / Folks, this is the end of the bandit." (Aşık Ökkeş, 1964)

[156] Kurdish people refer to the Syrian Kurdistan as 'Binxetê', which literally means 'below the border'. (Kevirbirî, 2004: 58)

myth as a legitimate rebellion against the oppressive order of the aghas. While the State is almost altogether lacking in this counter-narrative, the bandit myth in the native imagination, in contrast, mocked the entire State structure and its image as an irresistible force. The image of Koçero was, therefore, mainly representing the desire of the Kurdish peoples to resist and revolt against the State. He might be, in his own actuality, at least a successful smuggler and a thief; but the native population turned him into not only a symbol of social resentment, but also a counter-myth that falsified the State's self-imposed image of invincibility. Finally, Koçero had become a social protest icon of the radical leftist community from the late 1970s onwards through the nationally famous poem 'Koçero: The Motherland Poem' (1976) by Hasan Hüseyin Korkmazgil interpreting the bandit, as well as his different reconstructions by various agents, as the romantic summary of the ongoing injustice, oppression and corruption in the country and its Kurdish regions. (1988)

2. Hamido vs. Özbays: Bandit Wars and the State

"Here, the One that Takes the Gun in his Hand will be a Man and that Kills a Man, a Bandit" (Bilgi, 62: 1)

In Binevre (Ekmekçiler), a small Kurdish village of the town Eruh in the mountains of Siirt that resembled an eagle's nest and was totally unknown to the outside world, the two influential Aldemir and Özbay families became each other's archenemies. According to an interview conducted in 1968 by the novelist Fikret Otyam in Binevre, it was stated by the villagers that the fierce enmity between the two families had begun after a forbidden love affair. Sabri Güneş, the son of Osman Güneş, who was himself a relative of Hamit Aldemir, the chief of Aldemir family, fell in love with the wife of Mehmet Emin Özbay, the leader of the rival family. As Özbay's

wife was also in love with Sabri, she eloped with him and they began to live together as wife and husband in Binevre. The Özbay family saw this love affair as a shame on their honor and started to nourish hatred towards the hidden supporter of the forbidden love, Hamit Aldemir. Villagers described Hamit as thin, middling in size and a quiet man who was at that time the head of the village. When Hamit left the town for a while to soothe the escalating enmity of his rivals, the members of the Özbay family informed on him to the State, saying he was one of the bandits that carried out the highway robberies in Van. According to the villagers, he was innocent; but State officials who were under Government pressure to resolve the increasing brigandage problem in the region had already signed an arrest warrant for Hamit, who had, therefore, no other choice other but to take to the hills. (Otyam, 1968: 5) From now on, Hamit Aldemir would be known as the famous bandit Hamido.



The cover of the magazine *Akbaba* above satirized the national fame of the bandit Hamido: "This's Hamido's Rifle" (Akbaba, 03.05.1967)

In Binevre, on the other hand, the Aldemir family was taking the upper hand with the support of the villagers, while the disgraced Özbay family was leaving the town to emigrate either to the city of Siirt or to the fertile lands of Çukurova. Still, 12 members of the Özbays, including the troublesome brothers M. Emin Özbay and Reşit Özbay, did not leave the region and just like Hamido, they also took the hills. (Otyam, 1968: 5) Thus, the bandit war between Hamido and the Özbay gang – which was supposed to settle who would rule the mountains and would in turn decide who would rule the villages and even the region as a whole – had begun. But, they were not alone; when Hamido and the Özbay brothers took the hills, there were already a good number of bandits in the mountains of Siirt, from Ömer Bezek to Selim the Fox and Abdo Şevro. Indeed, Hamido made an alliance with the bandit 'Ermeni Musto' against the rival gang of Selim and Bezek. Seven villagers of Hamido were ferociously slayed and murdered by the bandit Bezek. This horrible massacre resonated in the meetings of the Republican Senate. (Journal of the Republican Senate Records, 1966b: 516) Moreover, the Minister of Internal Affairs Sükan announced in the next session of the Senate one December 22, 1966 that banditry incidents in the Eastern regions were overwhelmingly realized by four major bandit gangs – i.e. the gangs of Selim the Fox, Ömer Bezek, Hakim Yılmaz (Hakimo) and Hamit Aldemir (Hamido) – and the main goal of the Government was their elimination through a massive winter hunting. (Journal of the Republican Senate, 1966c: 531)



Hamido (Hamit Aldemir) (Hürriyet, 20.08.68: 1)

In the face of the rising fear of the Özbay brothers amongst the villagers, Hamido had become the only hope. When Hamido was searching for the Özbay gang in the mountains of Siirt in order to retaliate, he was, however, captured by the other rival bandit gang, led by Ömer Bezek and Selim the Fox.[157] (4th Oral Source) Instead of killing him, they fastened him tightly to a bridge and informed the Gendarmerie of his location. (Milliyet, 03.06.66: 1) Hamido was arrested. After spending 44 days in prison, he was, however, released by a verdict of non-persecution. (Otyam, 1968: 5) Despite the fact that he lost his job as the head of the village, he was no longer an outlaw being sought by the Gendarmerie. Still, with the Özbay gang in the mountains, the lives of villagers were beset by kidnapping and murders. Indeed, two villagers more were killed by the Özbay brothers; one was stabbed to death while working on his land, while the other, a 17-year-old boy who followed the gang with

[157] They could have easily killed Hamido on that occasion, but the true enemy of the gang of Ömer Bezek and his brother-in-arms Selim the Fox was Hakimo and his gang. (Milliyet, 06.04.66: 3)

his rifle, was killed in a gunfight. (Otyam, 1968: 5) Thus, Hamido again saw no other choice but to be a bandit to protect his villagers.

As the war between the bandit gangs of Hamido and the Özbay brothers was escalating, Hamido was becoming a popular public figure in the national press. On January 28, 1967, Hamido succeeded in escaping from a Gendarmerie ambush, but his two brothers-in-arms (including his nephew Tahir Aldemir) were killed in the skirmish. (Milliyet, 28.01.67: 1) On April 13, 1967, Hamido, accused of murder, home invasion, robbery, extortion and resisting the Gendarmerie with arms, submitted himself to justice. He was at the time 36 years old and had eleven children. (Hürriyet, 13.04.67: 1) In his press statement, he said that he had great confidence in the Government's promise and accused one of his rivals, Selim the Fox, of Kurdism. (Milliyet, 13.04.67: 1) His reference to the Government's promise laid bare the fact that Hamido's surrender was actually the result of negotiation with State officials. It was claimed in the national newspapers that the negotiation process with the bandit had begun during the visit of Faruk Sükan, the Minister of Internal Affairs, to Siirt for the ceremony welcoming the Gendarmerie commandos to the city. It was, moreover, argued that State officials accepted Hamido's conditions for surrender only to protect the political prestige of the Government. Those confidential conditions were claimed to be as follows: (i) Hamido would be arrested by a prosecutor, not by the Gendarmerie, (ii) Binevre, Hamido's village, would be protected against rival bandit gangs, especially the Özbay brothers, (iii) the security of Hamido's family would be ensured, and (iv) he would be treated honorably in prison. (Milliyet, 14.04.67: 7)

Before his actual surrender, Hamido didn't show up on the day he had promised to do so; instead, he sent a letter to the Governor, delivered by his two

sons, in which he promised that he would surrender after he had collected some of his debts. Meanwhile, Mustafa Aldemir, Hamido's 15-year-old son, was killed by accident by the journalist accompanying the prosecutor in Hamido's surrender. (Cumhuriyet, 10.04.67: 1) After this tragedy, Hamido declared in his letter to the Governor that he would submit himself to justice and not make a complaint about the journalist that had killed his son by accident. In the end, Hamido did surrender: "I've submitted myself to justice by the request of the Government. I wish that the other bandits would take the true path like me. I feel myself at peace for entering into the path of law." (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 447)



The political connection of rival bandit gangs was one of the main controversies in the national printed press. "Newspapers: Bandit Hakimo for AP, while Özbay for CHP." (Cumhuriyet, 24.08.69: 1)

The alleged negotiation process with Hamido led to heated debate in the mainstream media. Refik Erduran, for instance, who was expressing the claim that Hamido received a good amount of money in exchange for his surrender, was criticizing the AP Government for negotiating with a bandit. The columnist also

asked the Government whether a military post would be constructed in Hamido's village as a result of the bandit's request. (Erduran, 1967: 2) Indeed, four days later, newspapers would report that a military post had been established in Binevre. (Cumhuriyet, 17.04.67: 5) Columnists were, however, turning their attention to the alleged negotiation process between the State and the brigand, while neglecting the defenseless position of a village against a hostile bandit gang.[158] Indeed, establishing a military post was the first time that the State had shown interest in the disaster of Binevre and State officials had to accept it only after pressure from Hamido himself. Nonetheless, the Minister of Internal Affairs was strictly rejecting the reports that claimed the Government had negotiated with the bandit. (Milliyet, 18.04.67: 1, 7) During the 13th Session of the Senate on December 19, 1967, in which the bandit war between Hamido and Özbay brothers constituted one of the main topics of discussion, the Minister of Internal Affairs Sükan refused again the allegation over the Government's negotiation with the bandit Hamido. (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 448)

After Hamido's surrender, the Özbays' attacks on villages that supported Hamido intensified. On April 25, 1967, the Özbay gang kidnapped Hamido's six-year-old son (Abdullah Aldemir) who could only be rescued by the Gendarmerie after a fierce gunfight. (Milliyet, 25.04.67: 1) On May 17, 1967, the Özbay gang kidnapped and murdered four villagers who were supporting Hamido.[159] (Milliyet, 17.05.67: 1) After this incident, the Minister of Internal Affairs located a special commando platoon in the region on June 15, 1967. (Republican Senate Records,

[158] The columnist Ilhan Selçuk was, in this respect, an exception, since he was arguing that bandits turned into the security forces of the native people in the absence of the State in the region. (Selçuk, 1968: 2)

[159] In the face of the rising cruelty of the Özbay gang, Faruk Sükan, the Minister of Internal Affairs, promised in his press statement the elimination of the Özbay gang on May 17, 1967. (Republican Senate Records, 1967: 448)

1967c: 446-447) While the Government initiated immense bandit hunts against the Özbay gang through the related commando squadron, the oppositional parties had begun to blame the AP Government for the intensification of murders in the East. Muzaffer Özdağ, an MP from the Republican Villagers Nation Party (CKMP), for instance, declared in his press statement that bandits had become so out of control that they would be able to put the corpses on the table of the Minister of Internal Affairs. (Milliyet, 18.05.67: 3) In a similar vein, Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, the CHP's Senate member from Kars, accused the Government for not being able to protect the townsmen of Hamido against the gang of Özbay, and thus, not keeping the promise given to the bandit in exchange for his surrender. (Republican Senate Records, 1967: 447-448)

Eventually, one of the brothers of Özbay gang, Reşit Özbay, was captured and arrested in Adana after which the number of captured bandits within the Özbay gang had raised to ten.[160] (Milliyet, 24.05.67: 3) Meanwhile, Hamido - who was accused of four specific crimes with a possible sentence of fifty years, i.e. (i) resisting the Gendarmerie with arms, (ii) murdering a person, (iii) carrying out highway robbery and (iv) setting a house on fire (Milliyet, 15.04.67: 3) – was not only released due to lack of evidence, but he was also employed in a local State "Road, Water, Electricity" (YSE) institution in Siirt. (Milliyet, 09.05.68: 3) Hamido's release openly demonstrated that as State officials could not cope with the banditry epidemic, they were secretly negotiating and cooperating with certain bandit chiefs.

[160] In addition to Reşit Özbay, Faruk Sükan, the Minister of Internal Affairs, explicated the names and ages of these captured bandits in the Senate: 30 years old Ramazan Baytekin, 36 years old Raşit Baytekin, 19 years old Mehmet Oğuz, 28 years old Mehmet Ali Atalay, and 22 years old İbrahim Atalay. (Republican Senate Records, 1967c: 446)

After four months of his release, however, Hamido took to the hills again with 21 of his relatives. (Hürriyet, 03.09.68: 1) Indeed, Hamido even sent a letter to the newspaper Milliyet to clarify his intention. In this letter, Hamido argued that he took to the hills not for brigandage, but to protect his villages against the attacks of the Özbay gang. Hamido wrote:

"I decided to defend my villages and track the gang of the bandit Mehmet Emin Özbay, as if compulsorily assuming the Gendarmerie role of the Government. I am determined to prevent the Özbay gang reaching Barzani and cutting off its road. Thus, I will save my villages."[161] (Milliyet, 16.09.68: 1)



Reşit Özbay in handcuffs
(Milliyet, 24.05.67: 3)



M. Ali Özbay, later killed by the Gendarmerie
(Milliyet, 22.06.69: 3)

In his letter, Hamido claimed that the Özbay gang had so far murdered 16 people from his village so far, were waiting for an opportunity to attack him and were laying heavy tributes on the villages of the region. Hamido also accused local

[161] With reference to the news reports published in the national printed press, Muzaffer Özdağ, the CKMP's MP from Afyonkarahisar, argued in the Assembly that the gang of Özbay brothers was repressing the peasants of their region of influence for certain persecutors, who aimed at seizing their lands and collecting money to send to Barzani. (National Assembly Records, 1968d: 129)

state officials of neglecting their responsibilities by not arresting the obvious supporters of the Özbay gang in the region. Hamido was, therefore, arguing that he had no other choice but to carry out the unfulfilled role of the State by struggling against a vicious bandit gang. (Milliyet, 16.09.68: 1)

The letter of Hamido that hit the headlines of the newspapers of the period was a true blow to the Government's prestige. It laid bare the fact that the State was either unwilling or worse incapable of protecting its citizens against the bandit gangs in its Eastern regions. Against the cruelty of the Özbay brothers, Hamido was again taking to the hills again to protect the lives of his villagers – which were ironically both threatened and guaranteed by bandits. Indeed, on August 30, 1968, Hamido declared – in another letter that was published in newspapers – his victory over his rivals by announcing that the Özbay brothers had fled to northern Iraq to take shelter under the forces of Barzani. He wrote:

> "Why hadn't those marauders left the region until now? Thanks to all my efforts and cunning, I've re-established peace in our villages by making all bandit gangs leave the region with my men. I chased the murderous Özbay gang while only caring about the Government's honor. I am not a bandit, but a soldier of the Government. By assuming the Gendarmerie role of the Government and abandoning my salary, I just strived to protect my people. I am not stronger than the Government; but, as I know all the paths, I strived day and night to re-establish the peace of my people." (Milliyet, 30.09.68: 1, 7)

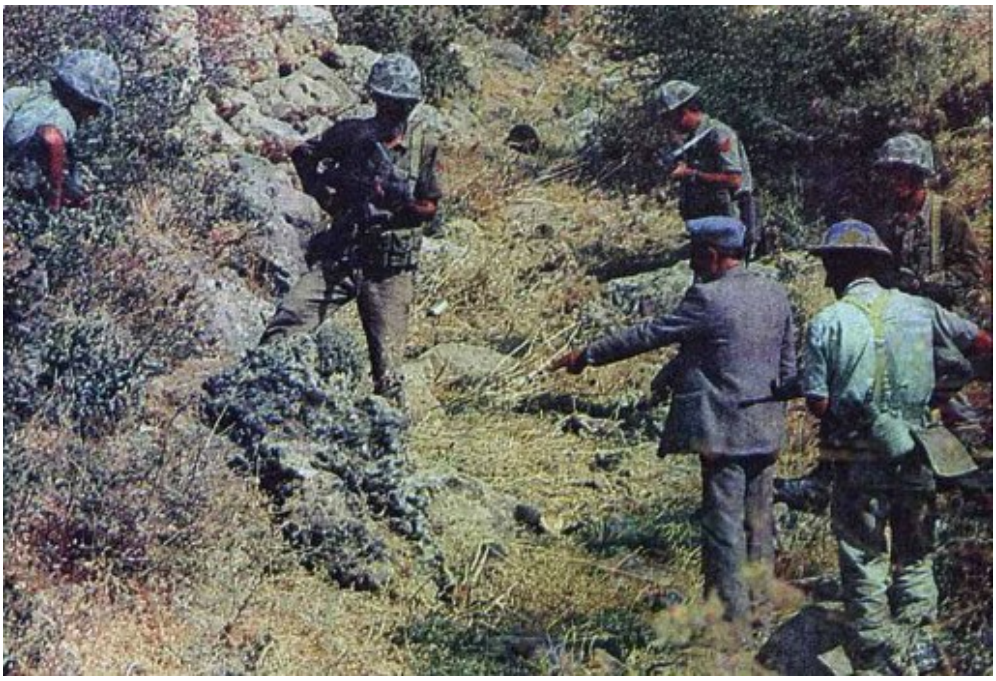
In the summer of 1969, the Özbay gang returned to the region and the war between the two rival bandit gangs reached its final zenith. On June 22, 1969, one of the members of the Özbay gang, Mehmet Ali Özbay, was killed in an ambush by the Gendarmerie. (Milliyet, 22.06.69: 3) On September 6, 1969, the Özbay gang raided the city of Siirt and killed Ali Elçin, one of their enemies, along with his mother. (Milliyet, 06.09.69: 4) In one of the decisive skirmishes between the two bandit gangs, Hamido and his men killed six members of the Özbays. (Milliyet, 12.09.69: 11)



Hamido's negotiations with the AP Government was one of the most controversial issues of the late 1960s. In this caricature, Hamido is calling the Gendarmerie for help against the Özbay gang. ('Weekend Addition', Milliyet, 15.09.68: 1)

In a short while, the bandit war between the two rival families was concluded with the triumph of the Aldemirs. Thus, the famous bandit Hamido had begun to live as a simple peasant in his village while his son was pursuing a career in the popular Yeşilçam bandit movies. In the mid 1970s, it was, however, reported that Hamido left his watchman job at the petroleum corporation to take to the mountains again against the re-emerging Özbay gang. In the midst of a never-ending war between those bandit families, villagers left Binevre that was, eventually, wiped off the map. (Öymen, 1975: 6) Still, the age of the last Kurdish bandits was soon gone and the mountains had begun to be ruled by 'political bandits', the PKK's militants. Hamido, 53-year-old former bandit, hit the headlines of the national newspapers for the last

time in 1984 as a stalker for the State security forces in their hunt for 'terrorists'. In interviews, he was stating, "those marauders will be caught by the Turkish soldier through the help of God." (Milliyet, 02.09.84: 6)



Hamido's last appearance in the national newspapers as a stalker for the State's forces against the PKK guerillas: "(…) Hamido [with the cap] traced the terrorists along with the security forces by providing guidance in a region that he knows like the palm of his hand." (Milliyet, 02.09.84: 1)

In conclusion, the bandit war between the Aldemirs and Özbays and the negotiation process between the AP Government and Hamido clearly exposed not only the State's incapacity, or worse unwillingness to guarantee the security of the native population in the region, but also its anti-image as an impotent power of an alien nature. The elimination of a bandit gang did not, in this respect, 'restore the order'; it could lead, on the contrary, to a power vacuum by damaging the established order, the balance of power between rival bandit gangs that had ruled the region for years in the absence of adequate State presence. The endless bandit wars, however, demonstrated that the balance had already been broken. While the traditional Kurdish

society that had been formed from the inter-tangled and continuous struggle among sheiks, aghas, bandits and tribes was shattering, the PKK seized that moment of social change and filled the power vacuum by reconstructing the ever-growing Kurdish resentment against the disintegration of traditional society into a modern, national program.

