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DISCOURSE, IDENTITY, AND TRIBAL BANDITRY: A CASE STUDY ON OTTOMAN AYNTÂB

In the history of the Ottoman Empire, banditry was an enduring phenomenon, beginning at least in the fifteenth century, becoming chronic in the sixteenth century, and continuing through the end of the empire in the twentieth century. The conflict began with Ottoman expansion eastward into the Turcoman principalities of west and central Anatolia and led some of the power holders of these regions to side with the Mongolian armies led by Timur, who soundly defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara in 1402.¹ Over the course of several decades, all of these regions were once again annexed to the Ottoman Empire, and with the defeat of Uzun Hasan of the Akkoyunlu at the Battle of Otlukbeli in 1473, the Ottomans largely succeeded in eliminating political opposition in Anatolia.

However, a new threat soon emerged from two mass movements inspired by the Shia Islam of Safavid Iran. In the second decade of the sixteenth century, these movements were harshly oppressed, and the Safavids were defeated at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. But, social protests and banditry were never really eliminated. In the second half of the sixteenth century, struggles with the Celali rebels or bandits reached a new peak. The most serious rebels of the period were largely suppressed between 1607 and 1610, with the bloody expeditions of Kuyucu Murad.² Subsequently, the *ayans* would challenge the central state on the periphery many times throughout the eighteenth century, and finally, ethnic uprisings in the nineteenth century would destroy state authority, especially in the Balkans.

In addition to the large-scale upheavals, there always was small-scale banditry, which has rarely attracted attention from historians.³ Consequently, no one has offered a holistic approach and a theoretical model aimed at discovering the underlying bases and common characteristics of all these periods of disorder. This

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¹ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, trans. M. A. Yekta Saraç Kemal Yavuz (İstanbul: Gökkuş, 2007), p. 120.

² *Kuyucu* literally means "well digger," and this epithet was ascribed to the grand vizier Murad when he filled numerous holes with more than a hundred thousand rebel corpses. İbrahim Peçevî, *Peçevî Tarihi*, trans. Murat Uraz, 2 vols., vol. 2 (İstanbul: Son Telgraf Matbaası, 1969), p. 436.

³ Çağatay Uluçay was the first to study banditry as an enduring phenomenon. M. Çağatay Uluçay, *XVII. Asırda Saruhan'da Eşkiyalık ve Halk Hareketleri* (İstanbul: Resimli Ay, 1944); M. Çağatay Uluçay, *18 ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Saruhan'da Eşkiyalık ve Halk Hareketleri* (İstanbul: Berksoy, 1955).

paper will attempt to fill this gap by means of a microhistorical analysis that employs certain theories developed in social psychology and historical sociology.

In 1954, psychologists divided 22 young boys of the same age and from similar backgrounds into two groups and sent them to a summer camp. The test subjects were allowed to have contact with each other, which led them to name themselves "the Rattlers" and "the Eagles." While these initial contacts resulted in the formation of group identities, various competitions between the groups led to a certain level of antagonism and attempts to raid each other's cabins.⁴ This experiment, ingeniously designed by Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues and considered one of the classic demonstrations of realistic group conflict theory, shows how group identity brings about conflict and a primitive form of banditry.

Several years later, a romantic view of banditry that reached its peak in the communist world⁵ found a powerful theoretical base in the work of the distinguished historian Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm's idea of "social banditry"⁶ was mixed with a typical Marxist approach and a strong flavor of history from below. In its basic sense, this paper will attempt to revitalize Hobsbawm's idea by applying realistic conflict theory to the judicial records (*kadı sicilleri*) of one small town, a *sancak* center of the Ottoman Empire, Ayntâb (the modern Antep or Gaziantep).

Richard W. Slatta's definition of banditry, "taking property by force or the threat of force, often done by a group, usually of men,"⁷ reflects a consensus, but a historian does not have the luxury of so clearly detaching banditry from other outlaw activities. Today it is hardly uncommon to be robbed by a gang by force or the threat of force in a deserted area of a city, yet we do not call such robbers "bandits." The main problem with Slatta's definition is that the action in question—"taking property by force or the threat of force"—is given a determining role in defining of the identity of the actor, i.e., whether it is banditry or not. However, is it because they commit a crime defined as "banditry" that we call some criminals bandits, or is it because we know or suppose them to be "bandits" that we stigmatize their actions as banditry? Consider the abduction of females and young boys, which, primary sources show, was a pervasive mode of banditry in the Ottoman Empire.⁸ Obviously

⁴ Muzafer Sherif et al., *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

⁵ Tomas Balkelis, "Social Banditry and Nation-Making: The Myth of a Lithuanian Robber," *Past and Present*, no. 198 (2008).

⁶ He first formulated his idea in 1959 and developed it in a second work in 1969. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1965), Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (United States: Delacorte, 1969).

⁷ Richard W. Slatta, "Eric J. Hobsbawm's Social Bandit: A Critique and Revision," *A Contracorriente* 1, no. 2 (2004), p. 22.

⁸ Uluçay cites numerous cases in *XVII. Asırda Saruhan'da Eşkiyalık ve Halk Hareketleri*. David M. Hart mentions Arabic bandits who kidnapped females for sexual purposes and/or for selling on the local market. *Banditry in Islam: Case Studies from Morocco, Algeria and the West Frontier* (Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, England: Middle East And North African Studies Press, 1987), p. 15.

such kidnapping could be treated as banditry, but it would be difficult to do so without knowing the reason behind the kidnapping documented in the archival sources. After all, female abduction (*kız kaçırma*) is a sociological phenomenon still found in many cultures, let alone in history, particularly in rural communities where there are strict social rules concerning marriage.⁹

Because, in the definition of banditry, the identity of the actor is as important as the nature of the act, there must be a process through which an actor is given the identity of "bandit." In this process, becoming a fugitive by escaping from or resisting justice is as important as the commission of the crime itself.¹⁰ It is then, as the criminals becoming a fugitive, that an anti-bandit discourse ascribes banditry to the identity of the one who resists. Ultimately, the process itself contributes to the reproduction of banditry, and for historians, what is offered by the evidence is only this last stage of the process. Therefore, what we see as banditry is in reality nothing but a discourse. As a result, this paper will not attempt to offer a superior or ideal definition of banditry but rather an analysis of this discourse.

"Good" and the "Bad" Bandits

The concept of banditry serves as a melting pot in which the sociological or cultural dimensions of any incident can easily become vague. Eric Hobsbawm, one of the first historians to realize this troublesome aspect of any comprehensive definition of banditry,¹¹ narrowed his analysis to "some kind of robbery" that is defined through the perception of peasants:

[Social bandits] are *not* regarded as simple criminals by public opinion ... they are peasant outlaws whom the lord and the state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions,

⁹ In this regard, one judicial case from Ayntâb dated 1716 presents an intriguing example. A certain Ömer decided to give his daughter Hatice in marriage to his nephew (most probably his sister's son), but his brother's son Ali entered Ömer's home with three companions (all three of whom were registered as bandits) and carried off Hatice by force to solemnize the marriage before an imam. See ACR 67, (5 Zilhicce 1128/19 November 1716), p. 44. It is clear that Ali's crude behavior was acceptable within the terms of the local social contract, even if it was not in conformity with the law. According to the customs of a patriarchal community, which are still prevalent in that region, the priority of marriage to a daughter belongs to one of her father's brothers' sons. Sometimes, only if the paternal uncle's son declares he will not marry his cousin, can the girl be given in marriage to anyone else.

¹⁰ As Işık Tamdoğan cogently asserted, nomadic tribes could be stigmatized as bandits whenever they resisted governmental forces. Işık Tamdoğan, "Le Nezir Ou Les Relations Entre Les Bandits, Les Nomades Et L'état Dans La Çukurova Du XVIIIe Siècle," in *Sociétés Rurales Ottomanes*, ed. Mohammad Afifi et al. (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2005), pp. 260-261.

¹¹ "For the law, anyone belonging to a group of men who attack and rob with violence is a bandit, from those who snatch pay rolls on an urban street corner to organized insurgents or guerillas who happen not to be officially recognized as such." Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 17.

avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported.¹²

This definition replaces a state discourse with a popular one in which the ideology of the "ruled classes" supplants that of the "ruling classes." In order to reflect "public opinion," then, the sources must be produced not by the ruling elite, but by the ruled peasants, who transmit their opinions through ballads.¹³

Though this approach found widespread acceptance,¹⁴ recent studies have incorporated revisionist critiques.¹⁵ For Anton Blok, ballads are much more likely to consist of "myths" and "legends" about bandits and to be related to the middle class more than to peasants.¹⁶ This may have a degree of truth in certain cases,¹⁷ but the main problem concerns the very basis of such songs, rather than the opinions of different classes. As Çağatay Uluçay cogently warns us about their objectivity; "It is not uncommon to see that they [poets] depicted murderers for whom they showed sympathy as heroes, and depicted innocent people whom they despised as monsters."¹⁸ In one example of an opaque historical figure who was reinvented in a perfect form, as a flawless hero, Şeyh Bedreddin—a religious figure attempting to

¹² Ibid., p. 17.

¹³ Several years before Hobsbawm, Çağatay Uluçay expressed the same enthusiasm for ballads as sources for studying banditry in Ottoman history: "Those who deal with the history of banditry have to take advantage of the songs and epics about banditry, which reflect public opinion." M. Çağatay Uluçay, "Üç Eşkiya Türküsü," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 13(1958), p. 85.

¹⁴ This approach inspired numerous studies in different parts of the globe. Allen Isaacman, "Social Banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique, 1894-1907: An Expression of Early Peasant Protest," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 4, no. 1 (1977); Brent D. Shaw, "Bandits in the Roman Empire," *Past & Present*, no. 105 (1984); and Elizabeth J. Perry, "Social Banditry Revisited: The Case of Bai Lang, a Chinese Brigand," *Modern China* 9, no. 3 (1983) are only few of them. It also inspired several works on Ottoman banditry. Mehmet Bayrak's *Eşkiyalık ve Eşkiya Türküleri* [Banditry and Bandit Ballads] (Ankara: Yorum, 1985) is a valuable collection of ballads, whose introduction is a good application of Hobsbawm's approach. Sabri Yetkin, who studied the western Anatolian bandits known as *efes*, does not insist on the dichotomy of ruling and ruled classes but posits only certain agents of the government as "bad" exploiters who were resisted by peasant heroes (social bandits). *Ege'de Eşkiyalar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996). Also, Nagihan Gür, " 'Sosyal Haydut' Düzleminden 'Halk Kahramanı' Statüsüne Bir Yükseliş: Köroğlu ve Sergüzeşti," *Milli Folklor* 20, no. 79 (2008).

