

THE MAKING AND TREATMENT OF AN ICONIC EVENT:
THE MENEMEN INCIDENT (1930) IN
MODERN TURKISH HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

THE MAKING AND TREATMENT OF AN ICONIC EVENT: THE MENEMEN INCIDENT (1930) IN MODERN TURKISH HISTORY

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The Menemen Incident is an attempt at rebellion by six armed insurgents on 23 December 1930. The Republican People's Party introduced the incident after its occurrence as a reactionary challenge to the republic instigated by the Nakşibendi order. The government proclaimed a state of emergency in Menemen, Manisa and Balıkesir, established a special military court for the trial of the accused. The court decided that indeed the order had preplanned the rebellion and actualized it to undermine the very existence of the republic.

This thesis explores the Menemen Incident. It reconstructs the events based on critical analyses of official statements, court documents and contemporary newspapers –with special attention to the trial process. Furthermore, the thesis examines the various representations of the incident in the contemporaneous media as well as in the secondary popular and academic accounts of the succeeding years.

The study indicates that this was a minor incident carried out by six ignorant hashish smokers. However, the beheading of Kubilay, an idealist republican reserve officer, stirred up the government to action and to hand out harsh punishments.

The decision of the military court to condemn the Nakşibendi order as the instigator of the event was preordained by the RPP leaders and unjustifiable. Nevertheless, the court's decision, misleading official statements, and newspaper reports that echoed the regime's position led to the emergence of a literature that continued to advocate and embellish this position over the years. In the process, the Menemen Incident grew into a potent icon that evoked the belief in the victory of republicanists over reactionists. A group of authors developed counter interpretations eventually. But they indeed reversed and perpetuated the polarized perspectives of the officially-biased accounts. Even highly reputable scholars could not overcome the misinformation that became endemic to the coverage of the Menemen Incident.

Keywords: the Menemen Incident, Derviş Mehmet, Kubilay, Nakşibendism, the martial court of Menemen, early republican period

ÖZ

İKONİK BİR VAKAYI ANLAMAK: MODERN TÜRKİYE TARİHİNDE MENEMEN OLAYI

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Menemen olayı, altı silahlı asinin 23 Aralık 1930'da gerçekleştirdiği bir başkaldırı girişimidir. Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası liderleri, peşinen olayın cumhuriyete karşı irticai bir eylem olup ve arkasında Nakşibendi tarikatının bulunduğunu açıklamışlardır. Menemen, Manisa ve Balıkesir'de sıkıyönetim ilan edilmiş, sanıkların yargılanmaları için askeri mahkeme kurulmuştur. Mahkeme, Nakşibendi tarikatının olayı cumhuriyeti yıkmak amacıyla önceden planlayıp gerçekleştirdiğine hükmetmiştir.

Bu tez, olay sonrası yapılan resmi açıklamalar, gazete haberleri ve mahkeme dosyalarını eleştirel bir gözle ve dikkatle inceleyerek gelişmeleri mümkün olduğunca doğru tespit etmeye çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca, daha sonra yazılan ikincil kaynaklar ile ciddi akademik metinlerde olayın nasıl anlatıldığını da irdelemektedir.

Tez, olayın altı esrarkeş cahil tarafından gerçekleştirildiğini, çapının ve halk üstündeki tesirinin çok sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak idealist bir cumhuriyetçi yedek subay olan Kubilay'ın başının kesilerek öldürülmüş olması, hükümeti derhal harekete geçerek ağır cezalar vermeye itmiştir.

Tez, askeri mahkemenin olaydan Nakşibendi tarikatını sorumlu tutan kararının, aslında CHF liderleri tarafından önceden verilmiş olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu temelsiz mahkeme kararı, yanıltıcı resmi açıklamalar ve rejimin duruşunu yansıtan gazetelerin haberleri ile de beslenerek, olay hakkında daha sonra yayınlananları şekillendirmiştir. Süreç içerisinde Menemen olayı, cumhuriyetçilerin irticacılara galebe çalacağına olan inancı çağrıştıran etkili bir ikona dönüşmüştür. Bu ikinci kuşak yayınlar, doğru olmayan bilgileri abartarak yeniden üretmişlerdir. Zamanla bir grup yazar karşı açıklamalar ortaya koymakla beraber, ciddi araştırmalara dayanmaktan ziyade resmi görüşü yansıtan anlatıların çift kutuplu perspektiflerini ters-yüz etmişlerdir. Saygın araştırmacıların Menemen olayına dair yazdıkları dahi yaygın yanlış bilgiler veya kutuplaşmış perspektiflerden etkilenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Menemen olayı, Derviş Mehmet, Kubilay, Nakşibendilik, Menemen sıkıyönetim mahkemesi, erken cumhuriyet dönemi

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on various aspects of the Menemen Incident and has several arguments. Based upon critical analysis of primary sources, this study mainly seeks to accurately understand what happened in Menemen on 23 December 1930 and under which circumstances it occurred. How the event was encountered in the political arena and media is another specific subject matter. The thesis also analyses what happened after the incident and how the legal proceedings concluded. A last general topic of the research is the ways in which the event has been recounted in academic and popular writings.

