Modern Rebels: Banditry and the Crime of Ransom Kidnapping in the Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1906)

Cem Doğan[*]

(ORCID: 0000-0002-2008-3830)

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Abstract

The crime of ransom kidnapping is frequently performed by criminal groups, and it possesses a long past in many cultures. It leads to drastic emotional, physical, and economic hardships both in terms of the victim and his/her family. Ransom kidnapping consists of three essential components. First of them is its unpredictable nature that makes it impossible to guess what would be at the end of this action. Kidnappers could either murder the hostage or spare his/her life, depending on their will to kill. Second is the actual objective of kidnapping. The kidnappers might have organized the crime merely for money, or intending to send a political message to their rivals when they plan to make a good deal of money. Moreover, they could combine these factors with the feelings of vengeance and retaliation in some incidents. Once for all, the deterrence of punishment influences the behavioral positions of kidnappers, and therefore it should be interrelated

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[*] Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Iğdır Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü, dogancem1@hotmail.com.

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with the penal code of the time. This paper aims to argue the ransom kidnapping in the reign of Abdulhamid II in the light of above-mentioned principles.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Crime, Kidnapping, Ransom.

Modern Asiler: II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Eşkıyalık ve Adam Kaçırma Suçu (1876-1906)

Öz

Fidye için insan kaçırma suçu sıklıkla kriminal gruplar tarafından işlenir ve birçok kültürde köklü bir geçmişi vardır. Bu eylem, hem mağdur hem de ailesi açısından şiddetli duygusal, fiziksel ve ekonomik zorluklara yol açar. Fidye için insan kaçırma üç temel bileşenden oluşur. Bunlardan ilki, kaçırma eyleminin sonunda ne olacağını tahmin etmeyi imkansız kılan öngörülemez doğasıdır. Kaçıranlar, iradelerine bağlı olarak rehineyi öldürebilir ya da canını bağışlayabilirler. İkincisi, kaçırmanın asıl amacıyla ilişkilidir. Suçlular, bu edimi salt para için gerçekleştirmiş olabilecekleri gibi bir yandan rakiplerine siyasi mesaj göndermek diğer yandan da kolayca para kazanmayı planlamış olabilirler. Dahası, kaçırma eylemini tetikleyen faktörler bazı vakalarda intikam ve misilleme duygularıyla iç içe geçmiştir. Son olarak, cezanın caydırıcılığı, kaçıranların davranışsal pozisyonlarını etkiler. Bu nedenle, kaçırma vakası yürürlükte bulunan ceza kanunuyla birlikte düşünülmelidir. Bu makale, II. Abdülhamid dönemindeki fidye için insan kaçırma hadiselerini yukarıda belirtilen ilkeler ışığında tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Suç, İnsan Kaçırma, Fidye.

Introduction

Eric Hobsbawm suggests in his classic work *Primitive Rebels* that the tenacious man who is not willing to put up with the burdens of ordinary people in society could escape from poverty and meekness by joining or serving them as well as crying out against them.[1] This argument implies that there is a possible link between the social order, system of justice and distribution of wealth in the society. This obvious link creates a web of relations through the feeling of lack in social and

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[1] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Manchester, 1971, p. 13.

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economic justice and equality among the citizens. Thus, the tenacious ones would choose to stray away the society and alienate themselves from the "others" with their ways of action. One of them emerges as kidnapping which is usually a strong and organized response to the undeserved gain and unrighteousness in the recreation and redistribution of wealth.