¹⁵ Richard W. Slatta, "Bandits and Rural Social History: A Comment on Joseph," *Latin American Review* 26, no. 1 (1991), and Gilbert M. Joseph, "On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance," *Latin American Research Review* 25, no. 3 (1990) offer a general review of such revisionist critiques. See also Hart, *Banditry in Islam: Case Studies from Morocco, Algeria and the West Frontier*; Anton Blok, "The Peasant and Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 4 (1972) and an extended version of that article in Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge, U.K.; Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Blok, "The Peasant and Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," p. 500.

¹⁷ The Lithuanian robber Blinda is a good example. Balkelis, "Social Banditry and Nation-Making: The Myth of a Lithuanian Robber."

¹⁸ Uluçay, "Üç Eşkiya Türküsü," p. 86

take advantage of the interregnum period (1402–1413) of Ottoman history—was gradually transformed into a source of socialist and national pride.¹⁹

Having emphasized that myth cannot be separated from reality, Hobsbawm insisted that since public opinion depicts certain bandits as “good” and others as “bad,” banditry can be seen as a kind of social protest.²⁰ In doing so, he seemed to ignore several dimensions of his sources. First of all, ballads have an artistic dimension, and their heroes may owe their fame to the aesthetic quality of the pieces in which they appear. In addition, the balladeer, through his or her own natural talent and socio-cultural experiences, gives a story another aesthetic dimension. Several years ago, I observed an elderly female *dengbej* (balladeer) visit my village from a remote place to sing, in return for some gifts, an impromptu lament for a woman who had died young. Depending on the power of the lament, the deceased could become widely known and grow into a public figure or she would be forgotten. In this case, the elderly woman was both a talented artist who knew how to have an effect on people and a professional observer of cultural codes. The singing of a ballad is something not every peasant is capable of. Although in my example it may be relatively unimportant that the sister of the deceased woman gave the *dengbej* the pertinent details of her sister’s life, the sources can be highly important in depicting a character who is a bandit.

Those who transmit ballads to distant places or to subsequent generations may also enhance the popularity of the ballad’s hero. This is true of the relatively new musical genre known as Anatolian rock, which has repopularized many ballads. Similarly, geographical distance may promote the idealization of a bandit. Spread to different regions via cassette tapes, a ballad sung for Osman—a bandit from a village neighboring mine who was still active in the 1960s—described him as an ideal type. In fact, Osman, who was very good to the residents of neighboring villages, was very cruel towards others and was used by local landlords (*aghās*) against peasants in different regions²¹—a duality that is hardly seen in the ballad composed for him.

Considering all of these factors, it becomes questionable whether ballads truly reflect the perception of peasants. Most often, they reflect only the opinion of a

¹⁹ In his search for a historical “national pride of the Turkish proletariat,” the famous poet Nazım Hikmet reinvented Şeyh Bedreddin in 1936. Nazım Hikmet, *Benerci Kendini Niçin Öldürdü* (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1987), pp. 270–271.

²⁰ Eric J. Hobsbawm, “Social Bandits: Reply,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 4 (1972), pp. 503–4.

²¹ Many elderly people from neighboring villages who saw Osman in their own lifetime agree that he was a hero who protected them. To emphasize this, they frequently said that “even a woman who went to work alone on her lands far from the village feared nothing when he [Osman] was in the mountains.” However, the same villagers were also quite aware that he was cruel to some peasants with whom certain landlords had problems. Once, my grandfather traveled to the city of Şanlıurfa, where he met a man who, upon finding out that my grandfather lived in a village neighboring that of Osman, astonished my grandfather by asking whether he had seen Osman with his own eyes, as if just seeing a man like Osman was something extraordinary.

specific segment of society, and only over time or distance, do they come to reflect a more comprehensive "public opinion."²² Far from wholly devaluing ballads for the purposes of a study such as this one, however, I would simply like to emphasize their limits as raw material for such inquiries.

Hobsbawm's attempt to reflect the bandit's side in a theoretically well-constructed analysis was so revolutionary that the study of banditry can be divided into two periods: before Hobsbawm and after Hobsbawm. Nonetheless, if ballads reflect public opinion and if public opinion is the main determinant of social banditry, then to what extent can Hobsbawm's methodology be said to surpass Rankean source-based history? By approaching the issue in this manner, Hobsbawm put himself in a trap. In reality, it is ultimately Hobsbawm's opinion, more than public opinion that determines the eligibility of a bandit for sociality. Let me give an example to test this point. In 1729, a group of peasants from six villages testified in the court of Ayntâb that while they were content with the tax collector, who did not act in opposition to the law or extract anything more than the imperial taxes levied on them, a group of bandits from their villages had prevented him from collecting taxes. They asked that these bandits be exiled to Rakka, an Ottoman province of northeastern Syria.²³ Were these bandits social bandits because they protected peasants and resisted governmental exploitation, or were they not social bandits because, in the opinion of the public, they were "bad" criminals? As a Marxist historian, would Hobsbawm underline the "false consciousness" of the testifying peasants in order to prove these bandits were social? Or would he condemn the bandits as freebooters since the peasants did not appreciate their activity?²⁴

The "universal conditions" that produce social banditry actually are the same as those that produce banditry without sociality. So, let us disregard the matter of public opinion for the moment to consider how and why similar determinants defined some bandits as "bad" and others as "good." Is it certain bandits' lack of "class consciousness" or their merciless egoism that makes them anti-social? Again, it seems that what determines the sociality of a bandit is not only public opinion, but also the historian's opinion. Otherwise, the definition would not be biased against

²² Hobsbawm himself does not wholly deny this reality, claiming that "a man may be [a] social bandit on his native mountains, [but] a mere robber on the plains." *Bandits*, p. 18.

²³ ACR 81, (Evail-i Rebiülahir 1142/End of October 1729), p. 214.

²⁴ By "traditional peasant societies," Hobsbawm means "all types of human society which lie between the evolutionary phase of tribal and kinship organization, and modern capitalist and industrial society, but including the phases of disintegrating kinship society and the transition to agrarian capitalism." *Bandits*, p. 18. The range that Hobsbawm proposes for social banditry, from egalitarian societies to modern capitalist societies, includes all class societies prior to modern capitalist societies. In other words, the lack of stratification in kinship and tribal societies and the availability of the means of effective control put a check on social banditry. What he means by "social banditry" thus seems to be nothing but a kind of Marxist sub-class conflict.

tribes or raiders who were "not social bandits"²⁵ yet were the heroes of many ballads.

Karen Barkey's recent study on banditry in the Ottoman Empire, though it offers a sort of anti-thesis to Hobsbawm's idea of social banditry, is equally problematic. Barkey attempts to answer the question: "Why did Ottoman peasants not engage in rebellious activity on their own or in alliance with other groups?"²⁶ Just as Hobsbawm based his concept of social banditry simply on the peasantry, Barkey bases hers on the same ground. And just as Hobsbawm constructed a stereotypical category of "social banditry," Barkey offers a no less stereotypical anti-social banditry.²⁷ She tends to see all bandits as *levends* (irregular mercenaries) or *suhtes* (students of religious schools), two notorious groups that became almost identical with banditry in the second half of the sixteenth century. Although Barkey may be right in depicting such bandits as more anti-public than pro-public, looking at the period more carefully would have shown her peasants positioning themselves beside, and even acting on behalf of, those bandit groups.

These groups may not have been social bandits, but the social dimensions of some of their acts cannot be denied. Cennetoğlu, who had been a *timar*-holder, was supported by the people in return for protection against the oppression of the *beglerbegi* (provincial governor) and his men.²⁸ Abaza Kara Hasan Pasha was a rebellious Ottoman governor whose successes against Ottoman armies made him

²⁵ Hobsbawm implies that the societal limits of bad banditry were broader than those of social banditry. From this, one can understand that, though some societies may produce banditry, they may not produce social banditry. For example, in tribal or kinship societies lacking stratification, as among the Bedouins, raiding is a *modus operandi*, but social banditry cannot emerge. *Ibid.*, p. 18. David M. Hart, on the other hand, disproves this point by citing the example of a famous bandit of Morocco, 'Ali l-Bu Frahi ('Ali the Six Fingered), who he thinks was a social bandit. "From Hobsbawm's point of view the Robin Hood syndrome was certainly present in 'Ali's story. 'Ali evidently never molested the poor. Wealthy caravaneers or traders certainly suffered from his depredations, but unless met with resistance his robberies were bloodless ... When weddings took place, he would even appear with a gift for the bridegroom." *Banditry in Islam: Case Studies from Morocco, Algeria and the West Frontier*, p. 10.

²⁶ Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, The Wilder House Series in Politics, History, and Culture (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 11.

²⁷ She sees the bandits as "the real malefactors of the Rural Society." *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁸ According to Çağatay Uluçay, even though the state propagated the idea that Cennetoğlu was misleading people, he was supported by the people and defended them against governmental authorities. *XVII. Asırda Saruhan'da Eşkiyalik ve Halk Hareketleri*, pp. 31-2. However, in Barkey's view, Cennetoğlu declared himself as a *timar*-holder and fought in the name of other *timar*-holders. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, p. 225. Though Barkey refers to Uluçay's work, Uluçay, on the contrary, says that those same *timar*-holders showed their dissatisfaction with Cennetoğlu by complaining of him to the government. *XVII. Asırda Saruhan'da Eşkiyalik ve Halk Hareketleri*, p. 33.

admired by soldiers and ordinary people alike.²⁹ Finally, the rebellion of Canpoladoğlu Ali Pasha at the beginning of the seventeenth century created one of the greatest problems for the government of the time. When he was finally stopped, he was on the verge of forming an independent state in northern Syria. Although he eventually recruited a number of mercenaries (*sekbân*), numerous Kurdish, Turcoman, and Arab tribes had provided his army with many warriors.³⁰ Without public support, these leaders would not have been able to persist in their opposition to the state, nor would they have been able to challenge the Ottoman forces more than once.