The Menemen Incident is the sum of the happenings that occurred on the morning of 23 December 1930 in Menemen, a town in the İzmir province, located thirty-three kilometers northwest of İzmir, the provincial capital. Six disciples of the Nakşibendi order took to the road from Manisa; half of them were armed. Having frequently smoked weed, the group entered the town of Menemen. They took from the Müftü Mosque a green banner on which Quranic verses were written and raised it. They made a few prayers follow them and went to the town square by shouting that they were to bring the old regime back.

Along with their leader Derviş¹ Mehmet, who had announced himself to be the Mahdi (“the rightly guided one” who will appear as the world nears its end), the company wandered in the neighborhoods of the town and proclaimed the restoration of the sharia. They called people to pass under the banner, which would mean declaration of their loyalty not solely to “the Mahdi” but also to the rightful way of the Islamic religion. After walking within the town center, they had a demonstration in the municipal square led by Derviş Mehmet. He had gathered a crowd of about a hundred people who joined in his group to perform a reciting of God (*zikr*). Another hundred of them watched the happenings from a distance.

Three gendarme officers, one of whom was the commander himself, came to the square, spoke with Derviş Mehmet, told him to halt their activities and warned the crowd to disperse. However, neither Derviş nor the townspeople did what the commander or other officers wished. Then, a reserve officer, Mustafa Fehmi Kubi-

¹ Also known as Giritli Mehmet.

lay, came to the square with his battalion. He left his unit behind and went to have a talk with Derviş on his own, unarmed. When Derviş did not heed his warnings, Kubilay, hot-tempered by nature, became angry and seized Derviş by the collar. Thereon Derviş shot him with his rifle. Kubilay's battalion fled because there were no bullets in their rifles.

Having heard the shot, some of the crowd dispersed. Kubilay tried to get away, yet collapsed in the courtyard of the Gazez Mosque nearby the square. Twenty minutes after his shooting, Derviş was somehow informed of Kubilay's condition. Along with one of his fellows, Derviş then went to the courtyard and cut Kubilay's head off with his knife. Derviş brought Kubilay's head to the square, sought to attach it on the edge of the banner but failed. Then they fastened the banner to a pole on the square. There, two district wardens became engaged in a gun battle with the company, but were killed.

Soon enough, support battalions arrived from the regimental commandry with machine guns and warned the insurgents to lay down arms. Derviş and his associates did not surrender. In response, machine guns were fired and three of the insurgents including Derviş were killed. Another one of them was injured while two others escaped and were captured two days later.

Martial law was proclaimed and investigations regarding both the perpetrators and negligent officials were initiated. In consequence, the martial court announced the event to have been planned by the Nakşibendi order, a sufi religious order founded in the fourteenth century. Its leader Şeyh Esat was accused of being the prime agent. Perpetrators of the incident were described to have been incited by notable figures of the order. At the end of the proceedings, twenty-eight defendants, including some prominent dervishes of the order, were executed.

The subject matter of this study was determined while I was writing the final assignment of Professor Şerif Mardin's "Research Seminar on Concepts in Historical Change." When examining the court records of the Menemen Incident, I noticed that the martial court charged the agency of Nakşibendi order as a whole of the Menemen Incident. The court charged some notable figures of the order in particular with inciting the perpetrators, despite the lack of substantial evidence. This observation intrigued me to undertake a more in-depth examination of the issue, with special attention to the judicial proceedings in general, as well as on analysis of the reactions to

the event. The result is the present study. It shows that although some prominent figures of the order were condemned for having instigated a revolt against the republic, the related records of the trials and interrogations of the defendants bore no evidential value to justify these decisions.

Although six insurgents were the core perpetrators of the actions, official statements as well as pro-government newspapers instantly announced the event to be a plot executed by reactionists against the very existence of the republic. However, as the thesis shows, the RPP leaders were aware of the simplicity of the event and yet deliberately described it to be a well-rounded movement preplanned by the Nakşibendi order to overthrow the government.