However, there is a slight nuance here about ransom kidnapping of what we have to be aware. Kidnapping is not what people usually assume it is. When someone speaks of a kidnapping, most consider of something like picking up a kid at a bus stop or holding a captive. We take its explanation: "to steal (a child), to carry off (a person) by illegal force." Kidnapping, however, has never actually been about that.[2] Kidnapping is a by-product of the social order, but not a crime against it. This argument has a crucial role to analyze the internal dynamics of ransom kidnapping as well as its relationship with politics. The discursive link that legitimate means forms between the kidnapping and 'organized crime' wishes to solidify their claim over the supervision of violence and to strip the act of kidnapping of its civil character. It is absolutely the justified practice of allegorical and real sets of violence by the so-called 'criminals' that renews their identification as 'rebels' of the system, a system which is attacked from 'within', with the mobilization of its own weapons of charged and uneven redistribution of economic resources.[3]

In the Ottoman example, ransom kidnapping welcomes us under the title of "fidye-i necat" which literally means "ransom of salvation". No matter how it seems the same, there is a serious gap between the cases of ransom kidnapping in Ottoman society compared to the modern occurences. Ottoman ransom kidnappings show us that these acts were not committed by any organized groups most of the time, if not always. In the absence of an organized criminal party, the state had to intervene in the situation and undertook the role of ransom-

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[2] Samuel P. Newton, "Kidnapping Reconsidered: Courts Merger Tests Inadequately Remedy the Inequities Which Developed from Kidnapping's Sensationalized and Racialized History", *William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal*, 3 (2020), p. 636.
[3] Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Capitalizing on Value: Towards a Sociological Understanding of Kidnapping", *Sociology*, 5 (2006), p. 942.

payer to free the victims. Banditry, on the other hand, amalgamated with the ransom kidnapping in many incidents and it made things more complicated in terms of the state authorities. As a matter of fact, the real causes that gave rise to ransom kidnappings stemmed from political and economical determinants. What we should bear in our minds is that the basic reality of changing faces of the cultures, and when they do change, it implies that both political and economical factors have been shifted (Briggs, 2001: 9).[4] This paper intends to untie the knot at the junction point of political economy, state intervention, banditry, and ransom kidnapping.

1. What, Why, and How of Ransom Kidnapping?

Kidnapping is an act of detainment and a serious crime, and actually a hideous crime as ancient as civilization itself. Once men came out to settle as communities, initially as hunting tribes, then in agricultural villages and later in city states, they had a strong yearning for preservation and the power of law. The authority of law meant that rulers and ranks were handed over (or picked up unto themselves) the mandatory capabilities to carry it out. Opponents or rebels who wanted to fight them off learned so swiftly that pressure could be imposed on the ruler by kidnapping his children, either boy or girl.[5] Thus, it should not be surprising to see that the word *kidnap* is actually a combination of two terms, *kid* (child) and *nap* (seize). *Abduct*, which is often used interchangeably with *kidnap*, comes from the Latin prefix *ab* (away) and verb *ducere* (to lead).[6]

Some of the earliest historical documents available talk of people and whole divisions of population being captured by force and sold, bartered, or subjugated. Even entire societies have been kidnapped and eliminated or auctioned into servitude.[7] Thus, we may assume that slavery was the earliest form of kidnapping because free individuals were oftenly kidnapped and sold to the slave traders in the

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[4] Rachel Briggs, *The Kidnapping Business*, London, 2001, p. 9.

[5] Richard Clutterbuck, *Kidnap, Hijack and Extortion: The Response*, New York, 1987, p. 3.

[6] Susan O'Brien, *Criminal Investigations: Child Abducting and Kidnapping*, New York, 2008, p. 13.

[7] Richard P. Wright, *Kidnap for Ransom: Resolving the Unthinkable*, Florida, 2009, p. 1.

ancient ages. Vikings, for example, abducted unnumerable people during their raids in the British Isles and Western European soils, and either held some of them for ransom or sold the other into the slave markets.[8] In the Roman Empire, similarly, subjugated populations were obliged to contribute the Roman army with soldiers, and that was carried out through kidnapping and slavery. During the Middle Ages, monarchs and other eupatrid were often ransomed after losing battles and wars. Hence, holding a person as a captive is a contemporary form of group kidnapping.[9]