When historians base their analysis on such unclear units as "peasantry" and "society," banditry automatically becomes an in-group phenomenon. By contrast, treating banditry as an inter-group phenomenon can yield an explanatory model that suggests how highway robbery and government-supported forays beyond the frontiers were in essence the same. Colin Tudge's observation of the symbolic similarity between bandits and Neanderthals in the clash between the Neanderthals and the Cro-Magnons some 35,000–40,000 years ago³¹ points to the clash *between*, rather than *within*, social groups, making it theoretically impossible to talk about inequality and stratification.

Therefore, we do not look for banditry in a society that is universally peasant; we look for it in a society divided along ethnic, socio-cultural, religious, economic, fraternal, and professional lines. As Slatta says, "What united people behind outlaw gangs more often were kinship, friendship, and region—not class."³² Hobsbawm's "public opinion," in this sense, cannot be considered without such divisions. Furthermore, treating banditry as an inter-group activity can better reveal its dualistic character in which the good bandit of one group may be the enemy of another. In the words of Paul Vanderwood:

An outlaw to one person may be a hero to another. One merchant keeps a weapon to fend off brigands; another forms a partnership with bandits for their mutual profit. One campesino hides a hunted felon from would-be captors; others help police to hunt him down. An entire community might defend a bandit because the brigand's activities are not considered to be outside the

²⁹ A contemporary chronicler, Mehmed Halife, notes that the majority of ordinary people began to think that he was God's chosen one and, believing that he would bring them benefaction, prayed constantly for his success. Mehmed Halife, *Tarih-i Gilmânî*, trans. Kâmil Su (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1986), p. 76.

³⁰ William J. Griswold, *Anadolu'da Büyük İsyan, 1591-1611* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002), p. 71.

³¹ Colin Tudge, *Neanderthals, Bandits and Farmers: How Agriculture Really Began* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), pp. 26-8.

³² Slatta, "Bandits and Rural Social History: A Comment on Joseph," p. 147.

morality and standards of the community. But the same bandolero might not find succor in a nearby village...³³

Reflections of Banditry in the Ottoman Court

After the turn of the eighteenth century, enduring wars forced the Ottoman government to levy such new taxes as the *imdadiyye* and *hazariyye*,³⁴ and the three-year contracts of tax farms (*iltizam*) were replaced by the lifelong contracts of *malikanes*.³⁵ As the authority of the *ayans* gradually surpassed the authority of the government in rural areas, in the Ayntâb region, the Reşvanzâde, the Battalzâde, and the Daltabanzâde were among the notables who had immense tribal power, and Reşvanzâde Halil, for instance, was a leader of the Reşvan tribe.³⁶ Daltabanzâde Mehmet Ali, who was most likely tribal in origin, pillaged Ayntâb and Aleppo several times together with Arab, Kurdish, and Turcoman tribes.³⁷ During this period, Ayntâb underwent Arab invasions from the south and Turcoman invasions from the north that led to peasant migration and famine.³⁸ In 1691, the government began to (re)settle many tribes in northern Syria in order to create a buffer zone against the Arab tribes, and this led, at the close of the century, to chaos in southern Anatolia from the eastern Mediterranean coast all the way to the empire's eastern border.³⁹ As the newly settled tribes began to leave their settlements and roam, the state considered them, and any who helped them, bandits, for there was really no way these migrants could avoid violence and mobilizing the other tribes they confronted. The cosmopolitan district of Ayntâb, peopled by different Arab, Turcoman, and Kurdish tribes, was located in this zone and was among the places most affected by the turmoil that lasted until at least 1865, when the government

³³ Paul J. Vanderwood, "Nineteenth-Century Mexico's Profiteering Bandits," in *Banditos: The Varieties of Latin American Banditry*, ed. Richard W. Slatta, Contributions in Criminology and Penology (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 26.

³⁴ Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntâb in the 17th Century* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 2.

³⁵ Mehmet Genç, "Osmanlı Maliyesinde Malikane Sistemi" (paper presented at the Türk İktisat Semineri, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 8-9 Haziran 1973).

³⁶ Faruk Söylemez, *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Yönetimi: Rişvan Aşireti Örneği* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2007).

³⁷ İsmail Kıvrım, "Kilis ve A'zaz Voyvodası Daltaban-Zâde Mehmed Ali Paşa ve Muhallefâtı," *OTAM*, no. 24 (2008), p. 152. For the conflict between Mehmet Ali and Battalzâde, see Hüseyin Çınar, "18. Yüzyılda Ayntâb'da Bir Yerel Gücün Yükselişi ve Düşüşü: Battalzâdeler (Battaloğulları)," in *XIV. Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara: TTK, 2006).

³⁸ ACR 64, (5 Cemazıyelevvel 1124/June 10, 1712), p. 45.

³⁹ For details of this settlement policy, see Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskânı* (İstanbul: Eren, 1987); Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskân Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996); Muhsin Soyudoğan, "Tribal Banditry in Ottoman Ayntâb" (M.A. Thesis, Bilkent University, 2005).

operation known as *fırka-i islahiyye* resettled and reorganized most of the tribes in line with new central policies.⁴⁰

To analyze this period, the selective-source method of Hobsbawm would be vulnerable to ignoring the opinion of certain segments of society, so this paper relies on a more systematic usage of the sources. Some 43 volumes of court records—all those dated between 1691 and 1731—were consulted. Since a local historian, Cemil Cahit Güzelbey, had previously published many interesting cases spanning the years 1729 to 1909,⁴¹ it was possible to investigate a very long period of time beginning in the 1690s. There are three main types of sources that can be used for a systematic analysis of a specific district in the Ottoman Empire: land surveys (*tahrir defterleri*), tax surveys (*cizye-avarız defterleri*), and court records (*şer'iyye sicilleri*). By the end of the sixteenth century the tradition of conducting land surveys had ceased, and tax surveys can hardly be used for an analysis of banditry, leaving court records almost the sole source for a systematic analysis of daily practices in rural society.⁴² Although not all conflicts were taken to the court,⁴³ these records contain an especially rich variety of documents, such as decrees sent from the capital or by governors, petitions, testimonies, notarial transactions and negotiations, death records, trial records, and various kinds of reports. They reflect not only governmental discourse, but also the efforts of various groups to manipulate this discourse in their conflicts with others.⁴⁴ Whether a complainant intended to accuse someone in court of banditry or simply was employing a cliché, it is certain that while some people were composing ballads, others were clearly disenchanted by these so-called bandits.

⁴⁰ Paul Dumont, "1865 Tarihinde Güney-Doğu Anadolu'nun Islahı," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 10-11 (1979-80); Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Fırka-I Islahiye ve Yapmış Olduğu İskan," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, no. 27 (1973).

⁴¹ Cemil Cahit Güzelbey, *Gaziantep Şer'i Mahkeme Sicilleri (Cilt 153 - 160)*, vol. 1 (Gaziantep: Gaziantep Kültür Derneği, 1966); Cemil Cahit Güzelbey, *Gaziantep Şer'i Mahkeme Sicilleri (Cilt 144-152)*, vol. 2 (Gaziantep: Gaziantep Kültür Derneği, 1966); Cemil Cahit Güzelbey, *Şer'i Mahkeme Sicilleri (Cilt 142 - 143)*, vol. 3 (Gaziantep: Gaziantep Kültür Derneği, 1966); Cemil Cahit Güzelbey and Hulusi Yetkin, *Gaziantep Şer'i Mahkeme Sicilleri* (vols. 81-141) (Gaziantep: Gaziantep Kültür Derneği, 1970).

⁴² Of course, certain chronicles and *mühimme* (concerning state affairs) and *şikayat* (state responses to petitions) records kept by the sultan's court can provide some ancillary information as well.

⁴³ Leslie Pierce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (London: University of California Press, 2003), p. 3. We can assume that many problems were solved within or between families, tribes, or small communities. While there has been no research on such informal justice in the Ottoman Empire, a good example of its potential is Christine D. Worobec, "Horse Thieves and Peasant Justice in Post-Emancipation Imperial Russia," *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 2 (1987).

⁴⁴ Pierce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*, pp. 4-5. Also see especially the section "Balance of Power in the Court" in Boğaç Ergene, *Local Court, Provincial Society, and Justice in the Ottoman Empire: Legal Practice and Dispute Resolution in Çankırı and Kastamonu (1652-1744)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

Hobsbawm notes that a government could consider almost every kind of robbing activity to be banditry, but the Ottoman government did not resort to such an umbrella definition. Of the various terms it used for banditry,⁴⁵ in the primary sources examined for this study the most common is *şaki* (plural *eşkiya*), derived from the Arabic *shaqāwa* (Turkish: *şekavet*), meaning both “to be miserable, unhappy, wretched,” and “to make someone miserable, unhappy, wretched.” The sources often refer to people as being involved in *şekavet* or being malice (*fesad*) rather than directly naming them as bandits. Considering a bandit a wretched person who creates further wretchedness, albeit apt to the assertion that economically deprived people are more inclined to banditry, represents only one side of the coin. In Ottoman Ayntâb, where banditry⁴⁶ was a constant of tribal life, disloyalty by tribes or conflicts, which were often classified as banditry, were not the result of economic causes.

In the court registers, certain behavior by governmental officials in the countryside was often termed differently from similar behavior by ordinary people. Hence governmental officials committed oppression, hostility, and injustice (*zulüm* and *te'addi*),⁴⁷ rather than banditry (*şekavet*), except when they went far beyond the limits of the government's toleration. This distinction reveals the Ottoman perception of the major socio-political differentiation between the ruling military class (*askeri*) and the ruled public (*reaya*, or taxpayers) and how banditry came to be identified with the “scum” and “the rabble” (*erazil*, *ayak takımı*). In short, banditry became a highly ideological discourse despite the lack of a uniform concept of banditry in the Ottoman sources, which mention at least three different types of banditry and bandit.

Thief Bandits: Ottomans used *sarik* (thief) or *sarik eşkiyası* (thief bandits) for a single person or a small gang who burgled a house or robbed a person, mostly at night in such residential areas as villages, towns, and cities. Choosing an isolated street to rob a person or break into a house, thief bandits who came face to face with their victims rarely hesitated to use force. They tended to be accused of roaming the

⁴⁵ *Haydut* (derived from the Hungarian *haiduk* or vice versa), *türedi*, *harami* or *haramzade*, *yağmakaran*, and *şaki* (pl. *eşkiya*) were the main terms used for bandits. From the late sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries, however, various illegal activities were also known by the term *celali*, derived from the name of Şeyh Celal, who had rebelled against the state at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Şeyh Celal actually was part of another wave of violence that had begun in the late fifteenth century and continued into the first half of the sixteenth century, known as *Kızılbaş* (lit. redhead; supporters of Ali, the fourth caliph and the first Shia Imam) rebellions. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bandits were known in western Anatolia as *eşe* or *zeybek*.

