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HISTORICAL REALITY AND LEGEND IN ALEXANDER PUSHKIN'S
SHORT STORY *KIRDJALI* — AN EPISODE FROM THE GREEK
INSURRECTION OF 1821 IN THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES*

1. PUSHKIN AND THE HETAIRIST INSURRECTION IN THE ROMANIAN
PRINCIPALITIES

Pushkin's internal exile to southern Russia in the summer of 1820 coincided with the outbreak of a series of revolutions in Western Europe and the Greek, or Hetairist, insurrection in the Romanian Principalities on February 23, 1821 (O.S.), against the Ottoman Empire, under the leadership of Prince Alexander Ypsilanti. The young poet, who lived in the city of Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia, until 1823, followed the revolutionary events in the neighboring provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia with the curiosity of an observer, the eye of a reporter, and the pen of a writer. In Kishinev Pushkin met Ypsilanti, his two brothers, Demetrios and Nicholas, Prince George Cantakouzino, Prince Michael Soutzo, the former Hospodar of Moldavia, several prominent Greek officers, and Bulgarian, Serbian, and Albanian participants in the Hetairist campaign in the Principalities.

Pushkin received the news of the Greek insurrection in Moldavia and subsequently the outbreak of the revolution in mainland Greece, with utmost enthusiasm and approbation. He wrote to his friend L. V. Davydov in March 1821:

A strange picture! Two great peoples [Greeks and Italians], who fell long ago into condemnable insignificance, are appearing into the political scene of the world. The first step of Ypsilanti is excellent and brilliant. He has begun luckily. And dead or a conqueror, from

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now on he belongs to history—twenty-eight years old, an arm torn off, a magnanimous goal! An enviable fate!¹

The Greek struggle of liberation from Ottoman rule preoccupied Pushkin's mind time and again, leaving a lasting impression on his literary creation. He expressed his Philhellenic sentiments for the "noble efforts of a people in the process of being reborn"², in a number of poems, letters, notes, diaries, fragments, and stories inspired by the events of 1821 in the Romanian provinces and the revolution in continental Greece³. In his unfinished writings, "Note sur la revolution d'Ipsilanti" and "Note sur Penda-Deka"⁴, Pushkin planned to write a brief account of the Hetairist movement in the Danubian provinces and the activity of the Hetairist officers Constantine Pendedecas, Constantine Doucas and Vasilis Caravias, who met them in Kishinev following the failure of the insurrection in the Principalities. He talked with them on several occasions in the house of his friend, Ivan Petrovich Liprandi⁵, a colonel in the Russian army. Pushkin gathered from these Hetairists information about the Hetairist insurrection in the Principalities and the history of the Romanians, inspiring him to write two historical legends, "Duca" and "Dafna and Dabizha" from the past history of Moldavia, though the originals are no longer extant⁶.

Pushkin began to write a long poem entitled *The Poem of the Hetairist* (*Iordaki Olympioti*), or better known as Georgios or Georgakis Olympios. In it, he wished to describe the last decisive battle of the Hetairists at the

1. Pushkin's letter to his friend V. L. Davydov, first half of March 1821, in A. S. Pushkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiaty tomakh*, ed. D. D. Blagoi et al. (Moscow, 1959-1963), IX, 25 (hereafter cited as *Sochineniia*). See also *The Letters of Alexander Pushkin*, trans. J. Thomas Shaw (Madison, Wisconsin, 1967), p. 80. For a complete discussion about Pushkin and the Greek Revolution, see Demetrios J. Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin: His Attitude toward the Greek Revolution of 1821-1830", *Balkan Studies* (1971), 12, 57-80; Idem, "The Greek Revolution in the [Romanian] Principalities as Seen by Alexander Pushkin", *Neo-Hellenika*, II (Austin, Texas, 1975), 100-105.

2. *Sochineniia*, IX, 108.

3. See Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", pp. 57 ff.; Idem, "The Greek Revolution as Seen by Pushkin", pp. 99 ff.

4. *Sochineniia*, VII, 188; Farsolas, "The Greek Revolution as Seen by Pushkin", pp. 118-119.

5. On the life and literary activity of Liprandi, see James J. Farsolas, "Ivan Petrovich Liprandi", *The Encyclopedia of Modern Russian and Soviet History*, vol. 18.

6. Liprandi, *Russkii arkhiv* (1866), 1408-1411; Eufrosina Dvoichenko-Markoff, "Pushkin and the Rumanian Historical Legend", *The American and East European Review*, VII (1948), 144-149.

monastery of Secu, though he never finished it. He left only the following rough draft:

Two Arnauts attempt to assassinate Alexander Ypsilanti. Georgakis kills them. In the morning he tells the Arnauts about Ypsilanti's flight [to the Austrian territory]. Georgakis takes over the command of the army and goes to the mountains, constantly pursued by the Turks. *Secu*.

and the first stanza of the poem:

In the plains, the mountains, and the forest
The night sets on quietly;
And under the dark canopy of the skies
...Ypsilanti is slumbering⁷.

In 1833 he wrote, but left unfinished, what appears to be a long study about Ypsilanti and the events of the Hetairist insurrection in the Romanian provinces, including some personal reminiscences of the years in southern Russia. The rough draft reads:

Kishinev—My arrival in Caucasus and Crimea—Orlov—Ypsilanti—
Kamenka—*The well*—The Greek Revolution—*Liprandi*—*Year 1812*
—*mort de sa femme*—*Le renégat*—The pasha of Erzerum⁸.

Pushkin's interest in the Hetairist insurrection was evident, too, in his short story *The Shot*. Though the theme of the story is entirely unrelated to the events in the Romanian Principalities, the poet nevertheless linked the fate of his central character, Silvio, with the Hetairist movement. Pushkin wrote that Silvio was an officer in the army of Ypsilanti who fought in the ranks of the Hetairists. He ended the novel with Silvio's death at the battle of Sculeni:

Then Silvio walked out to the front steps, called his coachman, and drove away... In this way I learned the end of the story, whose beginning had at one time made such a deep impression on me. I never saw again the hero of [this story]. I have heard that Silvio, comman-

7. *Sochineniia*, III, 391; See also Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", pp. 71-72, and footnotes.

8. *Sochineniia*, II, 477, 753.

ded a detachment of Hetairists during the revolt under Alexander Ypsilanti, and that he was killed in the battle near Sculeni⁹.

Silvio, of course, was a fictional character, bearing a foreign name, and implying the heterogeneous nature of Ypsilanti's army. The novel itself was an anecdote, well told, and characteristic of Pushkin's ability to integrate the historical and legendary forms of narrative about real or imaginary characters in his prose works.

2. PUSHKIN'S INTEREST IN HISTORY AND POPULAR HEROES: THE CASE OF KIRDJALI

Throughout his literary career, Pushkin showed a special fascination for brigands and popular heroes from the history of Russia and the Balkan peoples, whose life and adventures he described in several of his works. He was particularly intrigued by individuals who rebelled against the social system, its inequities and injustices. He tried to "rehabilitate" brigands and rebels whose exploits entered into folk tradition and songs, but who had been forgotten or neglected by history. At the same time, he combined their legendary and fictional deeds with historical facts to show how certain factors and forces shaped their life and made them popular heroes. He studied and depicted their action based not only on oral and popular traditions, but also using official documents which he came across at the office of General Ivan N. Inzov, governor of Bessarabia, or undertook himself exploratory studies. He added to his historical and anecdotal novels eyewitness testimonies and other accounts from his own personal experience with individuals he encountered in southern Russia.

In December 1821, Pushkin took a short trip across Bessarabia with his friend Ivan Liprandi, stopping in Odessa and Kamenka, passing through small towns and isolated villages, listening to people and their stories and legends, visiting remote and strange places, and meeting soldiers and deserters from the Hetairist army who entered Bessarabia following the defeat of Ypsilanti's army. He talked with political refugees and rebels, encountered bands of brigands and professional outlaws, and heard stories about famous and fierce bandit chiefs, among them, Ursul Tălharul—"The Bear Thief". The exploits of these brigands recalled in some of the episodes which he described in his prose works *The Brigand Brothers* and *Dubrovskii*.

9. *Ibid.*, V, 62.

One of these folk heroes, with whom the poet was fascinated by his life and exploits, was Kirdjali. He heard of this brigand and his incredible adventures during his stay in Kishinev in the early 1820s. He mentioned his name for the first time in a fragment of his poem *Official and Poet*, which he wrote in 1823. The poem begins with a brief description of the poet's desire to mingle among the "crowds" in the city fair and ends with Kirdjali's departure from Kishinev. Pushkin wrote that the brigand was taken "out of jail" and sent "across the borders to Moldavia" at the request of the Turkish pasha of Jassy. The poem ends with the lines:

Where is he?
In the dungeon—Today we are
Taking him out of jail and sending him
across the borders to Moldavia
—Kirdjali¹⁰.

The fragment indicates that the poet himself might have been present at the scene of Kirdjali's extradition to Moldavia.

In 1828 Pushkin returned to the same topic and left a rough plan of a poem about Kirdjali, in which he wished to include scenes from the history of the Hetairist movement in the Principalities. The poem, like many others he wrote and never finished, was conceived as a work of large proportions. The project shows his intention to provide a detailed description of Kirdjali and the events in Moldavia and Wallachia, the Russian officials, the Hetairist officers, the battle of Sculeni, the Arnauts (Greek, Serbian, Albanian, and Bulgarian refugees), who lived in Kishinev and elsewhere in Bessarabia. He jotted down only an outline of the poem:

Kalardzhi [wrong transposition, instead of *Kirdjali*] Krupianskii.
Room. Refugees. *Stenka*. Cantakouzino. *Penda Deka*. Khorchevskii.
Navrotskii. The Battle [of Sculeni]. The Arnauts in Kishinev...

and left a few verses, among others:

In the green steppes of Budjak,
...Where Bulgarian settlements are found
and Bulgarian families...are settled¹¹

10. *Ibid.*, II, 477, 753.

11. *Sochineniia*, III, 406.

Pushkin's intention was to present the villages in Bessarabia where many Bulgarians, including Kirdjali's family, lived. He knew the Budjak, an area laying between the Pruth and Dnieper rivers, and mentioned it in the poem *The Gypsies*¹².

After 1830, Pushkin turned his attention to historical themes and became interested in folk heroes and popular uprisings directed against the social system. Following the abortive revolt of the Decembrists, the poet began to study the history of Russia, to investigate the origins and causes of peasant unrest, and to examine the role of the masses and leaders, both in society and in the revolutionary movements. In 1833 he travelled to the Urals where he collected material for his work *The History of the Pugachev's Revolt* and the short novels *The Captain's Daughter* and *Dubrovskii*. It was during the same period that Pushkin began and finished the story *Kirdjali*, whose central theme is a reflection of his passion for historical subjects and social brigands¹³.

3. THE MOVEMENT OF THE KIRDJALIS IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA

Who was Kirdjali, the hero of the homonymous story? In the introductory paragraph, Pushkin wrote that Kirdjali was a *razboynik*, or brigand, a type of Robin Hood of the Balkans. This category of brigands, collectively known as *kirdjalis*, belonged to a social group of individuals who practiced brigandage in the Ottoman Empire. This type of banditry was synonymous with the *klephtouria*, to the Greeks; *haiducia*, to the Romanians and Serbs; and *aidustvoto*, to the Bulgarians.

The prime motive for the rise of brigandage among the Balkan peoples was political oppression, economic exploitation, social injustice, and a strong feeling of hostility towards the Turks. The brigand—*klepht*, *haiduc*, or *haidutin*—was engaged in plunder, blackmail, usually extracting money from Turkish lords or even rich Christians. Brigandage was a social phenomenon in the history of the Balkan peoples, and the commonest form of resistance to Turkish rule, which in time and space, coincided with the Ottoman domination of southeastern Europe.