3. Hekimo: Banditry and Blood Feud

"If the Edict Belongs to the Sultan, then the Mountains Belong to Us"

It was at a dark night when he was walking on thick snow and trying to reach the nearest village. Suddenly, he heard voices from darkness, the voices of sneaky footsteps and deep growling. He held both of his guns and tried to figure out the images that were crystallizing in the darkness. Then, he saw them right in front of him, a wolf pack that was divided into two and had taken up position to ambush their prey. He acted without hesitation. Instead of running away or waiting to defend himself, he directly attacked the very danger that was threatening his life. Several of the wolves were instantly killed by his gunshots and the others fled. It was this aggressive and active attitude he adopted for all his life that turned him into the bandit 'Hekimo'. (4th Oral Source)

Among the many Kurdish bandit figures of modern Turkey, the life story of Hikmet Zeren is prominent as it was composed of the convergence of the different variables of the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon, from honor tradition, blood feud and tribal conflict to smuggling and the spirit of rebellion.[162] As a member of the

[162] This part was written thanks to indepth interviews with Hikmet Zeren (Hekimo) in Istanbul, his brother-in-arms Mele Necmettin in Diyarbakır and two of his relatives (Şemsettiné İskender in Esê and Ezizé İskender in Nusaybin). (2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Oral Sources) A collection of news reports and

rooted family of the locally famous merchant Haci Seyfo in the city of Cizîr, Hikmet left primary school at the age of eight due to what he called an 'injustice' committed against him by his schoolteacher. (4th Oral Source) After trying several vocations in manual labor, Hikmet turned to the most profitable, but also the most dangerous profession of the region: 'smuggling'. When Hikmet began to cross over the borders of Iraq and Syria, which were filled with mines and soldiers, he was only a 13-year-old boy. During one of those attempts, Hikmet joined the expedition of a group of smugglers that was crossing the Iraqi border safely thanks to bribed border soldiers. One of the infamous lieutenants of the region at that time, who was determined to struggle against smuggling, was, however, informed of the expedition and set a trap for the smugglers' return path. Hikmet succeeded in escaping from that ambush wounded, but alive and took shelter in a nearby village. Apart from Hikmet, only three of the other members of the smuggling group escaped from the ambush, while three of them were arrested and five of them were shot dead. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 3-4-5)

Despite such tragedy, Hikmet decided in 1960 to form his own gang for bigger, more profitable expeditions. As the leader of his new gang, Hikmet had begun to smuggle thousands of sheep into northern Syria and Iraq either by bribing the border soldiers or by directly crossing minefields. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 6) The more successful his expeditions were, the more powerful and famous he became; as a result, a horse of prestigious breeding named 'Ewré Reş' (Black Cloud) was given to Hikmet as a gift from the influential Tayan tribe. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 6) Still, his dream was to settle down as a farm owner and having a happy marriage.

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interviews with Hekimo that were published in the national printed press constitute, on the other hand, the written resources of the part in question.

When he was 23 years old, Hikmet fell in love with Zeyno, the daughter of Hacı Hüseyin, an influential agha and the head of the village of Dicle. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 8) While Hacı Hüseyin could not be convinced to give away his daughter in marriage, Hikmet, following the tradition, decided to elope with Zeyno. He took the girl's consent in advance and eloped with her in broad daylight. Soon enough, Zeyno's relatives, together with the Gendarmerie soldiers, caught up with them. In the midst of fierce gunfight, Zeyno left her lover behind to return to her father who was screaming for his daughter back. While she was moving slowly away, Zeyno was crying to convince Hikmet that there was no way out for their love. Hikmet warned her not to leave; then, he shot Zeyno in the leg. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 12) The armed struggle turned ferocious, at the end of which Hikmet barely succeeded in taking shelter in one of his friends' house in his village. When the soldiers encircled the village and the Gendarmerie commander threatened to burn down the house together with the two other innocent people inside, Hikmet had no other choice but to surrender. Before giving himself up, Hikmet succeeded in hiding his rifle. Despite a terrible beating and torture at the military post in Dicle, Hikmet refused to give up the location of his rifle. He told to the Gendarmerie commander: "Commander, you know that guns are the honor of the brave in our region. Yes, I shot Zeynep and I am ready for my punishment, but don't ask the location of my rifle." (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 12)

Then, the torture, which had begun with the traditional falanga and the squeezing of hands in a press moved on to the extraction of toenails and electrical shocks. When the commander heard that Hikmet's family was on their way to Dicle to ensure his safety, the torture ended and he was put in prison on November 27, 1967. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 13) In prison, Hikmet was more than glad to hear that

Zeyno was alive.[163] He was released on bail after the first trial. Although his heart was with Zeyno, Hikmet's mother succeeded in convincing him to get engaged to Dilber, the daughter of his uncle. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 13) When he heard that Zeyno was still waiting for him, however, Hikmet went to Dicle again; but, Hacı Hüseyin, the father of Zeyno, had already put a contract on Hikmet's head. After learning of his intentions, two hitmen (Mehmet Onur and Yahya Öztürk) from the Seyid tribe – one of the greatest tribes of the region in terms of its religiously influential position and its organic connections to the State – set up a trap on the road. The trap backfired on the hitmen as in fierce close combat one of them was killed by friendly fire and after miraculously surviving two bullets in his neck and his leg, Hikmet killed the other with a rock. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 14, 15)

That incident was the beginning of the blood feud between the Abdülcelil and Seyid families. In retaliation for their lost ones, they burned down the houses (along with Hikmet's beloved horse Ewré Reş) and the shops of the Abdülcelil family. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 15) Meanwhile, Hikmet, who had taken shelter in the mountains, despite his grave wounds, decided to surrender; what he did, he thought, was self-defense after all. In order to prevent further bloodshed, he was taken away to the military post in Cizîr in a coffin as if he was dead and then transferred to the infamous Mardin prison. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 16) While he was in prison, his new name 'Hekimo' had begun to spread from Cizîr to Midyat, Mardin and Urfa.

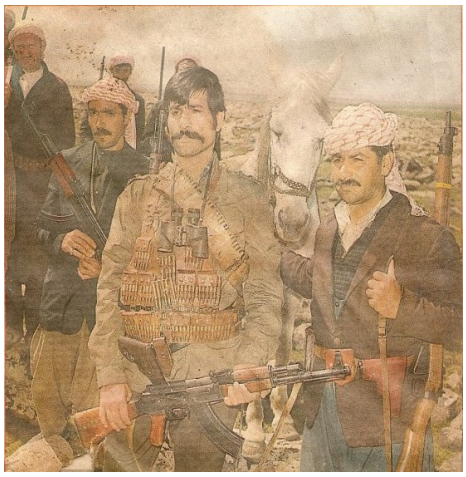
[163] Still, one of Zeyno's legs would remain crippled for life. (4th Oral Source)



Hekimo in his bandit outfit (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 6)

While the trial had begun, Hekimo's family was disintegrating due to the pressure of the families' rivalry. His parents had already gone to Istanbul, while his relatives could not even dare to leave their houses. After some time, his brother Abdülkadir was assassinated in Istanbul and Zeyno, who was sending love letters to Hekimo, was forcefully married to a stranger by her father. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 19) All this gloomy news made Hekimo restless and impatient on the inside; thus, on May 15, 1970, he escaped from prison with another convict (Abdullah Zink) who would be his brother-in-arms in the near future. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 21) As he was a fugitive now, Hekimo had no other choice but to make the mountains his home. In his own mind, he would not, however, be a *bandit*; instead, he decided to follow the lead of Koçero whose name was mentioned with respect all around the region.[164]

[164] According to his own narration, a close friend presented Koçero's soldier uniform to Hekimo. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 23)

Hekimo had a wide support base. He is seen here on the left with a tribal leader welcoming him with gunshots. On the right, Hekimo is with the men from his later wife's tribe.
(Çetin, 1975: Vol. 17; 1996: Vol. 1)

When Hekimo took to the hills they were deserted due to the massive commando operations that had been taking place since 1967. His name was widely known in the region and the villagers, particularly the nomadic Koçer tribes, were more than eager to host and support him. (4th Oral Source) He was vengeful, but the first problem he would solve belonged to Abdullah, his brother-in-arms, whose family was repressed by an agha in the village of Şah on the top of the mountain Cudi. By using his threatening fame and raiding the village several times, Hekimo assisted Abdullah's family in regaining their honor, their mill and their fields. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 25, 26, 27) As soon as it was heard that Hekimo was in Şah, Gendarmerie commandos encircled the area; but Hekimo had already disappeared. When Abdullah realized that Hekimo's position was too troublesome, he parted company with him. Thus, the lonely bandit decided to go to Istanbul, not only because of the threat he faced in the region, but also because of his longing to see his family.

As a fugitive convict in Turkey's greatest city, Hekimo did his best to survive in that alien urban jungle by living with his family and working as a construction worker. As the city was, however, in complete political turmoil, nowhere was safe,

especially for a fugitive. On one occasion, he barely managed to escape a regular police research on a train, his way out the kidnapping of a passenger. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 28) After realizing that the mountains were much more safer than the cities, Hekimo turned back to the region. In Nusaybin, Hekimo connected with the chief of Zahuran tribe (Hacı Halil Raşu), who was famous for hosting fugitives and smugglers. The tribe was, at that time, in the grip of an internal blood feud – which would soon be ended through Hekimo's intermediacy – and many of their members were arrested during commando raids. The remaining few fugitives of the tribe, who were wanted for murder and smuggling, were in the hills and the tribal chief agreed to assign them to Hekimo's order; thus, Hekimo's gang was established. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 28) Hereafter, Hekimo had begun to wander around the mountains of the region while his fame ensured the native support necessary for the survival of his gang. After massive commando operations, most of the bandits had either been killed, arrested or had escaped to northern Iraq to become the soldiers of Barzani; hence, the deserted mountains. The only remaining gangs were those of Hamido and Ahmedé Osman, who both sent envoys of invitation to Hekimo as a warm welcome to the mountains of Siirt. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 28)



Hekimo, at the middle, is seen talking to his gang. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 3)

Ahmedé Osman was a powerful bandit who was known to be the ruler of nine or ten villages, the perpetrator of eight murders, the leader of 12 armed men and the husband of five wives. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 28) Together with Ahmedé Osman, Hekimo realized two sheep-smuggling expeditions from Hakkari to northern Iraq. The sheep belonged to certain aghas who were hiring bandits to ensure the safety of such illegal trade. Hekimo's fame even reached northern Iraq, as he was officially invited to join the ranks of Mistefa Barzanî. He had to refuse, since his heart was with his family in Cizîr. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 29) The longer Hekimo wandered the mountains of the region, the better the living conditions of his family became. Indeed, the rival Seyid tribe not only returned their fields to their owners, but also paid compensation to his uncle for the family's losses. The murderer of Hekimo's brother (Mecit) was, on the other hand, found and arrested. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 29) Meanwhile, Hekimo fell in love with Nefiya ('Exile'), who he met in a village that was hosting him, and decided to leave banditry for good. As her family could not be convinced to give their daughter in marriage to a bandit, Hekimo eloped with her to Istanbul to live together with his family.

While Hekimo had begun to work as a construction worker again, he learned by chance that his enemies were still after him; thus, the blood feud was on-going. Not long after, Hekimo found his archenemy in Istanbul, Mehmet Yusuf Aslan, who had forcefully married Zeyno to his son and hired a hitman to kill Hekimo's brother. After seeing Zeyno on the balcony of their home, he shot four bullets at Mehmet and fled. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 33) Mehmet bled to death, while Hekimo turned back to his home region to resolve his remaining problems. After making peace with his father-in-law, Hekimo kidnapped Rıfat Gölge (the scout that was hired by the rival family to find him) in the region of Kercews. For his punishment, Hekimo stripped him

naked, tied his arms up to and dragged him through the village from his horse. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 33) Then, once again he returned back to Istanbul and tried to live a normal life with his family as a construction worker. Not long after, he was, however, found and arrested by secret police. In the interrogation, his relationship with Barzanî was of particular interest to the police. Hekimo was put in prison and was on trial with the possibility of being sentenced to capital punishment. Thanks to the general amnesty in 1974, Hekimo would, however, be released, since that time he has lived in Istanbul as a contractor. During the conflict between the State and the PKK, Hekimo served as a provincial chairman of the pro-Kurdish political party *HADEP* (People's Democracy Party) in Bakırköy, Istanbul and even participated in the general elections as one the party's MP candidates. (4th Oral Source) Just like the story of Koçero, Hekimo was known in the West of the country as a monster:

- "Hekimo, Monster of Mardin, Arrested in Istanbul" (Cumhuriyet, 03.06.73: 1)
- "Hekimo, who Spread Terror in East, Captured: (…) Hekimo said that he took to the hills for honor and blood feud." (Milliyet, 03.06.73: 1, 11)





Hekimo is in his native outfit on the left, while he is seen being arrested on the right.
(Çetin, 1975: Vol. 1) (Çetin, 1996: Vol. 2)

In the East, he was, however, known as a hero. During his long banditry career and seven-year fugitive life in the mountains, not only did not he harm the villagers but also he played an intermediary role in the resolution of many local problems. (4th Oral Source) By using his authority and fame, Hekimo, for instance, ended the blood feud within the Zahuran tribe that supported him. In several marriage issues, it was also said that Hekimo played a mediatory role on behalf of the oppressed and the poor. While he prevented the forceful marriage of a young blind girl to an old man, he convinced another father to give his daughter in marriage to her poor lover without the bride price. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 24) Hekimo was earning his income mainly from smuggling and both the villagers and the aghas of the region, except the rival tribes of his family, were eagerly supporting him. Still, blood feud was the defining character of Hekimo's story, as he was both the initiator and the main actor in the war between the two families. Thus, Hekimo's life story, from smuggling, abduction and blood feud to honor tradition, tribal conflict and rebelling against the State's authority, was, indeed, representative of the fundamental characteristics of the traditional Kurdish society that was on the brink of collapse.

C. From a *Mehkûm* to a *Cengawer*:
Deconstructing the Historical Context of the Last Kurdish Banditry

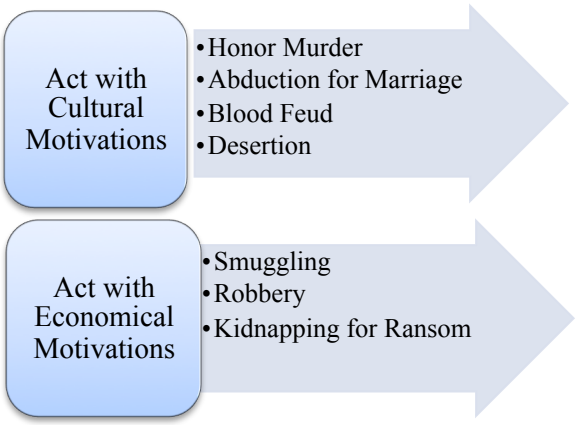
The individual life stories of the last Kurdish bandits lay bare the formation process of the bandit myth, showing the progression from a simple fugitive to a local power-holder and then the ultimate social rebel. In almost all cases, banditry careers begin with a preliminary act that violates the law and turns the perpetrator into a fugitive. For this very reason, the term *eşqiya* (bandit) is a word that was introduced into

Kurdish by the law, not by the native people. Instead, *mehkûm* (convict) and *firar* (fugitive) have been the terms most commonly used to denominate those that were labeled as bandits by the law. Here, a preliminary outlaw action that may not be seen as illegitimate by the bandit's native people turned the person into a criminal wanted by the law; hence banditry, the most appropriate profession for a fugitive.

Those preliminary acts that violated the law and initiated a person's banditry career should, however, be divided into the categories of culture and economy according to desired aims of the actor. An act with a cultural goal refers to actions that are motivated by the social norms of the native context, rather than mere economical interests. Thus, (i) *honor murder*, (ii) *abduction of women for marriage*, (iii) various acts for *blood feud*, and (iv) *desertion* should be differentiated from the acts with economical goals, i.e. (i) *smuggling*, (ii) *robbery* by raiding villages or blocking highways and (iii) *kidnapping for ransom*. In this respect, Koçero's banditry career had begun with an honor murder, while Hamido had become a bandit by blood feud. In Hekimo's case, on the other hand, whilst he was already earning his income from smuggling, he turned into a bandit only when his abduction of a woman for marriage led to a blood feud. Still, by the 1950s, not only fugitives and deserters, but also many non-criminal citizens had begun their outlaw career with mere economical purposes. The main differentiating line between the categories of culture and economy was the overwhelming legitimacy of the former in the eyes of the native population. It was, in other words, the traditional norms that turned the perpetrator into an innocent, unfortunate fellow that was hunted by the law and doomed to wander around the mountains. Thus, banditry as a mass phenomenon emerged in the 1950s both from the escalating contradiction between the traditional norms and the law of the State and from the transformation of the region's political

economy. Banditry was, in this respect, the spontaneous reaction of the traditional Kurdish society to the juridico-political and socio-economic transformation of the region.

Turning into a Fugitive: Initial Violation of the Law



Beginning with the DP's coming to power in 1950, a major social and political transformation covering both urban and rural spaces was turning the country's traditional class structure upside down. Regarding the economical transformation of the country, the DP's liberal free market strategy was, on the one hand, accompanied not only by the industrialization of agriculture, but also rapid urbanization, which meant a major population movement and a flux of social classes. (Keyder, 2005: 188-191) The establishment of the multi-party electoral system led, on the other hand, to a system of political patronage through which the ruling political party presented the State's resources to its electorate in exchange for political support.[165] The projections of such a major social and political transformation in the Kurdish regions of the country were dramatic. First of all, traditional local power holders – primarily aghas, sheihks and tribal leaders – used

[165] For a recent article on political patronage by Sabri Sayari, one of the first scholars to analyze Turkish politics through clientelism, see: (Sayari, 2011)

the clientelist networking presented by two rival political parties to acquire more power and land. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2111) Apart from their internal struggle for power (that was reproduced through the political conflict between the DP and the CHP), political patronage, the effect of which was combined with that of industrial agriculture[166], led to the establishment of big landownership in many parts of the region; hence, the disintegration of the classical tribal structure and the emergence of landless peasants.[167] Indeed, the percentage of landless peasants in Turkey's Kurdish population rose from 26 per cent in 1950 to 35.8 per cent in 1967 and 41 per cent in 1980. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2111-2112) Thus, homeless masses had begun either to emigrate to the cities or work as seasonal workers on land and plantations.[168] It was, therefore, more than natural that the newly emerged landless peasants constituted the primary human sources for the massive emergence of banditry with economical motivations.