One aspect of kidnapping that turns it into a torture is that it might last days, weeks, or sometimes even months. Kidnappers(s) who has an intention of physical torment could realize whatever harm they desire, or put the victim under a psychological maltreatment. Above all, the victim would be severely traumatized because of the fear of death that may come at any moment to him/her. Besides, there are some complicating factors in kidnapping as the obscurity of the victim's whereabout or whether the kidnappers kill the victim or not when they get the ransom. When people are captured for ransom there is usually a clear market valuation for the victim. Specific conditions will influence this, these encompass the work type, health status, ethnic group, religion, gender, and age of the victim, all of which are prominent and produce a tacit conception of price.[10]

Kidnapping can take place in many ways. The researchers and criminalists identified a number of kidnapping styles. Acorrding to Diana Concannon the most basic types of kidnapping are seven. Domestic kidnapping is the first one and it refers to a intra-familial type of abduction.[11] As it is understood by its name, political kidnapping takes place for some political agenda. Predatory Kidnapping could be examined in terms of its two different victims as adult and child victim. Adult Predatory Kidnapping aims to satisfy the

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[8] Michael Newton, The Encyclopedia of Kidnappings, New York, 2002, p. 156.

[9] Tawnya Eller ve Bill Tangel Eller, "Kidnapping", *Encyclopedia of Murder & Violent Crime* (Ed. Eric Hickey), California, 2003, p. 271.

[10] Phillips, Everard, "The Business of Kidnap for Ransom", *The Faces of Terrorism: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Ed. David Canter), West Sussex, 2009, p. 196.

[11] Diana Concannon, *Kidnapping: An Investigator's Guide*, London, 2013, p. 3.

sexual desires of the offender. Child Predatory Kidnapping serves the same purpose of the offender, but here, the object of lust is a child. Profit Kidnapping, which is our main concern in this paper, means the offender(s)'s goal of being rich by this action. Revenge Kidnapping is also establishes a striking type of action with its internal character, because it based on the feelings of retaliation. And the final one is Staged Kidnapping, which implies a fake abduction for distraction

Kidnapping for ransom is a monetary crime performed to enrich the perpetrators. Some economic difficulties emerge once the kidnapping has taken place. Each day the criminal holds the victim, there is a chance of being captured and penalized. It also gives another day for the victim to flee or to perish.[12] Therefore ransom kidnapping demands rather more strategy and manpower than other types of abductions. There is also remarkably higher jeopardize for the kidnapper, from being described by the abductee to the considerable number of opportunities for things to give error at all phases of the operation.[13]

One of the essential features of ransom kidnapping is that it has been planned generally long before the action. Like MacWillson stated, a preliminary investigation would be conducted by a unit that has the responsibility for that aim. Members of the investigation unit must collect all the information they are able for deciding how, when and where the kidnapping will take place. The data has to consist of a profile of victim in detail. Because knowing of what he/she does for a living, which car he/she drives, his/her family members, his/her habits of recreation will enable to appoint exact time and place in order to abduct the victim without any obstacles. And this period of inspection might last for weeks or sometimes even months.[14]

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[12] Claudio Detotto, Bryan C. McCannon ve Marco Vannini, "Understanding Ransom Kidnappings and Their Duration", *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy*, 3 (2014), p. 849-850.

[13] Brian John Heard, *Kidnapping and Abduction: Minimizing the Threat and Lessons in Survival*, Florida, 2015, p. 6.

[14] Alastair C. MacWillson, Hostage-Taking Terrorism: Incident-Response Strategy, London, 1992, p. 166.

Perpetrators may damage their hostages and display pictures of them to assure that the ransoms will be paid off rapidly and that the whole amount of ransom is paid. In some occasions, the abductors will cut a part off the abductee's body and send it with their request for a ransom.[15]

2. The Tradition of Banditry in the Ottoman Empire

In 1993, Gary Fields introduced the terms "elitism of the rich" and "isolation of the poor" in his paper *Inequality in Dual Economy Models*. "Elitism of the rich" suggests that when there are few wealthy individuals in an economy, these people experience an elite position that grants to a significant degree of imparity in the economy.[16] Contrarily, when there are merely a few poor people, then "isolation of the poor" adds considerably to inequality.[17] In this sense, we could assume that people, families and groups in the society could be expressed to be in hardship when they require the recources to receive the sorts of diet, engage in the activities and have the living conditions and facilities which are traditional, or are at least broadly promoted or ratified, in the societies to which they fit. Their recources are so severely below those mandated by the average human being or family that they are, indeed, externalized from typical living standards, practices and acts.[18]

