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The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830

Edited by

Frederick F. Anscombe



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Albanians and “Mountain Bandits”

FREDERICK F. ANSCOMBE

While numerous historians have recognized the problems which “Mountain Bandits”¹ (*Dağlı Eşkiyaları*) and other outlaw groups caused in the Balkans before and during the reign of Selim III (r. 1789–1807), few have given much attention to the brigands themselves, their origins, and their reasons for taking up banditry. Ottomanists have tended to focus on Istanbul’s efforts to control the problem and on the role of provincial notables in the troubles.² The national tradition in Balkan historiography, on the other hand, has often tended to lump Muslims together as “Turks,” incomprehensible, incorrigible, intolerable. It also has been prone to consider banditry as a self-contained, “national” problem (i.e., Bulgaria suffered from the rampages of *kârdzhalis/kırcalis*, Serbia endured Janissary and *dahi* oppression, Wallachia and Romania faced rapacious Janissaries), rather than recognizing it as a problem unconfined by then-unknown national borders. Yet banditry was a problem which affected most of the Ottoman Balkans, and those choosing a life outside the law did so for a wide range of reasons and came from a variety of backgrounds. A great many bandits were not ethnic “Turks” but rather were Albanians.³

This article will offer a preliminary assessment of the Albanian elements in the Mountain Bandit and parallel outlaw phenomena, the reasons leading

so many Albanians to brigandage, and the steps taken by the government to control the problem. Ottoman records from other periods regularly reveal Albanian engagement in “banditry” (an elastic term in Ottoman usage, including everything from highway robbery to local feuds to struggles between regional political factions),⁴ with variations in locale and intensity, but generally at a tolerable level. Such extralegal violence could be expected, given a generally well-armed population governed by a limited, pre-modern state, especially in a case where the population inhabited rough terrain. This Albanian participation in brigandage is easier to track than for many other social groups in Ottoman lands, because Albanian (*Arnavud*) was one of the relatively few ethnic markers regularly added to the usual religious (Muslim–*Zimmi*) tags used to identify people in state records.⁵ These records show that the magnitude of banditry involving Albanians grew through the 1770s and 1780s to reach crisis proportions in the 1790s and 1800s.

The reasons for this extended rise in brigandage are rather less elegant or heroic than some theorists of Ottoman banditry would suggest. Karen Barkey, discussing the Anatolian *celalis* of the seventeenth century, made a provocative claim for seeing this banditry as a tool of negotiation between the government and provincial groups feeling pressure from a centralizing state.⁶ While some bidders for provincial office did hire mercenary bands to try to seize power (as in the case of Matlı Osman cited below), in the 1790s the general lack of bandit interest in bargaining for state favors is striking: most brigands showed a clear understanding that the real, immediate rewards were to be won by taking advantage of the state’s weakness. Those who did try to seize provincial offices seem to have been motivated more by the obvious opportunities for immediate enrichment through abuse of office in a time of weak oversight, rather than by a desire to gain rewards from the state for service.

Still less did these brigands demonstrate the slightest affinity to the “*hajduk*” – “social bandit” ideal hypothesized by Eric Hobsbawm (and in more extreme form by some Balkan historians), featuring Christian *hajduks* (Tr. *haydud*) or *klephts* as “*national*” (Hobsbawm’s italics) proto-revolutionaries fighting against an oppressive, alien, “Turkish” system.⁷ As far as can be determined, the great majority of the Albanian brigands (and all of their leaders) were Muslim and certainly plundered whoever was vulnerable, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Rather than motivated by ideology, most simply sought even marginal profit. Small though the rewards often were, they nevertheless offered an escape from the often dreadful poverty

and living conditions found in the brigands’ homelands. This was true also for those subgroups usually identified in recent histories of this period as the bandits, namely soldiers discharged after the end of the war with Austria and Russia in 1792, or mercenary troops who had deserted from the private retinues of local notables in the eastern Balkans.⁸ To live securely and comfortably was rarely an easily achieved goal in Albania, but the pressures created by repeated wars made it much tougher in this period. One of the most damaging war-induced problems was Istanbul’s loss of control over provincial authorities, who quickly discovered that the government would turn a blind eye to almost any unjust act, as long as these notables continued to send men to serve in the army. Like the bandits themselves, the notables took advantage of the state’s distractions to seize land, wealth, and power. The Ottoman government proved unable to reestablish effective control over these notables, let alone to improve conditions in the Albanian provinces, and thus poor, armed Albanians continued to emigrate to seek a living in any way possible throughout the reign of Selim III.

Bandits! Bandits! Bandits!

Istanbul received a seemingly unending stream of reports in the 1780s, 1790s, and 1800s which detailed the depredations of marauders in all corners of Ottoman Europe. Taken to suggest the scale of the problems faced by both the government and the inhabitants of the Balkans, the following examples describe the activities of Albanian bands and bandits in different places, years, and situations.

In June 1792 the Sublime Porte learned from several sources that a number of Albanian bandit groups were roaming western and central Macedonia, creating havoc.⁹ A certain Matlı Osman (from today’s Mat, in central Albania¹⁰) marched to Pirlepe (Prilep, western Republic of Macedonia) with a band of three hundred Albanians to claim the position of local military commander. The residents of Pirlepe refused them entry, and the leading administrator of the town sent a request for help to a notable of Dibre (Debar, western Macedonia). One Mulla Yunus, a resident of Peşkipa (Peshkopi, central Albania) and an ally of this notable, duly arrived outside Pirlepe, accompanied by eight hundred Albanians, only to discover that Matlı Osman’s men had departed. They had vanquished the defenders of Pirlepe and, after being paid 25 *kese akçe* (12,500 silver coins, worth roughly £10) to leave,

had gone on to find employment with a claimant to the position of *ayan* (chief local notable) of İştîp (Štip, eastern Macedonia). Under his direction they were to harry this and surrounding districts.¹¹ The luckless leader of Pirlepe tried to send away Mulla Yunus and his men, since they were no longer needed, but they demanded their wages. As all these groups did, they lived off the land until they were paid, in this case another twelve *kese akçe*, as the people of Pirlepe were by now too poor to pay more. Mulla Yunus and his men subsequently headed toward Dibre. Other bands of Albanians from Kırçova (Kičevo, western Macedonia) and Dibre now entered the free-for-all, some joining Matlı Osman outside İştîp, while others swarmed around Köprülü (Veles, central Macedonia). In all, some 1,500–2,000 Albanians from central Albania and western Macedonia were ranging across much of the rest of the present-day Republic of Macedonia, as far as Köstendil (Kyustendil, western Bulgaria), stripping the land of both money and food and causing much of the population to flee their homes.