The growth of the movement of brigandage in the Balkan peninsula

12. See *Sochineniia*, III, 172.

13. *Sochineniia*, V, 263-269. See also *The Poems, Prose and Plays of Alexander Pushkin*, ed. by Avram Yarmolinsky (New York: Random House, 1936 and 1964, pp. 590-598; *The Complete Prose Tales of Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin*, trans. by Gillow R. Aitken (New York: Norton, 1966), pp. 307-315.

coincided with the decline of Ottoman power, the intensification of feudal exploitation, and political oppression of the Christian *rayahs*. The internal situation of the Ottoman Empire began to deteriorate at the end of the 18th and particularly the beginning of the 19th centuries. During the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1808), the Balkan region was plunged into a series of local conflicts and separatist movements led by powerful regional Turkish pashas, who raised their own army and fought against the central government. A special phase of opposition to the Turkish government began by a group of individuals, called collectively *kirdjalis*. Their activity marked a distinctive chapter in the history of the Ottoman Empire, known as the "period of the kirdjalis".

One of the most famous band of kirdjalis was that of Pasvanoglou, Pasha of Vidin. For several years he defied the authority of the Sultan and fought successfully against the imperial army¹⁴. Initially, the majority of these kirdjalis came from the Turkish population, originally from Kirçali, a region and town by the same name, in Bulgaria, situated in the southeastern part of the Rhodope mountain range, which is still known today by that name. The first group of brigands was formed in this area, and thus their name of *kirdjali*. The bands of kirdjalis, headed by a chieftain, staged periodic forays, attacked, plundered, or murdered wealthy Turks and Christians alike, ransacked homes, villages, and towns, and burned shops and houses of rich individuals.

Gradually the bands of kirdjalis included individuals from different Christian nationalities who operated throughout the Balkan peninsula toward the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. They extended their activity from Central Greece, through Bulgaria, to the banks of Lower Danube, in the Romanian Principalities, and along southwest of Russia, in Bessarabia. These groups of brigands fought either against the

14. A contemporary Romanian wrote that until 1826 the bands of kirdjalis staged repeated incursions all over the province of Wallachia, reaching the outskirts of Bucharest, and destroying and pillaging part of the city. He added that at Tatargic, a small locality in northern Bulgaria, the provincial troops drew up a range of cannons from Vidin in order to prevent the kirdjalis of Mola Aga, their chieftain, from leaving the fortress. Some of them were captured, others, however, escaped and continued their brigandage. See Ion Ghica, *Scrisorii către Vasile Alexandri* (Bucharest, 1970), pp. 9, 31-32; Nicolai Iorga, *Acte si fragmente cu privire la istoria rominilor* (Bucharest, 1896), II, 358-359, 363-367, 382-386, 407; Constantin Erbiceanu, *Cronicari greci, care au scris despre români în epoca fanariota* (Bucharest, 1888), pp. 264-265; S. Iancovici, "Haiducia în Balcani, forma de lupta sociala si antiotomana", *Studii si articole de istorie* (Bucharest, 1964), VI, 47 ff.

central government or, more often, engaged themselves in brigandage as a means of providing the basic necessities for their livelihood.

A Christian brigand, klepht or haiduc, claimed to be the defender and protector of the oppressed and the poor *rayah* against the misrule of the Turkish government. Some of them acted as individuals or formed small bands of outlaws. They usually followed the tactics of hit and run, with no possibility for staging a popular revolt against the Ottoman Empire. The only avenue was individual retribution and self-defense through isolated actions that found expression in the form of banditry¹⁵.

To the popular mind, a Christian brigand was identified as part of the movement of liberation from Ottoman domination. Their acts against the Turks were justified, often magnified, and invariably passed into the domain of popular tradition, folk literature, and epic poetry. The rebel-klepht or haiduc was depicted as a daring individual, whose love for personal freedom compelled him to turn against his Turkish masters. This kind of brigandage evolved as a spontaneous local movement among the Christian subjects. The klepht or haiduc brigands were relatively few in numbers, hiding and living high up in the mountains, and organizing sporadic swoops on villages and Turkish lords. One of these Christian brigands who bore that generic name or surname was Kirdjali, Pushkin's hero in the story by the same name¹⁶.

4. THE STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPAL EPISODES IN THE STORY *KIRDJALI*

The plot of the story *Kirdjali* is rather simple. It consists of six episodes.

15. For a general discussion on brigandage, see Giannis Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821-1912* (Oxford, 1987), Iancovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-60. Cf. St. Atanasov, *Koi sa bili krdzhaliile i protiv kogo sa se borili te?* (Sofia, 1954). Cf. a review of this work by A. Constantinescu, "Discutii în problema 'Cîrjaliilor'", *Studii. Revista de istorie*, Nr. 4 (1958), 145-149.

16. Liprandi wrote that a great number of soldiers in his detachment were brigands, and many captains and volunteers used the name *Kirdjali* as their own surname. See also his memoirs, "Iz dnevnika i vospominanii", *Russkii Arkhiv*, IV (Moscow, 1866), 1399, and his notes and study on the Romanian and Hetairist movements in the Romanian provinces in 1821 under Tudor Vladimirescu and Prince Alexander Ypsilanti, "Vozstanie [vosstanie] pandur pod predvoditelstvom Todora Vladimireski v 1821-om godu i nachalo deistvii ghetaristov v pridunaiskikh kniazhestvakh pod nachalstvom Kniazia Aleksandra Ipsilanti, i plachevnii konets oboikh v tom-zhe godu", in *Documente privind istorie României. Răscoală din 1821*, 5 vols. (Bucharest, 1959-1962), V, 459 (480). [Hereafter cited as Liprandi, *Răscoală din 1821*. The numbers in parenthesis referred to page(s) of the text in Romanian translation].

The first episode is a brief description, an historico-biographical note, in which Pushkin indicates that Kirdjali "was a Bulgarian by birth". He, however, admits that he did not know "his real name", or surname, and that "kirdjali" in the Turkish language meant a "knight-warrior" or "dare-devil". He then gives a short description of a raid led by Kirdjali and his companion, Mihalake, on a Bulgarian village, where the two brigands cut the throats of several Turks and carried off the loot.

The second segment deals with Kirdjali and the Hetairist movement in the Romanian Principalities. When Prince Ypsilanti launched the insurrection in Moldavia in February/March 1821, Kirdjali with his company joined the Hetairist army. According to Pushkin's story, Kirdjali was attached to the detachment of Prince George Cantakouzino and fought against the Turks in the last battle of Sculeni. With this occasion, the poet turns his attention to Prince Ypsilanti, pointing out that the failure of the Hetairist enterprise in the Principalities was due to Ypsilanti's lack of leadership; that he was devoid of those military qualities required to command his army to victory, despite the heroic resistance of the Hetairists; and that Prince George Cantakouzino, one of Ypsilanti's close confidants, who commended the troops at Sculeni, deserted them, on the eve of the battle of Sculeni, and asked permission of the Russian authorities to enter their territory, leaving his detachment without a leader.

In the third scene, Pushkin describes the battle of Sculeni and the heroic resistance of seven hundred Greek, Albanian, and Bulgarian Hetairists against a Turkish army and cavalry of fifteen thousands. The battle ended with the victory of the Turkish forces and the destruction of the Hetairist troops. A few who survived the onslaught were allowed to cross into the Russian side, one of them, Pushkin wrote, was Kirdjali. Most of the former Hetairist soldiers, he added, spent their time in "the coffee-houses of half-Turkish Bessarabia...sipping coffee grounds out of small cups... Nobody complained of them... It was impossible to imagine that these poor, peaceably disposed men, were the notorious klephts of Moldavia, the companions of ferocious Kirdjali, and that he himself was among them".

In the fourth part, the poet recounts the circumstances leading to Kirdjali's arrest and his extradition to Moldavia. The Turkish pasha of Jassy asked the Russian authorities of the province to hand the notorious brigand over to him, conform to treaty stipulations between the two powers. The Kishinev police arrested him and delivered him to the Turkish pasha. Although he protested the action of the Russian authorities, they, nevertheless, being

"convinced of the justice of the Turkish demand, ordered him to be sent to Jassy".

The fifth section describes the departure of Kirdjali from Kishinev. This incident was related to Pushkin by M. I. Leks—a government official who Pushkin knew from Kishinev. When Pushkin met Leks in 1834, he told him of Kirdjali's departure in minute details. With this occasion, the author presents the physical appearance and the psychological reaction of Kirdjali as he was forcibly extradited to the Turkish pasha of Moldavia.

In the final episode, Kirdjali is brought before the pasha, who ordered him to be impaled, though the execution was deferred for a few days. While in jail awaiting his fate, Kirdjali devised a stratagem to escape from his Turkish captors. He told the seven Turkish soldiers who guarded him, that he had buried a kettle filled with gold in a mountain nearby Jassy and wished to let them have the treasure before his execution. The guards believed his story, and, lured by the prospect of finding gold, asked him to guide them to the location where he had hidden the treasure. When they reached the place, however, Kirdjali managed to escape from his captors, and, once again, began to raid and pillage the Turks and Moldavian landlords.

The last part of the story, inspired by folk tales, is indicative of the human frailty, temptation, and greed of the guards, who, as Pushkin wrote, were but "simple people", and "in their hearts were as much brigands as Kirdjali" himself. At the same time, Kirdjali's stratagem underscores the wit, skill, and ability of the brigand who, facing with his own imminent death, cleverly concocted an enticing story, overcoming thus a perilous dilemma, and saving his own life¹⁷.

5. THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE THEME AND CHARACTER OF THE STORY

Pushkin made several attempts to write the exploits of Kirdjali during the 1820s, but it was only in 1834, probably during the first half of that year, that he finished the story and published it on December 1, 1834. In it, Pushkin combined the historical and fictional style of narrative which was dominant in the age of romanticism during the first decades of the 19th century. In using

17. *Sochineniia*, V, 263-269. See translations of the story in English in *The Poems, Prose and Plays of Alexander Pushkin*, pp. 590-598; *The Complete Prose Tales of Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin*, pp. 307-315; Tr. Ionescu-Niscov, "Kirdjali dans la littérature universelle", *Romanoslavica* (Bucharest, 1958), vol. I, 105-123.

these forms, he introduced reliable, informative, and eyewitness accounts, along with legends and tales about popular heroes and outlaws. In this manner, he created a literary narrative of a brave, noble, and romantic character, whose exploits began before, during, and following the end of the Hetairist campaign in the Principalities¹⁸.

But soon after the publication of the story, it produced a spirited debate among the Russian literary critics and historians which continued throughout the 19th and down to the 20th centuries. The controversy centered on the questions whether the story was an historical account or a fictional novel, and whether the prototype of Pushkin's hero, Kirdjali, was an authentic person or merely a legendary character of a brigand-haiduc, inspired by and based on stories and legends which circulated widely in Bessarabia and the Romanian Principalities during the first decades of the 19th century.

The majority of historians, writers, and literary critics agree that *Kirdjali* is a short story dealing with an episode from the Hetairist movement in the Principalities. But they disagree on its content, presentation of facts, and, particularly, whether Kirdjali was an historical or fictional character. These issues divided the Pushkinian scholars into two groups: one group considers the hero of Pushkin's story to be an inventive, fictitious, non-existent, idealized, and romantic character—the creation of the poet's imagination. They claim that the very name Kirdjali was a generic reference to and synonymous with brigand, klepht, or haiduc, which was often attached as surname by individuals belonging to various nationalities throughout the Balkan peninsula. Excluding certain passages, the story is, according to them, a romantic and anecdotal work, while its protagonist lacks historical identity and belongs to the domain of popular legend.

The second group of critics, on the other hand, argue that Kirdjali was a real historical person; that he fought in the ranks of Ypsilanti's army in the Romanian provinces; and that the account and various scenes which Pushkin described in it are based on historical facts and sources. In support of their arguments, they used a number of contemporary documents, reports of the Russian authorities of Bessarabia, and dispatches of foreign consular agents in the Principalities.