Such socio-economical transformation of the region was accompanied by a shift in the State's discourse. The Kurdish question that had previously been reconstituted through a security paradigm as a problem of *political reaction*, *banditry* and *tribal resistance* in the era of Kemalist one-party rule was then reconstructed through an economic perspective as a problem of *regional backwardness*. Such discursive change, it is argued, referred both to a new dialogue with the traditional

[166] To speak with numbers, the rate of tractor use rise in the region rose from 65 per cent to 1231 per cent from 1965 to 1982, while the same rate had been 767 per cent for the country as a whole. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2314)

[167] The system of political patronage, which was introduced by the DP and the related phenomenon of big landownership, became the norms of the Kurdish regions in the following decades. State officials were, in this respect, presenting not only the legal framework, but also its security forces for their clients' land seizures. For instance, in May 1969, the public lands in the village of Zihayat of the township of Harran in Urfa, which for years were cultivated by peasants, were seized by a local agha after the Gendarmerie's forceful evacuation of peasants. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2111)

[168] In this respect, most of the seasonal workers on the lands in Çukurova, the rising star of agriculture in the 1950s, were coming from the southeast of the country. (Zürcher, 2011: 332) One of the most crucial results of such socio-economical transformation was the gradual emergence of a nationalist Kurdish intelligentsia. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110)

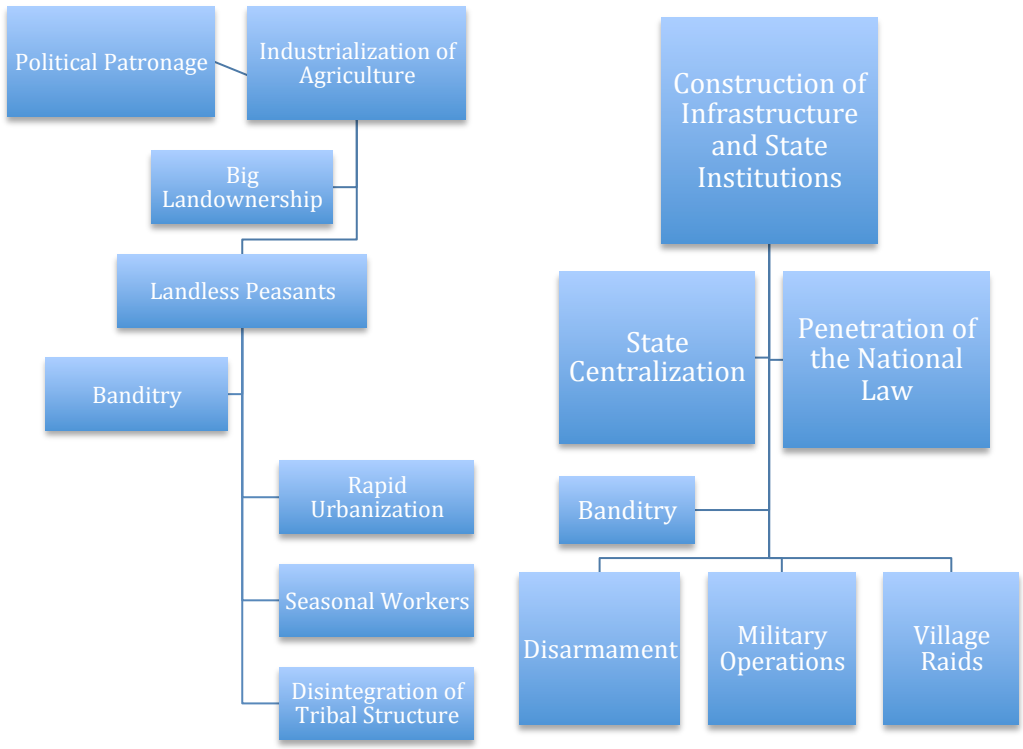
local power holders of the region through a disguised critique of the former Kemalist discourse[169] and to a consistency with the traditional discourse regarding the silence on the ethno-political aspect of the Kurdish question. (Yeğen, 1999: 565) As will be discussed below, however, while the traditional Kemalist elite was searching for Kurdism behind the rise of Kurdish banditry by negating its own law of silence, the politicians advocating the economist version were interpreting the epidemic as one of the many results of the region's underdevelopment by obeying the law of silence, soothing political anxieties and pretending to not see the plainly visible. Thus, all of the successive governments from the 1950s onwards consistently followed the same technologies and policies of State power 'against' Kurdish banditry as their predecessors did. The State oppression, mounting from the military operations against bandits, arms and contraband to the commandos' village raids, concluded with the exposition of the Kurdish identity. In order to suppress it by humiliation, the forbidden was set free.[170]

On the other side of the coin, the construction of basic infrastructure (especially highways) and the State's civil and military institutions in the region enabled the State centralization process, along with its national law, to penetrate into the most remote parts of the Kurdish regions by spontaneously contradicting and conflicting with the established norms of the traditional Kurdish society; hence, the massive emergence of banditry with cultural motivations. Thus, banditry as a mass phenomenon was both a result of and reaction to such major political and social transformation of the region.

[169] One of the most tangible results of such a discursive shift was the turning of the national leaders and the landowners – who resisted assimilation and were subjected to forced settlement – back to their lands. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110)

[170] This argument that was briefly stated here will be put forward fully in the next chapter.

The Massive Emergence of Banditry in the 1950s:
Socio-Economic and Juridico-Political Background



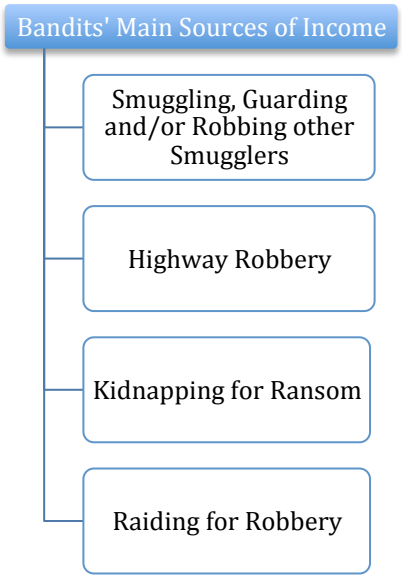
Once a fugitive had decided to follow a career in banditry, he had the chance to earn his income from various illegal economic activities. Smuggling was, in this respect, one of the primary sources of income for bandits. The centuries-old trade between the Kurdish regions of Turkey and northern Iraq and Syria, in addition to northEastern Iran (areas mainly populated by Kurds), was turned into an illegal economic activity by the establishment of modern nation-states parceling out the Kurdish regions and demanding their due from that trade. Thus, smuggling has turned into a natural source of income for a native population that has to bribe local State officials or directly cross minefields to realize such trade. In this massive illegal trade, bandits played a key role by either smuggling goods by themselves and/or guarding or robbing the smuggling caravans. While Koçero was, for instance, mainly

an opium smuggler between Turkey and Syria on behalf of certain people in the city of Siirt, he also occasionally robbed smuggling caravans. For Hekimo's case, on the other hand, since he was already a famous smuggler operating between the city of Cizîr and northern Iraq, he had also become in his banditry career a hired guardian of smuggling caravans together with the famous bandit chief Ahmedé Osman. Regarding this process of the combination of banditry and smuggling, the large-scale sheep smuggling from Turkey to Iraq or Syria had, for instance, been realized in the late 1960s through a network of bandit gangs. The gangs belonging to Ceylan around Ağrı and Van, Samedo and Cuma around Muş and Sason, Mehmet Emin Özbay around Hizan, Pervari and Cizre and Selim the Fox around Mardin, Kurtulan, Beşiri and Batman all took on a particular stage of sheep smuggling operations through their dominance of a specific region, thus monopolizing all the smuggling routes through their internal cooperation. (Beşikçi, 1969: 159-160)

Apart from smuggling, in the 1950s highway robbery turned into one of the most profitable sources of income for bandits. The newly constructed highways in the secluded areas of the Kurdish regions were bringing their prey to bandits' doorstep. Analysis of the headlines and the news in the mainstream national newspapers lays bare the fact that highway robberies had an irrepressible rise from the 1950s onwards.[171] In addition to highway robberies, kidnapping for ransom was proven to be a radical but lucrative source of income for bandits. As various incidents published in the national newspapers demonstrated, bandits either kidnapped simple villagers or native and foreign officials and held them to ransom. Finally, bandits occasionally carried out raids on the State's corporations or on villages for the purposes of robbery. In this respect, the State's petroleum

[171] See: Appendix I.

corporations in the region had become particularly common target for bandits. Koçero, for instance, raided these corporations so many times that he would eventually be killed on one such attempt.



In addition to their sources of income, most of the bandits had their own region of control where they enjoyed a wide native support base. Bandits in the same or adjacent regions could compete or cooperate with each other, hence the bandit wars of the Hamido vs. Özbay brothers or Ömer Bezek vs. Hakimo but also the cooperation between Koçero and Davudo, Hekimo and Ahmedé Osman or Ömer Bezek and Selim the Fox. Since most of the bandit chiefs belonged to an individual tribe, tribes constituted the main social structure of such support bases. As in the cases of Hamido and Hekimo, the struggle between two rival tribes that could have turned into a wholesale blood feud could be initiated and/or conducted by their respective bandit members. Therefore, a bandit was not merely a robber and a thief; rather, he was a local power-holder, who was able to use various means of violence that were at his disposal either for his own goals or for his tribe or other local power-

holders; hence, their usage of intimidation, abduction, torture and murder. Since bandits were usually on the hills and outside the effective rule of law, they were always in contact with the nomadic Kurdish tribes (Koçers*)* for whom supporting a bandit was part of their tradition. In order to ensure the continuation of such native support, however, bandits should have followed the norms of the traditional order; otherwise, they could easily be turned into a persona non grata for the native population. In order to strengthen his position in his region of control, a bandit, rather than merely abiding by the norms of the traditional order, could have, furthermore, promoted them, thereby becoming a social broker[172]. Social brokerage is defined as "the linking of two or more currently unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with each other and/or with yet another site." (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly [eds.]: 2001: 142)

Thus, bandits could turn into social brokers by resolving various local problems through intermediating between conflicting parties. In Hekimo's case, for instance, the bandit not only resolved several marriage issues in his region in line with the norms of the traditional order, but also mediated to resolve the internal blood feud within an ally tribe. By turning into a justice redistributor, a bandit chief, therefore, could become a long-term local power-holder.

The massive emergence of banditry in the 1950s was the harbinger of an emerging threat for the State elite, the hard proof of arising Kurdish separatism and the perfect opportunity and veil to eliminate it. Thus, while newly established commando units were sent on numerous military operations against the bandits, the native population was, in the meantime, subject to a disarmament campaign. The State's bandit hunt had soon turned into a peasant hunt, as commandos in pursuit of

[172] For the analysis of bandits' social roles in their communities as 'social brokers', I am indebted to Murat Yüksel.

arms were raiding hundreds of villages. While the native population had been repressed, the State's forces could in no way capture the bandits. Indeed, most of the famous bandits of the region, such as Koçero, Hamido and Hekimo, enjoyed a long banditry career. The iron image of the State as the irresistible and omnipotent force that had been promoted in the region by the ruling elite was being falsified and mocked every day by the continuation of bandits' rule in the mountains. In despair, State officials either negotiated or cooperated with certain bandit gangs to turn them against others, as was the case with the AP Government's cooperation with Hamido against the ferocious Özbay gang. Still, the massive commando operations that were launched in the late 1960s made most of the bandit gangs flee to northern Iraq and Syria until their rebellious position was replaced by that of 'the political bandits' of the PKK.

In conclusion, a simple fugitive (*mehkûm*) who in the meantime could become a local power holder then turned in the people's memory into a warrior (*cengawer*) of his people. It was, in other words, against the State's repression that the Kurdish bandit myth reacted. It represented and cried out the revolutionary praxis that was in the making in the native people's minds. In the Kurdish context, therefore, the Kurdish bandit myth was both the continuation of an ever-lasting war and the prelude to the upcoming rebellion laying bare the legitimacy of the cause, the weakness of the enemy and the necessity for guerrilla warfare. It was exposing the fact that the Kurdish people were preparing themselves to enter into a decisive struggle; thus, it was, in short, the clearest expression of their will to rebel.

CHAPTER V

THE LANGUAGE OF RETICENCE: LAST ERA OF KURDISH BANDITRY AS THE CONTINUATION OF AN EVER-LASTING WAR AND THE REHEARSAL FOR THE UPCOMING ORGANIZED REBELLION

The term 'silence' (*sessizlik*) refers to an *objective* state of quietness, while 'reticence' (*suskunluk*) is a *subjective* situation behind which there lies the subject's will to be silent. The former is a natural situation; the latter is the deed of a subject.[173] One could speak about silence, its causes and effects; but silence itself is speechless. Reticence, on the other hand, is a speech without words; hence a perfect language for collective resentment and resistance.

The struggle between the State and the Kurdish people escalated into a whole new level of oppression and resistance in the period between 1950 and 1980. The State oppression, implemented under the guise of 'struggle against banditry', was a preemptive strike that aimed to suppress the emerging Kurdish national consciousness at its birth; but, the policy of humiliation, finding its clearest expression in the village raids of 1970 that performatively turned the former 'ignorant, innocent Turkish peasants' into 'Kurds of Barzani', had to set free its target of intervention (Kurdishness), which had been forbidden and denied. The State opened the so-called 'Pandora's box', one that was already ripe to be opened. The oppression, which was physical as well as socio-psychological, was met with resistance. It is true that the physical violence over the seemingly 'irrelevant' bodies of Kurdish peasants could only be challenged through resistance when the State's physical coercion would spread from the rural to the urban Kurdish space from 1970

[173] That difference appears more clearly in Turkish, since 'sessizlik' derives from the noun 'ses' (sound), while 'suskunluk' or 'susuş' stem from the verb 'susmak' (to be silent). I am indebted to my father Abdullah Özcan for realizing the linguistic difference between silence and reticence.

onwards. However, the socio-psychological side of oppression over the Kurdish population as a whole that was concentrated on its Kurdishness had been defeated every day in the Kurdish mind through the bandit myth. The Kurdish oral tradition has already reconstructed the Kurdish banditry tradition as a national rebellion against authority, notwithstanding that it belonged to the Mir or Roma Reş, since authority – the enemy of the bandit in the final analysis (with reference to its spontaneous claim of power through illegal violence) – was also a natural enemy of the Kurdish people. For their contemporary bandits, on the other hand, the Kurdish myth was particularly falsifying the State's proud, self-incurred image of being 'the invincible'.

The oppression over the Kurdish identity of the Kurdish people was to *resist against*; but the oppression, at the same time, spontaneously granted to its enemy the cause to *resist for*. The oppression that was supposed to humiliate the Kurdish identity elevated and legitimated it. What is more, the Kurdish bandit myth proved that not only was the State unjust and cruel, it was, at the same time, weak. The so-called invincible could only beat, torture and kill the defenseless, while bandits had been the true rulers of Kurdish mountains for decades. Finally, the bandits' form of rebellion against the law, the clearest expression of the Kurdish philosophy of the mountains, was laying bare the most appropriate form of struggle against such a massive, but clumsy entity that was standing solely on violence and had already lost any form of consent. Hit and run raids by small groups of men, or gangs, had been implemented daily by Kurdish bandits while the State was forcing the Kurdish opposition to go illegal by closing down its legal means of expression.[174]

[174] For instance, university students, including Abdullah Öcalan, the future leader of the PKK, were immediately detained for staging a peaceful protest against the killing of Mahir Çayan and his comrades. (Marcus, 2007: 25) The expression of the Kurdish question through democratic channels, in particular, had been immediately suppressed.

A. Oppression: The State's Rehearsal

The history of the Kurdish question in modern Turkey and of the Kurdish rebellion against the Turkish nation-state began by breaking out of the great riots of Koçgiri, Sheik Said, Ararat and Dersim in the early 20th century. After the suppression of these riots by the State through the most oppressive means possible, it is as if the history of the Kurdish rebellion paused. From the suppression of the riots until the emergence of organized Kurdish movements in the late 1970s, beginning with the DDKO to the ultimate monopoly of the PKK, it is as if a period of silence and inertia had prevailed in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. The existing literature on Turkey's Kurdish question, indeed, interpreted the transitory period between the end of the massive uprisings and the beginning of the organized armed struggle as *the inert and the silent interlude* of Turkey's Kurdish issue. It was narrated as a different phase from both what comes before and after it with reference to an alleged absence of a manifest struggle between the State and the Kurdish peoples. Abdullah Öcalan wrote, "The second period in Turk-Kurd relations is the great period of *reticence* in the years 1940-70." (emphasis added) (2004: 293)

While the Kurdish local power holders were integrated into the hegemony, Öcalan argued, no Kurdish activism occurred in the given period except for some weak attempts by a bunch of Kurdish intellectuals. (2004: 293) Thus, his usage of the term *reticence* refers particularly to the lack of any substantial Kurdish resistance against the State oppression. In his analysis of violence as the principal factor shaping the Kurdish political arena of Turkey, Hamit Bozarslan concentrates on those two *pro-active* periods of the history of the Kurdish question in modern Turkey (i.e. the periods of massive rebellions between 1920 and 1938 and the organized

armed struggle from the late 1970s onwards), while defining the transitory phase as 'the period of silence'.[175] (Bozarslan, 2014a: 149) In a similar vein, in order to explain the shift in the 1950s in the reconstitution of the Kurdish question by the Turkish State from a security-oriented to an economy-oriented discourse (from the discourses of 'political reaction', 'tribal resistance', 'foreign plot' and 'banditry' to that of 'regional backwardness'), Mesut Yeğen argued that the problem of military consolidation had already been resolved by the 1950s, while that of economic integration of the region into the Turkish market constituted the essential issue that was on the table of the newly ruling political elite. (1999: 565) Therefore, Yeğen continued, although it was no longer necessary due to the military consolidation of power, a moderate policy towards the Kurds was adopted that was accompanied by such a discursive shift (2013, 165-166) – which was initiated in the 1950s and would become more elaborate in the 1960s; mainly because "the Turkish state was not going to undertake massive military operations *between the 1950s and the 1980s* as it had done in the first two decades of the Republic." (emphasis added) (1999: 565)

In terms of bloodthirstiness, the early Republican State's violence against the Kurdish population has certainly not been matched, at least in the history of modern Turkey. After the suppression of the rebellions, the massive military operations of the early Republic were, moreover, replaced by constant State coercion that had turned into an immutable reality of Kurdish daily life. The Gendarmerie's everyday oppression against the Kurdish peasants was implemented under the veil of bandit hunts and, as Kıvılcımlı wrote in the 1930s, was aimed at both the disarmament and repression of the Kurdish population. (1992: 442-443) It was, finally, true that the

[175] Bozarslan notes that 'the period of silence' in the Kurdish space of Turkey is between 1938 and 1960, while one of the main contentions of this study, i.e. the transitory phase's being (more than) active both in the sense of State oppression and indigenous forms of Kurdish resistance against it, essentially refers to the period between the late 1950s and the second half of the 1970s. (Bozarslan, 2014b: 18-19)

shift in the Turkish State Discourse (TSD) initiated by the newly ruling Democrat Party (DP) seemed to temper, although for a short while, the traditional State's coercion in the region; but such a discursive shift was accompanied by a material shift in the social structure of Turkey's Kurdish regions, i.e. the massive emergence of banditry from the 1950s onwards that was itself a result of and a reaction against the socio-economic and juridico-political transformation of the region.

Despite the leading politicians of the ruling DP, in line with their economy-oriented discourse, interpreting the 'Eastern' banditry endemic as a problem of the overall backwardness of the 'Eastern' regions, they (and their discursive successors) followed exactly the same technologies and policies of State power as their predecessors in the elimination of the 'Eastern' brigandage. While the traditional Kemalist political elite was detecting 'separatism' or 'Kurdism' behind the ordinary crimes of the 'Eastern' bandits, the DP's political cadre (and their successors) was occupied with soothing such political anxiety by proudly advancing the 'irreconcilable' attitude of the State towards the bandits through disarming the native population, increasing the Gendarme oppression and realizing massive military searching and scanning operations in the region. Indeed, three major interconnected State policies against the rise of the 'Eastern' banditry – (i) disarmament, (ii) bandit hunts, and (iii) commando raids – were not only consistently followed, but also pushed forward by the successive governments between 1950 and 1980. As the endemic turned into an epidemic in the 1960s, 'Eastern' banditry did not, however, remain mere *proof positive* of the rising Kurdism. When the 'hazardous' developments in northern Iraq were combined with the emerging national consciousness amongst the Kurdish youth – which were all meticulously investigated and considered by the civil and military bureaucratic elite of the period, the banditry

epidemic turned into the most suitable form of *veil* for the State penetration into the region in pursuit of the suppression of its Kurdish population.

It is, indeed, one of the main inferences stemming from the empirical body of this study that in the name of struggling against banditry, a series of massive military operations were realized throughout the 1960s in the Kurdish regions until the State oppression culminated in the commando raids of the 1970s.[176] According to the traditional political elite, who 'detected' Kurdism behind the ordinary crimes of bandits, the massive emergence of banditry demonstrated not only that the military consolidation of power had not yet been achieved in the Kurdish regions, but also that the banditry epidemic constituted the golden opportunity to delay, once again, the resurrection of the repressed.