The violent struggle over the *ayanlık* of İştîp had drawn Matlı Osman and others to eastern Macedonia, and disputes over provincial offices or provincial officeholders there and elsewhere offered opportunities to many other hired guns in this period. In July 1795 two administrators of İstefe (district of Thebes, southern Greece), themselves Albanian, were called to court in Athens to settle a conflict involving theft of property and murder. One of them showed up, as did a representative of the other party. His partner, however, gathered a band of Albanians under his command and refused to submit. He then joined forces with the local *ayan* and *kocabayış* (local notables, Muslim and Christian, respectively), who themselves faced charges of levying an illegal “second tithe” on crops. Albanians seem to have provided the backbone of something akin to a local legal defiance bloc.¹²

As the legal system in the provinces became less effective in this period of turmoil, those who lost positions and possessions to powerful local notables also recruited Albanians to strike back at those above the law. Late in 1788 the powerful *ayan* of Siroz (Serres, northern Greece), İsmail Bey, returned home after the first campaign season of the 1787–92 war against Austria and Russia, only to find that a number of his properties had been sacked by bandits. The destruction affected not just the district of Siroz but that of Demir Hisar (Siderokastro, Greece) as well. The main force of the bandits consisted of two thousand Albanian followers of a certain Orhan Bey of Beraştan, near Permed (Përmet, southern Albania). One of the leading disturbers of the peace, who had recruited Orhan and his men, howe-

ver, also sent a complaint to Istanbul, charging that İsmail Bey had illegally seized his estates (*çiftlik*s).¹³ That İsmail confronted a similar outburst of violence ten years later suggests that his noteworthy personal authority did not rest easily on the region. In 1799 the brother of the *nazır* (supervisor of revenues) of Drama (Greece) joined forces with one of the most notorious leaders of Albanian Mountain Bandits, Manav İbrahim, to pillage the district of Nevrekop (Gotse Delchev, Bulgaria) as part of a long struggle against İsmail's domination. İsmail naturally “managed” the problem by recruiting his own gang from Albania.¹⁴

Large, independent, roving gangs such as those of Manav İbrahim, Ali Zot,¹⁵ and the other leading figures of the Mountain Bandit phenomenon were an even greater concern for Istanbul than were such localized, recruited bands as those of Orhan Bey or Mulla Yunus. A great many of the rank-and-file bandits were Albanian,¹⁶ which presented the government's officers an additional potential problem, because so many of their own soldiers were also Albanian. Sometimes these government irregular troops (*levends* or *sekbans*) fought determinedly against the bandits, but on other occasions they cooperated with, or even deserted to, the outlaws.¹⁷ This can be illustrated by the experiences of but one provincial notable who held a succession of important posts, Hasan Pasha of Zihne (Zihna, northern Greece). In the early 1790s he served as governor of Silistre (Silistra, northeastern Bulgaria), an important post for the defense of the Danube and for the struggle against the Mountain Bandits. His position caused him to be given the primary responsibility for battling the bandits in 1792–93, a task in which he was ultimately unsuccessful, at least in part because many of his own men, Albanians, joined the brigands. As was often the case, arrears of pay due for service probably boosted such desertions. Hasan Pasha nevertheless continued to rely heavily upon Albanians thereafter. When he was dismissed from a later office in 1794, he was ordered to make sure that the one thousand Albanians in his retinue received all of the pay due them and were sent directly home, lest they, too, were to seek to recover back wages by joining the Mountain Bandits.¹⁸

Although ethnic, or more likely clan, ties may have played a role in some Albanians' changing sides in the struggle, it was this desire to be paid that appears to have driven the actions of so many of them on both sides of the government-bandit divide. In June 1800 the brigand Bayraktar Arnavud Hüseyin, besieged with his men in Bana (Soko Banja, north of Niš, Serbia), persuaded a number of the besiegers to join his group in the town. It was no

doubt meaningful that both bandits and turncoats were Tosks¹⁹ from southern Albania—but Hüseyin's distribution of money may well have been as important as the commonality of background.²⁰ Under such conditions, switching masters thus did not always have to go against the state. This could be seen in Vidin (Bulgaria), the base of the rebellious pasha Osman Pasvanoğlu [var. Pasvanoğlu/Pasvantoğlu/Pasbanoğlu] and one of the great centers of unrest in the Ottoman Balkans at the turn of the century. When Osman did not pay his own Albanian troops, some offered to come over to the government's side, provided that the state could demonstrate its ability to pay wages.²¹ The state treasury being perennially empty, gaining the loyalty of its employees through prompt payment of wages was a tremendous challenge, however.²²

As this limited selection of examples indicates, practically no region of the Balkans escaped problems involving Albanians operating outside of the law. Some particularly severely affected areas, such as geographic Macedonia, faced depopulation, while others, such as the Morea, southern Greece, and Serbia, would later be centers of insurrection.²³ Yet it is also true that much of the government's remaining ability to control the Balkan provinces rested in the hands of Albanian officers and troops. Albanians were certainly not irrevocably doomed to a life of banditry, with all legal options unthinkable. What, then, were the causes for the unusually severe outbreak of violence during this period?

Underlying Problems

Conditions throughout the Balkans in this era encouraged or forced many men to take up arms, either as brigands or as irregular soldiers who might not be much better than bandits. Bosnians and other Muslims of the region took part in the chaos, yet Albanians played an especially prominent role.²⁴ This suggests that it was not only the conditions felt throughout the peninsula during and after the 1787–92 war that drew in Albanians, but also circumstances peculiar to those districts in the western Balkans which had significant Albanian populations. It appears that those conditions were particularly severe.

A) Environment and Agriculture

Even in the best of times, the conditions of life found in regions inhabited

primarily by Albanians were tough. The population density in these areas was relatively high—strikingly so, when the nature of the land is taken into consideration. Remarkably little of the land now within the borders of the Republic of Albania was ideally suited to agriculture in the Ottoman period. Almost three-quarters of the area was forested mountain and, until the advent of modern drainage techniques, much of the remainder was wetland.²⁵ While some Albanian-inhabited lands in present-day northern Greece, western Macedonia, and Kosovo were slightly less forbidding, they, too, fit the general description of a region ill-suited to intensive and extensive agriculture. Throughout the Ottoman period, Albanians had to migrate to find farmland or other means of making a living, because the population so frequently tested the limits of what their rural homelands could support.

Endemic infectious diseases added to the precariousness of life and thus doubtless also helped to push many to migrate. Albania and Epirus were known centers of infectious diseases, especially in the eighteenth century.²⁶ The marshy flatlands surrounding such important settlements as Avlonya (Vlorë, southern Albania) and Dıraç (Durrës, central Albania) were breeding-grounds for mosquitoes carrying malaria. The highlands of Albania, whose population depended heavily upon pastoralism, suffered from other threats associated more clearly with animals. Plague was a particularly dangerous recurring problem, reported regularly in an arc from Yanya (Ioannina, Greece) in the south to İşkodra (Shkodër, Albania) and Prizren (Kosovo) in the north. Foreign consular reports noted the presence of plague in Albania-Epirus in 42 years of the eighteenth century—almost certainly an undercount, given limited consular access to the rugged interior.²⁷

During the period of rising banditry, disease was but one of the hazards that became critical in the western Balkans. In Yanya, for example, the French consul reported a plague epidemic lasting from 1784 to 1787. Venetian records note plague in İşkodra in 1798–99 and 1803–4.²⁸ The disease indeed appears to have become a severe problem throughout the peninsula, spread no doubt by Albanian brigands and soldiers, as well as soldiers returning from the Danubian principalities. In 1795, for example, Orthodox residents of Zağra (Stara Zagora, Bulgaria) were accused of trying to take advantage of the government's preoccupation with controlling both plague and bandits to build an unsanctioned new church.²⁹ Shortages of food also appear to have been a severe problem at times, particularly in the first half of the 1790s.³⁰ In the case of Matlı Osman and the various brigands encamped around Pirlepe, described above, it was by no means incidental that food

was one of their primary demands, and that the local population quickly faced the specter of starvation themselves. A decade later, the *vali* (governor) of Rumeli, who enlisted Albanian highlanders to track down mountain bandit groups, was shocked by his recruits' abject poverty, describing them as little better than naked.³¹