The Menemen Incident became one of the most commemorated and recounted events of the history of the Republic of Turkey. Three years after the incident in 1933, a monument of Kubilay and two wardens was laid on top of a hill in Menemen. It was built by the donations collected from citizens through a campaign organized by the daily *Cumhuriyet*. The monument was exceptional in that it remained the only one erected in the name of someone other than Atatürk, until his death in 1938. In the ceremony of the erection of the monument, the head of the Republican People's Party and of the administrative council in the province stated that the monument would be the Kaaba of republican reforms.²

Annual ceremonies have been held in Menemen on 23 December. Thousands of people attended these ceremonies since the incident. These meetings turned into secularist demonstrations. The incident has been officially narrated as one of the most important manifestations of reactionary threats. RPP administrators used the incident to illustrate the dangers of religious reactionism to Republican Turkey. Political leaders and after them official historiography presented and narrated the event along these lines in order to remind citizens of the need to protect the secular republic against its internal enemies.³

Kubilay was a teacher, dedicated to Atatürk's Reforms and a member of the Türk Ocakları. He was known to be a nationalist who sincerely defended the republican ideals. Thus, "the beheaded officer Kubilay, the heroic victim of the incident, has

² *Anadolu*, October 30, 1933.

³ Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 21, 43.

become an icon of Kemalist secularism as a source of inspiration against the enemies of the republic. The Kemalist elite were committed to turn him into a long-lasting symbol in the national memory as the martyr of the revolution and the embodiment of the national ideal.”⁴ The account of his beheading has been narrated constantly in commemorative ceremonies. His sacrifice has been emphasized in many official announcements and in history textbooks. Many issues of magazines have been published and poems have been written dedicated to the memory of Kubilay.

The purpose of the thesis is to probe and analyze this politically symbolic and consequential incident. It diverges from the prevailing popular and academic writings on the Menemen Incident and offers an original narrative on the whole. A critical approach to primary sources is essential in order to understand and objectively. Shaped by the official viewpoint to a large extent, the primary sources include misleading information. In order to avoid this trap that perpetuates misinformation and skewed viewpoints, I strived to filter the unreliable or questionable information from the reasonably trustworthy through careful examination of the accuracy of the sources by comparing them with each other.

In line with the purpose to reconstruct and contextualize the event, I divided this study into four chapters. In the first chapter, I aim to make a sensible depiction of the happenings that composed the Menemen Incident. I search for answers to the following questions: Who were the insurgents of the Menemen Incident? How did they come together under the leadership of Derviş Mehmet? What were their motivations to attempt to undertake such a revolt? What happened in the villages where they stayed prior to their arrival at Menemen? To what extent and why did the villagers aid them? What exactly happened in Menemen on 23 December 1930? How did the townspeople and law enforcement officials react to the group’s activities? Which mistakes paved the way for Kubilay’s killing?

I construct the story line of the events from three primary source categories. The first class of sources are the statements of the three perpetrators of the events who were seized when the situation was brought under control. The statements of the perpetrators made in the trials of the Menemen Incident do not contradict with each other in terms of their activities. The second primary source is the reports of the officials who were assigned to investigate the incident. Among these, there were reports

⁴ Ibid., 22, 40.

of the Presidency of the General Staff's inspector, the doctor who examined Kubilay's body, and the testimonies of civil servant witnesses. Most of the materials in this second category were published by the Turkish Security General Directorate. I obtained another part of these sources from the archives of the Turkish General Staff. Some other sources are available online at the website of the same institution. Official reports in general present objective information about the incident since their purpose was to reveal the truth. Lastly, the testimonies of townspeople from Menemen, who were interviewed in the aftermath of the incident, provided information for some aspects of the demonstrations in Menemen. By constructing a factual and justified description of actual happenings with a critical examination of the primary sources, I try to constitute a solid foundation upon which I make the succeeding analyses.

In the second chapter, I examine the official reactions to and media representations of the incident in general after the event but prior to the martial court trials. Primary sources of this chapter are parliament records and newspapers of the time. The chapter addresses the following research questions: What were the responses of the RPP leaders to the incident? How did they regard it? What decisions were taken regarding the official proceedings? What were the concrete steps that the government agencies took? How did the newspapers of the era report the incident? In what ways did their coverage differ from each other?

By searching answers to these questions, I indicate the distinction between the real events of the incident and the ways it was officially presented. Establishing the political circumstances under which the incident occurred is another purpose of the chapter. With detailed analyses of the official statements, parliament speeches and media news, I also look into the extent to which the legal procedure was predetermined.