18. See Andrej Kodjak and Lorraine Wynne, "Pushkin's *Kirdjali*: An Informational Model", *Russian Literature*, VII (1979), 45 ff.

6. THE FIRST POINT OF VIEW: THE LEGENDARY CHARACTER OF THE STORY

The debate over *Kirdjali*'s historical and/or fictional character was opened by the Decembrist poet Kiukhelbeker, a Lyceum schoolmate of the poet, who claimed that Pushkin's story was a fiction and was not based on authentic facts. He wrote in his diary on December 20, 1834 that "Pushkin's *Kirdjali* was a simple anecdote"—a short story relative to an interesting and amusing incident—"but", he added, "very well narrated"¹⁹.

Liprandi, an army officer, historian, and a memorialist, wrote one of the most interesting accounts about the life and literary activity of Pushkin during the years of his exile in southern Russia. In his memoirs²⁰ and other studies, Liprandi expressed doubts about the historical character of the story. Referring to the story itself, he pointed out that there were differences between the actual events which took place in Bessarabia and Moldavia and those which Pushkin described in it. He pointed out that *Kirdjali* was not a proper name, but rather a common one, which was adopted by many brigands in the first part of the 19th century. The real historical *Kirdjali* was a celebrated *ataman* (Cossack chieftain), who lived in the 18th century. The story, excluding a few passages, was not founded on historical reality, because Pushkin's description was based exclusively on stories which Leks—the secretary of the military governor of Bessarabia General I. N. Inzov—told him. He noticed certain incongruities between the actual historical events and the narrative of Leks to show that the descriptive part of Pushkin's story belonged to Leks' recounting of past events and happenings. Leks, he wrote, was a man who possessed a great reservoir of anecdotes. He was a prodigious storyteller and had a natural talent for narrating events and happenings in the most interesting and intriguing manner. He could improvise stories on the spur of the moment, but without any critical judgment. He could recall numerous episodes and adventures from the life of famous rebels and brigands from the history of Russia and the Balkan peoples. Pushkin had probably heard of *Kirdjali*'s adventures in Kishinev, Liprandi added, but paid no attention to them at that time. Only much later, when he accidentally met Leks in St.

19. See "Dnevnik V. K. Kiukhelbekera", *Briboy* (Leningrad, 1929), p. 222.

20. I. P. Liprandi, "Iz dnevnika", *Russkii Arkhiv*, 1213-1284, 1393-1491. The memoirs were written on the request of P. I. Bartenev, publisher of the journal *Russkii Arkhiv* and author of *A. S. Pushkin v iuzhnoi Russii: materialy dlia evo biografii* (Moscow, 1855). Liprandi's memoirs added and rectified certain erroneous affirmations introduced by Bartenev in his work.

Petersburg in 1834, he learned of Kirdjali's extradition to Moldavia²¹.

Liprandi, however, was inconsistent in his analysis of the story and its central character. Although he had some reservations about the authenticity of the story, he nevertheless recognized its historical and literary value. In some of his studies, he even admitted of the historical existence of Pushkin's main hero. In his lengthy account about the Romanian revolt of 1821 under Tudor Vladimirescu and the Hetairist campaign of Alexander Ypsilanti in the Principalities, he provided valuable details about the life of Kirdjali. He wrote that George Kirdjali, who operated in 1821 in the Romanian provinces and Bessarabia, should not be confused with the famous brigand who lived in the area around the Olympus Mountain and the region of Thessaly, in Greece, at the beginning of the 19th century. Following the destruction of these bands by the Turks, many brigand leaders added the pseudonym *Kirdjali* to their family name in order to enhance their prestige and influence among the men of that profession. Liprandi mentioned that during the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829, most of one thousand two hundred volunteers in his company, were former brigands, and that many of them attached the name Kirdjali as their surname, and used it on their passports and official documents²².

What is even more interesting is that Liprandi gave specific information about Kirdjali's whereabouts in course of the Hetairist withdrawal from Little Wallachia to the Austrian borders and beyond to Moldavia, which are attested by other sources. He wrote specifically that Captain George Kirdjali, "who was known for his unusual courage", served in the detachment of the Hetairist officer George Olympios. Pushkin, on the other hand, claimed that he fought with the troops of Prince George Cantakouzino, an allegation which is not supported by other historical evidence. Liprandi continued that when the Hetairists withdrew from Little Wallachia to the northeast, following the disaster at the battle of Dragashani, Captain Olympios and his soldiers marched along the Austrian border, reaching the small town of Dorna, near Moldavia, where he stayed there over a month, recuperating from an ailment. Soon Olympios was informed of the final defeat of the Hetairist forces at the battle of Sculeni. The news of the disaster caused great commotion among his soldiers. Several officers of his detachment, including George Kirdjali, demanded their money in arrears to pay the soldiers under their command. Olympios referred the issue to Captain John Pharmakis,

21. Liprandi, *op. cit.*, 1395, 1399-1400, 1403.

22. Liprandi, *Răscoală din 1821*, V, 230-231 (328-329), 395 (440), 459-460 (480).

to look into Kirdjali's complain as well as the rest of the officers. Pharmakis told Kirdjali that there were no money left to pay the soldiers. Kirdjali, Liprandi wrote, became angry, and taking with him about three hundred soldiers, withdrew from Olympos' main corps and crossed into the Austrian territory. From Austria, Liprandi continued, many of them, including Kirdjali, crossed into Bessarabia. But soon Kirdjali returned clandestinely to Moldavia and joined the service of the Turkish commander Eiup Aga, the future pasha of the district town of Isaccea, in Moldavia. When Eiup was inspecting the border guards along the Pruth River near Sculeni, Liprandi wrote, Kirdjali appeared before him and threatened to kill him. "It just crossed through my mind", he told him, "that I should kill you"! And snatching quickly at his pistol from his belt, he shot at him, and ran away without leaving any trace behind him. He gathered a band of brigands around him and continued to raid villages, spreading terror throughout Moldavia. When he returned to Bessarabia, however, he was arrested by the Russian authorities who extradited him to Jassy at the request of the Turkish pasha. Liprandi added that Kirdjali found means to escape from the hands of the Turks, inducing even the Turkish guard to follow him²³.

Liprandi's comments are valuable, for they confirm and support the historical existence of Pushkin's hero. Yet, a few of Liprandi's acquaintances and contemporary writers who lived in Kishinev during his stay here in the early 1820s, wrote nothing about this brigand, nor did they even mention his name, much less his adventures in Bessarabia and Moldavia. Two of them who wrote about the Hetairist revolt of 1821 in the Romanian provinces, the very astute Vigel and Veltman, remained completely silent about Pushkin's hero.

Vigel, who spent some time in southwest Russia, left in his memoirs a very interesting account about the battle of Sculeni and his visit to S. G. Navrotskii, the chief of the Russian quarantine station on the bank of the Pruth River. He described in detail the danger and terror caused by haiducs and thieves, who roamed freely through the mountains and villages of Bessarabia, but made no reference to the notorious Kirdjali²⁴.

Veltman, on the other hand, left an interesting account of the peasant revolt under Tudor Vladimirescu in Wallachia, but, he too, made no reference to Pushkin's hero²⁵. Although both Vigel and Veltman made no allusion to

23. *Ibid.*

24. "Zapiski Filipa Filipovicha Vigela", *Russkii Arkhiv* (Moscow, 1892), XII, 162-165.

25. A. F. Veltman, "Vospominaniia o Bessarabskii", in L. Maikov, *Pushkin. Biograficheskie materialy i istoriko-literaturnye ocherki* (St. Petersburg, 1899), pp. 102-126.

Kirdjali in their works, this does not indicate that such stories about the exploits of this brigand did not circulate in Moldavia and Bessarabia. If Vigel and Veltman failed, intentionally or otherwise, to mention the adventures of Kirdjali in their works, they nevertheless charmed the romantic Pushkin with their writings.

The Pushkinolog Inn. Oksionov maintained that Pushkin had in general presented accurately the historical events, but, as it often happens in historical chronicles, he altered and modified them, and the hero of his story appeared to be a distorted character. He concluded that the poet presented in his work a non-existent, idealized, romantic figure, whose name was akin to that of a folk rebel, known as haiduc in Moldavia²⁶.

The Academician V. A. Gordlevskii, on the other hand, in his efforts to identify the hero of Pushkin's story, studied the origin and etymology of the name Kirdjali. He concluded that the name Kirdjali was used by various notorious bandits in the Balkans, particularly those operating in southern Bulgaria. Moreover, Kirdjali is not a proper name, but originated from a certain Turkish military commander, called Kirça Ali, who lived in the 14th century, and from another leader, by the same name, who lived in the 18th century. The name Kirdjali, he argued, means "Gray-Haired" Ali; that a provincial town, situated in southeastern part of Bulgaria, was named after him; and that the entire region is still known by that name. In other words, Gordlevskii considered Kirdjali to be a common name, synonymous with brigand or haiduc, and should, therefore, be viewed as such in Pushkin's story. The bands of Kirdjalis, he wrote, fought both against the Turkish and Christian landlords. They belonged to different nationalities: Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, Albanians, Romanians, and, including, Turks. Many of them attached Kirdjali as their own family name, becoming thus a common family name among members of these bands. He called Pushkin's work a romantic novel, whose action depicts a chapter in the struggle of the Balkan people. But gradually, historical events had been influenced by popular creation, and it is difficult to discern, in Pushkin's story, the real and genuine from the myth or legend. The history of Kirdjali, he insisted, remains obscure, his image has lost the historical value, and, "we knew little about him". Nor did we know "what was his real [first] name"²⁷.

26. Inn. Oksionov, "Kirdjali/Pushkin 1834", published in the series, *Poslednie godi dvorchestvo Pushkina* (Leningrad, 1934), pp. 50-54.

27. See V. A. Gordlevskii, "Kto byl Kirdjali? (Istoriko-folklornyi kommentarii)", in *A. S. Pushkin, 1799-1949. Materialy yubileinykh torzhestv*, ed. S. I. Vavilov, et al. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1951), pp. 262-281.

In an attempt to be more convincing in his argument about the fictional form of Pushkin's work, Gordlevskii noticed a few interesting details which reveal its folk character. He cites, for example, the magic number *seven*, which was used twice in the story; first, there were *seven* companions with Kirdjali when he was arrested by the Russian authorities; and second, there were *seven* Turkish soldiers who guarded him at the jail and subsequently escorted them to the site of the buried treasure. *Seven*, perhaps an exaggerated hyperbolic, mystic, and symbolic number, connotes, in the popular tradition, the superhuman power and ability attributed to this fearless and dangerous brigand. As a consequence, the hero of Pushkin's story lost his historical identity and popular tradition embellished his image and exploits. Gordlevskii, however, raised some doubts about the existence of such an historical person by that name, adding, that even "the description of the battle of Sculeni appears to be rather unreliable", and "the heroism of the big-bellied [Hetairist] Kantagoni reminds us of the unrestrained boasting of Baron von Münchhausen"²⁸!

A similar opinion expressed the literary critic Mirsky in his work about Pushkin. He believed that Pushkin's story *Kirdjali* "is merely a well-told anecdote of the life of a famous Moldavian brigand—a reminiscence of Bessarabian days"²⁹.

With exception of some of Liprandi's comments, these critics and historians consider the story of Pushkin to be an anecdote, blended with fiction and popular legend, while the central hero, Kirdjali, is devoid of any genuine historical reality.

7. THE SECOND POINT OF VIEW:

THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE STORY AND ITS CENTRAL HERO

The second group of writers question the arguments of these critics who disclaim the historical character of Pushkin's story and its central hero. They believe that Kirdjali was an actual historical person and the account of the story was based on authentic historical sources.