⁴⁶ John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821-1912* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 239.

⁴⁷ Ahmet Mumcu, *Osmanlı Hukukunda Zulüm Kavramı* (Ankara: Birey ve Toplum, 1985), p. 9.

streets at night while armed with “tools of war/fatal tools” (*alet-i harb*)⁴⁸ and/or of being together with women or prostitutes in an “immoral way.”⁴⁹

According to Barkey, “Hundreds of court documents attest that bandits ... paraded around with prostitutes, and even violated mosques with insults and disruption.”⁵⁰ At least some of these “bandits,” however, were most likely varieties of thief, recorded as bandits in the majority of documents when they should instead be accepted as what Hobsbawm calls “simple criminals.” Although it would be highly problematic to claim that drinking wine or “parad[ing] around with prostitutes”—if they really were prostitutes—was banditry, comparing formal complaints with decrees sent by the government or by local governors suggests that ordinary people labeled as “banditry” not only drinking wine and consorting with women but even playing songs on the *saz*, a traditional stringed instrument.⁵¹

In rural areas, the essential difference between the “simple criminals” and bandits becomes obscure. Thieves engaged in highway robbery as part of large bandit groups, but apparently lacking the courage of bandits, they focused on single travelers or small groups. They also attacked people in isolated areas and, without hesitation, would break into their own neighbors’ houses or steal their animals.

Highway Robbers: Ebusuud Efendi (1490–1574), the *şeyhülislam* of the Ottoman Empire between 1545 and 1574 who had a great impact on Ottoman ideology, explained the Islamic understanding of highway robbery: They will be accepted as highway robbers even if it is in the city that they waylay passersby while armed. They will also be accepted as highway robbers if, outside of the city where protection is impossible, or at night in the city, they attempt to kill people using stone or wood.⁵²

In Ottoman documents, this kind of bandit was recorded as *kutta-i tarik eşkiyası* (waylaying bandits, highway robbers) or simply as *kutta-i tarik* (highwaymen), an Arabic term that refers more precisely to an archetypal banditry. At any rate, in the relevant documents *kutta-i tarik*s were bandits who attacked any target of economic value that moved along roads, including caravans, tradesmen,

⁴⁸ “Tools of war” included any kind of weapon, such as a dagger, sword, bow, pistol or rifle. The sources suggest not everyone was allowed to carry such weapons in daily life, which is why people who did were labeled bandits or vagabonds.

⁴⁹ In one case, people from the same neighborhood in the city of Ayntâb blamed a woman named Ayşe for being involved with bandits both day and night. ACR 61, (Evahir-i Muahrrem 1125/25 February 1713), p. 83.

⁵⁰ Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, p. 145.

⁵¹ Some people from the village of Aril accused other men from the same village of being bandits because they were carrying tools of war, drinking wine, and bothering people. ACR 51, (20 Rebiülevvel 1112/September 3, 1700), p. 225. In another case, a man was accused of always meeting with bandits and playing the *saz* with them. ACR 59, (Gurre-i Zilhicce 1120/February 10, 1709) p. 183. The *saz* is generally used by the Alevis in their rituals. Following the Alevi persecutions of the first half of the sixteenth century, these rituals may have become more targeted.

⁵² M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi'nin Fetvalarına Göre Kanuni Devrinde Osmanlı Hayatı: Fetava-Yı Ebussu'ud Efendi* (İstanbul: Şule, 1998), p. 240.

travelers, convoys of pilgrims, or military convoys carrying provisions for the army. They would generally attack at strategic points along roads, such as mountain passes or deep valleys, but relatively powerful bandit groups also attacked on open plains. Unlike thieves, they resorted to violence only when they faced serious resistance.

Rebellion and Rampage: I prefer to include rebellion (*isyan* or *ihtilal*) within the concept of banditry because they are virtually inseparable, and in documents there may always be some arbitrariness in qualifying a crime. The government often referred to tribes as sources of disorder (banditry) and disobedience (rebellion), as tribes tended to take part in both. Historically, in many cases, banditry preceded rebellions and also was a method of violence used in rebellions. For example, Şahkulu began with brigandage and murder before burning and destroying everything in his path. Zünun Baba, leader of another rebellion, began by killing the son of Mustafa Bey, the *sanjaqbegi* of Bozok, the judge, and his deputy (*naib*) in 1516, and then proceeded to loot their properties. The rebel Kalender likewise began with highway robbery and murder.⁵³

In the sources, some activities, which might be termed *rampage*, were classified by the government as causing misery (*şekavet*) or named as rebellion and insubordination (*isyan ve tuğyan*), though in essence they are not in form of highway robbery, nor are they typical rebellions. Among them were conflicts between tribes as well as tribal invasions (*istila*), raids and looting (*yağma*). These acts usually occurred when nomadic tribes were performing their seasonal migrations or during any instance of hostility and scarcity of resources.

In the Ottoman legal code and in numerous cases, the terms used for tribal banditry were *baghy* or *baği* (politically motivated banditry) and *dağı*⁵⁴ (highlander). Economically motivated banditry fell under a separate concept (*hirabe*).⁵⁵ Usually, rebellion and rampage were treated as *baghy*, while other cases were treated as *hirabe*. Punishments also followed the same distinction, at least in theory.

According to Islamic law, theft and banditry counted among the *hadd* or *hudud* penalties that are prescribed punishment in the Qur'an: theft, by the amputation of one or more limbs; murder, by *qisas* (retaliation). *Baghy*, in contrast, comes under the category of *ta'zir* and *siyasa* penalties in which punishment is decided upon by the ruler or by jurists.⁵⁶ In this study, I do not intend to prove how Ottoman law remained loyal to the Islamic Sharia⁵⁷ or to show how *hadd* penalties were harsher

⁵³ Mustafa Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, 1965), pp. 88-92.

⁵⁴ Being unsure whether there is a specific terminological meaning of *dağı*, I choose to keep it as it is. Most likely, the term indicates the functions served by mountains in political upheavals and banditry.

⁵⁵ Mustafa Avcı, *Osmanlı Hukukunda Suçlar ve Cezalar* (İstanbul: Gökkuş, 2004), p. 301.

⁵⁶ Rudolph Peters, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law: Theory and Practice from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 7; Avcı, *Osmanlı Hukukunda Suçlar ve Cezalar*, p. 361.

⁵⁷ Some historians view what the Ottomans called *örf* (customs) as part of Sharia law because Islam allows rulers to decide punishment when no punishment is clearly delineated in the Qur'an. In this sense, the Ottomans could be seen as loyal followers of Islamic law. Ahmet

than *ta'zir* penalties or vice versa.⁵⁸ Rather, I intend to emphasize how similar activities in different times could be labeled differently because in practice it was not so easy to create a clear-cut differentiation among these types of crime.⁵⁹ As a result, the crime with which a particular action should be charged became no more than a discourse,⁶⁰ and so was not exempt from either the government's intentions or those of the conflicting parties, nor was it independent of the social and political power enjoyed by tribes.⁶¹ For this reason, trials produced a wide range of decisions, including imprisonment, remission, negotiations, contracts of deterrence (*nezir*), hard labor, capital punishment, banishment, and massacre.⁶²

Given the different dimensions of tribal banditry in the Ottoman Empire, bandits who targeted peasants might be considered "anti-social," or they might be considered social bandits resisting the representatives of the government for the sake of a particular group. Although the group to benefit might encompass other members of a tribe not directly involved in banditry at all, Ottoman officials still could consider the whole tribe a bandit group. Because banditry here denotes group conflicts between tribes or within a certain tribe, as well as group resistance against the state, without considering the groups' relationships with each other and with the state, one cannot fully understand the social dimension of banditry.

Social Organization, Multiple Identities, and Banditry

Studies on banditry incline towards economy-centric interpretations. For Hobsbawm, two important sources of banditry are the "rural surplus population"

Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı 2006), p. 63. Imber, however, sees *örf* as a secular law which was applied alongside Sharia law. It was Ebussuud who made these two fields compatible with one another in the sixteenth century. Colin Imber, *Şeriattan Kanuna: Ebussuud ve Osmanlı'da İslami Hukuk* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2004), p. 30.

⁵⁸ Some Hanefi scholars proposed that a *ta'zir* penalty should not exceed the minimum level of a similar *hadd* penalty. Peters, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic Law: Theory and Practice from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, p. 67. This fact should not be interpreted to mean that *ta'zir* penalties were milder than *hadd* penalties.

⁵⁹ The questions of who was a rebel and how a rebel should be treated were among the most discussed problems in Islamic legal history. See Abou El Fadl Khaled, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Most Ottomanists are aware that the state used a cliché term to warn local officials and judges about the problems related to certain groups or villagers: "*isyan ve tuğyan üzere olup...*" meaning "they are in rebellion or are about to rebel." Here, nothing is said concerning the nature of the crime so that it could be punished more flexibly under *ta'zir* instead of under *hadd* because the primary aim of the government in dealing with rebellion was to prevent further problems, rather than simply to punish a crime.

⁶¹ For a discussion on this point, see Muhsin Soyudoğan, "Aşiretlerin Ekonomi Politikası ya da Olağan Şiddet: Osmanlı Aynatâb'ında Aşiret Eşkîyalığı Üzerine," in "*Ta Ezelden Taşkindir...*" *Antep* ed. M. Nuri Gültekin (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011).

⁶² For a detailed look at this issue, see Muhsin Soyudoğan, "Devlet-Eşkîya İlişkileri Bağlamında Aynatâb ve Çevresinde Aşiret Eşkîyalığı," *Kebikeç*, no. 21 (2006).

produced by the limits of the rural economy or environment⁶³ and those "who are not integrated into rural society," especially "soldiers, deserters and ex-servicemen."⁶⁴ Similarly, Karen Barkey describes how peasants became vagrants and then, as a mode of survival, became soldiers who often took part in brigandage.⁶⁵ To a great extent, Ottoman *levend* banditry was a typical example of this kind,⁶⁶ but as *levends* can be seen as deviants in terms of their origin, it is hardly surprising that *levends* were one of the least social of bandit groups.