Chapter three focuses on the judicial process and the trials related to the Menemen Incident. The primary source I use here is the court records of the Martial Court of Menemen. The chapter searches for answers to the following questions: What happened in the trials? What were the prominent features of the trials? How can we analyze or characterize these trials in judicial terms? What sorts of proof did the court have? Were they adequate to charge the defendants? Did the evidence substantiate the accusations? What sort of attitude did the perpetrators, defendants and

the chief judge adopt? What specific evidence did the court rely on in blaming the notable Nakşibendi figures for their presumed role in inciting the perpetrators? How did the court reach legal verdicts? What did these verdicts reflect regarding the outlook or position of the people in power and the image of the state?

In the third chapter, I divide the content of the trials into categories in terms of the chief judge's questions and the detainees' responses. By doing so, I try to describe the course of trials. The critical examination of the trials enables me to evaluate the consistency of the court's decisions and justifications with reality or what we can possibly know about the events that made the Menemen Incident.

I offer a literature review of the Menemen Incident in a distinct chapter, namely chapter four. Here I divide the accounts that I analyze into three categories: officially-biased, counter-official and unbiased accounts and seek to answer the following questions: How can we group the subsequent writings on the incident analytically? What are the sources on which these accounts are based? To what extent do they examine the narrations they recount? What is the general content of later writings? To what extent and in what ways do they present biased accounts and misinformation? What unique perspectives do these relatively unbiased writings represent? This critical evaluation of the relevant literature is a major subject matter of this thesis. Consequently, it is addressed in a distinct chapter rather than in the form of an introductory literature review aiming at positioning the thesis among current narratives.

There is such a vast amount of non-academic narration on the Menemen Incident that it is not quite feasible to gather and analyze all of them. Still, I tried to see as many of them as possible. My survey indicates that a good part of this literature relies uncritically on biased official accounts, newspaper reports and court records. They reproduce biased perspectives about the event and recount the prevailing misinformation. I defined the writings that adopted official descriptions of the incident as "officially-biased." I name the narrations that embrace a reverse perspective as "counter-official." I indicate that both group of authors not only recount the events from skewed perspectives, but also generate a great deal of disinformation themselves. I choose and take into consideration the most referenced ones among them.

I examine all the academic writings that focus on the Menemen Incident. By doing so, this thesis differs from others since there is not an academic study that ex-

plores and analyses all the scholarly texts systematically. I divide these academic accounts into groups in terms of the bias or neutrality of their content. In this way, I evaluate the prejudiced academic texts together with ordinary writings, and I regard the neutral ones separately.

Studies of Hamit Bozarslan, Eyüp Öz, and Umut Azak, whose works are examined in detail in chapter four, are noteworthy to briefly mention here. Among them, only Azak offers a careful summary of the actual happenings both prior to and during the incident, although it too gives in to some widespread but misleading information. Furthermore, the brevity of Azak's account deprives the reader of specific details significant to understanding the real motivations of the perpetrators and of other people who were somehow involved in the incident.

The common argument of these three authors is that the incident was not a plot of the Nakşibendi order and that the court records do not present substantial evidence to that effect. However, they do not provide sufficient details to prove their points as compellingly as possible. In order to do just that, this thesis dissects and contextualizes the content of the judicial process –as indicated above. Another disadvantage of these three studies is that they do not pay adequate attention to the political atmosphere of the era in order to contextualize the reactions to the event. Thus, they do not grasp the pattern formed by the official statements and pro-government news, which indicated the direction of subsequent official proceedings. This thesis shows those patterns and sheds light on the intensity of the political arena, thereby explaining why such a small-scale incident became so overblown as to justify predetermined judicial process and verdicts.

Bozarslan and his student Öz attempt to come up with explanations based on the social circumstances of the region in which the event occurred. They argue that certain economic and political conditions, and religious feelings paved the way for a collective expectation of the emergence of a millenarian savior. For them, Derviş Mehmet stepped into action and initiated a revolt under these conditions. A crucial drawback of their studies is that they assume a connection between certain social, political and religious circumstances and the attraction of people to Derviş Mehmet, rather than clearly showing that connection.

Although Bozarslan and Öz do not adopt the officially-biased arguments in general, their assumption of the existence of deep structural justifications to explain

the incident leads them to the grossly exaggerated conclusion that the incident represented an extensive rebellion. In contrast, this thesis will indicate that it is not appropriate to define the Menemen Incident as a “rebellion” in either social or political terms. The incident did not have a social base. Neither the inhabitants of Menemen nor the people from surrounding regions stepped into action against law enforcement agencies under the guidance of the perpetrators. It was a distinct and extraordinary accident that occurred in Western Anatolia. The act of beheading, the applause of a small group of the people and the religious terms the insurgents used severely disturbed the government. The subsequent official proceedings reflected the authoritarian determination of the state to intimidate anyone who would dare to initiate such a revolt especially for religious-political purposes.