28. *Ibid.* Baron Karl Friedrich Hieronymous von Münchhausen, (1720-1797) was a German cavalry officer, adventurer, and raconteur, who entered the Russian service and fought against the Turks during Catherine the Great's reign. He amused himself by recounting stories of his incredible prowess and adventures in Russia as a soldier and sportsman, which were later published and became classics.

29. See D. S. Mirsky, *Pushkin* (New York: Dutton, 1963), pp. 182-183.

The literary critic Belinskii was among the first to support the historical value of Pushkin's work. He wrote that its theme was based on historical facts. In a brief and terse characterization, he wrote that "*Kirdjali* is a masterful story of a real event". Reading it, one can sense its "simplicity, natural brevity and energy, its poetry and clarity"³⁰.

The writer Annenkov, who collected material about Pushkin and was his first biographer, considered *Kirdjali* to be "a fragment from notes"³¹, which the poet kept during his days in Bessarabia. The Pushkinolog Bartenev, on the other hand, who wrote about the poet's life in southern Russia, maintained that Pushkin was well informed of all the happenings in the administration of General Inzov; that during his stay in Kishinev, he followed closely the events of the Greek insurrection in the Principalities; and that evidence of this is the story of Kirdjali which, "in part, he heard it from M. I. Leks, the secretary in Inzov's chancery". But he considered it to be "an article", a collection of notes containing very important "first hand" details. The figure of Kirdjali was created on the basis of known facts, which Pushkin was familiar, and the description of the battle of Sculeni "has all the merit of an authentic historical writing"³².

The historian Iazvitskii³³, who studied the case of Kirdjali and other Moldavian brigands, defended the historical existence of Pushkin's hero. Relying mostly on known sources, he agreed with Pushkin that Kirdjali was a Bulgarian and a historical person. He believed that he took part in the Hetairist insurrection, fought in the battle of Sculeni, and entered Bessarabia following the defeat of the Hetairists. He was later arrested by the Russian authorities and delivered to the Turkish pasha in Jassy. However, he escaped from jail by improvising a clever fictitious story of a hidden treasure³⁴.

In support of Kirdjali's historical character, Iazvitskii cited two sources: one, the works of the French and Romanian historians³⁵, who wrote about

30. See V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniia* (Moscow, 1954-1955), V, 212, and vol. VII, 578.

31. P. I. Annenkov, *A. S. Pushkin, Materialy dlia ego biografii i ocherki proizvedenii*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1873), pp. 64 ff.

32. P. I. Bartenev, *Pushkin v iuzhnoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1914), p. 86.

33. See V. G. Iazvitskii, "Kto byl Kirdjali, geroi povesti Pushkina", in *Golos minuvshago. Zhurnal istorii i literatury* (Moscow, 1919), Nos 1-4, p. 45-60.

34. *Ibid.*

35. The French historians who wrote about Kirdjali were J. A. Vaillant, *La Roumanie ou histoire, langue, litterature, orographie, statistique...des Romains* (Paris 1844), III, 233-257; Stanislas Bellanger, *Le Kéroutza. Voyage en Moldo-Valachie* (Paris, 1846), I, 55-78. Bellanger

the life and exploits of Kirdjali and the battle of Sculeni; and two, the reports of foreign consular agents, especially the Prussian consuls in Bucharest and Jassy.

Two dispatches, which the Prussian consuls addressed to their government, bore the date of July 27, 1823. In one of them, it was reported that Kirdjali was a Bulgarian who lived by plunder; that he was among the chieftains who took part in the revolt under Ypsilanti; and that after the suppression of the Hetairists, he was captured by the pasha of Silistria, who ordered his decapitation, though the execution was postponed for sometime.

In the second dispatch, also under the same date, it was stated that the pasha of Silistria decided to grant amnesty to all Greek Hetairists if they would surrender, except George Kirdjali and two priests. Iazvitskii concluded that the reports of the Prussian consuls, the works of the French and Romanian historians, and the novel of the Polish writer Czajkowski³⁶ refer to the same person, as in Pushkin's story, that is, the brigand-haiduc George Kirdjali. But he argued that Kirdjali was not a proper name. Making an analogy with the word *Cossack*, Iazvitskii concluded that the name of *kirdjali* was a derivation from a Turkish word meaning *troop*. Gradually, however, it expressed a form of collective organization, akin to the word *Cossack*, and that it was later applied to all members of the group.

The reports of the Prussian consuls, however, are not consistent with other accounts and sources of the Russian authorities in Bessarabia claiming that Kirdjali lived in Kishinev and was delivered to the Turkish pasha of Jassy. Moreover, the Prussian consular dispatches maintained that Kirdjali was arrested by the pasha of Silistria, an obvious discrepancy and contradiction with other testimonies. As far as the writings of the French historians and the novel of the Polish writer Czajkowski are concerned, they all actually borrowed the basic plot in their works from Pushkin's story, expanding it, adding and embellishing the exploits of Kirdjali with many more details,

followed the narrative of Vaillant, but added more details about Kirdjali's adventures; E. Regnault, *Histoire politique et sociale des principautés Danubiennes* (Paris, 1855), pp. 120-134; M. Chopin and Ubcini, *Provinces danubiennes et roumaines* (Paris, 1856), II, 114-115. Cf. also Kodjak and Wynne, *op. cit.*, 45 ff.

36. M. Czajkowski, or his adopted Turkish name, Sadik Pasha, was a Polish immigrant in the service of the Ottoman Empire. He was familiar with Pushkin's story *Kirdjali*, and wrote a literary novel entitled *Kirdjali* (Leipzig, 1839). A second revised edition in Polish was published in 1863. See for a discussion on Czajkowski in M. I. Ianover, "Kirdjali i Kirdjaliitsky v ukrainskoi, polskoi i moldavskoi literaturakh", in *Pushkin na yuge. Trudy pushkinskoi konferentsii Odessy i Kishineva* (Kishinev, 1961), pp. 398-400.

tales, and legends which had been circulated in Bessarabia and Moldavia in the 1840s and 1850s.

The story of Kirdjali inspired another traveller through the Romanian provinces, James O. Noyes, who wrote his impressions about Romania, Eastern Europe, and Turkey. Noyes was aware of Pushkin's work describing the exploits of Kirdjali. He noted that "[t]he Russian poets and painters have celebrated the curious episodes of Kirdjali's history, and Pousckhine and Vaillant have given to the world many of the circumstances..."³⁷ which Pushkin described in his work.

The historian Selinov undertook research at the Historical Archives of Odessa. In studying the sources of the story³⁸, he compared Pushkin's description of the battle of Sculeni with the reports on the same subject prepared by the Russian commander of the Pruth quarantine station, S. G. Novrotskii, to his superior, General Inzov, who, in turn, forwarded them to the Emperor Alexander. Selinov maintained that the poet was privy to these reports which formed the source for his story. But unlike the other writers and critics of this group who upheld the historical existence of Kirdjali, Selinov remained rather skeptical about some of their arguments. Specifically, he did not share the view of those who claim that Pushkin's hero took part in the battle of Sculeni, because, he pointed out, the name George Kirdjali did not appear on the list of the Hetairists who crossed the Pruth River and entered the Russian territory following their defeat at Sculeni.

Selinov's view on this question merits careful consideration, for it confirms the findings of the Bulgarian historian Nikolai Todorov who published all the names of the Hetairists who entered the Pruth quarantine station. Todorov extracted the list of names from the State Archives of the Odessa Prefecture, Office of the Secretary of the Governor of Novorossiiskii and Bessarabia, which provided "information about the nationality and citizenship of the foreigners, the so-called 'Hetairists'". The list, which Todorov published, was compiled by the Russian authorities on July 14, 1821, and numbered over one thousand names. The name of George Kirdjali, however, was not included in it, an indication that he did not enter Bessarabia through the Pruth quarantine station, but followed other route³⁹.

37. James O. Noyes, *Romania: the Borderland of the Christian and the Turks, Comprising Adventures of Travel in Eastern Europe and Western Asia* (New York, 1857), pp. 212-227.

38. V. I. Selinov, "Do pitanii po dzhherela povesti Pushkina *Kirdjali*. (Za arkhivnimi materialami)", in *Zapiski istorichno-filologichnogo viddilu Kiivskoi Akademii nauk*, Book XIII-XIV (Kiev, 1927), 97-110.

39. See Nikolai Todorov, *Ile Vulkaniki diastasi tis ellinikis epianastasis tou 1821* (Athens,

Selinov's assertion is corroborated by other historical sources, particularly those of Liprandi. Another interesting point which Selinov raised in his study is the chronological transgression, or the time-sequence of events occurring in Pushkin's story. He maintained that, according to General Inzov's report, Kirdjali was arrested in May 1823. Pushkin, however, transported the arrest and escape of Kirdjali in 1821. The two events—the arrest and deportation of Kirdjali to Moldavia—occurred, according to Selinov, during the first half of 1823, and Kirdjali's escape therefore could not have taken place prior to that year, as Pushkin indicated in the story. Notwithstanding this discrepancy, Selinov believed that *Kirdjali* was a complete literary work, while the poet was not bound to follow the strict code of time-sequence.

The historian Iatsimirskii explored the activity of Moldavian haiducs and brigands in the 19th century, including Kirdjali. He wrote that Kirdjali appeared at the beginning of the 19th century, and that he was a real historical person. Kirdjali joined the army of Ypsilanti in 1821, but following the defeat of the Hetairists, he turned to brigandage, and became famous as a rebel along the left bank of the Danube, that is, in Moldavia and southern Bessarabia. He pointed out that there were many variations and stories about Kirdjali's adventures which had been collected and published several years later. The exploits of Kirdjali served as the prototype for some of Pushkin's poems, the story by the same name, and the novel of the Polish writer Czajkowski⁴⁰.

Two other Pushkinologists, Trubetskoy and Oganian, undertook extensive research at the State Archives of Moldavia (Bessarabia) where they discovered some very relevant documents covering the last period of Kirdjali's life as a brigand⁴¹.

Early in his literary career, Trubetskoy questioned the historical person of Kirdjali and considered the story of Kirdjali to be merely an anecdote. But as he continued his copious research in the Moldavian archives, he came across documents which induced him to reassess his initial view about Pushkin's anecdotal character of the story. The new evidence convinced him that Kirdjali was not merely an outlaw, but a "real living person, a Hetairist

1982), pp. 191-294. Cf. Liprandi, *Răscoală din 1821*, V, 231 (329), 395 (440), 460 (480).

40. A. I. Iatsimirskii, "Razboiniki Bessarabii v raskazakh o nikh", in *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, III (St. Petersburg, 1895), 84.

41. B. Trubetskoy, *Pushkin v Moldavii* (Kishinev, 1963), pp. 346-362; L. N. Oganian, "Novye arkhivnye materialy o geroe povesti A. S. Pushkina *Kirdjali*", in *Pushkin na iuge. Trudy Pushkinskikh konferentsii Kishineva i Odessy*, ed. A. T. Borshch (Kishinev, 1958), pp. 37-56.

fighter, one of the folk avengers in Moldavia, before whom the Tsarist authorities were frightened"⁴²! Kirdjali was, undoubtedly, feared by Turks and Moldavians alike, because he caused them great material losses, and both tried unsuccessfully to have him apprehended.

During his research, however, Trubetskoy unearthed three important documents, all related to the case of Kirdjali:

- 1) The public order for the arrest of Kirdjali, dated April 21st, 1822;
- 2) The report of the Chief of Police Pavlov, issued on April 23, 1822, acknowledging that the authorities were unable to arrest Kirdjali, because he had already quit the town of Teleneshti and moved to Kishinev; and
- 3) The secret order of the Civil Governor of Bessarabia, C. I. Katakazi, a Greek by birth, in the Russian service, issued in the name of the chief of police of Kishinev on April 29, 1822, "for the arrest of Eorghia Kirdjali and his followers, should they show up in Kishinev, even under assumed names"⁴³.