The difficulties encountered in ensuring a sufficient food supply for the Albanian population were probably aggravated by the continuing spread of *çiftlik*s throughout the region. *Çiftlik*s were estates considered and treated as essentially private property, rather than as lands at the free disposition of the sultan, as was the case with land assigned as *dirlik* (prebend, such as the *timars* designed to support cavalymen) to members of the military class, who were to use the revenue to equip themselves for campaign. In and of itself, estate formation was not necessarily a bad thing. Previously unproductive land could become the *çiftlik* of the person who brought it under cultivation, for example. Even the transformation of state *dirlik* into private *çiftlik* might be beneficial to the military, as long as the estate-holder made sure that the army gained a dependable source of the ever-more-critical irregular *sekban* infantry instead of the cavalry previously supported by the *timar-dirlik*.³² This was especially true in the western Balkans, given the exemplary reputation of Albanian *sekbans*, and indeed it had long been understood that notables appointed to office in Albanian provinces would use revenue from lands under their control to outfit *sekbans* for Ottoman service. While some land in the region remained in the *dirlik* category even after the end of the *timar* system in the 1830s, much more became *çiftlik* through this conversion process in the eighteenth century, as well as through that of land reclamation.³³

More damaging and more common than these, however, were the other means of creating private estates on already-worked land during this extended time of chaos. These generally involved the use of force to acquire rights over privileged lands and peasants. A number of areas in the region had never been fully incorporated into the *dirlik* system, which meant that many villages, farms and pastures enjoyed freedom from close oversight and from some of the usual tax burden borne by peasants on a *timar*. The sultan and his family, for example, retained control over broad swathes of land, appointing their own agents to collect the revenue. Other lands were set aside as *vakıf* (pious endowment), with revenue again collected by the administrator of each endowment or his agent. *Derbend* (highland pass) villages also were a quite common feature in a region as mountainous as

the western Balkans. The *derbend* villagers enjoyed significant relief from taxes in return for their service policing the roads and passes near their settlements. Other villages had similar rights in return for guarding the coast. Throughout this period of wars and turmoil, a growing number of such privileged villages and farms (in addition to nominally *dirlik* lands) fell under the control of powerful local notables.

The procedure adopted was frequently some variation of the following.³⁴ Given the lack of close oversight of a privileged village by any influential protector, a locally powerful man—military officer, *ayan*, tax farmer, self-appointed police chief—would demand the payment of taxes from which the villagers were excused, or which they had already paid to the properly-appointed agent. The villagers could not easily refuse. Given the generally low level of wealth possible for peasants on often marginal land, soon they fell deeply into debt. Unable to meet the rising demands for money, they eventually would offer to place themselves under the control of someone who could pay the debts and protect them from such arbitrary, illegal taxation. Whether or not the legal status of the land changed to *çiftlik* or remained as before (as would be the case with *vakıf*, for example), however, the peasants thereafter often continued to have to pay higher taxes than the laws prescribed.

The state often could offer little help to those who appealed for assistance beyond refusing to grant *post facto* legality to land grabs. In a village in Yanya district, for example, pasturelands were taken illegally as *çiftlik* by a local notable, but the state's officers could not reverse the seizure. The best that could be done for the dispossessed villagers was to refuse to sanction the transfer of the new *çiftlik* to the notable's heirs after his death.³⁵ In this extended era of state weakness, the fact that one powerful notable, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha of Yanya, was able to accumulate up to one thousand *çiftlik*s by the end of his career in 1822 gives an idea of the spread of estates, although it is impossible to determine the number of these that were new or illegal.³⁶ Yet it is clear that the spread of *çiftlik*s, with the often accompanying heavier taxation, helped to impoverish many who worked the land, pushed others off it, and contributed to the problems of feeding the population in troubled times.

B) Provincial Authorities

Integral to the widespread, recurring destitution seen in the Balkan provinces were the stresses produced by war from 1787 to 1792, in addition to those

caused by the mountain bandits themselves thereafter. While banditry was always to some degree a problem in the Albanian-inhabited lands, much of the region escaped the most obvious effects of military campaigning against either Habsburgs or Russians, since no armies passed through on the way to the front lines. This had also been the case during the disastrous 1768–74 war with Russia. Yet both of these wars and the ensuing internal disturbances did affect the region, helping to push many Albanians into joining brigand bands. The link between distant war fronts and local turbulence lay in provincial leadership.

One of the most significant ways in which even distant campaigning promoted penury and chaos, and then brigandage, among Albanian groups was that it gave *ayan* effective *carte blanche* to break the law. Along with Osman Pasvanoğlu of Vidin, the most commonly cited examples of *ayan* who crippled Istanbul's authority by acting violently and disobeying orders are Buşatlı Kara Mahmud Pasha of İşkodra and Tepedelenli Ali Pasha of Yanya. What is much less commonly recognized is that the two Albanian pashas initially established their local autonomy by serving Istanbul's war-induced, temporary critical interests, especially in providing invaluable men to fight the Austrians and Russians. In serving the state in this limited sense, in effect they earned the privilege to demand that Istanbul turn a blind eye to their own plans for self-aggrandizement.

During much of the period between 1699 and 1768, Istanbul had been able to keep the violence-prone rivalries that commonly feature in a kinship-based society such as Albania's under some degree of control. From the early days of Ottoman rule, the empire had tried to manage the region by tying the interests of its leading families to the well-being of the state, incorporating many of them into the ruling *askeri* class.³⁷ In return for titles, offices, and control of some land, a number of these families became effective servants of the sultan, guarding the region against Venice and sending soldiers when needed elsewhere. Should these *ayan* and other office-holders abuse their positions of influence, however, or fail to deliver tax revenues and soldiers to Istanbul, they were dismissed. This system was not unlike that found in provinces elsewhere in the eighteenth century, the "Age of *Ayans*."³⁸ It usually worked reasonably well. Ali Pasha himself, born of a notable Tosk family, lost his first important office after five months of ruthless "service"—and he was not the first member of his family to suffer such quick dismissal for misconduct.³⁹

Istanbul's interest in, and therefore capacity for, keeping aggressive no-

tables in check slipped in the era of repeated wars after 1768. The state's reaction to reports of one *ayan*'s misdeeds in 1772 offers an illuminating example of the change of priorities. The activities of a notable of Filorina (Florina, Greece) aroused complaints, but Istanbul chose to ignore them. The *ayan* was expected to equip and lead five hundred soldiers on the upcoming campaign against Russia; if he were made to answer the complaints, he would naturally be unable to show up with those valuable troops. It was decided, therefore, to delay justice until the campaign finished.⁴⁰ "Justice delayed" might not unreasonably be considered "justice denied," however, especially when the state, defeated, emerged from the war in such a weakened condition. The lesson would be hard to miss. Indeed, the 1770s saw very energetic struggles between ambitious Albanian notables.⁴¹

These struggles did not die away before 1787, and the renewal of war in that year only encouraged the competing *ayan* to new efforts. True to its form in earlier times of crisis, the state did not show its usual interest in investigating matters of justice, preferring to opt for the immediately rewarding expedient in the interests of finding soldiers. After Austria showed its readiness to withdraw from the war in 1790, for example, the *vali* of Rumeli began preparations for raising an army against Russia in the next campaign season. When he looked at Albania, the view frustrated him: a great pool of potential soldiers, but most of them (and most of the provincial revenues) were tied up in *ayan* squabbles. Each district (*sancak*) governor felt threatened by his neighbor, poured money into strengthening his own defenses—and then wanted to annex another *sancak* in order to be able to afford the arms race. The result was that, if the governor of a district were ordered to join the army with one thousand men, plus his household troops, he either would ignore the directive completely or, his attention and resources engaged elsewhere, would show up briefly with one or two hundred men, proving to be of no help to anyone. The *vali*'s solution was to have the state make clear to each recalcitrant notable that it wanted the levy of soldiers which his *sancak* was assigned to raise, preferably with the help of the notable, but, if a neighboring rival showed greater willingness, then Istanbul would be happy to give the rival control over the *sancak*.⁴²