The sociological and historical realities push us to think that these arguments above have effectively been obvious in the modern capitalism. Governing mechanisms against the poor, indeed, shifted its dimensions in the way of a more sophisticated politic apparatuses by the modern era. The triliteral paradigms of solidarity, specialization and monopoly grants us a definition of various designs of civil disadvantage economic, civil, political and cultural, and therefore

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[15] Stephen Morewitz, *Kidnapping and Violence: New Research and Clinical Perspectives*, New York, 2019, p. 128.

[16] Gary Fields, "Inequality in Dual Economy Models", *The Economic Journal*, 420 (1993), p. 1228.

[17] John D. Burger, "Fields' Index of Economic Inequality", *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences 3 (Ethnic Conflict-Inequality, Gender)*, (Ed. William A. Darity Jr.), Detroit, 2008, p. 138.

[18] Peter Townsend, *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Recources and Standarts of Living*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979, p. 31.

embraces ideas of citizenship and racial-ethnic injustice as well as poverty and longterm unemployment.[19] Because in the modern capitalist societies all individuals are presumed to be self-involved profit maximizers who fort his very reason assess policy options exclusively in terms of their connotations for proposed net wages.[20]

All details of hierarchy include 'images of inequality', civil pictures which label, categorise and classify the representatives of society: creating announcements about correlation or contrast, generating differences of social valuation, building our own communal location relative to others. These are politically charged characters, and the illustrations we draw partially depend on our own social position, our manners and relationships towards social unequals, and the schedule that we are seeking.[21] The economic parameters play a crucial role in creating social schemes and culturally exclusive patterns, and these are more observable and explicit in capitalism.

At this point, we have to take a look at the development process of the capitalist relations in the Ottoman Empire. Halil İnalcık showed us that the essential characteristic of capital formation in the Ottoman Empire took its shape within the line of its predecessor's principles. In this theory, all social classes in the society had to support the sovereign to ensure that the fabric of society was intact.[22] Therefore, all types of economic activities under the regulation of the state in order to execute this goal, and it seems that the distribution of income meant merely to solidify the main pillars of political power.

Having also based its foundations on fundamentally a conquest and economic subjugation system, the Ottoman state treasury highly relied on the military capabilities for centuries, too. However with the loss of

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[19] Hilary Silver, "Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms", *International Labour Review*, 133 (1994), p. 539.

[20] David Austen-Smith, "Introduction", *Selected Works of Michael Wallerstein: The Political Economy of Inequality, Unions, and Social Democracy* (Edp. David Austen-Smith, Jeffry A. Frieden, Miriam A. Golden, Karl Ove Moene ve Adam Przeworski), Cambridge, p. 247.

[21] Wendy Bottero, *Stratification: Social Division and Inequality*, London and New York, 2005, p. 15.

[22] Halil İnalcık, Halil, "Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire", *The Journal of Economic History*, 1 (1969), p. 97.

military power in cross-borders and the lack of coordination between state power, peasants and handicraftsman caused serious problems in terms of economic stability and the sustainability of traditional manufacturing activities in the empire. In the 19th century, Ottoman state authorities recultivated a new tendence in the economy which was basically took its roots from the Western style accumulation of capital. In this sense, authorities who sought to a cure for economic wellness for the state resources consulted more liberal economic and politic approaches in the Tanzimat era. Yet, the economic heritage of the Tanzimat era was mostly an unfruitful shift of industrialization, a fiscally destitute state, and a progressively dependent fiscal and political organization. But there was also a swiftly rising interest in economics as an experimental guideline to recover and rebuild the empire as well.[23]