After a careful examination of these documents, Trubetskoy concluded that Pushkin had knowledge of them; that the hero of the story was a real historical person; that the work of Pushkin bore historical credibility, and that Kirdjali was involved in a series of adventures in Bessarabia. Pushkin's description of Kirdjali's capture in Kishinev corresponds roughly to the report of the Chief of Police Pavlov and the secret order of Governor Katakazi to the Kishinev chief of police, instructing him to look for and apprehend the bandit. The reports also show the interest and efforts of the local and provincial officials to search for and arrest Kirdjali in the spring of 1822. Finally, the report for his arrest by the local authorities indicates that this event took place toward the end of 1822-1823, when Pushkin was still living in Bessarabia. It is more likely that the poet knew of Inzov and Katakazi's orders for the capture of the brigand⁴⁴.

But the circumstances of Kirdjali's arrest and extradition to the Turkish pasha of Jassy—an episode which Pushkin described so aptly in his story—still remained obscured. There was no reliable information about these incidents until Trubetskoy discovered the report of General Inzov to the Emperor Alexander, dated May 29, 1823, and referring to the Kirdjali affair. In it, Inzov wrote that a large band of brigands, including Turks and natives,

42. B. Trubetskoy, *Pushkin v Moldavii* (Kishinev, 1949), p. 35.

43. Trubetskoy, "Novye arkhivnye materialy o Kirdjali", in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, issue 58 (Moscow, 1952), pp. 333-337; idem., *Pushkin v Moldavii* (Kishinev, 1963), pp. 336-362.

44. Cf. Trubetskoy, *Pushkin v Moldavii*, p. 358.

among them, a certain George Kirdjali, arrived in Bessarabia from Austria. It was further stated that Kirdjali was their leader who, in February 1823, raided the Moldavian village of Sculeni. This brigand, Inzov added, crossed the Pruth River into Bessarabia, but was soon captured and handed over to the Turkish authorities of Moldavia who had him locked up. But he escaped from jail together with his Turkish guards and, regrouping some of his followers, continued to ravage and terrorize the province⁴⁵.

The report of General Inzov concerning the activity of Kirdjali confirms and supports the argument that during the course of 1823, there indeed existed a brigand in Moldavia bearing that name. In addition, it coincides with Liprandi's description, who, most likely knew of, or perhaps, had read the report of Inzov, when he lived in Kishinev, since he often visited the office of the general and held long conversations with him. It is also interesting to note that even the Emperor Alexander was informed of the activity of Kirdjali. One possible explanation is that the Russian government did not wish to aggravate the already tense Russo-Turkish relations, and, second, to show that Russia had no part in the insurrection of the Greek Hetairists in the Romanian Principalities⁴⁶.

Oganian, on the other hand, discovered three documents which supplement the findings of Trubetskoy:

- 1) The report of the Jassy chief of police to the Civil Governor of Bessarabia, Katakazi, referring to the raid of George Kirdjali and his companions on the village of Sculeni, in Moldavia, and the measures taken to apprehend him;

- 2) The report of the chief of police of the town of Balti about the arrest of a certain brigand named Ionitsa Kouchic; and,

- 3) The report of the Kishinev chief of police on the arrest of George Kirdjali⁴⁷.

These documents provide additional information about the life and activity of Kirdjali. Comparing Pushkin's description of events in his story with the reports, we find several similarities, though they differ in other respects.

The first report, dated February 25, 1823, acknowledged that two Serbs, Demetrios Pavlovich and Ionitsa Kouchic, made an incursion into the village

45. Trubetskoy, "Novye arkhivnye materialy", pp. 336-337; idem., *Pushkin v Moldavii*, pp. 357-360. See also Oganian, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-54.

46. See Trubetskoy, "Novye arkhivnye materialy", p. 336.

47. Oganian, "Novye arkhivnye materialy", pp. 43-51.

of Sculeni. In the story Pushkin mentioned such raid by Kirdjali, but the name of his companion and the place were different: Kirdjali's associate in the story was Mihaláke, a local Moldavian brigand, while the poet cited not Sculeni, but another village, where Bulgarians lived. There is, however, a very close resemblance between the story and the document: both alluded to Kirdjali's concern for the fate of his family. In the official document, Kirdjali expressed his hope that members of his family living in the village of Teleneshti, would not suffer as a result of his own action. In the story, Pushkin, too, gave a moving description of the hero's psychological and mental anguish for the plight of his family as he was ready to be deported to the Turkish pasha in Jassy. Pushkin wrote:

"What did Kirdjali say to you"? the young official asked of the police officer. "He asked me", replied the police officer with a smile, "to look after his wife and child, who live not far from Khilia, in a Bulgarian village—he is afraid that they might suffer on his account"⁴⁸.

The second report added another interesting point: that Ionitsa Kouchic was arrested on the night of February 20-21, 1823, and he admitted, in his deposition to the authorities, that Demetrios Pavlovich was the pseudonym of George Kirdjali. The document identified him as George Kirdjali.

The third report made public the arrest of George Pavlovich Kirdjali, and identified him as being a Serb. The first document also considered him a Serb. Oganian agrees with the report that he was of Serbian origin. Pushkin, however, wrote that he was a Bulgarian. The description of Kirdjali's arrest in the report of the Kishinev chief of police was almost identical with that given in Pushkin's story:

The police began a search. They discovered that Kirdjali was indeed in Kishinev. They apprehended him one evening at the house of a fugitive monk, when he was having his supper, sitting in the dark room with seven companions⁴⁹.

The report appears to contradict the assertion of Academician Gordlevskii who claimed that the magic number *seven* depicted the epic and legendary character of the story. Yet interesting enough, both Pushkin's

48. Pushkin, *Sochineniia*, V, 267.

49. *Ibid.*, 265.

story and the police report listed seven individuals arrested at the house of Father Basil, the fugitive monk. Specifically: (1) Father Basil, the fugitive monk himself; (2) his son, Constantin Popovich; (3) the Arnaut Captain Iov; (4) Demetrios Papadopoulos, Iov's companion; (5) Stoiko Pavlovich, a Serb and Kirdjali's acquaintance; (6) Captain Hadzoglou; and (7) George Kirdjali.

The police report, therefore, concurs with Pushkin's story. There were actually *seven* individuals in the company of Kirdjali at the time of his arrest. But there was a discrepancy between Pushkin's narrative and the police report on the year of Kirdjali's capture and extradition to the pasha in Jassy. Pushkin placed this event "toward the end of September 1821", while the report moved the date two years later—in February 1823. This contradiction was probably caused by the fact that Pushkin simply did not follow the exact time-sequence of events, while the archival sources and the reports of Inzov indicate April 1822, as the date of Kirdjali's raid, and February 1823, the year of his capture and escape. It is more likely that the fragment "*Official and Poet*" was not written earlier than February 1823, when Kirdjali was extradited to the Turkish pasha in Jassy, and made his escape after this incident, and certainly not in 1821, as Pushkin's suggested in his story. A Romanian contemporary document mentioned that a certain George Kirdjali and other haiducs were engaged in brigandage in the region of Vilcea in Little Wallachia during the month of April 1823⁵⁰. This information would indicate that the Kishinev police report is reliable.

The reports provide some details about Kirdjali's relations with the Hetairists—a point which Pushkin discussed in his story. The frequent raids of Kirdjali and his companions into Moldavian villages, particularly Sculeni, were motivated by the spirit of revenge on the Moldavian boyars, whom the Hetairists accused of refusing to support the Hetairist struggle against the Turks, and delivering to the enemy the wounded soldiers who had been hiding in the village, following the end of the battle of Sculeni in June 1821. The Turkish pasha demanded Kirdjali's extradition not only because he was a brigand who had committed acts of robbery and murders in Moldavia, but because he had been associated with and participated in the Hetairist insurrection in the Principalities. In his interrogation before the Russian officials, Kirdjali alluded to this noble cause he served by giving his last farthing to the Hetairist cause:

50. Ionescu-Niscov, *op. cit.*, p. 113. See Trubetskoy, *Pushkin v Moldavii* (ed. 1963), p. 361.

To the Turks, to the Moldavians, and to the Wallachians I am undoubtedly a *brigand*, but to the Russians I am a *guest*. When [George] Sophianos, having fired off the last of his grape-shot came here [to the quarantine station] to collect from the wounded the last shots, buttons, nails, watch-chains, and the knobs of yataghans, I gave him twenty bashliks [silver Turkish coins], and was left without money. God knows that I, Kirdjali, have since then been living on charity. Why then do the Russians now deliver me into the hands of my enemies⁵¹?

The Turkish authorities insisted that the Russian government should extradite all the Greek Hetairists who took refuge in southern Russia. Many of them were aware of the Turkish demand, including perhaps Kirdjali himself. He knew that his enemies—the Turks—viewed him not only as a dangerous brigand, but as a member of the Greek Hetairists. In Russia, however, he considered himself to be a "*guest*", perhaps a political refugee, like the rest of his companions who, in Pushkin's words, "led an idle life in the coffee-houses" of Kishinev, and "nobody complained of these poor, peaceably disposed men". But despite the remarkable defense of his own part in the Hetairist movement, Kirdjali could not convince the Russian officials to let him stay in their country and forgo his departure to Moldavia⁵².

Finally, the critic and writer Tomashevskii, in his extensive study about Pushkin, wrote that the poet's interest in the fate of the Bulgarian Kirdjali dates back to the years of his exile in Kishinev. He believed that Kirdjali was in the army of Ypsilanti, but following the defeat at Sculeni, he crossed the Pruth and lived quietly in Kishinev as "a political immigrant" for which he was "grateful to Russia for her protection". But as soon as it became known that he was a brigand, he could no longer remain in Bessarabia, and was arrested and immediately extradited to Jassy at the request of the Turkish authorities of Moldavia.

This incident, Tomashevskii noted, took place while Pushkin was still in Kishinev, but that he learned the details about Kirdjali's life from Leks many years later. It was also in Kishinev, where the poet gathered information about Ypsilanti's expedition in Moldavia and planned in 1828 to write a long work on the Hetairists, and another epic poem about the life of Kirdjali. Tomashevskii added that the documents, which survived and referred to

51. *Sochineniia*, V, 265.

52. Cf. V. Tomashevskii, *Pushkin* (Moscow, 1956), I, 466; II (Moscow, 1961), pp. 275-276.

Kirdjali, were those which Pushkin used in his story. He admitted, however, that *Kirdjali* "did not always conform to the historical facts which, more often, contradict themselves", and that even the name Kirdjali was assumed by various band leaders who roamed around Moldavia⁵³.

The majority of these scholars and critics try to prove the historical existence of Kirdjali by relying on contemporary testimonies and official records of the Russian authorities. Pushkin, they contend, had knowledge of these sources which formed the basis of his work. Moreover, the poet took an active part in the daily life of Kishinev and was probably an eyewitness to some of the episodes and events in that city. The poem *Official and Poet*⁵⁴ suggests that the scene of Kirdjali's delivery to the Turks did not escape the poet's attention, who might have even gone, perhaps from mere curiosity, to watch his extradition to Moldavia. Pushkin apparently found out of Kirdjali's arrest and departure in the office of General Inzov, himself directly preoccupied with the Kirdjali affair, and under whose supervision the poet lived.

8. OBSERVATIONS ON THE LEGENDARY AND HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF PUSHKIN'S STORY

A careful perusal of the various opinions and arguments presented by the two groups of historians, writers, and critics about *Kirdjali*, leads us to question whether either side succeeded in answering the controversial points concerning the historical and/or fictional character of the story, and whether its main protagonist, Kirdjali, was a real historical personality or a legendary hero.