As before, this policy of expediency had shortcomings, and now there were particularly aggressive men, such as Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, to exploit them. The *vali* thought it particularly important to bring about a reconciliation between Ali and his bitterest rival, İbrahim Pasha of Avlonya. Their rivalry was to continue for many years, but already it was widely known for

its intensity. Peace between the two men thus could not fail but to have a good effect on other *ayan* rivalries. The problem with Ali Pasha, however, was that he adhered to peace agreements only until he saw a good opportunity to strike again at his original target.⁴³ And whenever he struck, he did so with devastating consequences to both rivals and general population.⁴⁴ He also was ready to back other *ayan* who might be useful to him, working more indirectly to increase his own wealth and influence.⁴⁵ Whatever the means chosen to enlarge his own power, the net result was to threaten the lives and livelihood of others, driving both peasants and notables to seek their living out of his reach. Ali managed to get away with this kind of behavior for thirty years, however, because he also usually did take care to answer the state's demands for fighting men. Indeed, that is how he won his position in Yanya in 1787. He was appointed governor there in order to raise and lead an army against Kara Mahmud Pasha of İşkodra, who had himself caused so many problems for his neighbors that Istanbul felt obliged to remove him by military means.⁴⁶

Kara Mahmud was such a disruptive force in these years that it really should be no surprise that the western Balkans fell into lasting turmoil.⁴⁷ In listing the *sancaks* included in Ottoman Albania in 1790, the *vali* did not even bother to include İşkodra, perhaps because it was a district so completely dominated by its difficult governor that its resources could be tapped only by separate agreement with him. By that time Kara Mahmud had already faced more than one military expedition sent to punish him for his forays into adjacent territories; the threat of Istanbul throwing its support to one of his rivals would not impress him overmuch. He did have many men at his disposal, however, and when Istanbul desperately needed soldiers, it did try to persuade him to deliver them. On more than one occasion, he did so. Following the Austrian advance into the province of Bosnia in 1788, for example, Kara Mahmud was promoted to the rank of *vezir*, given the *eyalet* of Anadolu (Anatolia, essentially a lucrative financial reward), and assigned the responsibility of defending Yeni Pazar (Novi Pazar, Serbia).⁴⁸ Kara Mahmud fulfilled his new duties for a time but, like Ali Pasha, proved unable to give up for long his designs on neighboring territories, resuming his raids by the end of the war.⁴⁹

One of the primary objects of desire for Kara Mahmud, as for other notables, was the port of Dıraç, whose customs duties were a valuable source of revenue normally worked by a tax farmer. It was one of a number of properties in the vicinity of the *sancak* of İşkodra controlled by Asma

Sultan, the sister of Sultan Abdülhamid I. Asma Sultan became one of Kara Mahmud's determined enemies in Istanbul because of the threat he posed to her holdings.⁵⁰ Dıraç was particularly important for consideration of the reasons behind emigration from Albania, however, not only because of the general turmoil engendered by the struggles for control over it, but more specifically because its insecure, embattled position represents the difficulties which faced anyone wishing to make a living from commerce.

C) Commerce

Trade, both internal and external, had grown in importance in the western Balkans during much of the eighteenth century. This growth was simply part of the expansion of commerce seen through much of the empire.⁵¹ The rise in external trade, at least, must have been aided by the opening of ports such as Dıraç and Avlonya to European consuls after 1699. Within the peninsula, the development of a network of local and regional trade fairs (*panayır*) helped the growth of commerce, as did the increase in use of financial tools such as bills of exchange.⁵² Given the relative poverty and limited opportunities for agriculture in their provinces, it is not surprising that many Albanians turned to trading both local goods and the produce of distant lands. Among the most important exports were wool, hides, livestock, tobacco, rice, olive oil, salt, cotton, and silk. Artisan guilds also produced manufactures, including weapons, which were traded elsewhere in the Balkans. While maritime trade with Europe passed through ports such as Avlonya, Dıraç, Ülgün (Ulcinj, Montenegro), and Arta (Greece), the overland trade centers were spread throughout the interior, including important ones at Yanya, Elbasan (central Albania), Arnavud Belgrad (Berat, central Albania), Kavaya (Kavajë, central Albania), and Prizren and Priştina (Kosovo). The two with perhaps the strongest claims to importance, however, were İşkodra and İşkopol/Oskopol (Voskopojë, southeast Albania, commonly known as Moschopolis).⁵³

Both of these leading inland centers of commerce suffered badly from the unsettled conditions of this time. The thriving commercial and cultural center of İşkopol offered a tempting target to nearby notables who needed money quickly, since it had little protection or oversight by any powerful governor or *ayan*.⁵⁴ Late in the seventeenth century it had been a village included in a *zeamet* held by a secretary in the imperial land registry in Istanbul.⁵⁵ By the 1780s it had become part of the imperial properties (*em-*

lak-i hümayun), still dependent upon Istanbul, and vulnerable to repeated harassment from neighboring villages and more distant powers.⁵⁶ The town was sacked three times during the Ottoman wars with Russia and Austria, in 1769, 1772, and 1789, but not by foreign raiders. The last attack, by Ali Pasha's men, practically destroyed the town. Some of its commerce shifted to Görice (Korçë, Albania) and Arnavud Belgrad, but those towns could not make good the losses suffered by İşkodra.⁵⁷

The fate of İşkodra was rather different, although it, too, suffered from some of the same factors to be seen in Ali's lands to the south. Once Ali secured his control over tax farms, towns, and large swathes of land in Yanya and neighboring districts, he encouraged commerce. Charging high prices for goods and levying high taxes, he could command great profits from practically every transaction. Merchants accepted this in part because they had little choice, in part because Ali tried seriously to maintain public security, and in part because it was becoming ever clearer that fortunes might be made by all in neutral-flag trade during the Napoleonic period. Kara Mahmud also established his pervasive influence on commerce in the north, given his own notable collection of *çiftliks* and tax farms. He gained a dominant voice in the grain and pitch trades, for example, and in shipping out of Ülgün. With his accumulated power and wealth, he, too, could charge high prices and fees, although he seemed to take greater care to foster good relations with merchants than did Ali Pasha in the south and almost certainly enjoyed much stronger popular backing in his domains than did the pasha of Yanya. One reason for Kara Mahmud's support among the important merchant community of İşkodra, as well as among the city's artisans, was his willingness to provide "services" in return. Like Ali Pasha, he tried to keep the various unruly groups within his domains in check. Since the degree of Istanbul's direct writ of authority within the province was limited by distractions elsewhere and by the strength of a governor as entrenched as Kara Mahmud, moreover, İşkodra's merchants could more safely ignore imperial restrictions on trade, including the standing orders against the export of critical commodities to Christian countries or restrictions on the use of foreign currency.⁵⁸ In short, Kara Mahmud was a defender against both disorder at home and predatory authorities outside of the *sancak*.⁵⁹