CHAPTER 1

ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO AND IN DUE COURSE OF THE MENEMEN INCIDENT

The purpose of this chapter is to make a reasonable description of the activities that occurred just prior and during the Menemen Incident. First, it discusses the actors who sought to initiate a rebellion in Menemen. Then, this chapter elucidates the central happenings of the incident and gives a narration including all the significant actions that occurred in the town of Menemen. It also provides information about Kubilay, whose vicious murder during the incident was one of the symbolic and pivotal elements of the event, and of the Republican history in general. By putting forth the actual happenings, known in total as the Menemen Incident, this chapter provides a substantial basis for the thesis to make subsequent evaluations and to assess other accounts.

1.1. Before the Incident

The basic information about the company's actions before the incident was provided by the three perpetrators who were captured.⁵ This section of the chapter examines and compares the court testimonies of these perpetrators in terms of consistency. Official reports that were prepared after the event and published later are also taken into consideration. The chapter takes advantage of the newspapers of the period as well. The contents of the newspapers are also carefully compared and scrutinized.

This section introduces and provides brief information about the agents of the Menemen Incident. It accounts for Giritli Mehmet's ability to gather followers around himself, lead and mobilize them with religious intentions. Thus, the section touches on their meetings in Manisa and their departure. It then covers their arrival at villages and their actions. It culminates with their coming to the outskirts of Menemen to propagate their motivations and goals.

⁵ The other three insurgents, including Derviş Mehmet were killed in shootout.

1.1.1. The Insurgents and Their Activities in Manisa

The leader of the insurgents who sought to prompt a revolt in Menemen was Derviş Mehmet “the Cretan.”⁶ He was born in Manisa and was thirty-three years old at the time of the incident according to official records. His family was originally from Girit.⁷ Though he was a barber by profession, he had been busy with tree trimming and worked as a hoer.⁸ At the times of the Greek invasion between 1919-1922 he was accounted to have taken to the hills and lived in the mountains. With respect to the field research of Eyüp Öz, Giritli Mehmet came down from the mountain to disturb the villagers of Paşa at gunpoint.⁹ The official recordings point out that he joined the Nakşibendi sufi order¹⁰ in 1923 and his sheikh¹¹ was Ahmet Muhtar Efendi.¹² He appeared to be always in search of something.¹³ According to Öz, all the testimony about Giritli agreed on his being a short-tempered person.¹⁴ He was shot dead in the shootout in Menemen.

Sütçü (milkman) Mehmet was sixty-three years old, and the eldest of the company. He was from the Bozalan Village of Menemen and resided in Manisa. He had worked as a laborer and farm hand previously. Later on he became a milkman.

⁶ Aforementioned Mehmet was known as Derviş (Dervish) Mehmet and Giritli Mehmet (Mehmet from Cretan) as well as Mehdi (Mahdi) Mehmet.

⁷ Araştırma Planlama ve Koordinasyon Dairesi Başkanlığı Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Cumhuriyetin 75. Yıldönümünde Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler: 150'likler, Kubilay Olayı, Çarşaf-Peçe-Peştemalle Örtünme Sorunu* (Ankara: Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, 1998), 42 Document No: 13212-5/1.

⁸ According to Eyüp Öz, who studied the Menemen Incident, Giritli Mehmet had worked in various jobs. He had been a warden, an official in the marriage office, a farmer and even a bartender. Eyüp Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek: Menemen Olayı İrtica Mı, Komplo Mu?,” *FSM İlmî Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* 5 (2015): 412. Accounts about the incident are elaborated on in the literature review chapter. Since Öz’s statements are exceptional because he seeks to establish the personal background of the perpetrators, they are discussed when the occasion arises in the thesis.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Öz asserts based on witness accounts that Giritli Mehmet was a Sunni-Bektashi. Again for Öz, Giritli might have been fascinated by the significations of the Twelve Imams in the Bektashi order. That is why, he announced himself as the twelfth imam along with being the Mahdi in Menemen. Ibid., 419.

¹¹ Sheikh means the spiritual head in the religious order.

¹² Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 42.

¹³ Again with regard to Öz’s unverified allegation, Giritli was a good speechmaker and was able to convince people to follow him. Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 413.

¹⁴ Ibid.