1. The Logical Conclusion of the Discursive Shift: A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy?

It was self-evident that any politician or journalist that was discussing the rise of 'Eastern' banditry was actually discussing, and thus reconstituting the 'Eastern' question per se. The two seemingly rival lines of discourse (i.e. security-oriented vs. economy-oriented) competed in their interpretation of, and their proposed resolutions for, the 'Eastern banditry' problem, meaning the State's 'Eastern problem'. While the former discourse was detecting 'separatism' behind the rise of banditry, the latter interpreted the 'Eastern' banditry epidemic as one of the many results of the underdevelopment of the region. Therefore, as Yeğen argued, the former reconstituted the 'Eastern' question as a *threat* to be repressed, whilst the latter reconstructed it as a *problem* to be resolved. (Yeğen, 1999: 565)

[176] Regarding the massive commando operations of 1970, Yeğen wrote, "it looks like the native people that were being tried to be menaced constituted a threat against which the army should be prepared via military exercises." (2013: 157)

The former discourse, examined in detail in the second chapter[177], was best illustrated by the Senators' obstinate quest to find a hidden rebellion behind the rise of banditry, as was the case in the speech of Buhanettin Uluç in 1962 in which the Senator wondered whether the brigandage in the east was a crime of an ordinary nature or as a result of ideational movements. (Milliyet, 05.09.62: 1) In a similar vein, while Alparslan Türkeş, the president of the Turkish nationalist Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP) was criticizing the ruling AP for the problem of public disorder in the Eastern regions, he was underlining the urgent necessity to eliminate banditry at all costs for the continuity of the State. (Milliyet, 19.05.68: 1, 7) Behind the broken public disorder and the rise of banditry incidents in the Eastern provinces, Türkeş argued, there lay the secret propagation of separatism and the regionalism of the Eastern people by both internal and external colonialist forces. (Cumhuriyet, 06.03.67: 7)

Regarding the latter case, the CHP's discourse from the second half of the 1960s onwards came to the fore. Indeed, the breakdown of public order in the Eastern regions had remained one of the stalwart themes of the CHP's opposition to the ruling AP in the second half of the 1960s.[178] According to Bülent Ecevit, the General Secretary of the CHP, banditry was not a mere security issue that could be dealt with *solely* through military measures. When calling for the resignation of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Ecevit argued that banditry was, on the contrary, a component of a bigger sociological problem of justice in the Eastern regions that was urgently calling for a comprehensive land reform. (Cumhuriyet, 11.12.66: 1) For the

[177] See the part "The Disarmament of the Native Population and the State's Distrust in the Kurdish Peoples" of the second chapter "Last Era of Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press and the State Archives".

[178] In 1966, the CHP's motion of general debate on the public disorder in the Eastern regions was denied in the Assembly by the voting of the AP's MPs. (Cumhuriyet, 21.12.66: 1) Similarly, in 1967, the CHP called for the resignation of the Minister of Internal Affairs over the increase of banditry incidents in the Eastern regions. (Milliyet, 18.05.67: 3)

General Secretary, moreover, apart from those malign criminal types, most of the bandits in the Eastern regions took the hills either to protect their honor and families or to defend themselves against the oppression of cruel aghas and their armed gangs. Ecevit emphasized that as a result of the AP's political power, which protected the local landlords and patted rural and urban bandits on their backs, the problems of injustice and banditry had intensified in tandem.[179] (Milliyet, 11.12.66: 1, 7) In a similar vein, the MPs of the CHP argued in their speeches in the Assembly that the banditry epidemic was directly related to the problems of unemployment and blood feud in the Eastern regions. (Milliyet, 28.12.66: 1, 7)

The promise of the CHP as the left-of-the-center party, Ecevit announced in the late 1960s, was to remove Turkey's regional disparities by establishing social justice in the Eastern regions through a land reform, at the end of which the banditry epidemic would disappear spontaneously along with serfdom and big landownership. (Milliyet, 18.09.69: 4) According to that discourse, since the movements of banditry and separatism were deriving directly from the broken order in the region, the Eastern people did not, in fact, oppose the State. (Cumhuriyet, 24.08.69: 1) Thus, the CHP was determined to solve 'the Eastern problem' through schools, factories and infrastructure, instead of the Gendarmerie, arms and mines. (Milliyet, 24.08.69: 7)

Taking one step further, Mehmet Ali Aybar, the president of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), argued that the lands of big landowners should have been redistributed to the landless peasants for the resolution of the question of social injustice and disorder in the Eastern regions. (Milliyet, 21.10.67: 7) In a similar vein, an MP from Siirt of the New Turkey Party (YTP) argued that the banditry epidemic could not be resolved as long as the Government continued to interpret it as a mere

[179] Among those various accusations, Ecevit claimed that the AP had used bandits in bandit hunts and accused them of patronizing certain bandits, such as the famous Hamido against his rival Özbay gang, to gain influence in the region. (Cumhuriyet, 12.12.66: 1, 08.10.68: 7)

security problem: “The situation has now taken on a character that humiliates the Republican Government. Governments that cannot deal with a bunch of bandits are unaware of the economic conditions that lie at the base of the issue.” (Cumhuriyet, 13.05.66: 1)

When Yusuf Azizoğlu, the Kurdish president of the YTP, argued that the problems of smuggling and banditry were organically linked to the problem of underdevelopment in the Eastern regions, he was, however, immediately accused of Kurdism, even though his discourse was a mere reproduction of the former Eastern discourse of the overthrown DP. (Milliyet, 03.10.69: 5) The main oppositional parties were, therefore, arguing that the feudal persecutors (aghas, sheikhs and their bandits) would continue to oppress the ‘Eastern’ peoples as long as the State would remain indifferent to the issues of region and solely concentrate on its basic security interests. (Koç, 1966: 2)

Still, those two lines of discourse were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the discourse of regional backwardness was a *critical upgrade*, more than a *subfield* (Yeğen, 2013: 169), of the traditional security discourse: In order to eliminate the problem (for our case, the banditry epidemic), it was imperative to eliminate the socio-economic sources of the problem, themselves; thus, the ‘Eastern’ problem could not be resolved *solely* by military measures. By tacitly acknowledging such discursive upgrade, for instance, Senator Kadir Kaplan – who interpreted the banditry epidemic as a comprehensive problem with diverse social, cultural and economic fronts – could at the same time urge the Government to increase the State oppression over the ‘Eastern’ population by re-introducing the ancient security technique of collective responsibility. (Cumhuriyet, 07.12.66: 7) Similarly, while Kemal Sahir Kurutluoğlu, the CHP’s Minister of Internal Affairs from June to

September 1962, was arguing for economic development, the expansion of national education, investment in infrastructure, and a land reform in the Eastern regions for the reconsolidation of public order (Milliyet, 07.08.62: 1, 7), he was at the same time heralding the establishment of special commando units that would be much more effective against bandits due to their guerrilla training. (Milliyet, 12.09.62: 7)

The real divergence between those two lines of discourse occurred at the beginning of the 1970s when the State policy of manipulating the 'Eastern' banditry epidemic as a veil for strangling the emerging Kurdish nationalism at its birth culminated in the commandos' village raids. The importance of the commando operations did not, however, derive from their *magnitude*, but from their *targets*. The riddle was manifest: The State launched massive military operations targeting at their end point the ordinary Kurdish peasant when there was no form of a rebellion (neither revolts nor armed struggle), only simple brigands. It was, therefore, reckoned by a number of politicians and journalists of that period that the State's 'Eastern question' could turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In fact, while a part of the bureaucratic and political elite had been reconstructing 'the Eastern problem' as a question of underdevelopment in the Eastern regions, they were insisting that as long as this fundamentally economic problem could not be resolved, it was turning into a security problem for the State, whether in its indirect form of banditry or its direct form of Kurdism. Mehmet Hazer, the Senator for Kars, for instance, wrote that the State's success in the early Republican period in ensuring the security of the lives and properties of the Eastern people had been eclipsed in the succeeding periods by the arbitrary and unjust actions of *local* public servants. To soothe the resentment of the native population, which blatantly exposed itself in the broken public order, Hazer insisted, the Eastern

development that could be achieved easily through both public and private investments, should have been one of the principal topics of the Government's political agenda. (Hazer, 1970: 2) Similarly, but much more clearly, Ismail Cem concluded his interviews on the commando operations with the following question: "Are we creating the cause of 'Kurdism' in the east by force?" (Cem, 1970b: 7)

According to Cem, the Kurdishness of the 'Eastern' question was of little, if not any, significance, while the feudal class struggle between aghas, sheiks, bandits and peasants constituted the 'true' social contradiction of the Eastern regions. Thus, the State oppression, stemming from its paranoia about the spread of Kurdism, was propagating the phenomenon that it desired to eliminate in the first place. Through its paranoia of Kurdism, the State, in the name of struggling against banditry, was repressing and thus forcing the 'Eastern' people to rebel; hence their paranoia turning into a righteous prediction by their own making. In a similar vein, the political science scholar Haluk Ülman was underlining the economic backwardness and the State repression in the region as the principal cause for the rise of Kurdism among the poor 'Eastern' people:

> "Today, those *reminding* the people living in the east of Turkey that they are Kurds are those pretending to be the so-called Turkish nationalists. (…) By acting with their emotions, these so-called nationalists are putting the unity of the homeland in danger." (emphasis added) (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2130)

2. The Law of Silence and Discursive Contradictions

The thesis of self-fulfilling prophecy constituted, in fact, the ultimate critique of the traditional security discourse, and by then, the new economic discourse. The promise of such a critical upgrade for the State's resolution of its Kurdish *problem* was stemming, first and foremost, from the latter's genuine loyalty to, and the former's betrayal of, the State's law of silence on the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question. In

other words, despite the fact that the traditional security discourse in the early Republican period reconstructed the Kurdish rebellions as political reaction, tribal resistance, foreign plot and/or banditry, rather than a Kurdish rebellion, it *surprisingly* detected Kurdism or separatism behind the massive emergence of Kurdish banditry from the 1950s onwards. Everything seemed to turn upside down, as the State that interpreted the Kurdish rebellions of the early Republic as banditry was then reconstructing the 'ordinary' crimes of Kurdish bandits as separatism and Kurdism: Why had been such a discursive betrayal against the most sacred norm of the State on its 'Eastern' problem committed by the very Kemalist civil and military bureaucratic elite that set the law of silence in the first place? In order to address this question, similar moments of discursive contradictions should be invoked from the early Republican period.

The discursive contradictions were those historical moments when the State elite that was consistently following its *law of silence* on the ethno-political aspect of the Kurdish question 'suddenly' decided to break it by reconstructing the issue through ethno-political terms, such as 'Kurd' or 'mountainous race'. By exemplifying those moments of discursive contradictions with texts of open racism against the Kurdish identity, Yeğen interpreted such contradictions as (Freudian) *slips of the tongue* exposing the subconscious of the State elite. (2013: 147) Interpreting the discourse as the source of subject positions, instead of context-free speech of a biased actor, the TSD on the Kurdish question (i.e. its history of formation) should have been, according to Yeğen, the source of the State elite's (*sincere*[180]) subject positions while moments of discursive contradictions could be nothing more than the surfacing of the subconscious racism against the one whose

[180] For Yeğen's usage of the term *sincere*, see: (2013: 142-143)

very existence was denied. Despite the fact that Yeğen's usage of Michel Foucault's 'archeology' – that was itself inspired from Friedrich Nietzsche's 'genealogy' – enabled him to lay bare the historical formation process of the TSD on the Kurdish question and to conclude that the Kurdish question, rather than being a mere ethno-political issue, is the result of and a reaction against the modern Turkish nation-state building process, the practical-pragmatist *function* of discourses are excluded from Yeğen's analysis.

To clarify, it is imperative to invoke a major moment of discursive contradiction in the history of the TSD on the Kurdish question. During the initial phase of the Dersim Rebellion, the TSD was reconstructing the revolt as the 'political reaction of sheiks', 'tribal resistance' and 'foreign plot', while its members were defined as mere 'bandits'. The discourse was, in other words, contending that the bandits of the region were rebelling against the Republic mainly because their oppressive rule of pillage over the *Turkish peasants* was being threatened by the civilization project of the modern Turkish nation-state. (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.37: 5) However, in the late, decisive stages of the rebellion, the State discourse betrayed its own law of silence on the ethno-political character of the Kurdish problem by reconstructing the rebellion as the revolt of *a barbaric race* whose elimination was the precondition to the civilization of the region.[181] (Mazhar, 1937: 1, 4) The former 'ignorant, but innocent (Turkish) peasants' now turned into 'a barbaric (Kurdish) race' whose elimination was, in its cause of civilization, a historical duty of the State. Therefore, instead of a mere surfacing of the racist mentality of the State elite, the above discursive contradiction served as the most suitable tool to legitimize the total

[181] For a detailed analysis of that instant of discursive contradiction in the Dersim rebellion, see the part "From 'Ignorant Turkish Peasants' to 'Mountainous Monsters': The Pragmatist Fluctuation of the State's Banditry Discourse over the Massive Kurdish Insurrections (1923-1950)" of the second chapter "Last Era of Kurdish Banditry in the National Printed Press and the State Archives."

elimination of the rebels and their families and the suppression of the whole Kurdish population.

3. From 'the Ignorant Turkish Peasants' to 'the Kurds of Barzani': The Political Background of the State's Banditry Discourse

When the 'Eastern' banditry emerged as a mass phenomenon in the 1950s and turned into an epidemic in the 1960s, the traditional Kemalist military and bureaucratic political elite 'detected' Kurdism hidden behind the ordinary crimes of bandits. At that moment, the new economy-oriented discourse emerged not only to ensure the economic integration of the Kurdish regions into the rest of the country, but also to rejuvenate the State's law of silence on the ethno-political aspect of the Kurdish question that was openly betrayed by its very founder, the traditional Kemalist elite. Behind the rise of the 'Eastern' banditry, the spokesmen of the economic discourse cried out, lay the economic backwardness of the 'Eastern' society, rather than the 'artificial' Kurdish ethnicity. The harsh military policies of the State in the region against the rise of banditry were propagating, according to the economic discourse, the phenomenon (Kurdism) that it desired to eliminate in the first place. Indeed, while the Kurdish left – which was organized under the DDKO within the TİP – was marking a paradigmatic change on the reconstitution of 'the Eastern problem' by integrating its ethno-political and socio-economic aspects and leading the TİP to announce at its 4th Congress in 1970 the obvious, but unspeakable fact that "there live a Kurdish people in the east of Turkey"[182], Ecevit – who seemed to propagate

[182] As Alış argued, it was the Kurds within the DDKO that forced the Turkish left to reimagine the Kurdish question from scratch. (Alış, 2009) The price of staging for such a discursive challenge against the TSD for the Turkish left would, however, be the closure of the TİP on July 20, 1970. (Yeğen, 2009: 167) More importantly, during the trial for the closure of the party, the leadership of

the most critical arguments of the new economic discourse on the rise of banditry incidents in the Kurdish provinces – would oppose in his campaign trails the motto "the fraternity of the peoples of Turkey" by replacing the term 'peoples of Turkey' with 'the Turkish people'. (Milliyet, 05.11.76: 12)

In fact, the policy of denial of the Kurdish existence in Turkey had begun to be implemented through a fresh mood by the coup d'état on May 27, 1960. State-sponsored publications of historical theses on the Turkishness of the 'Eastern' people and the non-existence of a Kurdish race[183]; the national organization of the rally "Citizen, speak Turkish!"; the replacement of the original Kurdish names of villages and districts with Turkish names; and the spread of boarding primary schools in the Eastern regions were all realized after May 27. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2115-2116) The Constitution of 1961 presented, in this respect, the legal formulae for the forceful assimilation of the Kurdish people by announcing "sovereignty rests unconditionally with the Turkish nation" (Article 4) and "everybody affiliated with the Turkish State is Turk". (Article 54) (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2116) The subjects of the Constitution were the Turkish citizen, the Turkish nation and the Turkish State.

Despite the constitutional formulae of assimilation and the popularity of the new economic discourse within the Turkish society (including its many variants in the Turkish left), the State's policies against the 'Eastern' banditry epidemic had remained overwhelmingly militaristic, through which the Kurdishness of the native population was elucidated and suppressed; this was simply because, behind the

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the TİP would not defend the decisions taken at its 4th Congress. When the party was re-established in 1975, a great number of Kurds, disappointed by the timorous attitude of the party's leadership, would not participate in the TİP again. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2307)

[183] For those books that aimed to prove historically the Turkishness of the Kurds, M. Şerif Fırat's *The Eastern Provinces and the History of Varto* (1961), which was published by the Ministry of National Education and whose introduction was written by Prime Minister Cemal Gürsel, and Kırzıoğlu M. Fahrettin's *Kurds that are Turks in All Respects* (1964) were prominent examples. (Fırat, 1981) (Fahrettin, 1965)

traditional elite's detection of Kurdism under the rise of the 'Eastern' banditry, there lay other rational grounds. On the one hand, the emergence of a new 'Eastern' intelligentsia from the political and economic dynamism of the 1950s that had begun to lead the 'Eastern' youth in terms of the 'constitutional rights of the Eastern people' was seen as the manifest emergence of Kurdish separatism in Turkey. In this respect, the State's task was loud and clear; i.e. the suppression of the Kurdish intelligentsia and the organized Kurdish youth that would be realized systematically by the successive governments from the late DP's rule through to the 1980 coup d'état. Indeed, the political turmoil from the 1960s onwards was closely related with this new wave of Kurdish activism.

In the late 1950s, the rising racist discourse against the Kurdish identity in the national press was severely criticized by the Kurdish intelligentsia in the newspaper 'Ileri Yurt', which published in its 500th volume a Kurdish poem by Musa Anter.[184] After deep controversy over the publication of a Kurdish poem and the 'growing' danger of Kurdish separatism claimed in the printed media, in December 1959, five months before the military coup, 52 Kurdish intellectuals and students were arrested for being involved in separatist and communist activities. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2111-2112) This was the pivotal event called 'the arrest of the 49s'.[185] In line with the support of President Celal Bayar and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes for the National Intelligence Organization's recommendation for the execution of the 49s[186], the military junta moved ahead with the trials in January 1961 until the case would

[184] The striking line of Anter's poem, "Do not feel sorry elder sister, your brothers are growing to save you from the wheat bug", particularly caused a deep controversy in the Turkish media. The journal would be banned after the publication of its 527th Volume on September 22, 1959. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2111-2112)

[185] The number of the arrested Kurds reduced to 49, after two of those arrested were set free and a student, Emin Batu, died. (Alış, 2009: 56)

[186] While the Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatin Rüştü Zorlu was opposing the executions that would be harmful to the international image of the Turkish State, Menderes was proposing to accuse the suspects of communism in order to obtain financial support from the United States. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2112)

be dismissed due to lack of evidence six years later. (Alış, 2009: 58) The importance of the arrest of the 49s was that the suspects constituted the core of Turkey's Kurdish intelligentsia that would soon lead or influence the Kurdish national movement from the 1960s onwards.[187]

Despite the fact that the arrest of the 49s occurred during the DP's political power, the military Government blamed the leadership of the DP for secretly designing the emergence of Kurdistan in the Eastern regions and announced that the State would soon remind everyone that Turkey as a whole was the homeland of Turks only. Thus, on June 1, 1960, 485 more Kurdish notables were put in custody in a camp in Sivas and tortured until 55 of them were sent into exile on October 19, 1960. Regarding the exile of the 55 Kurdish aghas, the military junta was blaming the DP for deactivating the Compulsory Settlement Law of 1934 by letting go the expelled aghas who were believed to be a central element in the formation of the Kurdish national movement.[188] (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2112-2113) The suppression of the new Kurdish activism, which was being incited further by the national press, would continue with a similar arrest, called 'the incident of 23s' and the closure of various journals hosting the ideas of Kurdish intellectuals (such as the journals *Dicle-Fırat*, *Deng*, *Roja Newé*, *Reya Rast*, and *Barış Dünyası*) on June 28, 1963 until the ultimate Eastern Trials of 1971.[189] (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2126)

On the other hand, the recent political proceedings signing the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq, according to the Turkish political elite, must have inspired and boosted the national morale of the Kurdish population

[187] For the whole list of the arrested 49s, see: (Alış, 2009: 56, note 163)
[188] Although several of those expelled aghas, such as Faik Bucak, would play pivotal roles in the formation of the Kurdish national movement, State officials had to allow them to turn back to their lands two years later. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2113)
[189] After the closure of the DDKO, Kurdish activism would enter into its final definitive stage in the second half of the 1970s with a burst of various legal or illegal political organizations, innumerous journals, newspapers and publishing houses of Kurdish origin. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2304-2323)

of Turkey. Indeed, as soon as Molla Mustafa Barzani turned back from the Soviet Union to northern Iraq with the proclamation of the Republic on July 14, 1958, the State elite had begun to be concerned about the emergence of a Kurdish rebellion in Turkey. The first surfacing of the internalization of the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq happened after the bloody suppression of the Turkmen rebellion in northern Iraq by the Baghdad government of Abd al-Karim Qasim in 1959. Blaming the Iraqi Kurds for complicity in the massacre, the MP Asım Eren openly proposed in the Assembly to retaliate in kind (*mükabele-i bilmisil*) by killing as many Kurds in Turkey as the number of Turkmens murdered in Iraq, while the columnist Avni Doğan in the newspaper 'Vatan' (Homeland) was writing in October 1958 on the prospective emergence of Kurdism in Turkey from the political proceedings in northern Iraq in his notorious article series 'Danger Bell'.[190] (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2110-2111)

After a short break of two years, Iraqi Kurds under the leadership of Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) had begun to fight a sporadic war from 1961 to 1975 against the Baghdad Government, while the success of the Kurdish national movement for the Iraqi Kurds' autonomy reached a new phase with the agreement between the Kurds and the Iraqi Government on March 11, 1970.[191] (Sever, 2013: 264) The struggle between Iraqi Kurds and the Baghdad Government had been *internationalized* by growing support from Western powers (particularly the United States and Israel, in addition to Iran) in favor of the former and from the Soviet Union for the latter (i.e. the Iraq-Soviet Friendship and Cooperation Treaty of 1972); but Turkey had remained 'watchfully neutral' in the foreign realm, while

[190] The danger bell would ring again with the publication of yet another article series from Doğan in September 1962. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2121)

[191] Similar to that of 1966, the agreement of 1970 was a full-fledged autonomy agreement for the Kurds in northern Iraq. (Sever, 2013: 276, note 2) The Kurdish national movement under the leadership of the KDP would, however, be defeated in 1975 with the deal between Iran and Iraq, which was in turn facilitated by Turkey's intermediacy. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2307-2308)

internalizing the insurgency by taking its spill-over effects for Turkey's domestic Kurdish vulnerability into consideration. (Sever, 2013: 263-264)

The State's task was, in this case, more challenging; the annihilation of the increasing national honor and morale of the Kurdish people as a whole. For such a daunting task, banditry served as the perfect veil for the realization of a series of massive military operations that aimed to suppress the Kurdish peasants by humiliating their ethno-political identity. Thus, the State elite had to betray once again its law of silence on Kurdish existence in Turkey by realizing a slew of systematic torture on a massive scale that aimed to humiliate the Kurdishness of the native population. In order to humiliate it, the existence of the Kurdish identity had to be elucidated, and thus 'the innocent and ignorant Turkish peasants' had to turn into 'the Kurds of Barzani'.