An important aspect to be underlined in this period is that the imbalance in both incomes and the taxes resulted in a gap between classes and social inequality in the society. This situation reflected to the area of criminal acts, particularly banditry was in a great rise in the 19th century. Peasants those who lived in the peripheral zones of Anatolia came together and established bandit groups that involved usually in robbery, usurpation, and ransom kidnapping. Social distribution of the wealth did not happen in a fair condition and it naturally led to a social unrest in the agriculture-based zones. On the other hand, capitalist economy attempted to turn a limited population in hard labour into a working class but it did not succeed at it either. It underpinned the social unrest especially in the peripheral circles of the empire.

One of the outcomes of these happenings was banditry. Banditry, as we know it, implies the taking of property by force or by the threat of it. The action is as ancient as individual ownership itself. Bandits work in the shadows, usually on the peripheries of society or in geographically insulated territories. Their ways of life and acts are concealed in mystery and myth. They have been idolized by

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[23] Deniz Kılınçoğlu, Deniz, *Economics and Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire*, London and New York, 2015, p. 33.

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romanticizers and denounced by state authorities.[24] Banditry has always been a common and consuetudinary way of illegal life in the Ottoman Empire, but the bandit groups of the modern age were far more complicated organizations compared to the ones in the past. We know that there were a great number of bandit groups particularly in the Balkan peninsula before the ages of Ottomans, but this habit kept its existence through centuries by implying a great threat to the public order. Even though monetary reasons were absolutely present, the highly romanticising source materials of the day highlight the socio-political purposes of these people. Therefore, the Ottoman/post-Ottoman bandit was primarily regarded as a soldier for liberation, a bringer of justice and a protector of the faith. As for the medieval banditry movements, the essential motivations to become an outlaw were mainly economic conditions. Medieval bandit either tried to flee from the tragic poverty and living conditions established in provincial counties, or was attracted by the means given by the improvement of Balkan commerce and travel.[25]

Notables (*âyân*) and local elites (*yerel eşrâf*) became more visible in the provinces of the empire during the 18th century. Even though the elites were responsible for the process of levying on behalf of the state, they were not fulfilling their duties honestly by adding astronomical proportions to the taxes and sending short deliveries to the center, while keeping the lion's share for themselves.[26] This unjustness and illegal exploitation over the peasants of peripheral counties necessarily ended up with disobediences, that is, banditry. These outlaws showed their reactions by using lethal force and they generally isolated themselves from the society to which they belonged. They believed that they had to secure the justice of their own because the state had treated unfair to them.

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[24] Richard. W. Slatta, "Banditry", *Encyclopedia of Social History* (Ed. Peter N.Stearns), New York and London, 1994, p. 100.

[25] Panos Sophoulis, *Banditry in the Medieval Balkans, 800-1500*, Switzerland, 2020, p. 141.

[26] Ercan Gümüş, *Devlet ve Asi: 18. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı Diyarbekiri'nde Eşkıyalık*, Ankara, 2019, p. 340.

Curiously enough, state authorities' counter-reaction was pretty mild against these bandit groups. Karen Barkey explains it with the term "negotiated enterprise". In her opinion, such a moment of upheaval, a period of widespread banditry, should have been harshly responded by the authorities but instead they have chosen to negotiate the rebels and find a common ground to settle the complaints.[27] These bandits, actually, were the creation of the state and they came into existence from state mercenaries. Their only goal was not to be rebels against the state, but to gain recources for themselves.[28]

3. Modern Rebels: Banditry and Ransom Kidnapping in the Reign of Abdulhamid II

All rural societies of the past were accustomed to get through a number of periodic famine either as a result of harvest-failure or some other natural conditions. Villagers did not also predict the wars, conquests, or a breakdown in the administrative system. These catastrophes eventually and somehow were likely to multiply the banditry.[29]

As we argued above, the common point in defining banditry that it is unlawful and disrupting the established order and creating a danger for ordinary people. The place where all the bandits perform their actions is the mountainous region or the countryside. Bandits provided their financial resources through illegal works; they blocked roads, robbed people, kidnapped for ransom, raided villages or houses,[30] which one of these acts constitutes the core this paper, which is focusing on the 19th century Ottoman countryside as a complex but great model for analyzing the banditry and ransom kidnapping.