Some, at least, of the problems with external authorities thrown in the way of İşkodra's traders could accurately be blamed upon Kara Mahmud himself, however. The menace he posed to neighboring notables and to the state's authority prompted them to try to apply pressure on him by squee-

zing his merchants. His apparently tireless (and sometimes violent) efforts to acquire land and tax farms left those threatened feeling that İşkodra owed them a debt, which they duly tried to collect by seizing its merchants' goods and money whenever they came within reach. For example, the losses to İşkodran traders in Dıraç were one factor explaining why Kara Mahmud could not give up his hopes of acquiring control over it.⁶⁰ The threat of interference in the grain and pitch trades, based around Elbasan and Arnavud Belgrad, also helped to push him to attack mid-Albania's leading notable of the 1770s and 1780s, Kurd Ahmed Pasha, then the governor of Avlonya and one of his leading rivals. This campaign in 1785 eventually brought him yet another Ottoman army, sent to strip him of office, title, and property. When Kara Mahmud fell afoul of Istanbul, as in his conflicts with neighboring *ayan*, it was İşkodra's merchants who paid the stiffest penalty. In 1793–94, when its governor was declared yet again in rebellion against the sultan following renewed incursions into Elbasan, Istanbul ordered that İşkodra was to be completely blockaded, and any of its natives found trading elsewhere were to be imprisoned, as were those with whom they traded.⁶¹ And even if the traders managed to avoid arrest, they too had to be on guard against bandits, who regularly robbed merchants and attacked *panayırs* in the western as in the eastern Balkans. While the changes in value and volume of trade throughout the Albanian provinces in the 1790s and 1800s are impossible to measure, the overall trend cannot have been ever-upward under conditions such as these.

D) Emigration

If both commerce and farming were particularly hazardous or onerous in this period, then what other alternative means of earning a livelihood still existed? Albanians throughout the eighteenth century, and earlier, had migrated in search of work.⁶² Except for those engaged in trade or war, many (but by no means all) of the jobs they found were semi- or unskilled. Patrona Halil, a seller of used clothing in Istanbul and the leader of the revolt which overthrew Sultan Ahmed III in 1730, is particularly well known but otherwise not atypical. Sultans periodically issued decrees barring such unskilled job-seekers from migrating to Istanbul.⁶³ The bans were never completely effective, however, and there always was a large Albanian community in the imperial capital, and indeed in the sultan's palace. When war broke out in 1787, all non-Muslims in the Balkans were to turn in any weapons they

might have, in return for fair compensation; any non-Muslim found armed thereafter was to lose his weapons without compensation.⁶⁴ The sultan issued an exemption from this restriction to merchants and others who needed to protect themselves against bandits while traveling—including thirty caretakers of the palace water pipes and drains, who were going to visit their families in the district of Ergiri Kasrı (Gjirokastrë, southern Albania).⁶⁵

Other groups of Albanian émigrés, however, saw their employment opportunities in the capital and other areas limited sharply. Albanians had come to monopolize the lime-burning trade around Istanbul, for example, but the government ordered them sent home and for lime to be brought from Selanik (Salonica, Greece), an old source of supply.⁶⁶ Albanians were hardly more welcome in provinces such as Selanik or Yenişehir (Larissa, Greece), since they had come to be associated with troubles, and not only with banditry. Standing orders had been issued in the 1770s against Albanians taking up tax farms outside of their native provinces, for example.⁶⁷ The orders had little lasting effect, of course; the enduring banditry problems of the 1790s led to the renewal of wishful calls for barring Albanians from holding sensitive tax farms.⁶⁸ Whether tax farmers or not, almost all Albanians came to be viewed with suspicion and resentment. An incident from Yenişehir may serve as an example of what might result. A large group of local people, both Muslim and Christian, took the orders against the tax farmers as a license to attack other Albanians and thus assaulted those guarding a nearby *derbend*, killing six. Such an act shocked the government in Istanbul, and perhaps as a result the restrictions of the 1770s may have been enforced only loosely.⁶⁹ Yet migration for Albanians remained difficult in the following decades, as the state tried ever harder to control the movements of poor, desperate people.

Although the state might reasonably guess that its restrictions on movement would simply increase the poverty and deprivation felt by so much of the Albanian population, it did have equally valid reasons for tightening them. The Albanians' bravery and skill with weapons created many job opportunities for them as watchmen or guards, not only in *derbends* but in any valued place. The fact that Muslim Albanians long acted as guards and caretakers for important Orthodox sites in Kosovo excited curiosity amongst outside observers of the recent troubles there—but this kind of arrangement was replicated throughout the Balkans.⁷⁰ The sites protected naturally were much more often secular than religious, and the owners also often wished to use Albanian guards to win immediate earthly rewards rather than to wait

for the heavenly. The Khans of Crimea, for instance, gained a series of *çiftlik*s near Burgos (Burgas, Bulgaria) in the early 1780s and set up shops in the newly-acquired villages, placing Albanians in the shops. One of the Albanians' important duties apparently was to make sure that villagers did not go elsewhere to buy necessities to avoid the high prices in the shops. This was bad enough, but with the rise of banditry in the region, the Albanians also seemed to be too ready to shelter brigands in the *çiftlik*s. Istanbul ordered the shops closed to resolve the issue.⁷¹ A problem on a much larger scale was that, given Albanians' reputation as superb warriors, they could always find employment in the army or, following the conclusion of peace in 1792, in the private retinues of the rich and powerful throughout the empire. Demand for them among *ayan* remained strong for fifteen years after the end of the war, as these notables fought each other over territory and revenues.⁷² Being little more than mercenaries in these struggles, many Albanians switched sides when offered better or prompter pay, or, as has been noted, joined the ranks of the Mountain Bandits.⁷³

The government of the Ottoman empire thus found itself confronting a multifaceted problem which proved to be remarkably stubborn. In order to resolve the Mountain Bandit crisis and restore peace in the Balkans, the movement of Albanian mercenaries had to be controlled. This required not only effective control over land and sea routes, but also stabilization and improvement of conditions in the Albanian districts. This, in turn, depended on the state's assertion of effective authority in the teeth of resistance from such increasingly wealthy and powerful notables as Tepedelenli Ali Pasha and Buşatlı Kara Mahmud Pasha. Could the Ottoman government accomplish any of these formidable tasks during the reign of Selim III? Its performance certainly suggests that it could not, in spite of prolonged efforts.

The State's Methods of Restoring Peace and Justice

Selim III's government did not have the strength or resiliency needed to rescue the Balkan provinces from the tremendous disorders of the 1790s and 1800s. In the wake of the war lost to Russia, Istanbul lacked the money necessary to raise, equip, and maintain a force large enough to crush the brigands; as one contemporary analyst pointed out, it would take twenty thousand men to hunt down four thousand bandits, given the rough and wild terrain in which they hid.⁷⁴ Even with enough men, the state lacked capable

military commanders. As a result, the efforts to control the brigands depended upon cooperation from all of the *ayan*, which some gave, while others did not. This is hardly surprising, given the strength of rivalries among provincial notables. These problems should not suggest that progress was never made: forces led by various *ayan* clashed with lawless gangs regularly, and a steady stream of messengers brought heads of bandits to Istanbul to prove that vigorous action was being taken. Yet as long as some brigand bands survived, and as long as the government outfitted forces to chase them, Albanians would be drawn to the arena of action. Unable to control the bandits effectively, Istanbul never managed to address adequately the issue of Albanian migration, let alone those even tougher tasks involved in bringing more order and prosperity to the western Balkans.