The traditional political elite was, therefore, anticipating the emergence of a Kurdish national movement and as usual, deciding to postpone it through repression. It would soon be seen that the State oppression over the Kurdish population under the veil of 'the struggle against banditry' would precipitate, instead of postpone, the inevitable resurrection of the repressed. The contribution of the new economic discourse was, in this respect, restricted by its critical update of *self-fulfilling prophecy* that underlined the precipitation of the emergence of a Kurdish national movement by the very State policies of repression of the native population. Apart from such a critique, the new discourse presented no alternative plan for the struggle against the re-emergence of the repressed, except that of the economic development of the region, the State's bribe that would hopefully soothe the increasing Kurdish resentment against the State and make the 'Eastern' people forget about their

Kurdishness, of which they were, it was believed, being reminded by the State oppression itself.

B. Resistance: The Kurdish Rehearsal

State officials' plan of strangling the Kurdish national consciousness at its birth backfired when met by resistance. While the arrested Kurdish youth in the Eastern Trials of 1971 would, for the first time, systematically and openly defend the Kurdish reality[192] (Beşikçi, 1990: 75-77), massive demonstrations took place against the State oppression in the region, which spread from the rural to the urban spaces. Starting with the Eastern Meetings of 1967 and the protests against hunger in 1969 up until the urban uprising against the commandos' murdering of two young football fans in Siirt in 1970 (Milliyet, 04.05.70: 1), hundreds of mass demonstrations occurred against the State oppression, which had been carried out under the pretext of struggling against banditry. Kurdish resentment towards the State oppression was turning into a wholesale national resistance. Meanwhile, the reaction of the traditional Kurdish society against the socio-economic transformation of and the State's penetration into the region realized in the spontaneous form of banditry, while Kurdish banditry myth represented the Kurdish people's longing to rebel against the State.

[192] The importance of the Eastern Trials of 1971 was that the defendants scientifically challenged the trial's bill of indictment arguing for the non-existence of a Kurdish people and language. Thus, the trial turned into the defense of the Kurdish reality in sociological, historical, economic and linguistic terms. In the succeeding trials, the defendants would pursue the same attitude of resistance in defending the Kurdish reality. For the defense in the Diyarbakır Rızgari Trial of 1984, for instance, see: (Maraşlı, 1992) The same attitude of resistance was not, however, adopted by the Turkish left, as the leadership of the TİP in the trial for the closure of the party would not defend the decisions taken in its 4th Congress advocating the Kurdish reality. (Kürkçü et al. [eds.], 1988: 2307)

1. Banditry as a Lucrative Profession and a Spontaneous Mechanism of Resistance

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the massive emergence of banditry in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey from the 1950s onwards was both the result of and a reaction to the socio-economic and juridico-political transformation of the region. Within the advent of such massive transformation, the disintegration of traditional tribal structure and the spread of big landownership, which were accompanied by the industrialization of agriculture and consolidation of political patronage, led to the emergence of landless peasants. Apart from employment in the cities and seasonal agricultural fields, banditry emerged as the most radical, but also one of the most lucrative professions in the Kurdish countryside. Hundreds of bandit gangs shared out the region among themselves and committed various acts of brigandage, from highway robberies and raids for pillage to smuggling and kidnapping for ransom. They struggled against and cooperated with each other to spread and maintain their regional power. While many relied on clientalist relations with local sources of power (primarily their own tribal structure) and the support of the native population, others that had become local power holders themselves even negotiated and cooperated with the State. The means of violence at their disposal and the network of patronage that they established were enabling them to influence and profit from the existent 'predator economy'.[193] In this respect, they could serve as a means of force in the region in favor of a local power holder or their own tribal interests. On another level, banditry served as a spontaneous mechanism of resistance by the traditional Kurdish society to its own fall caused both by the aforementioned socio-economic transformation and the State penetration into the region. The clash between the

[193] For the concept *predator economy*, see: (Bozarslan, 2014b: 18)

traditional law and the law of the State turned thousands of Kurdish peasants into bandits (*eşkiya*) in the Turkish language of the law and convicts (*mehkûm*) and fugitives (*fîrar*) in the native Kurdish language. In this case, ordinary peasants found themselves violating the law of the State spontaneously and individually. Honor murder, blood feud, the abduction of women for marriage and desertion constituted, therefore, the cultural columns of the Kurdish banditry phenomenon. Thus, our analysis validates Hobsbawm's thesis on the causes of the emergence of banditry as a mass phenomenon:

> "Banditry as a mass phenomenon can appear not only when non-class societies resist the rise or imposition of class societies, but when traditional rural class societies resist the advance of other rural (e.g. settled farming against nomadic or transhumant pastoralists), or urban, or foreign class societies, states or regimes." (Hobsbawm, 2000: 9)

In this respect, Kurdish nomadic tribes (*Koçers*), one of the major human sources of banditry and the natural supporters of bandits on the hills, clarify the criminalization of the traditional Kurdish lifestyle. The interviews with captured bandits and native peasants that were published in the national printed press prove that *Koçers* constituted one of the major human sources of banditry. Indeed, the *nom-de-guerre* 'Koçero' of the famous bandit Mehmet Ihsan Kilit directly derives from the term of 'Koçer' (nomadic). Now, it cannot be a coincidence that it was the nomadic communities, i.e. *Koçers* in the Kurdish and *Yörüks* in the Aegean regions, which constituted the principal sources of banditry in modern Turkey. The stark difference, however, is that Aegean banditry disappeared in the early 1920s while Kurdish banditry lasted until the late 1970s. The explanatory point for this difference lies in the success (in the Aegean region) and the failure (in the Kurdish regions) of the State centralization process not only to pacify the region by consolidating its military power, but also to dissolve the nomadic life style. As the State oppression over the Kurdish nomadic tribes in the guise of struggling against banditry through

commando operations demonstrates, the State read not only banditry, but also the nomadic lifestyle itself as a substantial threat to its civilization project.

Kurdish nomadic tribes – which continued their existence without any infrastructure and relied not only on agriculture and husbandry, but also on 'smuggling' – simultaneously perturbed all of the norms of the established order by their very existence; thus they had become 'social rebels' without necessarily being bandits. Those tribes, indeed, constituted the most 'marginal' and deprived communities of modern Turkey. Their social organization not only resisted any regulation by the central administration, but also hosted heretic religious beliefs (primarily the Êzidîs) and the most traditional customs, from honor murder to blood feud. The statements of the local authorities of the period – in which the impossibility of convincing those nomadic tribes to adopt a sedentary lifestyle was underlined – implicitly designated the dissolution of the Kurdish nomadic communities as the only feasible solution for the State. (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5) Their being 'rebels' by their very nature was revalidated by the commando operations' concentration on the nomadic tribes, by which the State not only aimed to disarm those potential rebels but to also dissolve their communities altogether – communities that were in its civilizational discourse nothing but 'the remnants of the reactionary Ottoman society'. (Yeğen, 2009: 54) Apart from being a spontaneous form of resistance of the traditional Kurdish society (including the nomadic tribes) against the ongoing transformation in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, the last banditry phenomenon served a social protest function as well.

2. Kurdish Bandit Myth: The Expression of the Collective Will to Rebellion

The Kurdish bandit myth is rooted deeply in history. The first example of this kind is the myth of Elo Dîno, an immobile 16th century bandit in the region of Cizîra Bohtan, who forcefully taxed from his pavilion the passing boats of merchants on the Tigris. As opposed to the memory of the ruling class, e.g. Prince Süreyya Bedirhan's remembrance of Elo as a vicious murderer (Nikitin: 1991: 161-162), he was reconstructed in Kurdish oral tradition as a hero of the people. Through the themes of starvation and hospitality, Elo's brigandage was reimagined as a rebellion against the greedy and cruel Mir of Bohtan. Courageous in his actions, generous in sharing his loot with the poor and proud in welcoming pain and death, Elo Dîno is the Kurdish Robin Hood. In a similar vein, the Kurdish oral tradition reconstructed the conflict between the Ottoman State and the pillaging tribes of the 19th century as a national rebellion. The struggle of Emê Gozê, one of the leading warriors of the Elîkan tribe, against the Ottoman State was, in this respect, narrated as a national revolt against the Roma Reş, instead of a mere suppression of the tribe's pillage movements, while the tribal allies of the State in its struggle against Emê were reconstructed as the 'traitors'. Thus, banditry constitutes one of the founding myths of the emerging Kurdish national consciousness that reconstructed a national historiography through Kurdish oral tradition.[194] The mythic status of bandits in the Kurdish collective memory as a national symbol against the authority of the Mir or the Roma Reş acquired a fresh meaning with the massive emergence of brigandage from the 1950s onwards. While the State oppression over the Kurdishness of the Kurdish people had

[194] Regarding the role of Kurdish oral tradition in the reconstruction of Kurdish national consciousness, Metin Yüksel demonstrated in his doctorate thesis that the Kurdish dengbêjs, mullahs and intelligentsia played critical roles in the preservation of Kurdish as a language, and thus in the reconstitution of Kurdish national consciousness in the Middle East between 1925 and 1960. (2011)

begun to escalate under the guise of 'bandit hunting', several figures among those last Kurdish bandits have become the national symbols of resistance for the Kurdish people against the State's Kurdish policy of humiliation and suppression.

In the in-depth interview, the former bandit Hekimo (Hikmet Zeren) protested against the conventional discriminative attitude that praises the Aegean banditry as an indigenous form of chivalry while degrading its Kurdish counterpart as a criminal thirst for pillage. (4th Oral Source) Indeed, Aegean brigands – known as *efe*, rather than mere bandits – were reconstructed as the heroes of the people in the national historiography to such an extent that the founder of the new Republic presented himself as the *yellow zeibek*, whilst the struggle of the State against the Kurdish brigands of modern Turkey had been narrated as a national war. Apart from those brigands that harmed the native people and worked for the interests of aghas, however, the Kurdish bandit, known as a *mehkûm*, was a respected figure in their native context. By reconciling warring tribes, resolving local problems and assisting the poor, the Kurdish *mehkûm* could even turn into a long-term power holder and a social broker. Through the escalating State oppression over the Kurdish identity that had been realized under the veil of bandit hunting, Kurdish people, moreover, turned several bandit figures into the warriors of the people and their 'ordinary' crimes into a political revolt against injustice and oppression. Kurdish collective memory mythologized certain bandit figures as the heroes of the people, and thus developed a national morality through which 'good' and 'evil' were turned upside down by bandits' becoming the national symbols of resistance against the State oppression. Before the emergence of the guerrilla, the Kurdish bandit, therefore, represented the people's longing for rebellion, thus the Kurdish philosophy of the mountains.

The term 'philosophy of the mountains', which is taken from a guerrilla's speech to the Turkish journalist Kadri Gürsel who was kidnapped by the PKK in 1995, refers to the wild lives of wolves on the mountains. (Gürsel, 2004: 113) Mountains by their sublime inaccessibility defy any law other than its own, and thus shelter the outlaws. While the roof of the country becomes the natural lands of rebellion against the law (*siba*) (Bozarslan, 2012: 174), the outlaw needs to abide by the law of the mountains. Living and hunting like a wolf pack that is continuously mobile and taking on great distances in a single day, the outlaws cherish the wilderness and use it to their advantage. The method of survival on the outlaw lands, as well as the nationalization of the act of 'taking to the mountains', was therefore, inherited from the Kurdish *mehkûms* (convict) who had ruled the Kurdish countryside for decades from the top of the mountains. Both of them are cross-border actors who defy the official frontiers of the nation-states, thus uniting the fragmented lands of the Kurds.[195] Regarding the line that differentiates between the Kurdish mehkûm and the guerrilla, it is true that the latter is, and always aspires to be, a professional revolutionary that aims to abolish the law of the State on the Kurdish lands. The political violence of the guerrilla is, therefore, directly law-making in nature and aimed at defeating the law-preserving violence of the State. The 'ordinary' violence of the Kurdish mehkûm, on the other hand, spontaneously violated the law and thus indirectly weakened the law-preserving violence behind it. When the State applied its violence on the Kurdish population in order to reproduce its law on their lands, the Kurdish people cherished the 'ordinary' violence of the mehkûms by turning several of them into mythical warriors of the people. The Kurdish conception of the 'hero', who took to the hills due to injustice and

[195] For instance, the bandit Ömer Bezek was defining himself in his published letter in Milliyet as the ruler of the mountains of three States. (Milliyet, 06.04.66: 3)

oppression and was doomed to wander the mountains, was transmitted from the mehkûm to the guerilla.

CONCLUSION

One of the main theses stemming from the analysis of the last era of Kurdish banditry in modern Turkey is that the period between 1950 and 1980 – which is described as the 'age of silence' for Turkey's Kurdish question with reference to an alleged absence of a manifest struggle between the State and the Kurdish people – was not only active both in the sense of State oppression and Kurdish resistance against it, but also decisive as a transitory phase between the eras of massive insurrections and organized armed struggle. While the State oppression under the veil of bandit hunting was humiliating, and thus simultaneously acknowledging the denied ethno-political identity of the Kurdish population by annulling its own law of silence on the Kurdishness of its Kurdish problem, the social protest function of the bandit myth had been its contribution to the constitution of a dictinct, native and national kind of morality which reconstructed the State as the true oppressor whose self-incurred image of 'the invincible' was turning null and void, glorified some of their contemporary bandits as the heroes of the people, and thus revalidated the Kurdish philosophy of taking to the mountains as the rightful and honorable choice to revolt against oppression of any kind.

Therefore, the period between 1950 and 1980 that was characterized by a massive emergence of brigandage in the Kurdish regions of Turkey proves the continuation of an ever-lasting war between the Turkish State and the Kurdish people not only in the form, but also under the veil of banditry. Just like the Spartan tradition of killing a certain number of Helots every year for reminding them the reason behind their slavery, the State's law-preserving violence does not require massive insurrections or rebellious armed organizations for performing itself over the

Kurdish population under the veil of bandit hunting and reconstructing the law of the State as the almighty and the invincible. The Turkish State's well-established ritual of sporadically executing Kurdish smugglers, from the killing of 32 smugglers in Van in 1943 and of 9 smugglers in Viranşehir in 1974 to the slaughter of 35 smugglers by F16 jets in Roboski in 2011, revalidates the existence of an ever-lasting war between the State and the Kurdish people. When that immutable oppression turned into a systematic suppression and humiliation of the Kurds' ethno-political identity due to perceived signs for the spread of Kurdish national consciousness, the Kurds resisted by brigandage not only in its spontaneous and reactive social forms of the rise of outlawry within the Kurdish population due to the socio-economic transformation of the region, but also in its political and mythical meanings reflecting the process of a double nationalization of criminality both by the State and the native people.

In this respect, guerrilla is the bandit's successor, its heir for the inheritance of Kurdish mountains, and thus the Kurdish resistance. It is true that the linkage between the guerrilla and the Kurdish identity is both natural and self-consciously re-established, as the guerrilla fights for, thus reformulates, the Kurdish identity. Although the bandits' taking to the mountains was no decision taken for a political cause, their very outlaw existence constituted the embodiment of the traditional Kurdish society in the face of a massive socio-economic transformation of the region and a rise of oppression by a naturally hostile State. In retrospect, the period in question could, therefore, be interpreted as the 'rehearsal' for the upcoming conflict between the State and the PKK: By anticipating, and thus precipitating, the rise of a form of Kurdish revolt, the State aimed at delaying the resurrection of the repressed,

while the rebellious air that mythologized the bandits' 'ordinary' violence had already begun to fill into the lungs of the Kurdish people.

The Kurdish brigandage that lasted until the late 1970s, therefore, addresses the popular question, "why do the Kurds take to the mountains?" by placing it in a new light, stating, "Kurds have always been on the mountains". The content of their existence on the mountains, on the lands where the law has no reach, has changed (from 'spontaneous' banditry to organized guerrilla warfare, from the mother and the lover of the bandit to the female guerrilla and from the individual and profane to the collective and transcendental [ideological] causes); but, its character and spirit (the Kurdish philosophy of the mountains, the collective will to rebel against the State and the law-making myth of outlaw violence) has remained the same. To clarify further, the theoretical rationale of criminology should be invoked.

Through the dimension of theoretical criminalogy, the evolution of the penal code revalidates the analysis of Friedrich Nietzsche over the genealogy of punishment from making the offender pay for his harm to the offended through the legal notion of 'debt' to the protection of the offender from the offended and the society, along with the ultimate abolition of capital punishment. The more powerful and proud a community becomes, Nietzsche rightfully predicted, the more lenient its penal code would be. (1956: 205) Indeed, as opposed to the 19th Century writers emphasizing the horror of criminal deed, modern criminology has rendered it mundane, while positive criminology took one step further by finding the offender not only mediocre, but also pitiful and weak. (Morrison, 1995: 355-356) In the context of modern Turkey, the 'İzale-i Şekavet Kanunu' (Law on the Prevention of Brigandage), enacted in 1923, infamously de-criminalized the act of killing or wounding those declared as 'bandit', who turned thereof a 'homo sacer' that could be

killed by anybody. The bandit stripped from his/her criminal citizenship status was exposing the weakness and vulnerability of the State and society in the face of banditry pandemic of the early Republic. Indeed, the law would be abrogated in 1963 in the very context of banditry epidemic in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, when the State was, however, feeling confident in dealing with the bandit who would then be denominated as 'the Criminal Citizen'. In 1971, finally, a new law of public order would be adopted that avoided to use the term of 'bandit' and concentrated on the criminal deed, instead of the doer of the crime. Following the universal trend, the Turkish penal code had, therefore, become more lenient and respectful for the basic rights of its criminal citizens until the 1980 coup d'état, which severely punished masses of its citizens for political criminality.