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[27] Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, New York, 2008, p. X.

[28] Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Ithaca and London, 1997, p. X.

[29] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, London, 1981, p. 22.

[30] Cihan Özgün, Cihan, "19. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Aydın Sancağı'nda Eşkıyalık Hareketleri Üzerine Gözlemler", *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Eşkıyalık ve Terör* (Ed. Osman Köse), Samsun, 2017, p. 159.

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Rural areas in the Ottoman Empire were the nest of bandits in accordance with the spirit of traditional banditry patterns. Bandits were spreaded all over the countryside but particularly the Balkans drew their attention most thanks to its mountainous terrain. Indeed the name *Balkan* itself is coming from a Turkish expression for signifying a forested mountain. Approximately 70% of the Balkan Peninsula is containing mountain groups rising from narrow strips along the coasts of the Adriatic, Ionian and Aegean Seas of the northern Mediterranean Basin and, to the east, the Black Sea which annexes the Mediterranean via the Bosphorus Strait and Sea of Marmara in Turkey.[31]

Having established their outposts in the high mountains, bandits were almost unreachable. Even if the state forces hunted them down it needed a very tiresome and expensive campaign which the state could not, or we might assert that would not, afford these expenses. 19th century bandit, on the other hand, turned into a freedom fighter in the eyes of his nation. For this reason, they were not seen as a bunch of random deserters or local peasantry, but more of a Robin Hood, who aimed to steal from the Turks and share what he had under his possession with his local community. Nevertheless, we have to put these presumptions aside and carry on the cases of ransom kidnapping here.

In 1881, an Ottoman officer was kidnapped during his journey to the place where he was appointed in the province of Manastır. Bandits who captured Muhsin Münif Bey held him for a while and then released him in return for five hundred cash money. According to his statement, he had to put them up with fright and trouble (*dehşet ve meşakkat*), and now he was claiming his loss recovered with a minor bonus by the state. After all, he was an officer who was obliged to go to his post and when an injustice revealed itself the authorities that sent him there had a responsibility to compensate.[32] The example of

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[31] Jane M. Reed, Boris Kryštufek ve Warren J. Eastwood, "The Physical Geography of The Balkans and Nomenclature of Place Names", *Balkan Biodiversity: Pattern and Process in the European Hotspot* (Edp. Huw I. Griffiths, Boris Kryštufek ve Jane M. Reed), Netherlands, 2004, p. 14.

[32] B.O.A., *ŞD.*, 2445/15, 1881.

Muhsin Münif Bey is clearly thought-provoking for a suspicious eye at the first glance because he easily could lie about the incident and we must confess that some kidnapping incidents were just consisted of confidence tricks and gimmicks. Moreover, we observe in several archival documents concerning ransom kidnapping that state officers preffered to pocket the cash paid for abducted people.

In 1893, a man named Yakovil sent a petition to the center so as to inform the authorities about a scam. Yakovil claimed that his ransom money was extorted by Mehmed Paşa, the gendarmerie regional commander of Manastır. Bandits kidnapped Yakovil's son and he paid one thousand and eight hundred liras as ransom (*fidye-i necat*). After the criminals were arrested, Yakovil's money was found in their pockets but seven hundred and thirty liras were seized directly by Mehmed Paşa and it was confirmed by the witnesses. Thus, authorities did not allow Mehmed Paşa and the bandits to leave Manastır until the end of their hearing.[33]

Archival documents leave no room for a doubt that banditry and ransom kidnapping usually intertwined with skulduggery. Ottoman authorities felt compelled to pay the ransoms for kidnapped foreigners, and, at some certain point, embassies and Ottoman administrative elites had to involve in these abductions. Foreigners, probably due to their increased numbers, became a target for bandits, especially in the less well-policed countryside. The usual method was to kidnap possible victims and release them in exchange for a ransom.[34]