Hobsbawm concludes that it was mainly economic motives that drove the *haiduks* into the mountains.⁶⁷ What made social rebels of the *haiduks*, however, was the bandits' reference group: At least some of them created a perception that they stood against Muslims for the sake of their local Christian communities and thus built ties with their supporters on an ethno-religious level. As a result, they were not only highly social bandits, but also highly political. Calling them "*guerrilla-bandits*,"⁶⁸ Slatta emphasizes the political side of the *haiduks*. In his view, "[u]nlike social bandits, political bandits show clear partisan (rather than class) leanings."⁶⁹ Anton Blok makes a similar distinction:

The more banditry is politically oriented and evolves into what Italian scholars have called *brigantaggio politico*, the more likely it is that it will assume "anti-social" features when we take this term in the sense as understood by Hobsbawm, that is, anti-peasant. A surprisingly large number of the bandits mentioned by Hobsbawm were anti-peasant during most of their careers, which they typically initiated by righting personal wrongs.⁷⁰

The main mistake is that these views accept the dichotomous character of banditry as either good or bad, along with the underlying "anti-social" characterization of political bandits as partisans who represented no more than one segment of society. Banditry, however, always has a group reference, and the social bandits of one group might be anti-social in reference to another group. For this reason, the social group turns out to be a much more explanatory unit of analysis than the peasantry. A closer look at Hobsbawm's own examples illustrates the deficiency in his conceptualization. "A certain Doncho Vatach, who flourished in the 1840s, only persecuted Turkish evildoers, helped the Bulgarian poor and distributed money"⁷¹ could never have been a hero to a Turkish peasant. Hobsbawm

⁶³ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 31.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶⁵ See Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, p. 12. A similar point was emphasized by Sabri Yetkin regarding late Ottoman banditry in *Ege'de Eşkıyalar*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ To a certain degree, *levends* were vagrants, but in Ottoman historiography, vagrancy nearly became their defining characteristic. Soyudoğan, "Tribal Banditry in Ottoman Ayntâb," pp. 30-35.

⁶⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 72.

⁶⁸ Slatta, "Bandits and Rural Social History: A Comment on Joseph," p. 148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁷⁰ Blok, "The Peasant and Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," p. 499.

⁷¹ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 72.

also cites Schinderhannes, who was active in the Rhineland in the late 1790s and who “robbed only Jews, that is, dealers and moneylenders.”⁷² Wanting to rob only dealers and moneylenders is hardly a sufficient explanation for his robbing only Jews, but we know neither Schinderhannes’ ethnic origin nor his religion, which likely played a more important role in his selection of targets. Now do we know whether any Jewish peasants in the area also saw him as a hero. In both cases, Hobsbawm chooses not to see the role of group identity, a kind of primitive pseudo-nationalistic feeling that is especially powerful in tribal relations. All bandit groups who held certain mountains had a highly political sense of possession of that territory. As one minstrel (Turkish *aşık* or *ozan*) sang: “the decree is the sultan’s, [but] the mountains are ours.”⁷³ Banditry as a method of maintaining this bandit politics contributes to the sociality of banditry *per se*. Considered in this light, Schinderhannes’ banditry was neither more social, nor less anti-social, than that of a Bedouin, whom Hobsbawm would not credit as engaging in social banditry.

Dissociating the social and political dimensions of banditry does not enhance analysis of tribal banditry or of the social dimension of banditry in general. Within a society, groups are formed through various separate identities, including religion, ethnicity, language, geography, and profession. The special relationship between a social group and its members then makes the individual members more powerful and makes the social organization in question an important factor in the actions of its individual members. For example, in the seventeenth century, Janissaries, who were one of the most vital parts of the Ottoman army, became very powerful, even untouchable. In both the centers of the empire and its rural areas, the Janissaries began to dominate economic life, especially trade.⁷⁴ Yet they also were an important group in acts of banditry.⁷⁵ Although economic deprivation contributed to their banditry, the socio-economic power of the group was no less crucial. Similarly, in 1735, members of the weavers guild in Ayntâb and their families, numbering about a thousand in all, attacked the palace of the *voyvoda* (the chief overseer of the sultan’s revenue of a certain region), freed ten chained prisoners and plundered the *voyvoda*’s property.⁷⁶ In another instance, in 1731, certain notables and craftsmen,

⁷² Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, p. 20.

⁷³ Tahir Kutsi Makal, *Dadaloğlu* (İstanbul: Toker Yayınları, 1974), p. 90.

⁷⁴ During this period, peasants began to leave their lands and work for Janissaries. Some would even travel to Istanbul for the purposes of trade and not pay their taxes, under the pretext of being the relatives of Janissaries. ACR 65, (Evahir-i Cemaziyyelahire 1125/July 22, 1713). p. 376; ACR 68, (Evasit-ı Safer 1130/January 17, 1718), p.1. Although these activities were primarily interpreted as signs of degradation in the Janissary corps, the many social networks they generated greatly increased the power of the Janissaries.

⁷⁵ During the war against Iran in 1725, some one hundred Janissaries involved themselves in banditry. ACR 77, (Evahir-i Ramazan 1138/May 31, 1726), p. 264. Another record mentions Janissaries who did not join the army in fighting against Venice. ACR 62, (15 Cemaziyyevvel 1127/May 18, 1715). p. 227.

⁷⁶ ACR 87, (2 Muharrem 1148/May 24, 1735), p. 124, cited in Güzelbey and Yetkin, *Gaziantep Şer’i Mahkeme Sicilleri*, vols. 81–141, pp. 17–8.

recorded as "the owners of communities," killed the *naib* (deputy judge) of Ayntâb,⁷⁷ who refused to refund taxes collected for a military expedition that did not take place.⁷⁸ The most remarkable point is that the notables had already come to wield such power by, at least, the last decades of the seventeenth century. In the following decades, and throughout the eighteenth century, they would continue to be major factors in violence. Another striking point is that the record identifies two of them as "the owners of communities": Debbagzade Mustafa and Basmacı Mehmed Efendi. Here, *debbag* (tanner) and *basmacı* (maker or dealer in printed goods) clearly refer to their occupational organizations or craft and trade affiliations. There also were some notable families that held great religious power.⁷⁹

The most notorious groups in banditry, however, were tribes, which were not merely organizations of economy or kinship, but also very important wielders of social power. This power provided the main encouragement for an individual to take part in banditry. For instance, in 1730, when two men from the İlbeyli tribe were imprisoned for failing to pay their taxes, a group of fifteen men from the Ufacıklı and İlbeyli tribes attacked the fortress of Ayntâb and freed the two men.⁸⁰ With tribal customs as a kind of insurance backing the activities of the bandits in case of failure, the tribe could prove to be a dangerous avenger in a long-enduring blood feud.

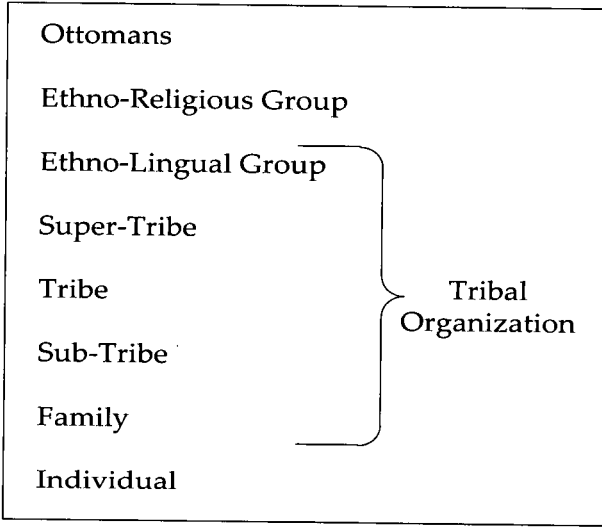
A person might well have more than one communal identity in addition to their occupational one. Especially in tribes, a person was a member of a family; on a higher level, a member of the tribe; a member of an ethnic group on yet another level; and so on. Such multiple identities could create a wide range of banditry, from the personal to the ethno-religious level. As one Bedouin proverb has it: "I against my brother, my brothers and I against my cousin, then my cousins and I against strangers." With regard to social banditry, of course, the final clause of this proverb contains the foremost potential.

⁷⁷ ACR 82, (4 Zilhicce 1143/June 9, 1731), p. 79.

⁷⁸ ACR 82, (10 Receb 1143/January 18, 1731), p. 230.

⁷⁹ For example, a family called Boyacı (dyer) was a supposed *seyyid* family, considered to be descended from the Prophet Muhammad through the line of Hussein, the Prophet's grandson. Pierce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*, p. 61. Canbakkal estimates that some eighty notable families were living in Ayntâb by the end of the seventeenth century. *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntâb in the 17th Century*, pp. 112-113.

⁸⁰ ACR 81, (24 Receb 1142/February 11, 1730) p. 83; ACR 81, (Evahir-i Safer 1142/September 22, 1730), p. 211.

Figure 1: Tribes in the Ottoman Social Structure

In order to understand the interplay between the identity and social power of a group and banditry, it is worth considering the minority groups of the Ayntâb region during the period under review. Although the region provides not one example of a Christian bandit, at least in a position of leadership, other minority groups,⁸¹ such as Yezidi Kurds and Alevis, did take part in banditry. In 1709, Yezidis were among the 500 to 600 armed men who pillaged the town of Rumkale.⁸² And numerous Turcoman tribes were Alevis. For the most part, Sunni typologies of Islamic sects consider Yazidism under the umbrella of the Kharijites,⁸³ and Alevism is a kind of Anatolian Shi'a Islam that was considered under the umbrella of the Rafida.⁸⁴ Both of these umbrella groups had moved away from mainstream Sunni Islam a short while after the death of Muhammad, and in the following period, as the tension between the sects turned into violent conflict, their names, especially Kharijism, became almost synonymous with banditry and rebellion and sometimes infidelity.⁸⁵ For this reason, juristic discourses on rebellion were called *ahkam al-khwarij wa al*

⁸¹ By minority I mean any mainly sedentary Turcophone group that was not Sunni Muslim.

⁸² ACR 60, (19 Receb 1121/September 23, 1709), p.1; ACR 60, (22 Receb 1121/September 26, 1709), p. 2.

⁸³ For the typology by Abu Muhammad al-Yemeni, see Sönmez Kutlu, *Mezhepler Tarihine Giriş* (İstanbul: Dem, 2010), p. 179.