Both groups raised several important points in defense of their position. The critics who doubt the historical credibility of the story and its principal character based their claims on careful analysis and critical evaluation of the composition, chronology, content, and other elements of the story. They expressed reservations about the poet's account, and even the sources which he had utilized in writing it. Pushkin wrote the story many years after his departure from southern Russia, and thus a considerable time elapsed since the actual events took place. The recreation of these events, relying exclusive on memory, over a decade later, could not but influence its content and

53. *Ibid.*, I, 466; II, 276. Cf. also, *idem.*, "Nezavarshennye kishinevskie zamysly Pushkina", in *Pushkin. Issledovaniia i materialy* (Moscow, 1953), p. 200.

54. See *Sochineniia*, II, 447. 753.

reliability. Kirdjali's exploits, therefore, lack historical authenticity, for it was difficult to reconstruct the life of a brigand who lived during the first decades of the 19th century. His deeds had, in time, become proverbial in the oral tradition, and often it was hard to delineate the real from the legendary. In many cases, acts of brigandage—the mark of a rebel—had been committed by a host of bandits and thieves under conditions dominated by terror, panic, and confusion. Several of Kirdjali's exploits, including those of other brigands, were told everywhere, sometime with awe, consternation, and fear. As a result folk literature forged them into tales and legends which circulated throughout Moldavia and Bessarabia down to the 20th century.

The same critics insist on certain details in the life of Kirdjali which reinforce the legendary character. Pushkin called the hero of his story by the generic name of Kirdjali, a common name assumed by various brigand leaders throughout the Balkan peninsula. The poet did not use the Christian name George, one of the commonest in the Orthodox faith, but the collective form of Kirdjali, born by brigands who lived and operated in Moldavia and Bessarabia at that time. Pushkin admitted that he "did not know his real name", implying lack of information, or simply applying the same name to brigands throughout much of the Balkan region. This would indicate, that Pushkin did not have in mind a certain prototype of brigand, but used it to suggest any member or leader of a group of brigands. By not identifying the full name of his protagonist, the poet increased the ambiguous nature of the story and its central character.

Another point raised by these scholars is the etymology of the name Kirdjali. There is, however, no agreement even among them regarding the origin and meaning of the word itself. Their interpretation ranges from that of being synonymous with brigand or thief, to that of being a derivation from the name of a Turkish military commander, while others suggest to be a Turkish word meaning troop, similar perhaps to the term Cossack. Pushkin lexical translation of the Turkish word was that of a "knight-warrior" or "daredevil", which gradually denoted a brigand or klepht.

Nor is the year of Kirdjali's birth known, these critics claim, except from the narrator's story. The question of Kirdjali's nationality is also obscure and debatable. The majority of them claim to be a Bulgarian, others an Albanian, and still others believe to be a Serb or a Moldavian. Contrary to these arguments, Pushkin considered Kirdjali to be "by birth a Bulgarian", and that "his wife and child lived not far from Khilia, in a Bulgarian village",—an assumption which is probably closer to truth.

A critical issue which both groups of critics disagree is whether or not

Kirdjali participated in the battle of Sculeni on June 17/29, 1821. Pushkin, of course, believed that he did. In his story, he described the epic resistance of its defenders “in all its touching reality”. He begins the narrative of the battle in a historical setting, suggesting that the source of information he used was that of an eyewitness testimony, reinforcing therefore its credibility:

“The battle of Sculeni does not seem to have been described by anybody in all its touching reality. Imagine seven hundred men—Arnauts, Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians and every kind of riffraff—without the least idea of military art, retreating in the face of fifteen thousand Turkish cavalry. The rebels’ detachment kept close to the bank of the river Pruth, and placed in front of themselves two small cannons... The next day, however, the Turks attacked the Hetairists... The battle was fiercely fought. Men slash each other with yataghans. The Hetairists, by permission of our Emperor, were allowed to cross the Pruth and take refuge in our quarantine station. Kantagoni and Saphianos were the last to remain on the Turkish bank. Kirdjali, wounded the previous evening, was already in our territory. Saphianos was killed. Kantagoni, an extremely fat man, was wounded in the belly by a lance. With one hand he raised, his sword, with the other he seized the enemy lance, and thrust it into himself; and in this manner he was able to reach his murderer with his sword, when both fell together. All was over. The Turks remained victorious⁵⁵.

Pushkin altered slightly the transcription in Russian of the names of the two Hetairists who fought in the battle of Sculeni: Kantagoni, instead of [John] *Kontogonis* (known as “the Peloponnesian”), and Saphianos, instead of [George] *Sophianos* (known as “the Kean”, that is, from the Aegean island of Kea). But unlike Pushkin who considered Kontogonis, Sophianos, and Kirdjali the principal officers of the Hetairist detachment at the battle of Sculeni, Greek and foreign sources refer to Captain Athanasios Karpenisiotis as the commander of the Hetairist forces at Sculeni. Furthermore, the majority of Greek and foreign historians describe Karpenisiotis as the most gallant officer in the Hetairist campaign in Moldavia and the battle of Sculeni. The

55. The most detailed description of the battle of Sculeni is in Ioannis Philemonos, *Dokimion istorikon peri tis ellinikis epanastaseos*, 4 vols. (Athens, 1859-1861), II, 193-201, 362-378, 395-400. See also for another description based on Greek sources in C. D. Aricescu, *Istoria revolutiunii române de la 1821* (Craiova, 1874), 303-313.

names of Kontogonis, Sophianos, and others are also included among those who fought at Sculeni, but they did not present them in such heroic terms, as did Pushkin, particularly Kontogonis' death. Kontogonis, according to Greek historical writings, died bravely with his sword in hand fighting the Turks. The poet, too, wrote that he was wounded in the belly by a lance, and "with one hand he raised his sword, with the other seizing the enemy's lance", he "was able to reach his murderer with his sword, when both fell together".

But Greek and foreign historians maintained that it was Karpenisiotis who displayed that unusual heroism at Sculeni. Liprandi, too, as well as other contemporary eyewitness accounts, ascribed the self-sacrificed scene to Karpenisiotis, not to Kontogonis, as the poet indicated in his story. Liprandi is even more specific about this episode. Describing the battle, he quotes Karpenisiotis' last words, as he bid farewell to his relatives and friends, shortly before the battle came to a climax: "I know", he told them, "we shall all die here. Yet our duty lies in that [giving our life for the freedom of our country]; it is a question of honor for the entire people". The French historian Laurenton, who resided in Bucharest in 1821, wrote in his history about the Romanian Principalities in 1821, that he was "un témoin oculaire"—an eyewitness of the events in these provinces, and that the "honor and eternal glory" belongs to the brave Hetairists at Sculeni and to Karpenisiotis, "the second Leonidas"⁵⁶!

An interesting part of the story is Pushkin's comments on the reaction of the Russian military authorities who watched the action from across the Russian border, and of the Russian army, positioned on the left bank of the Pruth, in full view of the fighting between the Hetairists and the Turkish forces. In Pushkin's words:

The Turks would have been glad to use grape-shot, but they dared not without the permission of the Russian authorities: the shot

56. F. G. L.[aurençon], *Nouvelles observations sur la Valachie...* (Paris, 1822), pp. 108-109, appended a brief sequence to the battle of Sculeni and the death of Athanasios Karpenisiotis, whom he referred by the name of *Anastase*, an apparent mispronunciation of *Athanasios*. Liprandi's description of the battle of Sculeni in *Răscoală din 1821*, IV, 199-203; V, 227-230 (324-334); Philemonos, *op. cit.*, II, 195-198, 362-400; Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privind istoria României* (new series) (Bucharest, 1967), II, 715, 720-722, 726-727, 761-763, and vol. III, 371, 397, 482; Aricescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305. Gordlevskii (*op. cit.*, pp. 262 ff.) questioned the poet's presentation of Kontogonis' death, though he probably misunderstood Pushkin's intention, or, assuming that the poet had somehow exaggerated or perhaps romanticized the death of that brave soldier.

would have inevitably flown over to our shore. The commander of our lines (now deceased), had never heard the whistle of bullets, although he had served in the army for forty years... Several of them whizzed past his ears. The old man became terribly angry with the major of the Okhovskii infantry regiment... The major ran towards the river, on the other side of which some of the Turkish cavalymen were displaying their prowess, and threatened them with his finger. Seeing this, the Turkish cavalymen turned round and galloped off, followed by the entire Turkish detachment. The major, who had threatened with his finger, was called Khorchevskii. I do not know what happened to him⁵⁷.

The episode of the Russian general threatened with retaliation if a shot was thrown into the Russian territory, is mentioned by Greek sources and eyewitness accounts. Pushkin's humorous scene of the Russian major Khorchevskii, who chased the Turkish soldiers with a wag "of his finger", is corroborated by a contemporary memoir, written probably by Constantine Doucas. The memorialist wrote that when the Turkish forces suffered great losses and were repeatedly driven back by the Greek defenders, the Turkish commander Kehaya-Bey decided to mount a general assault and batter them with his artillery. But he could not employ the cannons without the risk of throwing shots onto the Russian side. The Kehaya-Bey then asked the Russian General of the Infantry Corps, Sabaneev, and the Military Governor of Bessarabia, Inzov, to allow him to use the cannons against the Greek position, but he was flatly turned down⁵⁸.

Another report, certified for its authenticity by the Captain of the Guards, Burtsov, stated that the Kehaya-Bey called on the Russian commander of the quarantine station, Navrotskii, if the Turks could stage a frontal attack on the Hetairist detachment through the Russian side of the Pruth. Navrotskii told him that such attack would be considered a violation of the peace treaties between the two countries, and warned him that the moment a single cannon ball would fall over to the Russian shore, the Russians would be forced to attack immediately the Turkish position. The Turks then placed their cannons on the left brink of the Pruth River and, without violating the Russian side, made a fresh assault with their cavalry and infantry forces on the positions of the Greeks, taking their entrenchment sword in hand. Most of the Greek

57. *Sochineniia*, V, 264.

58. See *Răscoală din 1821*, IV, 270-271.

defenders perished, none of them was taken prisoner, and a few who survived were able to swim across the Pruth River to the Russian side.

The Russian officers and many onlookers, who came from Kishinev and other parts of Bessarabia, watched the entire engagement from the left bank of the river. They cheered by repeated shouts the courage and gallant stand of the Greek Hetairists. General Inzov, who, during the fighting placed two infantry regiments and one Cossack cavalymen ready for battle on the opposite bank of the river, told Rizo Neroulos, a Hetairist leader and adviser to former prince of Moldavia, Michael Soutzo, that "if Ypsilanti was fortunate to have had only ten thousands such brave men, he could have been able to withstand four times that number of Turks"⁵⁹.

9. DID KIRDJALI TAKE PART IN THE BATTLE OF SCULENI?

One of the major points in establishing the historical accuracy of the story is whether or not Kirdjali participated in the battle of Sculeni. Pushkin wrote that he was a participant in it; that he fought in the ranks of the Hetairist forces against the Turks; and that he was wounded in the battle and "by permission of our Emperor", was allowed to cross the Pruth and take refuge "within our lines", leaving behind him Sophianos and Kontogonis, both of whom perished at the battlefield.

The poet's version, however, is incorrect, nor is confirmed by any other historical source. Testimonies of participants in the battle of Sculeni and other reliable accounts made no mention of Kirdjali joining the Hetairist troops in Moldavia and participating in it. Neither Greek historians, who wrote of the battle, cite him as participant in it.