He joined the Nakşibendi order in 1925 and his sheikh was Giritli Mehmet. He was captured dead at the time of the incident.¹⁵

Şamdan Mehmet was also killed in the gunfight in Menemen. He was from Manisa, twenty-eight years old and a vine grower. He joined the order in 1927 and his sheikh as well was Giritli Mehmet.¹⁶

Mehmet Emin was twenty-nine years old and from Manisa. He was a vine grower. He joined the Nakşibendi order three months before the Menemen Incident.¹⁷ He was seized wounded after the firefight in Menemen. According to Mehmet Emin's statements in court, Derviş Mehmet hired him as a laborer to work in his vineyard. Later on Giritli associated him to the Nakşibendi order. Derviş Mehmet talked to his followers about the requirements and benefits of becoming a disciple, made them seek spiritual signs in their dreams (*istiare*), and interpreted their dreams in terms of spiritual meaning. Mehmet Emin stated repeatedly in the court that Derviş Mehmet's spiritual explanations fascinated them.¹⁸

Ramazan was another member of the company who ran away on the journey. He was in his twenties at the time. According to his statements in court, he had met Sütçü Mehmet when buying milk from him. He committed himself to the Nakşibendi order five months before the incident. He had not known Derviş Mehmet before joining the order. It was Sütçü Mehmet who introduced Ramazan to Derviş Mehmet. Ramazan, like other detained perpetrators, stated that Derviş Mehmet had many other disciples. Yet, Ramazan did not know any other sheikh in Manisa except Derviş Mehmet. Ramazan also alleged that Sütçü Mehmet remarked about 70,000 angels who were supporting and defending Derviş Mehmet. According to Sütçü Mehmet, it was the reason why Ramazan became a follower of Derviş.¹⁹

¹⁵ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 42.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Yirmi Beşinci İn'ikat T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt: 25, "Menemen Hadisesini İka Ve Teşkilâtı Esasiye Kanununu Cebren Tağyire Teşebbüs Edenlerden 37 Şahsın Ölüm Cezasına Çarptırılması Hakkında 3/564 Numaralı Başvekâlet Tezkeresi ve Adliye Encümeni Mazbatası," January 31, 1931, 9.

¹⁹ In the court, Ramazan alleged that Sütçü Mehmet intimidated him that in case he refused to dedicate himself to Derviş, things would go wrong for him. Ibid., 15. However this statement might be Ramazan's fabrication in order to convince the court that he had been forced to obey. The arrestee made this sort of expressions in the court frequently to please the court members. This issue is discussed in "The Process of the Court" section in detail.

Küçük Hasan, was seventeen years old, and the youngest member of the company. He resided in Manisa. He was a vine grower and single.²⁰ He had no educational background, similar to other followers of Derviş Mehmet. Küçük Hasan joined the Nakşibendi order one month before the Menemen Incident. He, along with Nalıncı Hasan, fled from Menemen during the shootout taking advantage of the ensuing confusion. As Küçük Hasan stated in the court, one day Derviş Mehmet had a talk with Küçük Hasan's father and asked him whether his children went to mosque and prayed. This was the initial point of Küçük Hasan's acquaintance with Derviş Mehmet. Then he asked Küçük Hasan if he knew about Derviş.²¹ Küçük Hasan said that he did. Thereon Derviş Mehmet introduced himself as the expected Mahdi and invited Küçük Hasan to become his disciple. Derviş Mehmet then taught him invocations (*zıkr*) of God.²²

Nalıncı Hasan was twenty years old and from Manisa. He was a clog maker,²³ single, and unschooled. He joined the Nakşibendi order two years before the Menemen Incident. His sheikh was Laz İbrahim from Manisa. According to Nalıncı Hasan, he met Derviş Mehmet at his workplace in Manisa, through the agency of Şamdan Mehmet. He stated not to have been familiar with him for a long period. One day, though the date is not accurate, Şamdan Mehmet and Derviş Mehmet came to his shop and Nalıncı Hasan ordered coffee for them. There, Derviş Mehmet expressed his being "the Mahdi" and his plan to declare himself. Derviş told Nalıncı Hasan his intention to recover the Islamic religion. He spoke of becoming a better Muslim and spiritually getting closer to God by way of citing his name. In addition, Derviş Mehmet stressed the significance of their gatherings in Çırak Mustafa's coffeehouse, where they had performed *zıkr*, and asked Nalıncı Hasan to attend to become a fellow and his disciple. Nalıncı Hasan began to participate in the meetings and perform *zıkr* in the coffeehouse.²⁴

²⁰ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 42.