Despite such evolution of the Turkish penal code, the mundane status of criminals had easily become shocking, disturbing and extra-ordinary in the case of Kurdish criminality. The Western political elite, including the journalists of the mainstream media, developed a special criminal discourse that defended the harshest methods in dealing with the Kurdish brigandage ensued between 1950 and 1980 to such an extent that the whole Kurdish population was criminalized at the end of the process. Either for being bandits and/or smugglers, aiding and abetting bandits, or possessing non-registered firearms and/or contrabands, the Kurdish population in general was accused of an ongoing mass guilt. In fact, the State elite found a political ('separatist', 'Kurdist' etc.) criminality that was hidden behind and appearing by a pseudo-ordinary Kurdish criminality. The 'primitive' reaction the Kurdish people was an eversion of the Western moral values through embracing that criminality as a national resistance. Therefore, the spontaneous and individual structure of the last Kurdish banditry phenomenon together with the heroic bandit myth, enable us to

analyze the State oppression and the Kurdish resistance against it in their most 'primitive' forms.

APPENDIX I

BANDITRY HEADLINES FROM THE NATIOINAL PRINTED PRESS

(1930-1980)

I. Headlines from the Cumhuriyet Newspaper Reporting on Incidents of Banditry in the Eastern and Southeastern Provinces of Turkey (1930-1950)[196]:

- "Gang in Malazgirt Eradicated" (Cumhuriyet, 22.07.30: 3) *(Muş, 1930)*
- "Public Order in Muş: Two Bandits Killed in Varto and Bulanık" (Cumhuriyet, 06.08.30: 3) *(Muş, 1930)*
- "4 Bandits Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 27.08.30: 3) *(Malatya, 1930)*
- "Bandit Chief Killed in South" (Cumhuriyet, 14.10.30: 3) *(Muş, 1930)*
- "Rebel Fugitive in East" (Cumhuriyet, 16.10.30: 3) *(Muş, 1930)*
- "Bandits Hunted Down and Killed in East" (Cumhuriyet, 28.10.30: 3) *(Van, 1930)*
- "Gang Eradicated" (Cumhuriyet, 12.11.30: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1930)*
- "Gang of 42 Eradicated in the East" (Cumhuriyet, 04.12.30: 6) *(Diyarbakır, 1930)*
- "Brigandage in Gaziayıntap" (Cumhuriyet, 05.04.31: 2) *(Gaziantep, 1931)*
- "Bandit Killed in Erzurum During Escape" (Cumhuriyet, 04.06.31: 4) *(Erzurum, 1931)*
- "Clash with Bandits in Urfa: Officer Wounded, Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 06.06.31: 4) *(Urfa, 1931)*
- "Bandits Invited to Surrender" (Cumhuriyet, 07.08.31: 2) *(Muş, Erzurum, Ağrı, Van, 1931)*
- "Bandit Killed in South" (Cumhuriyet, 25.08.31: 2) *(Urfa, 1931)*
- "Vicious Bandit Killed During Escape Attempt" (Cumhuriyet, 03.09.31: 4) *(Urfa, 1931)*
- "Bandit Killed by Accomplice" (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.32: 5) *(Diyarbakır: 1932)*
- "Urfa Gang Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.32: 5) *(Urfa, 1932)*
- "Two Bandits Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 12.07.32: 4) *(Gaziantep, 1932)*
- "Gang Eradicated, 3 Soldiers Dead" (Cumhuriyet, 22.08.32: 3) *(Elazığ, 1932)*
- "4 Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 02.09.32: 2) *(Bitlis, 1932)*
- "Smuggling Gang Eradicated" (Cumhuriyet, 06.10.32: 2) *(Mardin, 1932)*
- "Gang Eradicated in South: 11 Bandits Killed, 40 Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 07.10.32: 5) *(Urfa, 1932)*
- "Syrian Bandits Steal 1,300 Cattle" (Cumhuriyet, 11.10.32: 3) *(Urfa, 1932)*
- "Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 18.03.33: 5) *(Urfa, 1933)*
- "Bandit Killed in Erzincan" (Cumhuriyet, 29.07.33: 2) *(Erzincan, 1933)*
- "Perpetrators of Many Murders Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 02.09.33: 6) *(Diyarbakır, 1933)*
- "Two Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 06.09.33: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1933)*
- "Two Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 05.10.33: 3) *(Van, 1933)*
- "Vicious Bandit Captured in Nizip" (Cumhuriyet, 10.03.34: 4) *(Gaziantep, 1934)*
- "Brigandage in Erzincan" (Cumhuriyet, 06.08.34: 2) *(Erzincan, 1934)*
- "Sadık, Ringleader of Sheikh Said Rebellion, Captured with Gang" (Cumhuriyet, 13.09.34: 5) *(Erzincan, 1934)*
- "Bandits Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.05.35: 12) *(Erzincan, 1935)*
- "Public Order in Tunceli Province: Many Bandits Lay Down Weapons and Surrender" (Cumhuriyet, 23.03.36: 3) *(Tunceli, 1936)*
- "Vicious Bandit Killed in Siird" (Cumhuriyet, 12.09.36: 1) *(Siirt, 1936)*
- "Bandit Hanged" (Cumhuriyet, 06.06.47: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1947)*
- "Bandit Captured in Ergani" (Cumhuriyet, 01.12.48: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1948)*

[196] Note: Headlines reporting the Ararat and Dersim Rebellions as banditry are excluded from this list.

II. Headlines from the Cumhuriyet Newspaper Reporting on Incidents of Banditry Outside of the Eastern and Southeastern Provinces (1930-1950)

- "Two Bandits Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 09.01.30: 3) *(Manisa, 1930)*
- "Incident of Banditry in Kütahya" (Cumhuriyet, 31.01.30: 3) *(Kütahya, 1930)*
- "Bandits Rob People in Prayer" (Cumhuriyet, 14.02.30: 3) *(Manisa, 1930)*
- "Bandit Ali (…) Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.02.30: 6) *(izmir, 1930)*
- "Robbery on Salihli-İzmir Highway" (Cumhuriyet, 18.06.30: 5) *(İzmir, 1930)*
- "Has Bandit Fuat Absconded to Greece?" (Cumhuriyet, 06.07.30: 2) *(İzmir, 1930)*
- "Murderer Halit the Blind Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 12.08.30: 3) *(Adana, 1930)*
- "Brigands Captured in Konya" (Cumhuriyet, 15.11.30: 2) *(Konya, 1930)*
- "Gang of Kara Ali on Trial Facing Death Penalty" (Cumhuriyet, 21.12.30: 4) *(Gebze, 1930)*
- "Bandit Sentenced to Death" (Cumhuriyet, 14.04.31: 2) *(Kayseri, 1931)*
- "Çerkez Fuat Breaks Out Again" (Cumhuriyet, 08.05.31: 3) *(İzmir, 1931)*
- "Bandit Captured in Çankırı" (Cumhuriyet, 06.06.31: 4) *(Çankırı, 1931)*
- "Fugitives Seized" (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.31: 3) *(İzmir, 1931)*
- "Bandits in Kozan" (Cumhuriyet, 05.07.31: 3) *(Adana, 1931)*
- "Bandits Hijack Two Trucks" (Cumhuriyet, 27.07.31: 2) *(İzmir, 1931)*
- "Governor Muhittin Pursues Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 09.08.31: 2) *(Yalova, 1931)*
- "Brigandage Operation on Yalova-Gemlik Highway" (Cumhuriyet, 10.08.31: 1) *(Yalova, 1931)*
- "Bandit Killed During Capture" (Cumhuriyet, 12.08.31: 3) *(Denizli, 1931)*
- "Brigandage in Çorum" (Cumhuriyet, 16.08.31: 4) *(Çorum, 1931)*
- "Bandit Raider of Yörük Camp Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 20.08.31: 4) *(İzmit, 1931)*
- "Bandit Halil Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.08.31: 3) *(Yalova, 1931)*
- "Famous Brigand Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 05.10.31: 5) *(Central Anatolia, 1931)*
- "5 Bandits Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 30.10.31: 6) *(Adana, 1931)*
- "Bandit Killed in Adana" (Cumhuriyet, 16.01.32: 3) *(Adana, 1932)*
- "Three Bandits Captured in Kozan" (Cumhuriyet, 02.02.32: 3) *(Adana, 1932)*
- "Two Bandits Captured in Zonguldak" (Cumhuriyet, 09.06.32: 3) *(Zonguldak, 1932)*
- "Bandit in Ordu Killed, One Gendarme Dead" (Cumhuriyet, 03.07.32: 3) *(Ordu, 1932)*
- "Robber Bandit Flees" (Cumhuriyet, 29.07.32: 3) *(Bursa, 1932)*
- "Bandit Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 05.09.32: 3) *(Adana, 1932)*
- "Bandit Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 03.12.32: 2) *(Sinop, 1932)*
- "11 Bandits Killed in Adana" (Cumhuriyet, 07.12.32: 3) *(Adana, 1932)*
- "Brigandage in Çanakkale" (Cumhuriyet, 12.12.32: 2) *(Çanakkale, 1932)*
- "Bandit Gang Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 14.02.33: 5) *(Zonguldak, 1933)*
- "Infamous Bandit Killed in Ereğli" (Cumhuriyet, 09.04.33: 2) *(Zonguldak, 1933)*
- "Gang of Highwaymen Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 23.04.33: 5) *(Burdur, 1933)*
- "7 Automobiles Hijacked on İzmir-Manisa Highway" (Cumhuriyet, 22.05.33: 4) *(İzmir, Manisa, 1933)*
- "Arrests in Kadirli: 111 Suspects Sent to Diyarbakır" (Cumhuriyet, 29.07.33: 2) *(Osmaniye, 1933)*
- "Mustafa of Tosya, Wanted for many Criminal Acts, Including Three Murders, Killed by Gendarmerie" (Cumhuriyet, 02.09.30: 6) *(Kastamonu, 1933)*
- "Ex-Convict Bandit Çerkez Rıza Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 28.12.33: 3) *(Bilecik, 1933)*
- "Brigands of Bursa" (Cumhuriyet, 16.01.34: 1) *(Bursa, 1934)*
- "Bandit Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 09.04.34: 3) *(Amasya, 1934)*
- "Four Bandits Wanted for Village Raid Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 20.04.34: 9) *(Aydın, 1934)*
- "Bandit that Fled to Syria Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 23.04.34: 3) *(Adana, 1934)*
- "Two Bandit Gangs Captured around İzmir" (Cumhuriyet, 26.04.34: 4) *(İzmir, 1934)*
- "Masked Highwaymen" (Cumhuriyet, 28.11.34: 2) *(Bilecik, 1934)*
- "Vicious Bandit Killed in Düzce" (Cumhuriyet, 04.05.35: 10) *(Düzce, 1935)*
- "Bandit Killed in Anamur" (Cumhuriyet, 05.04.36: 5) *(Mersin, 1936)*
- "Vicious Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 11.07.36: 3) *(Konya, 1936)*
- "Two Bandits Captured in Edirne" (Cumhuriyet, 05.02.38: 7) *(Edirne, 1938)*

- "Bandit Surrenders in Trabzon" (Cumhuriyet, 09.06.38: 3) *(Trabzon, 1938)*
- "Infamous Bandit Çakıcı Kills Two" (Cumhuriyet, 07.02.39: 5) *(Kayseri, 1939)*
- "Bandit Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 13.12.41: 3) *(Denizli, 1941)*
- "One of Adana Highway Murderers Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 31.05.48: 3) *(Adana, 1948)*
- "Bus Robbed in Zonguldak" (Cumhuriyet, 14.09.48: 3) *(Zonguldak, 1948)*
- "Basri, 'the Monster of Kocaeli', Surrenders to Government" (Cumhuriyet, 27.09.48: 1) *(Kocaeli, 1948)*
- "Commander of Gendarmerie Forces Investigating Recent Highway Incidents Arrives in Our City: Makes Statement to our Newspaper" (Cumhuriyet, 08.12.48: 1) *(Istanbul, 1948)*
- "New Monster of Kocaeli Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 14.09.49: 3) *(Kocaeli, 1949)*

III. Headlines from the Cumhuriyet and Milliyet Newspapers Reporting on Incidents of Banditry in the Eastern and Southeastern Provinces of Turkey (1950-1980)

1950s:

- "Vicious Murderer Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 22.07.51: 3) *(Malatya, 1951)*
- "Bus Hijacked" (Cumhuriyet, 11.06.52: 5) *(Gaziantep, 1952)*
- "Bandit Chief Surrenders in Malatya" (Cumhuriyet, 19.10.53: 3) *(Malatya, 1953)*
- "Bandit Wanted for Robberies around Malatya Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 07.11.53: 3) *(Malatya, 1953)*
- "A bandit gang in Muş murdered 6 people during an ambush of a group of 15 people (…)." (Ulunay, 1953: 2) *(Muş: 1953)*
- "Gunfight with Smugglers in Diyarbakır" (Milliyet, 06.09.54: 1) *(Diyarbakır: 1954)*
- "Gunfight with Bandits in Diyarbakır" (Cumhuriyet, 15.10.54: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1954)*
- "Vicious Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 31.05.55: 3) *(Hakkari, 1955)*
- "Paymaster Robbed and Killed in Gaziantep" (Milliyet, 04.09.55: 3) *(Gaziantep: 1955)*
- "Two Brigands Kill Shepherd" (Cumhuriyet, 04.10.55: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1955)*
- "Bandit that Killed Gendarme Escapes" (Milliyet, 31.10.55: 5) / "Vicious Bandit Kills Gendarme" (Cumhuriyet, 31.10.55: 3) (*Diyarbakır: 1955*)
- "Bandit Captured in Diyarbakır" (Cumhuriyet, 23.01.56: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1956)*
- "Vicious Bandit Kills Two Gendarmes" (Cumhuriyet, 11.04.56: 1) / "Bandit Wanted for Killing Gendarme" (Cumhuriyet, 18.04.56: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1956)*
- "Vicious Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 04.05.56: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1956)*
- "Bloody Robbery between Siirt and Mardin" (Cumhuriyet, 16.05.56: 3) *(Siirt, Mardin, 1956)*
- Three Bandits Who Murdered Four Captured: (…) Three murderers, who had been keeping the gendarme occupied for two years in Muş and Erzurum, (…), surrender themselves to justice." (Milliyet, 12.06.57: 5) *(Erzurum, Muş: 1957)*
- "21 Fugitive Murderers Captured in Diyarbakır" (Cumhuriyet, 24.06.57: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1956)*
- "Monster of Kulp, Murderer of 6 People, Surrenders" (Cumhuriyet, 14.07.57: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1957)*
- "Fugitive Murderers with Machine Guns Remain Free" (Cumhuriyet, 14.07.57: 5) *(Bingöl, 1957)*
- "Vicious Bandit Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 17.07.58: 3*)* / "Bandit, Sentenced to Death, Shot by Gendarmes" (Cumhuriyet, 25.07.58: 5) *(Muş, 1958)*
- "Hunt for Bandits in East" (Cumhuriyet, 27.07.57: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1957)*
- "Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 01.08.58: 3) *(Muş, 1958)*
- "Bandits on Mardin Road Sack 100 Travelers" (Ulunay, 1958: 3) *(Mardin: 1958)*
- "Gunfight between Gendarmes and Five Bandits" (Milliyet, 24.05.59: 5) *(Siirt: 1959)*
- "Bandit Chief in Siirt Mountain Escapes Ambush Again" (Cumhuriyet, 30.07.59: 5) *(Siirt, 1959)*
- "Bandit Left Free to Roam for Twenty Years" (Cumhuriyet, 02.08.59: 5) *(Mardin, 1959)*
- "Incident of Brigandage in Diyarbakır" (Cumhuriyet, 13.11.59: 3) *(Diyarbakır, 1959)*
- "Twenty-Two Bandits Captured in South: Twenty-two bandits, who were on the run after committing crimes of murder, highway robbery and rape in the Southern provinces, have been captured." (Milliyet, 08.12.1959: 1, 5) *(Adıyaman: 1959)*

- "Four More Bandits Captured in Southeast: Many More Remain in Eastern and Southeastern Mountains" (Milliyet, 11.12.59: 3) *(Adıyaman: 1959)*
- "Five More Bandits Captured in Eastern Provinces" (Cumhuriyet, 19.12.59: 1) *(Mardin, Siirt, 1959)*

1960s:

- "Bandit On Run for Six Years Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 12.03.60: 5) *(Mardin, 1960)*
- "Bandit Killed" (Millyet, 13.03.60: 5) *(Hakkari: 1960)*
- "Bandits Martyr Gendarme in Siirt" (Cumhuriyet, 09.08.60: 5) *(Siirt, 1960)*
- "One of Two Bandits Chased by Planes Killed" (Milliyet, 09.09.60: 1) *(Batman: 1960)*
- "Bandits of Salihli: Bandits, who had avoided capture by the Gendarme for 5 years in Diyarbakır, surrender after the arrest of leader Zülfü Agha." (Milliyet, 21.11.60: 3) *(Diyarbakır: 1960)*
- "Vicious Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 02.04.61: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1961)*
- "Armed Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 23.05.61: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1961)*
- "Turkish Soldier Martyred in Clash with Syrian Bandits" (Milliyet, 28.06.61: 1) *(Diyarbakır: 1961)*
- "Murderer Koçero Killed" (Milliyet, 28.06.61: 1) *(Siirt, 1961)*
- "Bandits Hijack Bus" (Milliyet, 26.09.61: 5) / "Bandits that Attacked Bus Captured." (Milliyet, 29.09.61: 1) *(Ağrı: 1961)*
- "Brigand Hunt in Siirt Province: Gang Leader Abdülkerim Ürün of Uludere Captured While Attempting to Cross the Border" (Cumhuriyet, 22.12.61: 1) *(Siirt, 1961)*
- "Operation 'Criminal Hunt' in East / Gendarmerie Take Action in Diyarbakır, Muş and Bitlis: Bandits Kill Four Citizens for Informing on Them" (24.12.61: 1) *(Siirt, Hakkari, 1961)*
- "Operation 'Criminal Hunt' Continues in East / Gendarme Forces on Trail of Four Major Siirt Gangs: In fear of bandits, many peasants take refuge in Siirt, abandoning their villages." (Cumhuriyet, 25.12.61: 1) *(Siirt, 1961)*
- "Syrian Border Closed to Prevent Bandits from Escaping: In Fear of Bandits, Life Ends at 3 pm in Siirt Province / Another Robbery in Çermik" (Cumhuriyet, 26.12.61: 1) *(Siirt, 1961)*
- "Brigand Koçero in One-Hour Clash with Gendarme Yesterday" (Cumhuriyet, 28.12.61: 1) / "Surrounded Bandit Manages to Escape: Famous smuggler, robber and fugitive murderer Koçero (…) manages to abscond." (Milliyet, 28.12.61: 3) *(Siirt, 1961)*
- "Two More (Father and Son) Bandits Captured in Pervari" (Cumhuriyet, 29.12.61: 1) / "Bandits Captured" (Milliyet, 29.12.61: 1, 5) *(Siirt: 1961)*
- "728 Gendarmes in Pursuit of Bandits: In the last three months, eight incidents of robbery occurred in the region around Diyarbakır, Siirt and Bitlis during which bandits hijacked 25 cars, robbed 113 passengers and stole 78 thousand Turkish Lira." (Milliyet, 30.12.61: 5) *(Diyarbakır, Siirt, Bitlis: 1961)*
- "Haco: Ruler of Regions of Şirvan, Eruh, Şırnak and Pervari" (Cumhuriyet, 30.12.61: 5) *(Siirt, Şırnak, 1961)*
- "Mountain Bandit: No Surrender until Amnesty Granted" (Cumhuriyet, 31.12.61: 1) *(Siirt, 1961)*
- "Twelve More Bandits Captured around Siirt: (…) Hunt in Siirt, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Bingöl and Bitlis Continues" (Milliyet, 04.01.62: 3) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Bandits Begin to Rob Smugglers" (Cumhuriyet, 06.01.62: 1) *(Southeastern Borders, 1962)*
- "Two More Bandits Captured in Siirt" (Cumhuriyet, 11.01.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- "Head of Fugitive Bandit Crushed by Rock" (Milliyet, 03.02.62: 3) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Three More Bandits Captured in Siirt" (Milliyet, 09.02.62: 3) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Five Masked Bandits Rob Three Americans" (Milliyet, 06.03.62: 1, 5) / "Bandits Who Robbed Americans on Highway Captured" (Milliyet, 12.03.62: 3) *(Diyarbakır: 1962)*
- "Three Bandits in Soldier Outfits Rob Wealthy Person" (Milliyet, 12.03.62: 3) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Koçero Identified, but not yet Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.03.62: 5) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- "Bandit Koçero Slips through Gendarmes' Hands" (Cumhuriyet, 24.03.62: 5) / "Koçero Again Escapes Gendarmerie Ambush" (Milliyet, 24.03.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- "Brigand with Sten Gun Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 09.05.62: 5) *(Ağrı, 1962)*
- "Bandit Robs Three Teachers" (Milliyet, 14.05.62: 7) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- "Brigands in Military Uniforms Proliferate in Siirt" (Cumhuriyet, 09.06.62: 5) *(Siirt, 1962)*