⁸⁴ Saim Savaş, *XVI. Asırda Anadolu'da Alevilik* (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 2002), pp. 42-45.

⁸⁵ Abu Muhammad al-Yemeni, who lived in the twelfth century, describes Kharijites as "those who left the religion as an arrow leaves a bow." Ümüt Toru, "Ebû Muhammed El-Yemenî'nin "Akâidü's-Selâse Ve's-Sebîn Fırka" Adlı Eseri ve İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi Açısından Önemi" (M.A. Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi, 2006), p. 141.

bughah (the law of Kharij and rebellion).⁸⁶ In the Ottoman case, although there is no evidence that Yezidis were treated as bandits simply because of their identities before the eighteenth century, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, this Islamic doctrine was used to legitimize persecution of the Alevis, positioning the Alevis at the very center of the banditry discourse.⁸⁷

In Islamic doctrine, Christianity was no less a vulnerable identity than those of the "Islamic" groups accused of being "heretics." While Christians were termed "infidels," however, they were only stigmatized as bandits if there was conflict or if they resisted governmental authority, as they often did in the Balkans but not in Ayntâb. The difference was not merely a matter of population statistics, but that every group was a bandit in its own nest. Ayntâb was seen as the nest of tribes, regardless of their religious beliefs, and it was their tribal organization that provided those tribes with great social power. By contrast, because in Ayntâb Christianity, as an identity, provided more power than a tribe would or could, Christians there did not take part in banditry. In any serious criminal activity, where the identities of the targets were most likely to be cast along religious lines, bandits would be categorized and responded to as "Christian bandits," not simply as bandits. This explains why a Christian robbing a Muslim would be perceived differently than a Muslim robbing a Muslim and why it would be difficult for a Christian in the Ayntâb region to perform banditry on either a personal or an ethno-religious level.

There is a twofold logic behind the relationship between social organization and banditry. First, social organization is the area where self-identity is formed. The stronger the tie between the individual and the group, the more altruistic an individual's behavior will be and the higher the potentiality of the banditry's sociality will be.⁸⁸ Tribes, which are networks of strong ties, consequently have a high potential for producing social banditry. Second, the position of the group in the social structure determines the level of sociality of its members' actions. A bandit who steals merely to fill his/her stomach, a tribesman who attacks an enemy tribe to exact revenge, and a believer who targets only "infidels" for the sake of his/her coreligionists cannot all be accepted as equally social. In other words, every act of banditry contains a greater or lesser degree of sociality. To quote Blok:

In a sense, all bandits are "social" in so far as they, like all human beings, are linked to other people by various ties. We cannot understand the behaviour of bandits without reference to other groups, classes, or networks with which bandits form specific configurations of interdependent individuals.⁸⁹

If so, sociality does not reflect an unchanging character on the part of certain bandits with multiple identities, and the sociality of banditry is not static, but subject to change. Because anti-sociality is not the exact opposite of sociality, figure 2

⁸⁶ Khaled, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, p. 6.

⁸⁷ For how their lifestyles were treated as part of the Rafida, and thus as banditry, see Savaş, *XVI. Asırda Anadolu'da Alevilik*.

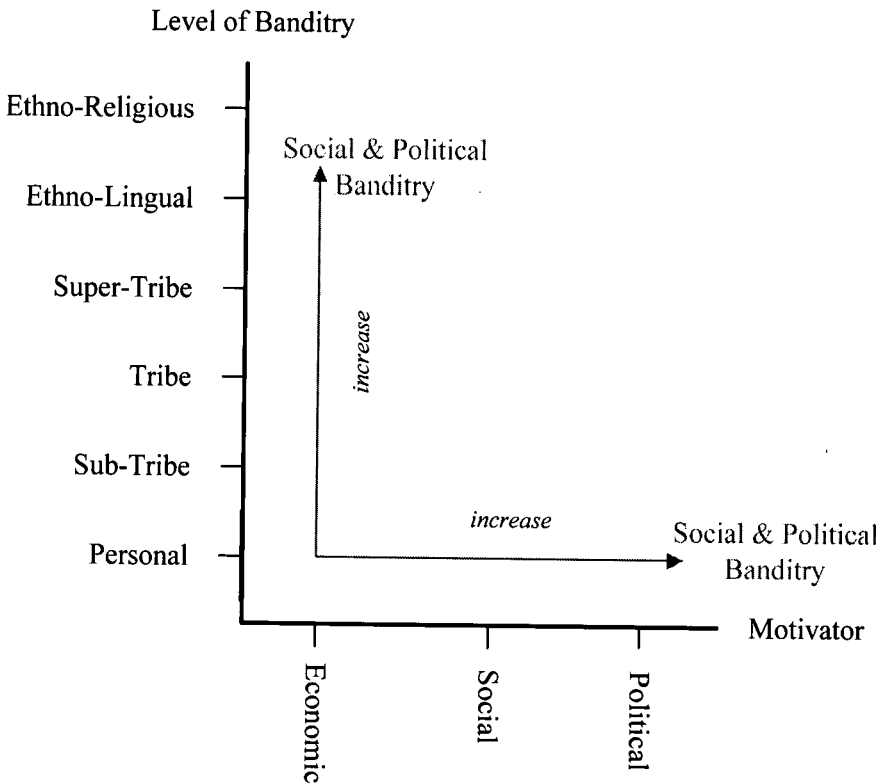
⁸⁸ To a certain extent, the ballads produced within a given society contribute to such altruistic behavior by recounting the attitudes and behavior of heroes as models for the future.

⁸⁹ Blok, "The Peasant and Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered," p. 498.

below does not show an increase in absolute social banditry; rather, it indicates the possibility of experiencing social banditry once various combinations of motivators and levels of social organization are taken into consideration.

In addition to social organization, the character of banditry is strongly shaped by the particular motivation behind it. As a social scientist would claim that there are infinite variables at play in a single social phenomenon, seeking the actual reason for such a phenomenon may not always be meaningful, especially in a historical study. For this reason, I have grouped the possible causes of banditry into three broad categories: economic factors, social factors, and political factors. The problem is that, generally speaking, these three factors are mutually interdependent. Thus, it is not uncommon to see social degradation and/or political conflict following economic depression. Overall, the level of sociality of banditry is dependent on two basic questions: banditry for whom, and banditry for what reason?

Figure 2: The Possibility of Social and Political Banditry



This figure shows the possible reaction of people to different motivators under different socio-psychological conditions. In other words, observing a combination of social structure and different kinds of motivators could well produce a much richer typology and, ultimately, a better understanding of banditry.

Tribal Banditry

More than 400 names of tribes were found in the court records of the first half of the eighteenth century. Some consisted of just a number of families and can be termed sub-tribes, several of which together constituted main tribes. Some large tribes, termed *mir aşiretlik*, that enjoyed certain economic and political privileges might be called super-tribes, or tribal confederations. The main problem faced in this study was how to define the tribes' relations with one another.

The Ottomans generally referred to tribal organization by the terms *oymak*, *cemaat*, *ulus*, and *aşiret* or by ethnic names, such as Arab, Kurdish, and Turcoman, but these designations were not fixed and were used interchangeably. Consequently, historians of the Ottoman Empire have not been able to satisfactorily explain their meanings or define their place in a hierarchical tribal organization.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, some documents register tribes together with their upper-level tribes, permitting the hierarchical relations of some tribes to be reconstructed. However, although tribes are generally known as kinship organizations descended from an apical ancestor, in reality these tribes could join with others through economic and political, rather than blood, ties. Accordingly, the ethnic names used for tribes in the documents may not refer to their actual ethnic origins but to the identity of the super-tribes to which they are joined. Nonetheless, observation of their names and the frequency with which relations are seen allows us either to define their ethnic origins or to determine whether they had been assimilated into another ethnic group.

We can confidently say that nomadism or semi-nomadism was still prevalent in the rural areas of eighteenth-century Ayntâb and that conflict between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles was one of the reasons behind banditry. What is more, nomadism had always been a significant problem for the Ottoman government so, in any given case of banditry, nomads became automatic suspects, despite the facts that banditry reflected mutual conflict and banditry was a general problem of tribalism, not only of nomadism.

All these points were illustrated when some villagers complained to the court of the governor of Rakka that after some horsemen from the Kılıçlı tribe had taken their cereal crops, some 200 horsemen from the same tribe had returned to the city and raided shopping districts and the bazaar. An investigation by the governor found that, in fact, the Kılıçlı tribesmen had bought the crops and just sixteen horsemen had come to the city in order to sell three camels.⁹¹ A subsequent part of the same report related that a group from the Kılıçlı tribe had been sent to Menbiç region of

⁹⁰ For a detailed discussion on the topic, see Soyudoğan, "Tribal Banditry in Ottoman Ayntâb," p. 86.

⁹¹ ACR 64, (1712), p. 40.

Rakka from Elbistan, but following their departure to Rakka, people back in Elbistan began to complain of intrusions by the Cerid and Tacirli tribes.⁹²

The settlers, therefore, were ordered to return to Elbistan in order to restore a balance between those two tribes. It seems that previously the Kılıçlı tribe had been accused of being a bandit group until the government realized that they had been effecting a balance between the other tribes and immediately reclassified them as innocent of the accusations of banditry. Later, a decree was sent to the court to further clarify exactly what was happening. Ironically, when they were first ordered to settle in Rakka so that their lands could be confiscated, some of the Kılıçlı did not go and instead had become involved in banditry in Elbistan.⁹³ The government's insistence on settling them in Rakka further criminalized the Kılıçlı tribe, which ended in the massacre of tribe members described below. This story demonstrates how the government manipulated banditry for the sake of state policies,⁹⁴ as well as how certain rivals attempted to benefit from the situation. Whatever really occurred, the banditry in question was no more than a reflection in the court records of conflict.

Revenge is always a part of the politics of banditry. It is difficult for a bandit to survive on his/her own, and the need to establish networks with different groups makes banditry a rational activity. Though the idea of "banditry" generally evokes robbery, bandits rarely aim to fill a cave with precious goods as if they were Ali Baba and the forty thieves. On the contrary, bandits either sell their booty or give it to their companions and families in return for support.⁹⁵ This activity makes a social network obligatory, which in turn forces ordinary people to choose between the bandit group and the anti-bandit group made up of the government and those pragmatically affiliated with the government. The discourse of tribal banditry reflected in official documents was rooted in this obligation. At times, an entire tribe could be accused of banditry.