²¹ Mahdi is a savior who, Muslims believe, will emerge at the end of times. He is deemed to provide justice, maintain order and restore the faith. Ekrem Sarıkçıoğlu, "Mehdi," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, n.d.), 369.

²² "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 13.

²³ His name *Nalıncı* came from his vocation.

²⁴ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 11.

Mehmet Emin, Ramazan, Tatlıcı (confectioner) Hüseyin, Nalıncı Hasan and Küçük Hasan, all disciples of Derviş Mehmet, used to congregate in Çırak (apprentice) Mustafa's coffeehouse in Menemen. They were accustomed to perform collective invocations of God.²⁵ They had religious goals to fulfill, such as reaching a certain number of invocations. For example, as Küçük Hasan recounted in the court, Derviş Mehmet obliged him, during their meetings at Çırak Mustafa's coffeehouse in Manisa, of reciting the holy phrase of *lâilâhe illallah* for 500 times.²⁶ Derviş Mehmet's spiritual assignments of this nature did not invite adverse reaction. All his disciples seemed to comply and carry out their assignments.

However, Derviş Mehmet's religious motivations apparently deviated from those of typical sheikh affiliated with the order. According to Mehmet Emin, Derviş Mehmet used to tell his companions that God appeared to him and commanded that believers should cite him frequently. Together with his revelations, Derviş Mehmet referred to these revelations and advised his companions to cite God as much as they could. In another time, when Derviş asked his followers how many reciting they practiced, they told him "500". Then, he suggested to them that they should increase the number. He told them that the Prophet used to mention God ever so much that by this means he could become God's beloved.²⁷ In obedience to their mentor, they cited one of the most significant divine phrases in Islamic faith, *lâilâhe illallah*²⁸, more than a 1,000 times a day.²⁹

Derviş Mehmet had primarily asked the ones he met whether they prayed and cited God. His overall argument was that the greater the number of times they recited God's name and prayed to him, the closer they would become to God. Derviş prescribed to those who were acquainted with him to step up their efforts and he led them in prayers. He was a guide who directed them to religious reciting and praying, and remained around to check upon them.³⁰ Derviş Mehmet manifested himself as being the Mahdi to some of his followers. He notified others of the imminence of the arrival of the Mahdi. He advised them to keep on reciting God's name in order to witness to the Mahdi's arrival.

²⁵ Ibid., 8–9.

²⁶ Ibid., 13.

²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²⁸ A statement of acknowledging and accentuating the oneness of God.

²⁹ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 11.

³⁰ Ibid., 18.

In the court, Mehmet Emin recalled a conversation between Hafız Ahmet, another person of the Nakşibendi order in the Manisa region, and Derviş Mehmet about the Mahdi in one of their gatherings. The Mahdi was expected to show up at the end of the world (*ahir zaman*) according to their belief. Hafız asked Derviş Mehmet whether the Mahdi would be a human being or emerge in a shape of something else. In his answer, Derviş Mehmet stated that all of the prophets had been human beings, therefore the Mahdi as well would necessarily be a human being. Then Derviş Mehmet told Hafız Ahmet that he was the expected Mahdi. From that moment on, he declared that he was the Mahdi. After this, Hafız Ahmet asked Derviş Mehmet whether he could overcome and cope with being the Mahdi or not. Derviş replied he would get through. Hafız Ahmet kissed Derviş's hand and announced him as a true saint. Hafız Ahmet then summoned the people present in the meeting to firmly believe in Derviş and warned them not to touch him. However, this story stands in the middle of truthfulness and fabrication. Mehmet Emin mentioned that he had heard about this affair both from Derviş and Fırıncı Ahmet (baker), a follower of Derviş. However, there was no other testimony that validated this questionable account.³¹

Somehow the police had learned about the gatherings to recite *zıkr*. Later on, the coffeehouse was closed down. The police might have known about the group and the identity of the participants, who they were, and what they did when they came together in the coffeehouse, including their performance of *zıkr*. Yet, no legal action was initiated against them. After the coffeehouse was closed, Tatlıcı Hüseyin proposed to continue the *zıkr* meetings in his house. That is to say, the group came together in a coffeehouse and then at a private home in Manisa before their departure. They kept on praying in Tatlıcı's house for a while.³² Ramazan asserted that they continually talked about the issues of Mahdism there as well.³³

1.1.2. Departure from Manisa

As Mehmet Emin told in the court, they were performing *zıkr* every afternoon in the house of Tatlıcı Hüseyin until they left. In one of the last days of their gatherings in Tatlıcı Hüseyin's house, Derviş Mehmet brought forward his consideration of