The most constant measures applied, as suggested above, involved the setting up of a system to police transportation routes across the Balkans. A regime under which Albanians were allowed through passes and along roads only with written permission from district governors was well established by the second half of the 1790s, if not earlier.⁷⁵ Istanbul also applied a measure commonly essayed in order to check the wilder impulses of possible troublemakers, including *sekbans*: the requirement of naming guarantors (*kefil*), or indeed the taking of hostages. Sometimes these methods worked, but none offered a perfect solution. One energetic *vezir* who campaigned against the Mountain Bandits, Hakkı Pasha, wanted Tepedelenli Ali Pasha to seize as hostages relatives of leading southern Albanian bandits operating in present-day Bulgaria. Ali replied that he was willing to do so but pointed out, quite reasonably, that the measure would be unlikely to accomplish anything, since the brigands would know nothing of their far-off relatives' new plight.⁷⁶ When Ali himself was later given the responsibility of quelling the Mountain Bandits, however, he did take hostages, apparently with some effect.⁷⁷ Yet guarantors and hostages could not halt the flow of so many disparate groups and individuals from the region.

The system of restrictions thus was intensified after the turn of the century, as part of a general tightening of restraints on movements by all and sundry in Ottoman Europe.⁷⁸ By mid-1803 no Albanians—even the soldiers so needed by those fighting the brigands—were to be allowed out of their homelands, even with the permission papers.⁷⁹ Any responsible official who allowed such men to pass was threatened with dire consequences. Not all listened to orders, however. Tepedelenli Ali was often singled out by other frustrated officers of the state as bearing great responsibility for the conti-

nuation of the Mountain Bandit problem because of his reluctance to close the mountain passes under his control.⁸⁰ One of the offices which he held was *derbender başbuğu*, or supervisor of the system of guards watching the highland passes throughout much of the Balkans. His unwillingness to apply the rules restricting the movement of Albanians thus was particularly damaging to their effectiveness, which makes the frustration of other officers quite understandable. Given that Ali himself was in charge of the operations against the Mountain Bandits in 1802 and did well in persuading many to settle down, why did he not cooperate in closing the passes?

Ali had more to fear from closing the passes than from supervising them laxly and risking Istanbul's displeasure. Although his own status and authority amongst the Tosks of the south was great, it was by no means unchallenged. He always had to struggle to control banditry even in the districts most under his control, let alone those still being absorbed after violent campaigns against other notables. Ali would much rather see the kinsmen and followers of defeated rivals, as well as those who lost *çiftliks* or other property to him, go elsewhere to try to mend their fortunes, rather than stay bottled up in or near his territory. The degree of his mastery over the passes is also debatable. The *derbend* system did not cover all of the Balkans (which in itself suggests that he did not bear sole responsibility for allowing disreputable bands to slip through) but did extend over a very large area. While he exercised greater mastery over the system than did his several predecessors, it seems likely that his ability to ensure complete closure of distant passes was less than absolute, even had he wished to. Ali was rarely, if ever, accused of sending bands of brigands far from Albania, since his interests were focused on neighboring lands, but it does seem all too understandable that he did not spend much of his influence and resources on keeping those who wished to migrate from doing so.

In light of Istanbul's demonstrated inability to bend Ali and other Balkan notables to its will and of the limited efficacy of its road-policing system, it is difficult to explain conclusively the ending of the Mountain Bandit era after Selim III's overthrow in 1807, and especially the dwindling of the Albanian threat to public order. The deaths of several of the most powerful and willful *ayan*, including most notably Osman Pasvanoğlu, certainly helped.⁸¹ No one of equal stature could rise to such levels of influence in lands which were exhausted by 1807. In some senses the Albanian provinces perhaps gained some stability, as trade boomed during the Napoleonic period and the successors to Kara Mahmud in İşkodra showed themselves to be less troub-

lesome to their neighbors and the state.⁸² Plague also subsided for a number of years after 1804. Another probable factor, however, was the renewed outbreak of war with Russia in 1806, which offered to many Albanians once again the opportunity to find employment in the Ottoman army. It is ironic that renewed warfare might have helped to reduce the problem of banditry, after having been so important in promoting it in the previous century.

Conclusion

Ottoman Europe suffered turmoil in the late eighteenth century that shook to its foundations Istanbul's structure of provincial authority. Violence and lawlessness are symptoms of frictions or tensions within a society, and no state has ever been entirely free of them. In this case, the veritable epidemic of brigandage points to the existence of widespread, fundamental problems. For the Albanian provinces of the western Balkans, the 1780s, 1790s, and 1800s brought the most intense stretch of an extended period of turbulence, as rival notables became ever more aggressive in their attempts to secure for themselves wealth and power. Their actions caused rising impoverishment and misery in both town and country, both by outright destruction resulting from raid and counter-raid, and by promoting significant changes in the urban and rural economy. Notables gained control over ever more land through threats and force, imposing thereafter heavy revenue burdens upon the remaining peasants. Commerce, in turn, suffered from the insecurity promoted by the conflicts, and by the *de facto* creation of internal borders defended by rival *ayan*. The local notables were taking advantage of the imperial government's preoccupation with immediate threats to its own existence, and many Albanians who had no secure place in this environment chose to emigrate. Given both the lack of viable peaceful opportunities and the plunder to be taken in other chaotic, ill-defended provinces, it is no surprise that so many chose the option of banditry. For the state, pressed by severe external threats, mounting internal challenges, and suffering a visible loss of domestic authority and power, little could be done quickly to repair the damage suffered by the Albanian provinces. Many years would pass before Istanbul could muster the resources needed to crush the last of the powerful *ayan* of the Balkans, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha.⁸³ The move came too late to repair the old system, as the various layers of lawlessness eventually provoked successful revolts against Ottoman rule amongst first

Serbs and then Greeks. These revolts, of course, were to push the Ottoman state toward the full-scale reform or modernization projects of the nineteenth century.

Notes

1. The term refers to brigands or "outlaws" who, based in the Balkan and Rhodope mountain chains of Bulgaria, ravaged surrounding areas as far as northern Greece, southern Romania, and western Macedonia from ca. 1791 to ca. 1808.
2. Stanford Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1971); Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Dağlı İsyanları (1791–1808)* (Ankara: Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, 1983); Bruce McGowan, "The Age of the *Ayans*, 1699–1812," in Halil İnalcık et al., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 663. Halil İnalcık ("Arnawutluk," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* [Leiden: Brill, 1960], 656–57) is one of the few to make even a passing reference to the large numbers of Albanians among the Mountain Bandits.
3. In light of the recent violent troubles in Kosovo and Macedonia and the strong emotions tied to them, readers are urged most emphatically not to draw either of two unwarranted conclusions from this article: that Albanians are somehow inherently inclined to banditry, or that the extent of Ottoman "Albania" or *Arnavudluk* (which included parts of present-day northern Greece, western Macedonia, southern Montenegro, Kosovo, and southern Serbia) gives any historical "justification" for the creation of a "Greater Albania" today.
4. For further comment on the breadth of activities considered as "banditry," see discussion of the term "*eşkiya*" in Anastasopoulos's contribution to this volume.
5. The reasons for the Ottomans' enduring readiness to use a non-religious identifier are obscure but perhaps are related to Albanians' mobility as both pastoralists and migrants, which brought them and their noticeably clannish or tribal social mores into frequent and extended contact with settled groups of different social and ethnic backgrounds. Other groups sharing these characteristics (and not by coincidence also from very mountainous regions, in the majority of cases), such as people from the Caucasus (Georgians, Abkhaz, Circassians), Kurds, and Gypsies/Roma, were also more often identified by an ethnic marker than was the case with Greeks, Bulgars, or non-tribal Turks and Arabs. Indeed, the word "Arab" was most commonly applied to desert nomads, rather than the much larger category of Arabic speakers.

6. Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).
7. In the most recent edition of his book on banditry, Hobsbawm acknowledged criticism of his reliance on mythical folklore in his discussion of *hayduds*—but nevertheless changed remarkably little of his original theoretical model (Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000], xi, 171–72, ch. 7). Katherine Fleming recently attempted to link together the Hobsbawm and Barkey theories in discussing Tepedelenli Ali Pasha's career. Terming this time as a period of increasing centralization of the state and strengthening of its institutions, and drawing upon much the same flimsy material used by Hobsbawm, her picture also fails to persuade (K. E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999], 40–44). For a purer “Balkanist” view of bandits as national heroes, see Bistra Cvetkova, “The Bulgarian Haiduk Movement in the 15th to 18th Centuries,” in Gunther Rothenberg, Béla Király, and Peter Sugar, eds., *East Central European Society in the Pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century* (Boulder, Colo: Social Science Monographs, 1982), 301–38. For the best account of banditry in the Ottoman Balkans, with particular attention paid to exposing many of the common misperceptions about *haydud* bands operating as national-Christian freedom fighters, see Fikret Adanır, “Heiduckentum und Osmanische Herrschaft,” *Südost-Forschungen* 41 (1982): 43–116.
8. For example, McGowan, “Age of the Ayans,” pp. 665–66, and İnalçık, “Ar-nawutluk,” 657.
9. Başbakanlık Arşivi, Istanbul (BA), Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH) 427, 8 June 1792; BA, C.DH 1340, 25 June 1792.
10. The current place-name and country (including Kosovo, for the sake of simplicity, in spite of its present hazy status) henceforth will be given in brackets following the Ottoman name.
11. BA, C.DH 6365, 12–16 June 1792.
12. BA, C.DH 1452, 13 August 1795.
13. BA, C.DH 7850, various reports dated November 1788.
14. BA, C.DH 534, orders dated March–April 1799; BA, Mühimme Defteri (MD) 210/30, late February 1800.
15. Ali Zot came from a notable family in the district of Yanya which had entered into the violent struggles for wealth and power afflicting the area in the 1780s. Ali emigrated to become one of the leading figures of the Mountain Bandit problem in the 1790s.
16. Of the more than three thousand Mountain Bandits in the vicinity of Filibe (Plovdiv, Bulgaria) and Zağra (Stara Zagora, Bulgaria) in September 1791, half were Albanian. BA, Hatt-i Hümayun (HH) 10420, 2 October 1791.
17. BA, HH 2844-A, 1799–1800; BA, C.DH 326, late December 1794; BA, Cevdet Adliye (C.ADL) 703, 6 April 1802.

18. BA, C.DH 1832, 1793–94; BA, HH 5239-A, 1792–93; Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, pp. 23–24; BA, C.DH 326.
19. Among the various Albanian linguistic-social groups, the two most important were the Tosks of the south and the Ghegs of the north. In this case, without more information it is impossible to determine whether just the Tosk background or some closer tie inclined the brigands and deserters toward each other.
20. BA, HH 3742-A, June–July 1800. John Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821–1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 58–60, also notes such an overtly mercenary streak demonstrated by bands from “northern Greece” (including Epirus and Macedonia) during the Greek revolt of the 1820s.
21. BA, HH 3434-D, 12 January 1801.
22. BA, HH 2889-B, 17 July 1802; Deena Sadat, “Ayan and Ağa: The Transformation of the Bektashi Corps in the Eighteenth Century,” *Muslim World* 63 (July 1973): 206–219.
23. The Morea suffered repeated raids and other abuse, particularly after 1770, in spite of Istanbul's efforts to keep Albanians out of the peninsula. See, for example, BA, HH 1285, 1778; BA, C.DH 900, 5 April 1782; BA, Cevdet Zabtiye (C.ZB) 4236, 26 May 1795; BA, C.DH 281, 13 January 1800; BA, C.DH 521, 29 August 1803.
24. For references to Bosnians, see BA, C.DH 4126, 18 May 1800; BA, HH 3049, 1801–2.
25. Machiel Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania (1385–1912)* (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1990), 14.
26. Gilles Veinstein, “Les Provinces Balkaniques (1606–1774),” in Robert Mantran, ed., *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 321.
27. Daniel Panzac, *La Peste dans l'Empire Ottoman, 1700–1850* (Leuven: Editions Peeters, 1985), 109–115, 198.
28. Panzac, *La Peste*, 67, 111–12.
29. BA, C.ADL 1053, 1 November 1795.
30. Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 25, for references to famine in 1794; BA, HH 6163-F, for grain shortage in Prizren in 1806; BA, C.DH 13425, undated (probably shortly before 1798) for lack of grain shipments from Selanik due to drought. Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet* (Istanbul, 1886), vol. 5, 211, for grain shortages in Istanbul in 1791, and vol. 6, 86, for shortages in Manastir in 1794.
31. BA, HH 6907, 17 December 1803.
32. Since it has been customary since the seventeenth century to deplore the decline of the *sipahi-dirlik* system and to point to this development as evidence of “decline,” it is worth repeating that the system could not continue unchanged in an era of military requirements much changed since the *sipahi* system was first instituted. It is noteworthy that Russia started to move away from its own

- system of landed service-cavalry (and its “Janissaries”, the *strel'tsi*) in the eighteenth century for similar reasons. See Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Simon Dixon, *The Modernisation of Russia 1676–1825* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
33. Conversion of *dirlik* to *çiftlik* in Albanian territory was already well advanced by the mid-eighteenth century. BA, MD 154, 308/1, late April–early May 1750. See also Ligor Mile, “De l’extension du système des *çiftlig* sur les territoires albanais,” *Deuxieme Conférence des Études Albanologiques* (Tirana, 1970), 101–108. For continuation of the *dirlik* system long after its formal abolition in the 1830s, see Nathalie Clayer, “Note sur la survivance du système des *timâr* dans la région de Shkodër au début du XX^e siècle,” *Turcica* 29 (1997), 423–31.
 34. Records of irregular taxation and disputes over *çiftliks* abound. For a selection from different years, places, and tactics, see: BA, C.ADL 446, 1 November 1768; BA, C.DH 10372, November–December 1785; BA, Rumeli Ahkâm 42/773, mid-April 1788; BA, Rumeli Ahkâm 47/275, mid-November 1793; BA, Rumeli Ahkâm 50/149, April 1796; BA, MD 210/678, mid-May 1800.
 35. BA, C.DH 10372, 1786.
 36. Dennis Skiotis, “From Bandit to Pasha: First Steps in the Rise to Power of Ali of Tepelen, 1750–1784,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 221, note 1; McGowan, “Age of the Ayans,” 668, 688. McGowan notes that Ali also took advantage of Istanbul’s preoccupation with the Ottoman-Russian war of 1806–1812 to seize more lands. For references to the seizure of *çiftliks* by Ali and his family during that war, see William Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London, 1835), vol. 4, ch. 38.
 37. Halil İnalçık, “Stefan Dušan’dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna,” in *Fuad Köprülü Armağanı, Mélanges Fuad Köprülü* (Istanbul: Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, 1953), 85–90; Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture*, 18.
 38. For an example from Anatolia, see Yuzo Nagata, “The Role of Ayans in Regional Development during the Pre-Tanzimat Period in Turkey: A Case Study of the Karaosmanoğlu Family,” in his *Studies on the Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire* (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1995), 120–21.
 39. Skiotis, “From Bandit to Pasha,” 226, 234–36.
 40. BA, C.DH 980, February 1772. For a similar case from 1790, see BA, Cevdet Askeri 3850.
 41. Skiotis, “Bandit to Pasha,” 230–31; Kristo Frashëri, *The History of Albania (a Brief Survey)* (Tirana, 1964), 101–4.
 42. BA, HH 2058, 18 November 1790.
 43. BA, HH 15326, 1800–1801.
 44. BA, MD 210/380, mid-April 1800.
 45. BA, C.DH 1570, late August 1799.