As mentioned above the Kılıçlı tribe was to be settled in Menbiç, which was located between Ayntâb and Rakka. After some of them were settled there, however, the resulting great disorder in the southern regions of Ayntâb led the governor of Rakka Yusuf Pasha to try to send them back to Maraş. Most probably the government did not accept that. So then Yusuf Pasha sent the prominent figures of the tribe an order to settle in Menbiç and to give the properties they had pillaged back to the original owners.⁹⁶ Yusuf Pasha's negotiations between the Kılıçlı and the victim peasants produced in an agreement that required compensation only for the

⁹² Some cases verify the fact about the "banditry" of these two tribes. ACR 62, (8 Cemaziyyelahire 1124/July 13, 1712), p.149; ACR 62, (1712), p.154; ACR 62, (4 Rebiülahir 1124/May 11, 1712), p. 155.

⁹³ ACR 64, (Evahir-i Şaban 1124/September 1712), p. 75.

⁹⁴ Tribes, families, or individuals who left the places to which they had been sent in northern Syria were declared bandits. Of course, those who left their places had little chance to avoid banditry, but any who did still would be declared bandit because they had violated a governmental decision.

⁹⁵ This is why the state often treated those who helped them (*yatak*) as bandits.

⁹⁶ ACR 63, (11 Şaban 1123/September 24, 1711), p. 56.

peasants' losses in the year 1711. Consequently, in June 1712 the representatives of all villages that had complained about the Kılıçlı applied to the court to determine the value of the properties the Kılıçlı tribe had seized or destroyed in the previous year.⁹⁷ When all the losses had been calculated by the court, both sides meet on Düztepe hill in the presence of Mustafa Ağa, the representative of Yusuf Paşa, and many other notables. There, the Kılıçlı tribe agreed to pay the losses and to settle in Menbiç, never coming to Ayntâb for seasonal migrations or to disturb anyone. If they did not keep this oath, they would pay 20,000 kuruş and 40 of their members would be executed.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the government tried to send all those who had remained in Maraş to Rakka on the pretext that they were getting involved in banditry.

Eventually in 1714 the government ordered the governor of Maraş to launch a campaign against the Kılıçlı and the Koyunoğulları, the Elci and the Bektaşlı tribes,⁹⁹ and an armed force of peasants and other civilians (*nefir-i âmm*) killed more than eighty people in an attack.¹⁰⁰ Some fled for their lives, but the Ayntâbians were encouraged to kill those fugitives in rehabilitation for the pillaging of their properties.¹⁰¹ In the end, 445 survivors—97 percent of whom were women and children—remained imprisoned for exile to Cyprus. After a couple of months under surveillance, just 272 were deemed ready for the dangerous journey; 97 others had died in the meantime, and 76 more were too weak even to state their names to the officers.¹⁰² Some of them, however, were sold as slaves in Aleppo.¹⁰³ Here, the government punished women and children who had had no part in the banditry. In another instance, some Kurdish bandits killed the footman (*çukadar*) of the governor of Rakka and hanged six people from Adana. While these bandits were still in the villages of Antakya, the army suddenly attacked them, inflicting a number of casualties. After the army had left, the bandits returned to the villages for revenge, accusing the peasants there of denouncing them to government officials.¹⁰⁴

The socio-political power that enabled tribes to excel in banditry depended on their vertical relations with the groups from which they descended and on their horizontal alliances with other groups. Blok emphasizes something very similar when he discusses the "blood symbolism of *Mafia*."

We shall see that the relationships through which *mafiosi* in Sicily operate evoke blood imagery, and that blood metaphors are used to mark and foster

⁹⁷ Representatives of some twenty villages came to the court. ACR 64, (8-20 Cemaziyyelellevvel 1124/June 13-25, 1712), pp. 205, 207 (2 record), 210 (2 records), 222 (2 record), 223 (2 records), 224 (3 records), 225, 226, 227 (2 records), 228, 229, 230.

⁹⁸ ACR 64, (20 Cemaziyyelahire 1124/July 25, 1712), p. 174.

⁹⁹ ACR 65, (21 Şevval 1126/October 30, 1714), p. 229.

¹⁰⁰ ACR 65, (25 Şevval 1126/November 3, 1714), p. 228.

¹⁰¹ An order sent to Ayntâb was saying that: "their properties are for those who kill them and their heads for us" ACR 65, (3 Zilhicce 1126/December 10, 1714), p. 227.

¹⁰² ACR 65, (12 Zilkade 1126/November 19, 1714), p. 226. For details of the document, see Soyudoğan, "Tribal Banditry in Ottoman Ayntâb," appendix 4, pp. 171-175.

¹⁰³ ACR 65, (1714), p. 206.

¹⁰⁴ ACR 60, (Evail-i Şevval 1121/December 3, 1709), p. 229.

reciprocity. These relationships include agnatic kinship (consanguinity), affinal kinship, ritual kinship (godparenthood, coparenthood) and ritual friendship (blood brotherhood).¹⁰⁵ Although historians primarily use "tribe" to refer to agnatic kinship systems, affinal and ritual forms of kinship are also essential for understanding tribal society and the banditry they produced.

Marriage is one of the primary means of establishing network institutions with outsiders. According to Peter Taylor, "[p]easants saw marriage as way to (only) partially diminish the dangers of enmity by converting enemies into friends from whom one could expect support."¹⁰⁶ Thus, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Canpoladoğlu Ali trapped his primary enemy Seyfoğlu Emir Yusuf in Aleppo, each of them agreed to marry a female relative of the other. Then Seyfoğlu agreed to surrender.¹⁰⁷ In this way, rather than destroying his enemy's power, Ali converted the enmity into an alliance; in other words, he simply pacified his rival. Similarly, in the *berdel* tradition widespread among Kurdish tribes, on the same day, two men marry one another's female relatives. According to another tradition based on Koranic law, the family of a murder victim could legally demand either retaliation (*qisas*) or blood money (*diyet*) that in tribal tradition, especially among Kurdish tribes, could be a girl, a horse, or any kind of property to restore the peace.¹⁰⁸ In this case, the agreement was not reciprocal.

A marriage is more than a ceremony joining two factions. Like many public or religious festivals, the wedding celebration is an event that creates cohesion between the attendants. In one example of this, on a spring day in 1707, the Kara Kaşaklı tribe, a nomadic sub-tribe of the Ağcakoyunlu that had been camped on a mountain pasture, invited the neighboring villagers to join in the joy of a wedding.¹⁰⁹ This event shows how nomads and settled agriculturalists, who are almost always considered enemies from time immemorial, could establish networks among themselves.

Brotherhood was another important means of redefining a group's boundaries. In order to dissuade Canberdi Gazali, the leader of the rebellion of 1521, from again rising up in revolt, the Ottoman commander Hayre Bey warned him in a letter that if he persisted in his disobedience, he would be punished without regard for the "law

¹⁰⁵ Blok, *Honour and Violence*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Taylor, "Some Ideological Aspects of the Articulation between Kin and Tribute: State Formation, Military System and Social Life in Hesse-Cassel, 1688-1815," in *Agrarian Studies*, ed. James Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ Griswold, *Anadolu'da Büyük İsyân, 1591-1611*, pp. 92-3.

¹⁰⁸ Chéref-ou'ddine, *Chéref-Nâmeh: Fastes De La Nation Kourde*, trans. François Bernard Charmoy (St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l'Académie Impériale des sciences, 1870), p. 32. There is a special rug called *berxwîn* in Kurdish that can be translated as 'for blood.' It is said that in the past these rugs were used as blood money.

¹⁰⁹ It is true that tribesmen and some village guests began to fight during the dancing, but if they had not, we would not have had the records to document that social cohesion between nomads and agriculturalists was even envisioned. See ACR 58, (27 Safer 1119/May 29, 1707), p. 119; ACR 58, (27 Safer, 2 Rebiülevvel 1119/May 29, June 2, 1707), p. 174 (2 records); ACR 58, (27 Safer 1119/May 29, 1707), p. 175.

of brotherhood.”¹¹⁰ In this context, it is certain that “brotherhood” means “peace.” Blood brotherhood was common in the Ottoman Empire, and a special form called *kirvelik* (*krîvatî* in Kurdish) remains especially common among tribes in eastern Anatolia. This tradition has its origins in Zoroastrianism, and the term was derived from the Iranic *kirbağ*, meaning “virtue” or “good deed.”¹¹¹ The *kirve* (*krîv*) acts as a kind of godfather to male children during their circumcision feast, when, as Mahmut Tezcan points out, the blood of the child staining the *kirve*’s hands creates a bond similar to the bond of kinship.¹¹² This, however, is something of an overinterpretation arising from a popular misconception that reduces the *kirve* to the godfather of the circumcised child. The *kirve* is not a single person, but rather, a familial institution. Before a wedding takes place, if the groom’s family does not have a *kirve*, they must find one. When two men have agreed to serve as *kirve* at a wedding, all members of their two families will recognize one another as *kirve*, and none will be allowed to marry a person from that *kirve* family.¹¹³ *Kirvelik* is an institution representing the symbolic unification of families that are not otherwise related, and in tribal societies it provides additional social power to the parties that are united.

Kirves pay for many or even all of the wedding expenditures, called *şebaş* or *sabaş*, meaning “gift” or “donation.” After the ceremony, the couple invites a person from the family of the *kirve* into the nuptial chamber to see the blood of virginity. The *kirve* then recognizes the marriage and declares it to the others. Because the woman is seen as the carrier of the family’s honor (*namus*), neither her family nor that of the bridegroom wants the community to suspect their honor. Indeed, *kirvelik* is a symbol of prestige, power, and honor.

Both tribes and *levends* often collected money called *bayrak akçesi* (flag tax), *kurban akçesi* (sacrificial tax), and many other names that were the same as those used by governmental officials for the taxes levied on peasants. This type of banditry was a kind of deceit in which the bandits presented themselves as if they worked for the state. In particular, court records show some Arab and Kurdish tribes collected 30 to 50 *kuruş* from peasants under the name of *khuva/huva*, or

¹¹⁰ Solak-zâde Mehmed Hemdemi Çelebi, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, trans. Vahid Çabuk (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1989), p. 113.