Moreover, there are several primary sources which prove that he was absent from the battle. The Romanian memorialist Ion Dârzeanu, a participant in the revolt in Wallachia, wrote that Kirdjali joined the army of Tudor Vladimirescu. When the troops of Tudor arrived in Bucharest, several of his soldiers deserted from the main corps along the trail from Little Wallachia to the capital, and began looting anyone they encountered on their way. Among them was George Kirdjali, who broke from Tudor's army and ransacked many villages beyond the Olt River in Little Wallachia. Vladimirescu wished

59. Pushkin, *Sochineniia*, V, 265 ff; *Răscoală din 1821*, II, 265-267; IV, 199-203, 270-272, 303-306; V, 228-229 (326-327); Philemonos, *op. cit.*, II, 196-197; Thomas Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London 1844), I, 127-130; Spyridonos Trikoupis, *Istoria tis ellinikis epanastaseos* (Athens, 1925), I, 104-105, 248.

to get rid of him because of his unruly behavior and insubordination to his authority. But as soon as Kirdjali found out of the intentions of the Romanian chieftain, he deserted his army and, together with other members of his band, joined the troops of Captain George Olympios. Dârzeanu added that Kirdjali and his band of bandits continued to loot the people that it was impossible to describe the devastation caused by these marauding thieves throughout the province. According to Dârzeanu's report, Kirdjali remained in Little Wallachia with Olympios' troops, and that he subsequently crossed into Austrian territory⁶⁰.

Costache Protopopescu, another Romanian memorialist and participant in the revolt under Tudor Vladimirescu, wrote that Kirdjali and his band of followers lingered in the small locality of Zavedeni, in Little Wallachia, where he met briefly the *pandours* of Tudor. When Kirdjali was told of Ypsilanti's arrival with his troops at the town of Rîmnicu Vilcea, situated north of Little Wallachia, he soon headed toward that direction. The account of Protopopescu, like that of Dârzeanu, implies that Kirdjali did not reach Moldavia, but remained probably in Little Wallachia, from where he headed toward the Austrian border⁶¹.

Similarly, the Austrian authorities in Transylvania provided information about Kirdjali's activity in the Hetairist campaign. In his report of July 1821, Baron Emanuel Schustekh, Supreme Commander of the Imperial Army in Transylvania, informed Count Banffy, the Governor of Transylvania, that the Turkish army chased the Hetairist troops in Little Wallachia and among the Hetairist officers was a certain George Kirdjali. Moreover, a Hetairist soldier who entered Austria declared in his deposition to the local authorities of the city of Hermannstadt (Sibiu), that George Kirdjali and one hundred fifty men from the detachment of Captain George Olympios reached the town of Rîmnicu Vilcea from where Ypsilanti crossed into Austria⁶². Apparently Kirdjali followed the same road to Austria.

Liprandi's narrative of the events in the Principalities concurs with the accounts of the Romanian memorialists and the Austrian authorities. George Kirdjali, who served in the troops of Captain Olympios, withdrew from his corps, and, marching to the north along the Austrian border with three

60. Ion Dârzeanu, *Răscoală din 1821*, V, 64.

61. Dumitrache Protopopescu, "Amintirile lui Dumitrache Protopopescu din Severin", *Răscoală din 1821*, V, 571.

62. Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privind istoriei României* (New Series), (Bucharest, 1967) III, 375, 397.

hundred soldiers, crossed into Austria, and then he came to Bessarabia⁶³. General Inzov, too, reported that Kirdjali and other individuals arrived in Bessarabia from Austria, and subsequently entered Moldavia where they engaged in a series of robberies⁶⁴.

The historian Selinov, on the other hand, rejected the claim that Kirdjali took part in the battle of Sculeni. He argued that he did not enter Bessarabia through the Russian quarantine station near Sculeni, as Pushkin wrote, for his name was not in the list of the Hetairists who crossed the Pruth. Finally, several Russian critics and researchers do not agree with Pushkin and the French historians about Kirdjali's participation in it. They are not only skeptical of his alleged heroism in the battle, but are convinced that he was entirely absent from the scene⁶⁵.

Pushkin himself made a pointed observation that many of the participants who joined the Ypsilanti's movement did not have a clear understanding of the real objectives of the Hetairia. Kirdjali, like many other soldiers in the Hetairist army, was a typical example. Pushkin wrote:

When Alexander Ypsilanti proclaimed the [Greek] revolt and began to form his army, Kirdjali brought him several of his old companions. The real object of the Hetairia was but ill understood by them, but war presented an opportunity of getting rich at the expense of the Turks, and perhaps of the Moldavians—and *that* was clear to them.

There existed a clear dichotomy in the ranks of Ypsilanti's army, between those who were willing to fight for the cause of Greek freedom and those who refused to risk their life and face the advancing Turkish forces. Kirdjali and those under his command were mercenary soldiers, like many other "volunteers", who joined the Hetairist forces and demanded money for their participation in the anti-Turkish struggle. Kirdjali and his companions sought eventually the safety of the Austrian or Russian territory, as soon as the defeat of the Greek Hetairists became imminent.

The decision of the Russian authorities to deliver Kirdjali over to the Turkish pasha of Moldavia remains also a puzzling question. To the Turks and to the Romanian boyars, he was certainly "a brigand", but to the Russians, he was a "guest", a "political immigrant". Why did, then, the Russian aucho-

63. See *Răscoală din 1821*, V, 230-231 (328-329).

64. See Trubetskoy, *Pushkin v Moldavii*, p. 358.

65. Cf. Selinov, *op. cit.*, pp. 100 ff.

rities of Bessarabia decided to extradite him to the Turks, who would undoubtedly have him executed?

One may indeed question the motives of the Russian officials behind this action. Kirdjali's extradition could not have come at that critical time—summer of 1821, nor perhaps during the next years, because Russia had already broken off diplomatic relations with the Sublime Porte in July of that year, direct communications between the two governments did not exist, and a Russo-Turkish war loomed ominous on the horizon. Although there were treaty stipulations between the two powers on extradition procedures for subjects from each country, yet historically, neither Russia nor Turkey followed them. In fact, the Sultan Mahmud II demanded that the Russian government should hand over all Greek fugitives who entered Russia in the summer of 1821, including the rebel Michael Soutzo, formerly prince of Moldavia, "with all his adherents"⁶⁶. The Emperor Alexander, however, emphatically rejected the Turkish demand. And the question, why the Russian authorities of Bessarabia extradite Kirdjali to the Turkish pasha, remains still an enigma. For, historical circumstances would not have allowed the provincial authorities of Bessarabia to take such step.

10. THE ROMANTIC, ANECDOTAL, AND ORAL CHARACTER OF THE STORY

The romantic and anecdotal character of the story and its central hero is another point of contention among these critics who claim that these literary forms diminish the historical reliability of the work. Yet for Pushkin the romantic trend, both in his prose and poetry, presented a different connotation and conveyed a special message. The integration of *Kirdjali* into this literary mode was imposed as much by its theme and message it carried, as by its social value and moral character, which, in essence, belonged to the romantic tradition. Pushkin himself expressed this view in his description of Kirdjali's delivery to the Turkish pasha in Jassy, when he wrote that the Russian authorities were "not obliged to regard brigands with *romantic eye*". And again, at the time of Kirdjali's departure from Kishinev, the poet was "moved deeply" and "felt sorry" for the fate "of poor Kirdjali". This sentiment of compassion, expressed in a form characteristic of the romantic era, but undoubtedly, sincere, lends, in the content of the story, a feeling of worm sympathy for the hero of his story.

66. Anton Prokesch-Osten, *Geschichte des Abfalls der Griechen von türkischen Reiche im Jahre 1821 und der Gründung des hellenischen Königreiches* (Vienna, 1867), III, 134.

As for the anecdotal part of the story, Pushkin acquired an interest in this form of writing from his French studies—the anecdote as a literary genre, which was often employed by French writers in the 18th century. He returned, more than once, to the anecdotal theme, both in his poetry and, particularly, in his prose and essays, developing it into a dynamic and captivated narrative, full of spiritual zest, revealing exceptional characters, and describing and psychoanalyzing the individual destiny of his heroes with compassion and forbearance. Several of his historical novels, including *Kirdjali*, belong to this category of writings, where the anecdote was injected into an historical and analytical commentary.

Pushkin's prose dealing with historical and contemporary events became for him a preoccupation and a pursuit. He wrote of the great events of the past in his poems, and later introduced them in his prose writings. Pushkin was a historian, indeed a careful historical researcher, a critic, an analyst of documents, an archival examiner of original sources, including contemporary material and oral testimonies. He utilized this investigatory approach in the years following the suppression of the Decembrist revolt, when preoccupation and the study of history assumed a new dimension among scholars, inspiring him to write a series of historical works, either finished or unfinished, including *Kirdjali*.

The oral testimony of the exploits of popular heroes and rebels formed another essential source in Pushkin's writings. In particular, the brigand motive persisted in his Bessarabian work, *The Brigand Brothers*, which was inspired by an actual event in Ekaterinoslav in which Pushkin himself was an eyewitness. Yet, in the story, it was evident the influence of the Bessarabian brigands. Pushkin's novel *Dubrovskii*, on the other hand, was a reminiscence of the life of Bessarabian haiducs. The hero of the novel was presented in the same light as the brigands of the folk songs of Bessarabia and Moldavia. Like other outlaws, *Dubrovskii* turned to banditry because of the social injustice and his determination to defend the downtrodden⁶⁷.

Pushkin introduced in *Kirdjali* elements of oral history, folk traditions, and stories and legends from the life of Moldavian haiducs. It is more likely that he adopted the scene of *Kirdjali*'s escape from jail from the famous Moldavian haiducs Codreanu and Gruia Grozovan. Likewise, Pushkin had heard of the notorious outlaw Ursul Tâlharul—"The Bear Thief", in Kishinev, where many stories circulated among the Moldavians about this "Thief"

67. See E. Dvoicenco, "Opera lui Puskin in Bessarabia", *Revista fundatiilor regale*, VIII (1937), p. 32.

and his companions. It was during the 1820s that Ursul Tâlharul was caught and executed in Kishinev—an episode which inspired Veltman to write a novel based on the life of this brigand. Kirdjali was a contemporary of Ursul Tâlharul and the life of these Moldavian bandits resembled, in many ways, that of Kirdjali's. In this respect, Kirdjali's imprisonment echoes the popular legends about Moldavian brigands, while the story he contrived, leading to his freedom from his Turkish captors, was obviously inspired by Moldavian folk ballads⁶⁸.

11. THE ROLE OF THE SECOND NARRATOR: M. I. LEKS

The case of Leks presents an interesting component of the story. It was Leks who told Pushkin much about the life and adventures of Kirdjali. According to Liprandi, Leks was "a man of intelligence and sensitivity", who was familiar with the case of Kirdjali and knew many details about his life. He "possessed a vast treasure of anecdotes", and "could discuss the most varied subjects". He thought of himself as being "an extremely erudite man"⁶⁹.

Leks told Pushkin about Kirdjali's exploits on two occasions: in their first conversation during their stay in Kishinev, Leks related to Pushkin Kirdjali's transfer from Kishinev to Jassy. In the second meeting, which took place at the beginning of 1834, almost twelve years after Pushkin's departure from southern Russia, when Leks "occupied an important post" as Director of the Intelligence Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Pushkin learned of Kirdjali's escape from prison. It is more likely that Leks did not know of Kirdjali's escape during their first conversation, or perhaps such conversation took place in the interval of compressed time, between the arrest of Kirdjali and his escape. It is important, however, to determine the chronological sequence of events only in so far as to make a logical connection between the information provided by the poet in the story and the subsequent investigation on that subject. Leks was not apparently aware of what finally happened to Kirdjali, and his presence at this stage complicates the time-sequence of the narrative.

In the story, Pushkin's hero still lives and continues to provoke havoc to the local authorities. His failure, intentional or not, to mention the execution of Kirdjali, conforms to the tradition of the popular ballad in which the

68. Cf. Tomashevskii, *op. cit.*, II, 275; Trubetskoy, *op. cit.*, p. 362-363.

69. Liprandi, *op. cit.*, 1399-1400, 1403.

triumph of the main hero of the story was a mandatory finale⁷⁰.