46. BA, C.DH 334, 6 March 1787; BA, C.DH 3815, undated but almost certainly from the same year.
47. For a good example of Kara Mahmud in action, see Michael Hickok, *Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia* (New York: Brill, 1997), 152–75.
48. BA, HH 1106-C, 14 February 1789; Cevdet, *Tarih*, vol. 5, 17.
49. Peter Bartl, “Albanien im Russisch-Österreichischen Türkenkrieg, 1787–1792,” in Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, ed., *Albanien in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Munich: Südosteuropa-Studien, 1991), 57–60; Cevdet, *Tarih*, vol. 6, pp. 84–86; BA, HH 3318, 1 April 1793.
50. Stavri Naçi, *Pashallëku i Shkodrës në sundimin e Bushatllive në gjysmën e dytë të shek. XVIII* (Tirana: University of Tirana, 1964), chapter 4; Cevdet, *Tarih*, vol. 6, 197–98; BA, HH 742, 27 January 1788; BA, HH 7922 and 10913, 1789.
51. McGowan, “Age of the Ayans,” 724–25.
52. See Ömer Şen, *Osmanlı Panayırları (18. –19. Yüzyıl)* (Istanbul: Eren, 1996) for information on selected fairs in the Balkans, particularly for the nineteenth century.
53. McGowan, “Age of the Ayans,” 736; Stavri Naçi, “Le Facteur Albanais dans la Commerce Balkanique au XVIIIe Siecle,” *Studia Albanica* VII/2 (1970), 37–42.
54. On İskopol see Max Peyfuss, *Die Druckerei von Moschopolis, 1731–1769: Buchdruck und Heiligenverehrung im Erzbistum Achrida* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989).
55. BA, MD 104/470, mid-August 1693.
56. BA, C.DH 16315, August–September 1782.
57. Veinstein, “Provinces Balkaniques,” 332; Frashëri, *History of Albania*, 102, 108; Peyfuss, *Druckerei*, 43, 45. İskopol did not disappear completely from the map of Albanian commerce, but it certainly never regained its previous prosperity. See Ferit Duka, *Berati në Kohën Osmane (shek. XVI–XVIII)* (Tirana: Toena, 2001), 137. It continued to be vulnerable to outside threats: by the end of the Greek revolt of the 1820s, most of İskopol’s residents had fled to safer places. BA, C.DH 8285, mid-September 1829.
58. Both of these restrictions were honored haphazardly, at best, in other Albanian *ayans’* territories. For the widespread use of non-Ottoman currency in Ali Pasha’s Yanya, see BA, MD 220/208, mid-March 1803.
59. Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 230; Naçi, *Pashallëku i Shkodrës*, ch. 4; Stavri Naçi, “Le Pachalik de Shkodër considéré dans son développement économique et social au XVIIIe s.,” *Studia Albanica* III/1 (1966): 137–42; McGowan, “Age of the Ayans,” 667; Fleming, *Muslim Bonaparte*, 46–49, 51–54.
60. BA, C.DH 4496, 24 and 28 July 1780. İškodra’s traders were not the only ones to suffer such losses, of course. For an early example of confiscation of goods

- from a trader from Arnavud Belgrad, carried out in 1775 by İşkodran officers in Bar (Montenegro), see Duka, *Berati*, 145.
61. BA, C.DH 543, April 1794; BA, C.DH 1280, 26 March 1794.
 62. The migration of Albanians in search of work has been noted frequently, at least in passing. For a recent discussion of this phenomenon, see Suraiya Faruqi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater Istanbul' as Reflected in the Kadi Registers of Eyüp," *Turcica* 30 (1998): 171, 173–75.
 63. Robert Olson, "Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20/2 (1977): 187–88, 194–98.
 64. As with many still-popular beliefs about the oppressiveness of Ottoman rule over non-Muslims in the Balkans (e.g., drastic curbs placed upon churches, bans on riding horses, numerous sumptuary restrictions), the idea that *zimmis* could not have weapons certainly does not reflect the reality of all times and all places. One of the empire's defense and security tactics was the *nefir-i amm*, which called all capable men of a district to arms. BA, C.DH 560, 21 June 1796, for example, calls all local men, including *reaya* (non-military men including, but not necessarily limited to, Christian peasants), to arms against Mountain Bandits active in central Bulgaria. Those who fought against the bandits were permitted to keep whatever spoils they captured—not just money and goods, but also weapons.
 65. BA, Rumeli Ahkâm 42/424, late October 1787.
 66. BA, Rumeli Ahkâm 42/829, early June 1788.
 67. BA, C.DH 3291, 1779.
 68. BA, C.DH 430, undated but apparently from the period 1798–1801, for example, decried the continuing practice of awarding important positions, such as the *nezarets* (supervisor of revenue collection) of Üsküb (Skopje, Macedonia) and Filibe (Plovdiv, Bulgaria) or the *cizyedarlık* (collector of the poll-tax paid by non-Muslims) of Edirne (Turkey), to Albanians or any other locals who lacked clear dependence upon Istanbul.
 69. BA, C.DH 8776 records the presence of Albanian tax farmers in Yenişehir in 1793–94—and both they and other Albanians continued to be viewed frequently with suspicion. In Domenik district in northern Greece, Albanian traders as well as tax farmers preferred to demand food and lodging from Orthodox villagers as they passed through, rather than to arrange their own supplies. BA, C.DH 2501, 12 November 1795. For an earlier case in Yenişehir, see BA, C.DH 8196, 1782.
 70. See, for instance, Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), xxviii, the best history of the background to the recent conflict. For a summary of explanations of the role of guards, see Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 72, n. 6.

71. BA, C.ZB 425, May and August 1790.
72. Albanians fighting for ambitious *ayan* was certainly not a phenomenon reserved solely for the Balkans. The retinue of the Bosnian Ahmed Cezzar Pasha ("The Butcher"), *ayan* of Acre on the Syrian coast (1775–1804), had a large Albanian component—as of course did that of the Albanian Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt (1805–49).
73. BA, MD 210, mid-April 1800; BA, C.DH 430. The latter document, a detailed analysis of the Mountain Bandit problem, has been published in transliteration (but with numerous errors): Yücel Özkaya, "XVIII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısına Ait Sosyal Yaşantıyı Ortaya Koyan bir Belge," *OTAM* 2 (Ankara, 1991): 303–34.
74. BA, C.DH 430.
75. BA, C.DH 7377, late November 1797.
76. BA, HH 2168, 18 March 1797.
77. BA, MD 220/658, early June 1803.
78. BA, C.DH 430 includes details of a wide-ranging scheme to police all movement in the regions affected by the Mountain Bandits.
79. BA, MD 220/643–656, early June 1803. These restrictions, however, did not prevent the *vali* of Rumeli from recruiting Albanians to serve in his army in the following winter (see note 31).
80. BA, HH 2168, 18 March 1797; BA, HH 13256, undated but presumably 1800–1801.
81. Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 101–03.
82. Norman Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean, 1797–1807* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 221, for example, notes that Black Sea trade through Odessa saw strong growth in 1808, promoted in part by the Continental System of Napoleon's newly-expanded European empire.
83. Istanbul never could manage to crush that other famous Albanian provincial notable, Mehmed Ali Pasha, a *sekbân* leader who left Kavala (Greece) to establish his dominance in Egypt. Mehmed Ali's actions and mindset bear a number of important similarities to those of Tepedelenli Ali. The best critical work on Mehmed Ali is Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).