¹¹¹ See the etymological dictionary of Sevan Nişanyan, “Kirve,” (2011), <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=kirve>. Some scholars, however, point out the Islamic origin of the *kirve*. Mahmut Tezcan, for instance, quotes a popular belief that “the Prophet Muhammad was circumcised with the *kirvelik* of angels.” *Kültürel Antropoloji* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1997), p. 90.

¹¹² Tezcan, *Kültürel Antropoloji*, p. 91.

¹¹³ Many Kurdish folk songs tell of star-crossed lovers whose relationship was thwarted by the taboo of *Krîvatî*. “God may burn the house of *krîvatî*. The glass of my heart was broken and could not be repaired...” is from “Sînanê Kiriv” by Gulistan Perwer. In another song the lover invokes: “*Krîvê!* (girl!) you know what our sin is. All roads closed before us. It became our misfortune that I am a Muslim and you are a Yazidi...” from “*Kirivê*” by Şivan Perwer.

"brotherhood" in Arabic.¹¹⁴ Whenever someone resisted, their houses were looted. *Khuva* was not taken only by "destructive" and "useless" tribes,¹¹⁵ but was deeply embedded in the notion of tribal authority over a specific territory, in which the protective relationship between the dominant tribe and the tributary tribe resembled that between a sovereign state and a tributary state.¹¹⁶ *Khuva* is a clear reflection of tribal politics. When it was seen as a real symbol of brotherhood, *khuva* most probably constituted alliances against rival tribes. Otherwise, at the very least, the tributary tribe did not expect to suffer invasion, pillaging, or banditry from the dominant tribe.

There was another form of horizontal alliance that might occur after migration rearranged group borders. Subsequently, enduring relations between two groups could lead to the shifting of the lineage system, that is, the assimilation of one group by another or a special form of alliance appearing under the same political and economic organization. Whether or not the tribes making up the Kurds of Kilis or the *İfraz-ı Zulkadriye* descended from the same root, they did coalesce in many instances of banditry. In 1714, when 100 cavalry and infantry from the Gevune tribe seized 1,200 sheep from three herds belonging to the semi-nomadic Muykanlı, the Belkanlı, and the Şeyh Bilanlı—all sub-tribes of the Reşvan—some men from those tribes immediately joined together and attacked them to rescue their sheep and punish them.¹¹⁷ Here, they seized three herds, each likely to belong to one of the three nomadic groups. This indicates that these three tribes performed a sort of collective animal husbandry, which gave the different tribes a kind of cohesion. In an earlier case, in 1705 some 50 to 60 bandits from three other sub-tribes of the Reşvan—the Rumiyanlı, the Hemdanlı, and the Hacılar—attacked some traders of the Za'feranlı tribe of Erzurum. They took 110 sheep worth about 264 *kuruş*, along with 120 *kuruş* in cash and killed one man with a rifle.¹¹⁸ Events such as these show that communal life and interests required both collective defense and collective banditry.

But what were the motives behind the banditry? The economic value of goods flowing along the route between Aleppo and Erzurum and spanning the west bank of the Euphrates attracted bandits of all kinds. One case dated 1704 describes how a group of bandits headed by Bektaşlı Nebi had attacked a caravan, looted its stores,

¹¹⁴ ACR 54, (2 Cemaziyyelahire 1116/October 1, 1704), p. 322; ACR 43, (5, 6 Rebiülahire 1106/November 22 and 23, 1694), p. 198 (2 records); ACR 43, (3 Rebiülehaire 1106/November 20, 1694), p. 199.

¹¹⁵ Ziya Gökalp describes the Şammar tribe, which took money and crops from tribes and peasants, as "locusts created for destruction." *Kürt Aşiretleri Hakkında Sosyolojik Tetkikler* (İstanbul: Sosyal, 1992).

¹¹⁶ Traditionally it was among the duties of *khuva* takers to find and return the pillaged properties of *khuva* givers. Suavi Aydın, "Baraklar: Antep'in İskan Halkı," in *"Ta Ezelden Taşkıdır..."*: Antep, ed. Mehmet Nuri Gültekin (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011), p. 182 n 77.

¹¹⁷ ACR 65, (evahir-i Zilakde 1126/December 7, 1714), pp. 139, 140, 142; (27 Zilkade 1126/December 4, 1714), p. 141.

¹¹⁸ ACR 56, (24 Receb 1117/March 8, 1706), p. 67; (22 Receb 1117/March 6, 1706), p. 68; (3 Şaban 1117/November 19, 1705), p. 83; (22 Şaban 1117/December 8, 1705), p. 94.

and killed some people.¹¹⁹ In 1710, when Kurdish bandits were roaming in the region of Ayntâb, overseers were warned about the danger to caravans, and the governor of Aleppo, Mehmed Pasha, ordered officials in Ayntâb not to allow a caravan to stop there but to provide it an armed escort to Aleppo.¹²⁰ In 1712 bandits from the İlbeyli tribe attacked a caravan.¹²¹ In times of war, moreover, the main route for transporting provisions began at the seaports of İskenderun and Payas on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and ran eastwards. In 1725, some five years after Arab tribes attacked ships carrying guns and provisions along the Euphrates,¹²² the government ordered ten contingents, amounting to approximately 500 cavalry, to ride along the bank of the river in order to protect the ships.¹²³

In these incidents of economically motivated banditry there was no relationship between the bandits and their targets, but it is difficult to be certain about the motivation for banditry involving those who already knew each other. In 1696, Ömer from the Oturak Kızıği tribe, together with some friends, burgled the house of Zeynelabidin who was a member of the same tribe. He stole 18 oxen, 3 rugs, 5 kilos of wheat, 2 swords, 12 quivers, 2 axes, 1 bowl, 1 salt cauldron, 1 silver belt, and 1 cauldron with a storage capacity of 2.5 tons of wheat.¹²⁴ In this case, Ömer's brother had been killed by Zeynelabidin and as mentioned above, the family of a murdered person had a legal right to demand retaliation or blood money. Because the two sides could not come to an agreement, Ömer took the value of his brother's blood via robbery. In another case, a man complained that his son's wife had prompted bandits to take fifty *kuruş* from him by telling the bandits that he had engaged in "bad treatment" (most likely sexual harassment) against her.¹²⁵ Regardless of the truth of this claim, the main motive behind the banditry was something other than economic gain. Here, only one particular man was condemned by the community for one particular act and made a target. Even if it inspired no memorable ballads, this case, like that of Ömer, was certainly more social in nature than the banditry of the highwaymen discussed above simply because it better conformed to social conscience and convention.

In addition, throughout history, tribes have always had a serious potential for engaging in politically motivated banditry. Especially in the nineteenth century, nationalism melded ordinary banditry to separatist movements that also affected Arab and Kurdish tribal banditry. Many Muslim tribes long known for their banditry became militia bands during both World War I and the War of Independence (1919–

¹¹⁹ ACR 55, (28 Şaban 1116/December 25, 1704), p. 278.

¹²⁰ ACR 60, (12 Zilhicce 1121/February 11, 1710), p. 234.

¹²¹ ACR 61, (29 ? 1124/1712), p. 285.

¹²² In 1720, some Arab tribes captured 18 ships with lumber aboard, leaving only 20 of an original total of 38 ships to reach their destinations. Cengiz Orhonlu and Turgut Işıksal, "Osmanlı Devrinde Nehir Nakliyatı Hakkında Araştırmalar: Dicle ve Fırat Nehirlerinde Nakliyat," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* XIII, no. 17-18 (1962-1963), p. 89.

¹²³ ACR 76, (2 Rebiülahire 1137/December 18, 1724), pp. 79, 133.

¹²⁴ ACR 48B, (22 Cemazıyyevvel 1725/February 5, 1725), p. 67.

¹²⁵ ACR 76, (1137/1724-1725), p. 274.

22) against occupying forces. Among these was the Okçu İzzeddinli tribe, probably the most notorious bandit group in the Ayntâb region. During the French occupation of the region, however, the tribe sent a letter to the national parliament, inviting national forces to fight against the French forces. No longer just a tribe, but now a politicized tribe of a certain ethnic group, on behalf of the southern Kurds, they emphasized the importance of an alliance of Kurds and Turks against the occupation.¹²⁶ Religious identity also brought uncontrollable tribes into alliance with the government, and some of their members became national heroes, as did Karayılan, a leader from the Reşvan tribe.

*Karayılan*¹²⁷ says "Let us fight!"

Taking heads on the roads to Kilis

We will smash our foes wherever they may be

People of Antep, fight! Today is the day of honor

Sons of Kurds, fight! Today is the day of honor

Conclusion

Embodied in the maxim "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,"¹²⁸ the Marxist conceptualization of society is limited by the borders of a state, within which all conflict occurs between exploiters and producers or owners and co-owners of the means of production. Struggles between different groups of the same class or between different societies are seen as meaningful only if they do not contradict the idea of class conflict. Therefore, the only important bandit is one who targets the exploiting class on the behalf of exploited peasants. To know whether or not a bandit was fighting for the peasants, a Marxist would advise us to trust the peasants, to tell the truth, a rather constraining and naïve approach. The aforementioned poem is a good example of a ballad that glorifies public heroes, but today very few recall its final verse quoted above. While the ballad was promoted by Turkish nationalism, that last verse was excluded as were the Kurds from Turkish national history. State ideologies, especially in modern times, can foster a selectiveness that makes using public sources just as problematic as using governmental sources. At this point, the historian should not confuse bias with critique.

For a Marxist historian, only an egalitarian society could be exempt from class struggle, and so—as a warrior fighting on behalf of the exploited class—the social bandit could never be found in an egalitarian society. In fact, a tribe always has the

¹²⁶ M. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Dağıstan-Aras-Dicle-Altay ve Türkistan Türk Boylarından Kürtler* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1984), pp. 39-51.

¹²⁷ Karayılan (*lit.* "black snake") was a Kurdish tribal leader whose statue is among the few national monuments in Gaziantep. For this ballad, see Bayrak, *Eşkıyalık ve Eşkiya Türküleri*, p. 183.

¹²⁸ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: International Publishers, 2007), p. 9.

potential to produce bandits who are seen as heroes fighting for their lovers, their families, their clans, their tribes, their religions, and so on. Inevitably, these fighters harm someone while being applauded by someone else, and sometimes, the rumble of the applause gets so loud that the historian cannot hear the moan of the one who has been harmed. So this study has tried to build a tool the historian might use to hear different voices and thereby evaluate both the applause and the one who is being applauded.

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