- “Vicious Brigand Gang of Selim the Fox Resurfaces, Raids Village in Siirt” (Cumhuriyet, 17.06.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Six Bandits Hold 14 Peasants for Ransom in Mountains” (Milliyet, 27.06.62: 1) / “Bandits Release the Hostages after Ransom Paid” (Milliyet, 29.06.62: 1) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- “Massive Search and Scan Operation in Eastern Region” (Milliyet, 29.06.62: 1) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1962)*
- “Bandits Flee Towards Iraqi Border” (Milliyet, 01.07.62: 1, 7) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- “600 Gendarmes Cordon City to Capture Bandits in Siirt” (Milliyet, 04.07.62: 3) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Bandits in Bitlis, after raiding two villages and stealing 14 thousand Turkish Lira, set fire to the mills. (…) Three days earlier, another bandit gang (…), using force, stole 15 thousand Turkish Lira from a rich person in a village.” (Milliyet, 11.07.62: 1, 7) *(Bitlis: 1962)*
- “Four Bandits Captured around City of Siirt” (Milliyet, 11.07.62: 1) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- “Three Gangs Captured in Two Days in Siirt” (Cumhuriyet, 12.07.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Bandits in East Begin to Kidnap Children” (Cumhuriyet, 14.07.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Bandits Rob Three Highway Work Sites” (Milliyet, 17.07.62: 1, 7) *(Hakkari: 1962)*
- “Bandit Captured.” (Milliyet, 17.07.62: 7) / “Tribal Leader Bandit Captured Yesterday” (Cumhuriyet, 17.07.62: 1) *(Mardin: 1962)*
- “Gendarmes Face Great Difficulties in Tracking Bandits” (Cumhuriyet, 18.07.62: 1) *(Southeastern Region, 1962)*
- “Koçero, Hiding Out in Siirt Mountains, Tracked by 500 Gendarmes” (Cumhuriyet, 20.07.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Despite constant pursuit by mobile Gendarme troops in the Siirt region, a group of ten armed bandits were able to carry out three robberies last night on the Tatvan-Norşin highway. (…) Aside from this, bandit raids on villages that began one week ago in Bitlis (…) continue. (…) Necati Yaman, gendarmerie commander of Van, along with soldiers of a platoon, (…), clash with six armed bandits and capture deserter and robber Vezir Çelik, who sustained grave injuries.” (Milliyet, 18.07.62: 7) *(Siirt, Bitlis, Van: 1962)*
- “Minister of Internal Affairs Tours East due to Public Order Concerns” (Cumhuriyet, 24.07.62: 1) *(Gaziantep, 1962)*
- “Koçero the Vicious a Legend in the Eyes of the Ignorant” (Dallı, 1962 (I): 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Minister of Internal Affairs: Bandit will be Disposed Of” (Cumhuriyet, 26.07.62: 1) *(Mardin, 1962)*
- “Ringleader of Agit Bilen Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 26.07.62: 5) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero Escapes from Gendarmerie by 20 Meters” (Dallı, 1962 (II): 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero Breaks Cordon with Great Skill and Vanishes Without Trace, Again Leaving Officials, Notably Governor, in his Wake” (Dallı, 1962 (III): 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Robberies Continue in East: While Minister of Internal Affairs Meets with Governors in Tatvan, 4 Bandits Block Highway 7-8 km Away, Rob 60” (Milliyet, 29.07.62: 1, 7) / “15 Buses Robbed in Tatvan while Minister of Internal Affairs Meets with Governors” (Cumhuriyet, 29.07.62: 1) *(Bitlis: 1962)*
- “Gun-Runner Pursued to Border” (Dallı, 1962 (VI): 5) *(Mardin, 1962)*
- “Four Adıyaman Bandits Surrender to Gendarmerie” (Cumhuriyet, 31.07.62: 1) *(Adıyaman, 1962)*
- “Ten Armed Bandits Kidnap Peasant” (Milliyet, 01.08.62: 1) *(Siirt: 1962)*
- “Bandit Surrenders to Justice” (Milliyet, 01.08.62: 1, 7) *(Mardin: 1962)*
- “Ringleader of Tatvan Robbery Gang Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 02.08.62: 5) *(Bitlis, 1962)*
- “Two Soldiers of Infantry Regiment in Erçiş Ambushed and Disarmed” (Cumhuriyet, 02.08.62: 1) *(Van, 1962)* / “Bandits that Ambushed Gendarmes Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 04.08.62: 5) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “8 Masked and Armed Bandits Hijack 10 Transport Vehicles on Malatya-Elazığ Highway” (Cumhuriyet, 11.08.62: 1) “15 Bandits Hijack Eight Trucks on Highway between Malatya and Elazığ” (Milliyet, 12.08.62: 1, 3) / “One Vehicle Hijacker Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 12.08.62: 7) *(Elazığ: 1962)*
- “Number of Captured Bandits: 47” (Cumhuriyet, 19.08.62: 1) *(Southeastern Region, 1962)*
- “Bandits in East Begin Attacks against Defenseless Peasants” (Cumhuriyet, 29.08.62: 1) *(Hakkari, Muş, 1962)*
- “1,380 Sheep (Stolen) in 24 Hours” (Cumhuriyet, 29.08.62: 5) *(Mardin, 1962)*
- “Gang of Three Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 29.08.62: 5) *(Siirt, 1962)*

- “Koçero, Despite being Surrounded by 500 Gendarmerie, Escapes Again” (Cumhuriyet, 30.08.62: 1) / ““Koçero Martyrs Sergeant, Escapes from Cordon” (Milliyet, 30.08.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero, Surrounded in Highlands, Clashes with Smugglers Entering Syria.” (Milliyet, 01.09.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero Flees to Iraq” (Cumhuriyet, 03.09.62: 1) *(Şırnak, 1962)*
- “New Troops Sent to Capture Bandit Koçero” (Milliyet, 04.09.62: 3) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Those that Inform on Koçero to be Rewarded in Cash” (Milliyet, 07.09.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero’s House in Syria Raided” (Cumhuriyet, 07.09.62: 1) *(Syria, 1962)*
- “Wife of Sergeant Martyred by Koçero Sues Governor of Siirt” (Cumhuriyet, 11.09.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Two Bandits Escape from Siirt Prison” (Cumhuriyet, 29.09.62: 5) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero Bombed by Jet Plane: Pilot Reports Hitting his Target and Killing Koçero.” (Milliyet, 29.09.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero Alive and Launching Smuggling Operations” (Cumhuriyet, 30.09.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Koçero Visits House of Friend Davudo” (Cumhuriyet, 14.10.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Petroleum Exploration Camp in Diyarbakır Raided and Robbed by Masked Brigands” (Cumhuriyet, 29.10.62: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1962)*
- “Convoy of 30 People Robbed by Two Bandits in Siirt” (Cumhuriyet, 02.11.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Minister of Internal Affairs: Kocero Still on Loose” (Milliyet, 03.11.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “Syrian Border Cordoned Off to Capture Koçero” (Cumhuriyet, 04.11.62: 7) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “We Demand Koçero from Syria.” (Milliyet, 06.11.62: 1) / “We Demand Return of Koçero from Syria” (Cumhuriyet, 09.11.62: 1) *(Syria, 1962)*
- “Village Hideout of Koçero Confirmed.” (Milliyet, 07.11.62: 7) *(Syria, 1962)*
- “Syrian Authorities: It’s our Duty to Capture Bandit Koçero” (Milliyet, 09.11.62: 1) *(Syria, 1962)*
- “Captured Bandit not Koçero.” (Milliyet, 29.11.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “8 Bandits Captured in East” (Cumhuriyet, 02.12.62: 1) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1962)*
- “Another Brigand Appears in Habis Mountains” (Cumhuriyet, 11.12.62: 5) *(Mardin, 1962)*
- “News of Koçero’s Capture Again Unfounded” (Cumhuriyet, 12.12.62: 5) *(Hakkari, 1962)*
- “Fugitive Bandit Captured in Mardin” (Cumhuriyet, 14.12.62: 5) *(Mardin, 1962)*
- “Gendarme Undergo Guerrilla Training to Consolidate Order and Security in East and Capture and Eliminate Bandits” (Milliyet, 30.12.1962: 1) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1962)*
- “Kocero Becomes Legend and Lover of Young Girls” (Milliyet, 30.12.62: 1) *(Siirt, 1962)*
- “One Bus and Three Trucks Hijacked in Mardin” (Cumhuriyet, 22.02.63: 5) *(Mardin, 1963)*
- “Bandit Hunt Scheduled for June” (Milliyet, 03.03.63: 1) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1963)*
- “11 Bandits Captured in South East: (…) Three Indicted for Murder, Four Accused of Smuggling. (…) 120 Names on Gendarme’s Capture List. Forces Supplied with Equipment for Mountain Operations. More than Half of Listed Bandits are Murderers, Fugitives, Robbers and Assailants.” (Milliyet, 29.05.63: 1, 7) *(Van, Muş, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Mardin: 1963)*
- “Koçero Flees to Syria.” (Milliyet, 29.05.63: 1) *(Syria, 1963)*
- “372 Brigands Identified in Southeast: Gendarmerie to Launch ‘Bandit Hunt’ from June 1” (Cumhuriyet, 30.05.63: 1) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1963)*
- “Two Trucks and One Bus Hijacked in Malazgirt Last Night” (Cumhuriyet, 25.06.63: 5) *(Muş, 1963)*
- “Captured: Ringleader and Three Accomplices of Gang that Hijacked 21 Vehicles in Urfa” (Cumhuriyet, 28.06.63: 1) *(Urfa, 1963)*
- “Bandit Captured” (Milliyet, 03.07.63: 3) *(Siirt: 1963)*
- “27 Fugitives Captured in one Month in Eastern Bandit Hunt” (Cumhuriyet, 13.07.63: 5) *(Siirt, 1963)*

- "Two Robbers in Peasant Outfit Captured by Gendarmerie" (Cumhuriyet, 15.07.63: 5) *(Batman, 1963)*
- "Another Brigand (Captured)" (Cumhuriyet, 15.07.63: 5) *(Siirt, 1963)*
- "Anti-Bandit Operation Launched in Hakkari" (Cumhuriyet, 29.07.63: 5) *(Hakkari, 1963)*
- "Two Bandits Killed" (Milliyet, 31.07.63: 1) *(Hakkari: 1963)*
- "Leader of Karagöz Gang Captured Smuggling Opium to Iran." (Milliyet, 31.07.63: 3) *(Van: 1963)*
- "Highway Under Construction between Hakkari and Uludere will Ease Military Operations against Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 04.08.63: 1) *(Hakkari, 1963)*
- "Fugitive Hunt Continues in East" (Cumhuriyet, 13.08.63: 1) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1963)*
- "Vicious Bandit Halit Duman Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 24.08.63: 1) *(Hakkari, 1963)*
- "Murderers of Gendarmes Killed Five Years Ago Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 31.08.63: 5) *(Hakkari, 1963)*
- "28 Bandits Captured in One Month in East" (Cumhuriyet, 16.09.63: 5) *(Southeastern Region, 1963)*
- "Koçero Accomplice Elected as Village Head" (Cumhuriyet, 12.12.63: 7) *(Siirt, 1963)*
- "Brigand Koçero Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 05.07.64: 1) / "Koçero Killed (…) (Milliyet, 05.07.64: 1) *(Siirt, 1964)*
- "How was Bandit Koçero Shot?" (Cumhuriyet, 06.07.64: 1) *(Siirt, 1964)*
- "Predestined End" (Cumhuriyet, 07.07.64: 1) / "Hundreds of Peasants Visit Grave of Famous Bandit" (Milliyet, 07.07.64: 1) *(Siirt, 1964)*
- "Belief in Diyarbakır: Koçero Alive" (Milliyet, 13.07.64: 1)
- "Bandit Ali Selim, Accidental Killer of Kocero, Captured." (Milliyet, 14.07.64: 1, 7) *(Siirt, 1964)*
- "Bandits, Watch Out! Commandos are Coming" (Milliyet, 22.07.64: 1, 7) *(İzmir, 1964)*
- "Six Bandits Captured in One Day in Siirt" (Milliyet, 10.09.64: 3) *(Siirt: 1964)*
- "4 Robbers Captured Yesterday in Kars" (Cumhuriyet, 23.10.64: 7) *(Kars, 1964)*
- "Two Gendarme Soldiers Shot in Brigand Hunt" (Cumhuriyet, 02.11.64: 1) *(Siirt, 1964)*
- "Gunfight in Çermik Suppressed" (Cumhuriyet, 07.11.64: 7) *(Diyarbakır, 1964)*
- "Nobody Believes that Koçero Killed" (Milliyet, 25.12.64: 5) *(Southeastern Region, 1964)*
- "Attempted Robbery of Judge and Persecutor" (Milliyet, 05.08.65: 3) *(Adıyaman, 1965)*
- "Bandits Wanted for Robbery of Three Drivers Seriously Injure Commander" (Cumhuriyet, 09.09.65: 7) *(Batman, 1965)*
- "Three Bandits Captured Hiding among Horses" (Cumhuriyet, 14.09.65: 4) *(Bitlis, 1965)*
- "Bandit Who Wandered the Mountains for 4 Years Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 06.10.65: 4) *(Siirt, 1965)*
- "5 Masked Bandits Hijack 8 Vehicles" (Cumhuriyet, 08.12.65: 7) *(Urfa, 1965)*
- "Two Bandit Gangs Clash" (Milliyet, 03.01.66: 1) *(Siirt: 1966)*
- "(…) Bandits hijack cars by blocking highway. The sad side of the incident is that the Gendarme commander of the province of Van (…) was among those who were robbed." (Ulunay, 1966a: 2) *(Bingöl: 1966)*
- "Bezek Announces Hakimo as 'the Enemy of Honor': Two Bandits in East Clash for Mountains" (Milliyet, 06.04.66: 3) (Siirt, 1966)
- "Hamido Releases Hostages" (Cumhuriyet, 04.05.66: 1) *(Siirt, 1966)*
- "New Robbery" (Cumhuriyet, 04.05.66: 1) *(Diyarbakır, 1966)*
- "Two Robberies, One Bandit Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 10.05.66: 5) *(Malatya, 1966)*
- "Bandit Hamido Captured Thanks to his Rivals" (Milliyet, 03.06.1966: 1) *(Siirt, 1966)*
- "3 Bandits Rob 9 People" (Cumhuriyet, 04.06.66: 1) *(Mardin, 1966)*
- "16 Gendarmes Drown While Engaged in Guerrilla Training and Military Exercises against Bandits" (Milliyet, 21.06.66: 1) *(Siirt, 1966)*
- "Vicious Bandit Clashes with Peasants, Gendarme Killed" (Milliyet, 17.07.66: 1) *(Muş: 1966)*
- "15 Bandits in Bitlis Attempt to Rob Gendarmerie Jeep" (Cumhuriyet, 07.09.65: 5) *(Bitlis, 1966)*
- "15 Bandits Faced Lieutenant Commander rather than Passengers" (Cumhuriyet, 27.09.66: 7) *(Bitlis, 1966)*

- "Ihsan Turunç, 34-years-old truck driver, who was robbed in Van by bandits, told that he would quit his job, if the activities of bandits could not be prevented." (Milliyet, 23.10.66: 7)
- "12 Masked Bandits Open Fire on Small Van" (Cumhuriyet, 22.11.66: 7) *(Siirt, 1966)*
- "Five bandits that were carrying out robberies on Van-Hakkari highway (…) have been captured. (…)" (Cumhuriyet, 04.12.66: 1) *(Hakkari, 1966)*
- "Bandit Hakimo Hosts Two Police Officers at Son's Wedding" (Cumhuriyet, 12.12.66: 1) *(Siirt, 1966)* / "(Wanted Bandit) Hakimo Attends Son's Wedding" (Milliyet, 12.12.66: 1)
- "Brigand Captured in Officer's Uniform" (Cumhuriyet, 24.01.67: 1) *(Batman, 1967)*
- "Famous Bandit Hakimo Wounded, Two Accomplices Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 28.01.67: 1) / "Skirmish between Hamido Gang and Gendarmerie in Eruh" (Milliyet, 28.01.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Davudo Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 11.02.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Bandit Killer of Koçero Sentenced to 30 Years, 8 Months" (Cumhuriyet, 18.02.67: 7) *(Batman, 1967)*
- "Hamido's Followers Begin to Move" (Cumhuriyet, 25.02.67: 7) *(Adana, 1967)*
- "32 Villages Abandoned in Siirt due to Fear of Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 06.03.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "65-Years-Old Bandit Ömer Ürper Kurtalan Captured." (Cumhuriyet, 08.03.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Commando Troop Launches 'Bandit Hunt' in East" (Milliyet, 10.03.67: 3) *(Eastern and Southeastern Regions, 1967)*
- "720 Gendarme on Bandit Pursuit" (Cumhuriyet, 03.04.67: 1) / "720 Commandos Go for Bandit Hunt in East" (Milliyet, 03.04.67: 3) *(Southeastern Regions, 1967)*
- "Agit, Famous Bandit in East, Surrenders" (Cumhuriyet, 03.04.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Eastern Bandit Hunt Begins Tomorrow in Siirt." (Milliyet, 05.04.67: 3) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Commandos Trained for Bandit Pursuit Welcomed to Siirt with Ceremony" (Cumhuriyet, 07.04.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Hakimo's Surrender Expected" (Cumhuriyet, 08.04.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Hamido's Son Killed by Friendly Fire" (Cumhuriyet, 10.04.67: 1) / "Journalist Kills Hamido's Son" (Milliyet, 10.04.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Hamido: I Surrender" (Milliyet, 12.04.67: 3) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Hamido Surrenders" (Milliyet, 13.04.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Hamido Surrenders after Secret Negotiations" (Milliyet, 14.04.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Hamido on Trial, Faces 50 Years in Prison " (Milliyet, 15.04.67: 3) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Military Post Established in Hamido's Village" (Cumhuriyet, 17.04.67: 5) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Gendarmerie Rescue Hamido's Kidnapped Son from Mountains" (Milliyet, 25.04.1967: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "4 Kidnapped by Bandits Killed" (Milliyet, 17.05.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Bandit Issue Opened Again for Discussion in Senate: Officials in East Stand Accused" (Cumhuriyet, 19.05.67: 7) *(Ankara, 1967)*
- "Reşit from Özbay Gang Brought to Siirt" (Milliyet, 24.05.67: 3) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Two Accomplices of Hamido Surrender" (Cumhuriyet, 26.05.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Bandits with Automatic Weapons Block Road in Broad Daylight: 50 people Robbed on Muş-Tatvan Highway" (Milliyet, 02.07.67: 1, 7) *(Muş: 1967)*
- "Bandit Surrenders in Siirt" (Cumhuriyet, 29.07.67: 7) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Bandit Shoots Gendarmerie Soldier" (Cumhuriyet, 08.08.67: 1) *(Urfa, 1967)*
- "Bandits Abduct 7 Peasants to Mountains" (Cumhuriyet, 14.08.67: 1) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "Conflicts Begin in Siirt Mountains after Koçero's Death" (Mercan, 1967(I): 5) *(Siirt, 1967)*
- "400 Bandits in East Take Refuge in Barzani" (Cumhuriyet, 07.02.68: 1) *(Southeastern Regions, 1968)*
- "Bandit Hamido Employed in YSE (Road, Water, Electricity) in Siirt" (Milliyet, 09.05.68: 3) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Two Vicious Bandits Captured after 3-Hour Gunfight" (Cumhuriyet, 07.07.68: 5) *(Bingöl, 1968)*
- "Hamido: I Fulfill the Duty of the Gendarmerie" (Cumhuriyet, 14.09.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Bandit Musto to Surrender" (Cumhuriyet, 15.09.68: 5) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Hamido: I'm Tracking Bandit Özbay" (Milliyet, 16.09.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*