As Yetkin pointed out, in the Aegean part of Anatolia, bandit groups saw the foreigners as their main targets for ransom. In doing so, they both hoped to create a turmoil in the external relations for drawing international attentions to the region and to use this embroilment to flee from justice. Abdulhamid II found the solution in paying the ransoms of foreigner abductees from the state treasury but this only prompted the bandits arrange their abductions in a more detailed and

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[33] B.O.A., *Y..MTV.*, 75/177, 1893.
[34] Jan Schmidt, *Through the Legation Window 1876-1926: Four Essays on Dutch-Indian and Ottoman History*, İstanbul, 1992, p. 2.

planned way. For the Sultan's political move also created a concept of superiority in favour of the European citizens in the empire.[35]

In such an occurences, a cunning person who knew that he could get paid for being kidnapped, made an agreement with bandits and really got himself kidnapped by them. And then, he sent a letter of help to the center in order to ask for ransom money to be given to the bandits. After getting the ransom, he probably would share it with his bandit friends and call the situation as a win-win. Mr. Philippe's case sets an example in understanding this scam. Aforesaid man was the brother of Mr. Willis, British vice-consular in Smyrna. Mr. Philippe had himself kidnapped in Manastır to get a certain amount of money (*fidye-i necat almak fikriyle kendisini eşkıya yedine düşürdüğü*) but in a little while he gave himself away. Mr. Philippe dissolved into thin air as soon as possible by the ferry of Messageries Maritimes, once he predicted that he was to be arrested for this wrongdoing.[36]

There were also a number of examples that show the spirit of social solidarity. In one of them, a letter sent by İzmir Bank-ı Osmanî to the same bank's Istanbul branch for monetary help. The document said that the son of Frederik Şarno was kidnapped for ransom. Thereupon, the local people who had heard the situation formed a "donation book" (*iâne defteri*) and collected fifty liras, and they aimed to get more help through Bank-ı Osmanî's Istanbul branch.[37] In the absence of a decent bourgeois class, bandits targeted often state officers as their kidnapping objects and the relatives of these officers consulted to the state authorities to ask them for ransom. In the autumn of 1883, a father submitted a petition to the center in order to ask the authorities for saving his son from the hands of bandits. Yenişehirli Hacı Rıfat adressed the authorities as:

> "The bandit gang called Nearmi Novrani and Yorgi Satanaka kidnapped my son, who is the district governor of Florina asked me four thousands liras as ransom within eight days. They declared that if

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[35] Sabri Yetkin, *Ege'de Eşkıyalar*, İstanbul, 2003, p. 56-57.

[36] B.O.A., *ZB.*, 318/128, 1906.

[37] B.O.A., *Y..PRK.ML..*, 5/48, 1885.

this certain amount of money not provided in these eight days they would kill my son".[38]

Desperate father almost begged to the sultan so that he could save his son through generous imperial help. He wrote that he was a seventy five years old poor father (*yetmiş beş yaşında bir bedbaht peder*) whose son was in need of help.[39]

In some cases of ransom kidnapping, we come across with a clever strategy such as offenders drawn into the foreign kids with the thought that kidnapping them would pay a much more amount of money. In an occurence like this in 1887, kidnappers had four British kids in their sights in Bornova. One of the Wilkinson boys was twenty two years old and his brother was eighteen. Kidnappers also abducted one of their friends who was twenty three years old and another seventeen years old boy who was related them. The last two of the abductees were Hunter Lefter (*Avcı Lefter*), a man of Greek community, and donkey trader Yorgi (*Merkepçi Yorgi*). This group of six said that they were going to go for hunting on their horses at three in the morning.[40]

The group departed for village Laka and they hunted there for almost seven hours. While they were on the way home, five armed men cut their road around the farm of Palamut and took their side by side shotguns. Kidnappers made one of Wilkinson boys write a letter adressed to her mother and sent it to Bornova with Yorgi.[41] Local authorities must have found this event very important because they immediately asked the appearances of kidnappers with their language to begin their investigations. According to the information, some of them were wearing *setre* pants and the others long dresses (*fistan*) and regarding their language, they were probably Siamese.