But according to official records, Kirdjali was arrested and subsequently hanged on February 24, 1824. This information is confirmed by Constantin Necruzzi, a Romanian writer, who lived in Kishinev, knew Pushkin personally, and was familiar with his work. In his preface to *Kirdjali's* translation in Romanian, Necruzzi wrote that "Kirdjali, created by Pushkin to be a bandit *a la Salvador Rose*, was, on the contrary, a very unpoetical thief. If he demanded five thousand *lei* [ransom from the hospodar of Moldavia, who threatened to kill him if payment was not forthcoming]—which I doubt—and especially if they [money] had been given to him—which I do not believe—I have no knowledge [of this incident]... But I know one thing, that the ferocious Kirdjali, who escaped the Turkish axe, did not escape the Moldavian gallows, ending his life very prosaic in 1824"⁷¹.

Necruzzi's comment concurs with other official sources on the year of Kirdjali's death, but not with Pushkin's story. It is true though that Pushkin did not keep an account of events in chronological sequence, and by compressing the lapse of time between the battle of Sculeni and the arrest of Kirdjali, he transposed the action of the story in the summer of 1821, that is, the months immediately following the battle of Sculeni. Pushkin did not indicate either the source he used in the most crucial portion of his narrative, specifically, the transfer of Kirdjali from Kishinev to Jassy. In doing so, Pushkin introduced in the story the element of oral history, relying perhaps solely on Leks' account, his personal reminiscence of the Bessarabian days, and the stories he heard while living in Kishinev.

12. PUSHKIN'S CHARACTERIZATION OF YPSILANTI AND THE HETAIKIST MOVEMENT IN THE STORY *KIRDJALI*

Almost half of the story of *Kirdjali* deals with Prince Ypsilanti, the Hetairist leaders of the Greek campaign in the Romanian provinces, and the battle of Sculeni. Pushkin rendered these episodes, discussed in the first part of the story, as if he had kept records of them.

At the beginning of the Hetairist insurrection in Moldavia, Pushkin was very much impressed by Ypsilanti's undertaking. "A strange picture"! he wrote. "Two great peoples [Greeks and Italians], who fell long ago into con-

70. Cf. Paul Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin. A Study of Alexander Pushkin's Prose Fiction* (Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 278-279.

71. C. Necruzzi, "Cirdjaliul", *Curier de ambe sexe*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest, 1862), p. 144.

demnable insignificance, are arising from their ashes at the same time, and rejuvenated, are appearing into the political scene of the world. The first step of Ypsilanti is excellent and brilliant. He has begun luckily. And dead or a conqueror, from now on he belong to history: twenty-eight years old, an arm torn off, a magnanimous goal! An enviable fate"! But the initial successes of Ypsilanti and the Hetairists were compled with failures and defeats, which, if they did not change the course of the Greek Revolution, they had certainly effected the attitude of Pushkin and of the European Philhellenes toward the Greek cause. Pushkin's confidence was undermined by the military setbacks of the Hetairists in the Romanian provinces, by the lack of unity, dissension, disagreements, and intrigues which prevailed in the Hetairist camp. When the campaign in Wallachia and Moldavia collapsed and Ypsilanti fled to Austria, Pushkin censured the prince's conduct and of those who followed his example, among them, Pendedecas, Doucas, Caravias, Prince Cantakouzino, and others⁷².

In the confusion and defeat of the revolutionary movement in the Romanian provinces, Pushkin became disillusioned and disgusted with everyone and everything. He was indignant with Russia for not coming to the aid of the Greeks, and with the Greeks for not deserving it. He was critical of Ypsilanti and the conduct of his officers and soldiers who could not withstand the first attack of the "worthless Turkish musketry". Watching the actions of Ypsilanti and the Hetairists amidst the apathy and hostility of the Romanian population, Pushkin realized how difficult was, even under better conditions, to raise the morale of the soldiers and of the masses to the level of the political exigencies of the time. There seemed to have been an unbridgeable gap between the commander and his soldiers, and Ypsilanti proved at the end incapable of inspiring a sense of unity and confidence in them. "Ypsilanti was personally brave", Pushkin remarked, "but he did not posses the qualities necessary for the role which he had assumed with such ardor and imprudence. He did know how to control the people over whom he was obliged to command. They had neither respect for him nor confidence in him". Instead of taking command of the military operations in Little Wallachia, Ypsilanti, "hastily removed himself to the borders of Austria" following the "unfortunate battle" of Dragashani "in which the flower of the Greek youth perished" at the hands of the Turkish swords. Just before he crossed the frontier into Austria, where he hoped to find safety for himself, his brothers, and a

72. *Sochineniia*, IX, 26; V, 263. Cf. see Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", pp. 73-77; *Idem.*, "The Greek Revolution", pp. 100-101.

few of his close associates, he issued his famous order of the day, in which he held responsible for the failure of the revolution in the Principalities all of his former associates, generals, officers, and the entire army, accusing them of treachery and "sending back his curse upon his men, calling them disobedient, cowards, and scoundrels", of which he, Ypsilanti, had allegedly been the victim⁷³.

Pushkin was informed of these developments by the same individuals, Doucas and Caravias, whom Ypsilanti castigated and charged them with treason in his order of the day⁷⁴. Following his example, they, too, abandoned their troops in the midst of the battlefield and entered the safety of the Russian territory.

The majority of these officers, whom Ypsilanti accused, deserved such reproach and had probably been, to a certain extent, responsible for the debacle of the Hetairist insurrection in the Romanian provinces. Yet the main weight for the failure of the revolutionary movement in Wallachia and Moldavia falls upon Ypsilanti himself, who, at the most critical moment of the struggle, abandoned his troops, seeking safety in a country where he soon found himself a prisoner of Metternich. But the soldiers and officers who remained behind him, continued the fight to the very end. Pushkin wrote in *Kirdjali* that "the majority of these cowards and scoundrels, however, perished within the walls of the monastery of Secu or on the banks of the Pruth river, desperately trying to defend themselves against an enemy that outnumbered them ten to one"⁷⁵. Pushkin's sympathy lay with the simple and brave soldiers and officers who fought and died in the battlefields of Dragashani, Secu and Sculeni.

Pushkin's caustic criticism of Ypsilanti and his associates in the Romanian provinces⁷⁶, perhaps not entirely justified, referred to their incapacity

73. *Sochineniia*, V, 263. See Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", pp. 73-77.

74. *Ibid.*, 263-264. See Philemonos, *op. cit.*, II, 184-185; Elias Photeinos, *Hoi athloi tis en Vlachia ellinikis epanastaseos to 1821 etos* (Leipzig [Braila, Romania], 1846), pp. 160-161. See Sir Archibald Alison, *History of Europe from the Fall of Napoleon in 1815 to the Accession of Louis Napoleon in 1852* (London, 1854), III, 111, note; George Finlay, *A History of Greece from Its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time, B.C. 146 to 1864*, ed. H. F. Tozer, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1877), VI, 130-138.

75. *Sochineniia*, V, 263-264. See Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", pp. 69 ff.; Idem., "The Greek Revolution as Seen by Pushkin", pp. 110-118. The officers who had been stigmatized in Ypsilanti's order of the day, had allegedly responded that "We served you, as you had commended us". Laurençon, *Nouvelles observations sur la Valachie...*, p. 125.

76. In a letter from Odessa to his friend Davydov, he was far more critical of the conduct of the Greek Hetairists calling them "a crowd of cowardly beggars, thieves, and vagabonds,

to lead the revolution to victory. He was not against the ultimate goal for which the Greeks were fighting. Pushkin's comments cannot, in any way, be construed as a repudiation of the national cause of Greece. In the same letter to his friend Davydov, he made it clear that his criticism of the Greek Hetairists should not be construed by his friends as disapproval of the efforts of the Greeks to free themselves for foreign rule. "I am neither a barbarian nor an apostle of the Koran", he wrote. "The cause of Greece interests me very much indeed"⁷⁷.

Pushkin was indeed among the very few Russian intellectuals whose literary works express a genuine Philhellenic sentiment for "the noble efforts of a people in the process of being reborn"⁷⁸. The story of Kirdjali reflects one phase of the Greek struggle of liberation from Turkish rule.

13. CONCLUSIONS

A careful perusal of the various views and interpretations by both groups of historians and literary critics, leads us to conclude that *Kirdjali* is a combination of fictional and historical narrative. Like his *Journey to Arzrum* and *Table Talk*, the story is a brief account of the life of a brigand, who lived and operated in the Romanian provinces and Bessarabia during the early 1820s. Pushkin injected into the story the element of popular tradition and legend, along with historical facts.

Kirdjali's actions are often fictionalized, particularly in the second part of the story, where his fame as a rebel is achieved through the aura of a folk hero and incredible deeds. Pushkin introduced in the story feigned, invented, or imaginary characters and circumstances. Kirdjali's escaped from jail after his extradition to Moldavia is part of the popular tales and legends. He was not recaptured. However, the exclamation mark, *Kakov Kirdjali?*—"What

who were not even able to sustain the first fire of the Turkish musketry... As of the officers, they are worse than the soldiers... We have seen these new Leonidas in the streets of Odessa and Kishinev—we are personally acquainted with a number of them, we attest of their complete worthlessness—they have...not the slightest of the art of war, no concept of honor, no enthusiasm... They will endure anything, even blows of a cane, with compose worthy of Themistocles... This is just why I become indignant when I see those poor wretches invested with the sacred office of defenders of liberty". *Sochineniia*, IX, 107-109; Farsolas, pp. 73-76.

77. *Ibid.*; Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", pp. 77-78.

78. *Ibid.*; Farsolas, "Alexander Pushkin", p. 77.

a man, is that Kirdjali"! at the end of the narrative leaves a rather ambiguous tone, for it undermines the credibility of the historical account, turning it into a paradoxical anecdote"⁷⁹.

The central issue, however, whether or not was Kirdjali a real historical person is of special interest to us in order to understand Pushkin's literary creation, the objectivity with which the poet examined the action of a living personality, and how, with the help of such personality, he was able to present and describe that particular historical period. There are several questions and gaps in the life of the hero that are debatable, and part of the testimony of the narrative falls short of being accurate. The role of Kirdjali in the Hetairist movement, for instance, is not thoroughly factual. He joined the Hetairist army in Wallachia, but he did not fight in the battle of Sculeni, as Pushkin suggested.

Despite the fictional and anecdotal form of Kirdjali's exploits, the story itself provides historical facts which, as a whole, attest of its veracity. *Kirdjali* contains reliable information about the events of the Hetairist campaign in the Principalities. Pushkin used personal and eyewitness accounts to enhance the historical validity of the narrative. Almost half of the story dealing with the revolutionary developments in the Romanian provinces and the conduct of the Hetairist leaders, including aspects of the battle of Sculeni, is credible and reflects historical accuracy. The poet knew many details about the Hetairist movement in Moldavia and Wallachia, and the tragic circumstances which led to its ultimate failure.

The life of Kirdjali is a political and historical account of a brigand who lived and played an active part in Moldavia and Bessarabia. He is a social rebel, endowed with wit, courage, and a sense of justice for the oppressed and the poor. Pushkin portrayed in him the mentality of a social category of individuals—those who rebelled against the oppressive Turkish rule. The brigand-klepht embodied the qualities of personal pride, honor, and dignity. Pushkin transcended the descriptive and transient psychological sketch. He meticulously analyzed the inner, personal motives, which produced the social rebel. The poet displayed an acute interest in investigating and describing the human destiny and fortitude, and creating thus a monographic picture of those who defy the social system and its injustices.

As in other historical novels, Pushkin presents in his story a daring and humble individual; a rebel against Turkish domination; an avenger on the powerful masters—the Turks, punishing them and condemning the predatory

79. Cf. Kodjak and Wynne, *op. cit.*, p. 46, 61-62; Debreczeny, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-280.

for injuring and unjustly treating the downtrodden. In this manner, the poet “awakened tender feelings”, for, as he wrote, “in this cruel age, I glorified freedom, and invoked mercy for the vanquished”⁸⁰.

Kirdjali, the hero of Pushkin’s story, is a fitting testimony.

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80. “*Exegi Monumentum*”, *Sochineniia*, II, 460.