- "10 Bandits in Gendarme Uniforms Rob 30 Passengers" (Cumhuriyet, 28.09.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Hamido: Hills are Taken to Honor Government" (Cumhuriyet, 30.09.67: 1) / "Hamido Forces Bandit Gang to Flee to Iraq" (Milliyet, 30.09.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "H. Aydoğan, Right Hand of Selim the Fox, Captured Attempting to Cross into Syria" (Cumhuriyet, 09.10.68: 7) *(Mardin, 1968)*
- "Cornered Bandit Hakimo Escapes" (Cumhuriyet, 15.10.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Father Killed with Son after Refusing to Give Up Daughter to Bandit" (Cumhuriyet, 14.11.68: 1) *(Siirt, 1968)*
- "Two Bandits that Killed Sentry Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 24.12.68: 5) *(Bitlis, 1968)*
- "6 People Injured in Gunfight between Hamido and Özbay Gangs" (Cumhuriyet, 03.01.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Özbay Gang Imprisoned by Barzani" (Cumhuriyet, 23.01.69: 1) *(Northern Iraq, 1969)*
- "Hamido's Groom Liberated from Barzani" (Cumhuriyet, 10.02.69: 7) *(Northern Iraq, 1969)*
- "Vicious Bandit Demands 45 thousand Turkish Liras Tribute from Village" (Cumhuriyet, 17.02.69: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1969)*
- "3 Gendarmes Killed, 4 Wounded in Bandit Pursuit" (Cumhuriyet, 19.02.69: 7) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Bandits Martyr Gendarme in Bismil" (Cumhuriyet, 21.02.69: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1969)*
- "Files Combined of Bandits that Martyred Gendarme" (Cumhuriyet, 24.02.69: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1969)*
- "Bandit Özbay Escapes from Barzani, Returns to Turkey" (Cumhuriyet, 24.02.69: 1) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Bandit Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 24.02.69: 1) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Colonel's Pledge to Capture Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 25.02.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Two Men from Özbay Gang Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 06.03.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Hamido's Son to Play Father in Movie" (Milliyet, 04.04.69: 3) *(İstanbul, 1969)*
- "Bandit Özbay Executes Two by Shooting and Abducts Two Peasants to Mountains" (Cumhuriyet, 20.04.69: 7) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Masked Bandits Rob Truck Passengers" (Cumhuriyet, 31.05.69: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1969)*
- "Infamous Mehmet Ali Özbay Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.69: 5) / "Özbay Killed by Gendarmerie" (Milliyet, 22.06.69: 3) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "4 More Bandits Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 12.07.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "(Şahin Ertaş) Sacrifices Himself to Permit Hakimo's Escape" (Cumhuriyet, 16.07.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
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- "Bandit Immolates Man and Sister Abducted to Mountains" (Cumhuriyet, 30.07.69: 1) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "15 Bandits Raid Hot Water Station" (Milliyet, 31.07.69: 1) *(Bitlis, 1969)*
- "Two People Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 05.08.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Bandit Emin Özbay and Accomplices Wounded in Gunfight" (Cumhuriyet, 07.08.69: 5) *(Van, 1969)*
- "Governor of Mardin Goes Bandit Hunting" (Cumhuriyet, 11.08.69: 5) *(Mardin, 1969)*
- "Gendarme Raid on 17 Villages to Locate Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 13.08.69: 5) *(Urfa, 1969)*
- "Bandit Özbay Escapes after Killing 2 in Town Raid" (Cumhuriyet, 06.09.69: 1) / "Özbay Gang in Raid on Siirt: Two Killed. Hakimo Murders Peasant and Abducts 13-Years-Old Girl to Mountains" (Milliyet, 06.09.69: 4) / "Man Killed by Özbay was Uncle of Hamido" (Cumhuriyet, 07.09.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Bandits Flay Agha" (Cumhuriyet, 12.09.69: 1) *(Bitlis, 1969)*
- "Two Gangs Clash, 6 Dead" (Cumhuriyet, 12.09.69: 1) / "Six Brigands Killed in Battle between Hamido and Özbay" (Milliyet, 12.09.69: 11) *(Bitlis: 1969)*
- "Three Armed Bandits Flee After Robbing 7" (Milliyet, 29.09.69: 7) *(Siirt: 1969)*
- "Bandits Force Passengers to Run Naked after Stealing 1,117 Turkish Lira" (Milliyet, 29.09.69: 7) *(Bitlis: 1969)*
- "Bandits Flay and Kill Hacı Yusuf Sarı after Refusal to Hand Over Money" (Milliyet, 29.09.69: 7) *(Bitlis: 1969)*
- "(…) 10 people were killed in the four-hour bloody skirmish between two bandit gangs." (Milliyet, 29.09.69: 7) *(Bitlis: 1969)*

- "Cadastral Public Servants Robbed" (Cumhuriyet, 12.10.69: 1) *(Bitlis, 1969)*
- "2 Bandits Hijack 2 Trucks" (Cumhuriyet, 14.10.69: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1969)*
- "Southeastern People Concerned with Abundance of Bandits" (Cumhuriyet, 17.10.69: 5) *(Southeastern Regions, 1969)*
- "Envoy Sent to Bandit Özbay for Kidnapped Public Servant" (Cumhuriyet, 24.10.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*
- "Tribe Turns against Bandit Hakimo over Woman" (Cumhuriyet, 17.11.69: 5) *(Siirt, 1969)*

1970s:

- "Police Call for Gendarmerie Support after Running Short of Ammunition" (Cumhuriyet, 05.01.70: 5) *(Diyarbakır, 1970)*
- "Bandit Özbay Joins Barzani's Army" (Cumhuriyet, 02.03.70: 5) *(Northern Iraq, 1970)*
- "Bandits that Robbed Truck Drivers Send Compliments to Demirel" (Cumhuriyet, 29.03.70: 5) *(Mardin, 1970)*
- "Brigand Professing Himself as Second Hamido Captured in his Village" (Milliyet, 05.07.70: 4) *(Siirt, 1970)*
- "While Minister Announces, 'No Bandits Remain in Mountains', Two Buses Assaulted" (Milliyet, 18.07.70: 1, 9) *(Diyarbakır, 1970)*
- "Bandit Hakimo Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 16.09.70, p. 1) *(Siirt, 1970)*
- "4 Bandits from Bezek Gang Surrender" (Cumhuriyet, 09.11.70: 7) *(Siirt, 1970)*
- "Brother of Bandit Özbay Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 24.07.71: 5) *(Siirt, 1971)*
- "4 Armed Bandits Hijack Two Trucks" (Cumhuriyet, 11.08.71: 7) *(Erzurum, 1971)*
- "Captured in Woman's Outfit" (Cumhuriyet, 09.02.72: 1) *(Mardin, 1972)*
- "4 Relatives of Bandit Hakimo Killed with Automatic Weapons" (Cumhuriyet, 12.10.72: 5) *(Siirt, 1972)*
- "Hekimo, Monster of Mardin, Arrested in Istanbul" (Cumhuriyet, 03.06.73: 1) / "Bandit Hekimo, who Spread Terror in East, Captured" (Milliyet, 03.06.73: 1, 11) *(Istanbul, 1973)*
- "4 Truck Robbers Captured While Sharing Spoils in Cave" (Cumhuriyet, 14.08.73) *(Mardin, 1973)*
- "3 Trucks Robbed" (Cumhuriyet, 14.08.73: 7) *(Elazığ, 1973)*
- "Samedo and Gang Return to Murder and Robbery" (Milliyet, 28.07.74: 5) *(Siirt, 1974)*
- "7 People that Robbed 15 Cars Captured" (Milliyet, 09.10.75, p. 1) *(Ardahan, 1975)*
- "5 Mounted Bandits with Automatic Weapons Raid Village in Erzurum, Kill 3, Gravely Injure 2" (Milliyet, 22.09.77: 14) *(Erzurum, 1977)*

IV. Headlines from the Cumhuriyet and Milliyet Newspapers on Incidents of Banditry Incidents Outside of the Eastern and Southeastern Provinces (1950-1980)

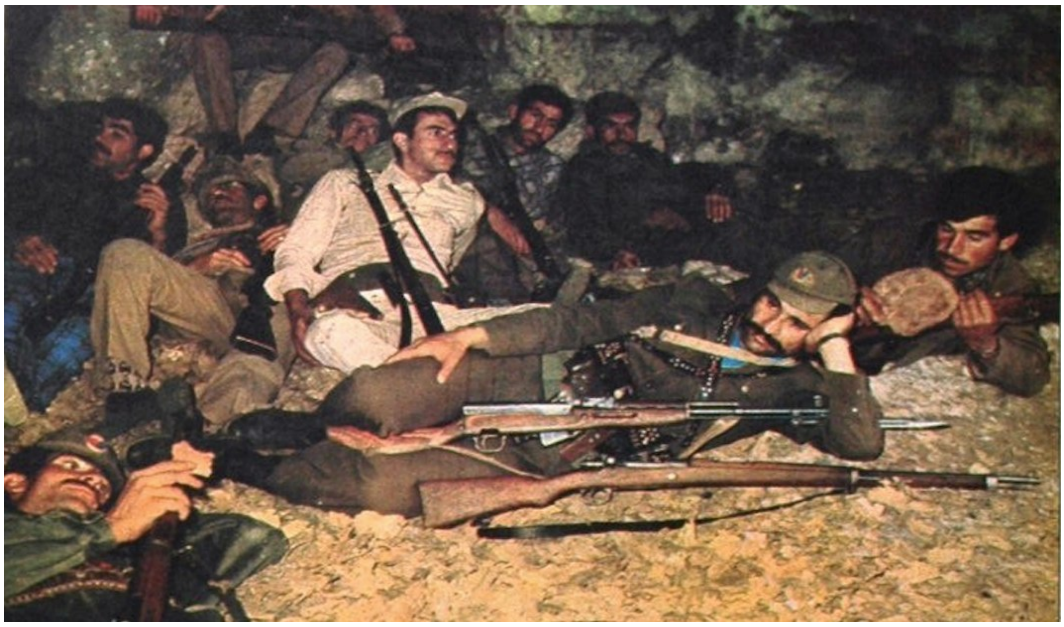
- "Highway Robbery between Sariyer and Tarabya" (Milliyet, 27.08.50: 1) *(Istanbul, 1950)*
- "Robber Murderers" (Milliyet, 05.09.50: 5) *(Ankara, 1950)*
- "Banditry around Ankara" (Milliyet, 23.11.51: 1) *(Ankara, 1951)*
- "Bandit Steals Grain" (Milliyet, 29.11.51: 1, 7) *(Thracian Region, 1951)*
- "Truck Robbed on Ankara-Istanbul Highway" (Cumhuriyet, 10.12.51: 3) *(Bolu, 1951)*
- "Bandits Attempt to Rob Each Other" (Cumhuriyet, 18.05.54: 3) *(Hatay, 1954)*
- "Vicious Fugitive and Deserter Killed" (Cumhuriyet, 16.08.54: 5) *(Edirne, 1954)*
- "Monster of Inegöl Allowed to Roam Free" (Cumhuriyet, 19.01.56: 3) *(Bursa, 1956)*
- "Bandit Captured on Train in Ankara" (Cumhuriyet, 24.01.56: 1) *(Ankara, 1956)*
- "Bandit Kozanoğlu Captured while Dressing Wounds" (Cumhuriyet, 26.12.57: 3) *(Adana, 1957)*
- "400 Gendarmes Search for 20 Bandits in Afyon Mountains" (Milliyet, 26.09.58: 1) *(Afyon, 1958)*
- "90 People Robbed on Dinar Highway" (Milliyet, 12.11.58: 1) *(Isparta, 1958)*
- "New Robbery in Isparta" (Cumhuriyet, 24.12.58: 1) *(Isparta, 1958)*
- "Two Bandits in Sivas cannot be Captured" (Cumhuriyet, 22.06.59: 1) *(Sivas, 1959)*
- "Armed Bandit Kidnaps Married Woman in Broad Daylight" (Cumhuriyet, 23.06.59: 5) / "Bandit Returns Kidnapped Woman to Village" (Cumhuriyet, 22.07.59: 3) *(Çanakkale, 1959)*

- “Bandit Kills Two Accomplices” (Cumhuriyet, 23.06.59: 5) *(Sivas, 1959)*
- “Incident of Highway Brigandage in Mudanya” (Cumhuriyet, 08.07.56: 1) *(Bursa, 1959)*
- “Bandit On Run for Five Years Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 28.09.59: 3) *(Denizli 1959)*
- “Bandit Wanted by Police” (Milliyet, 17.07.59: 3, 11.10.59: 5) *(Rize, 1959)*
- “Fugitive with Bomb Kills Two” (Milliyet, 21.10.59: 1) / “Killed Bandit Put on Public Display” (Milliyet, 07.11.59: 5) / “Corpse of Bandit Exhibited” (Cumhuriyet, 07.11.59: 5) *(Sivas, 1959)*
- “Brigandage” (Milliyet, 04.01.60: 1) *(Afyon, 1960)*
- “Robbery in Dinar: 4 Bandits Rob 16 People” (Cumhuriyet, 12.01.60: 5) *(Afyon, 1960)*
- “Vicious Bandit (…) Found Dead” (Milliyet, 05.05.60: 5) *(Ordu, 1960)*
- “Three Armed Bandits Captured in Keskin” (Cumhuriyet, 03.10.60: 1) *(Kırşehir, 1960)*
- “14 Merchants Robbed in Mountains” (Cumhuriyet, 22.09.61: 1) *(Sivas, 1961)*
- “Brigandage in Maraş” (Cumhuriyet, 26.12.61: 5) / “Five Brigands Captured in Maraş” (Cumhuriyet, 30.12.61: 5) *(Maraş: 1961)*
- “3 Masked Bandits Rob 4 Trucks” (Milliyet, 29.03.62: 3) *(Afyon, 1962)*
- “Vicious Bandit Captured while Hiding in Grave” (Cumhuriyet, 01.04.62: 1) *(Kayseri, 1962)*
- “Peasants Celebrate with Flourish of Trumpets after Capture of Two Bandits that Held District to Ransom” (Cumhuriyet, 07.04.62: 5) *(Kayseri, 1962)*
- “2 Bandits Rob Passengers of 6 Vehicles” (Milliyet, 10.04.62: 1) *(Antalya, 1962)*
- “Kamalı Efe Killed” (Milliyet, 02.07.62: 1) *(Manisa, 1962)*
- “Brigands of Yozgat Captured in Ankara” (Milliyet, 06.07.62: 1) *(Ankara, Yozgat, 1962)*
- “Two Bandits Prey on Villages in Sivas” (Milliyet: 14.07.62: 7) *(Sivas, 1962)*
- “16 of 18 Bandits Shot” (Milliyet, 03.08.62: 1) *(Maraş: 1962)*
- “9 Robbers Burn Farm in Kayseri” (Cumhuriyet, 21.08.62: 1) *(Kayseri, 1962)*
- “Bandit of Çankırı Captured in Istanbul” (Cumhuriyet, 03.11.62: 3) *(Istanbul, 1962)*
- “7 Armed and Masked Bandits Hijack 40 Vehicles in Muğla” (Milliyet, 02.09.64: 1) *(Muğla, 1964)*
- “Robbery in Yozgat” (Cumhuriyet, 01.07.65: 1) *(Yozgat, 1965)*
- “3 Bandit Robbers Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 29.12.65: 5) *(Isparta, 1965)*
- “Two Vicious Bandits Flee to Mountains after Killing Peasant (…)” (Cumhuriyet, 18.06.66: 1) *(Sivas, 1966)*
- “Minister of Internal Affairs Goes Bandit Hunting” (Cumhuriyet, 03.11.66: 7) *(Manisa, 1966)*
- “(Minister of Internal Affairs) Sükan in Manisa: Victims of Robbery aren’t Courageous” (Cumhuriyet, 04.11.66: 1) *(Manisa, 1966)*
- “Bandits in Maraş Rob 10 People” (Cumhuriyet, 26.06.67: 5) *(Maraş, 1967)*
- “3 Bandits Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 15.11.67: 1) *(Maraş, 1967)*
- “4 Armed People Hold Up Minibus, Attempt Kidnap of 8 Women” (Cumhuriyet, 12.07.69: 5) *(Denizli, 1969)*
- “3 Highwaymen Captured” (Cumhuriyet, 12.07.69: 5) *(Denizli, 1969)*
- “While Minister States ‘Bandits are Gone’, 2 Vehicles Held Up” (Milliyet, 18.07.70: 1, 9) *(Muğla, 1970)*
- “7 Vehicles Robbed in East Yesterday” (Cumhuriyet, 19.07.69: 7) *(Maraş, 1969)*
- “3 Killed in Blood Feud” (Cumhuriyet, 31.07.69: 5) *(Karabük, 1969)*
- “Two Bandits Killed” (Cumhuriyet, 20.09.71: 7) *(Maraş, 1971)*
- “Fugitive Bandit Captured in Nurhak Mountains” (Cumhuriyet, 10.06.72: 1972) *(Maraş, 1972)*

APPENDIX II

BANDIT PHOTOS

- The most traditional technique of camouflage was, for bandits, wandering around in military outfit:



Hekimo and his gang in soldier outfit (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 3)



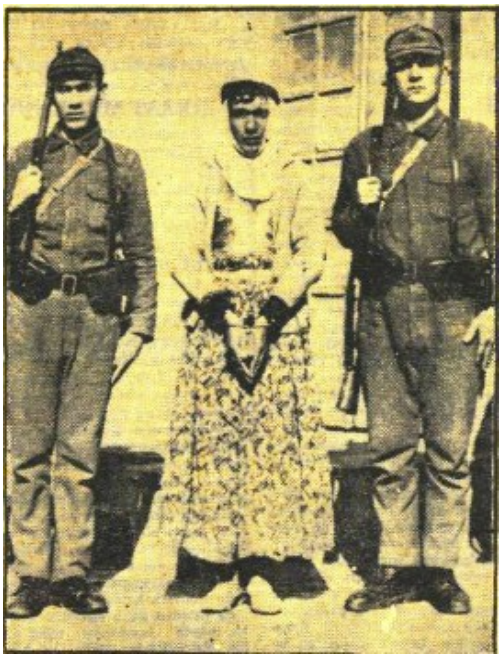
Hekimo on the front is seen like a lieutenant of a regiment of the army. (Çetin, 1975: Vol. 22)





Captured Bandits in Soldier Outfit (Cumhuriyet, 08.03.67, 24.01.67: 3)

- Several bandits used traditional woman outfit as a camouflage to get into their villages:



(Cumhuriyet, 09.02.72: 1)



(Hürriyet, 22.02.71: 1)

- Soldiers' posing with captured bandits to camera had been an old tradition of the army:



Soldiers posing with four captured bandits in Aydın (Cumhuriyet, 20.04.34: 9)



Captured bandits posing with their guns (Cumhuriyet, 24.02.69)

Oral Sources



Ramazanê Botî from Cizîr on the story of Elo Dîno



Şemsettiné Iskender from Esê of Kercews on Kurdish Banditry



Ezizé Iskender from Nusaybin on Kurdish banditry



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Hikmet Zeren (Hekimo) from Istanbul on his own story

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