Authorities did not want to spend any more time and alerted almost all the local forensic officers. Then kidnappers released Lefter who was one of the insignificant members of abductees, because

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[38] B.O.A., *HR.TO..*, 527/41, 1883.

[39] B.O.A., *a.g.b.*

[40] B.O.A., *Y..A...HUS.*, 207/31, 1887.

[41] B.O.A., *a.g.b.*

offenders' real intention was to get paid in return for British boys. Lefter's statement, meanwhile, created doubts on him, too. He claimed that he managed to escape kidnappers and came to Bornova, but investigators knew that there were no bandits in that area and the coast is clear, and so, they started to suspect him that somehow he took these young boys to hunt with and offered them to the so-called bandits. Offenders requested a good deal of money to release their captives, and finally the boys could return their home after seven hundreds and fifty liras ransom (*fidye-i necat*) was paid.[42]

Another important point in the fight against bandits and their kidnappings was to provide financial support to the ones those who contributed in catching the criminals. There was no better source than the hidden treasures of captured bandits to achieve this aim. One of the related samples in 1893 shows that the state authorities exchanging ideas about what to do with the money of several bandits like Anastaş, Hıristolab, and Erkirin. These bandits robbed and kidnapped people for ransom and when they achieved their goals they buried their incomes somewhere unknown to everyone, except themselves. When the officers who interrogated them asked for their illegal incomes, they had no choice to cooperate with their interrogators and confess them whereabouts. Their previous incomes could reached some considerable amounts in sum and the government dealt this money out among the contributors of capturing these criminals. State authorities obviously intended to encourage law enforcement officers for fighting against these outlaws by this way of rewards. Each of abovementioned bandits, to be an example, confessed that they buried a lot of cash in some places and officers found 4.246 liras in total when they dig them out.[43]

Conclusions

Kidnapping is a cruel crime that is old as humanity itself. It affects both abducted person's mental state and physical condition. Besides, it gives a very hard time to the family of victim. There are some certain

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[42] B.O.A., *a.g.b.*
[43] B.O.A., *İ..DH..*, 1304/6, 1893.

types of kidnapping, and one of them as we mentioned above, is kidnapping for ransom.

The act of ransom kidnapping might seem that it is carried out only for money. However, ther are some certain dynamics within this crime. First and foremost, ransom kidnapping has its own political meaning and one can not perceive its implicit messages unless he/she look closely at the social and economic conditions of the day in which it happened. That is to say, ransom kidnapping is not just an act of violence but more of a way of social protest. Kidnappers, either being bandits and living in an isolated world or not, attempt to send their remonstrances to the state authorities with their misdeeds. It means that they are not content in what they find in the social and economic relations with others in the same society. Hence, kidnapping draws its roots not far from banditry.

As the Ottoman epitome sets us out, kidnapping business was peculiar to bandits who used to live in the mountainous terrain of the empire. Whether in the Balkans or in Anatolia's rural areas, bandits made a habit of kidnapping people around them and earned a living with this practice. What lied beneath of this crime was, though, is more important to explain because it had its vigor from the thought of social and economic inequality.

Bandits in the Ottoman Empire had always been motivated by the socioeconomic factors, even if in the situations they seemed not so. And kidnapping rich people, or at least worth-to-abduct for ransom, was not only a way of living but also a symbol of rebellion against the unapproved behaviours of the center. Kidnapping, on the other hand, was a complex crime in which civil people also sought to make undeserved money as we saw aforementioned occurences. In the final analysis, the crime of banditry and ransom kidnapping were shaped by web of intertwoven social links and economic relationships based on mutual interests particularly throughout the Ottoman periphery in the absence of effective penal rules and sufficient state officers who could typify the power over the countryside.

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