³¹ Ibid., 8. This issue is discussed in chapter three.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Ibid., 15.

the necessity of enhancing their invocations of God. He propounded the idea of a constant fifteen days of seclusion in a cave for better praying. He told his companions that he would be expecting revelation from God in this cave. He recounted them that the Islamic Prophet Muhammed had taken divine inspiration in the same way when he prayed in seclusion in cave. He also referred to Şeyh Esat in İstanbul. By Derviş Mehmet's own evaluation, Şeyh Esat, the mentor and leader of Nakşibendi order, possessed very large power. He held the world in his hand and he could create cataclysms, storms, and was able to run the world upside down. After their staying in the cave, Derviş Mehmet intended to go to the village of Paşa, declare his Mahdism, and invite people to join him.³⁴ He shared his plans with others in Manisa. No dispute occurred over those plans when he mentioned them.

Derviş Mehmet charged Küçük Hasan to go to a certain İsmail, present his compliments and ask for a rifle for himself. Küçük Hasan did as Derviş wished and brought a rifle to him. It was the first gun they acquired. Derviş in addition obtained a knife from Koca Mustafa in Manisa. When they left Manisa to go to the village of Paşa, they had one rifle and one knife as their weapons. They also speculated about assaulting a law enforcement station to obtain guns.³⁵ According to Ramazan, Sütçü Mehmet as well obtained a gun for himself in Manisa.³⁶ The company, composed of seven people, namely Derviş Mehmet, Şamdan Mehmet, Sütçü Mehmet, Küçük Hasan, Nalıncı Hasan, Mehmet Emin, and Ramazan, thus, intended to initiate a religious movement in their own way. To fulfill their goals, some, but not all of them obtained guns and left the city armed.³⁷ Yet, Derviş Mehmet did not mention going to Menemen during any of their meetings in Manisa.

They split into two groups in Manisa before taking the road. The first group consisted of Derviş, Sütçü Mehmet, and Şamdan Mehmet. The other group included Mehmet Emin, Ramazan, Nalıncı Hasan, and Küçük Hasan. The first group was

³⁴ Ibid., 11.

³⁵ Ibid., 13.

³⁶ Ibid., 15.

³⁷ Eyüp Öz asserts that Derviş Mehmet, Sütçü Mehmet and Mehmet Emin divorced their wives before setting off for Menemen. Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 415. Öz's study generally seeks to stay away from prejudiced arguments. However, as it is the case here, he gives unverifiable information. No other account mentions that these people divorced their wives before their departure. This information appears to be fabricated as evidence of Derviş Mehmet and his followers' commitment to their goals. Such problems of our sources are discussed in the literature review chapter. We refer to this particular rumor here because of its relevance.

headed for the village of Paşa where they waited for the second group to join them subsequently. They intended to go to the village of Bozalan after Paşa. According to the statements of the three perpetrators who were detained alive, their journey would continue after these two initial stops. They planned to go to many villages, towns, and cities to summon people to join them to uphold the religion. Derviş spoke about going to Arabia and even to China. He would unite with Jesus (upon Jesus' second coming) and then head for European countries to invite them to Islam.

1.1.3. The Group in Paşa

The groups arrived at the village of Paşa separately and united at the house of Derviş Mehmet's mother-in-law Rukiye and brother-in-law Ahmet, a post officer. Ahmet hosted them for three to four days and met their needs. There, Derviş obtained another weapon for himself and one for Şamdan Mehmet.³⁸

In the village of Paşa, they stayed for four days and kept on invoking God's names and smoking hashish. Initially they told the villagers that they were in the village for hunting. Yet later on, Derviş Mehmet declared his Mahdism to the villagers. He had a dog with himself called Kıtmir, named after the dog of the *ashab-ı kehf*, known as the companions of cave and seven sleepers. Derviş instantiated the dog to townspeople as his sign of Mahdism.³⁹ He told them to obey him and stated that every one of villagers was obliged to do so.⁴⁰ Most likely due to the absence of an evidence to verify his Mahdism, he pointed out his dog to the villagers.

As mentioned by perpetrators, some of the inhabitants of Paşa believed in Derviş while some others did not. Still, no one reported the unusual assertions of the company to officials. The reason of their silence was most likely kinship. As re-

³⁸ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 9.

³⁹ An article published in *Cumhuriyet* after the event claimed that Derviş Mehmet and his fellows adopted second names for themselves after seven sleepers. They called themselves Mernuş, Etabiyoş, Kefeş, Sazenuş, Debernuş etc. *Cumhuriyet*, January 17, 1931. Indeed, according to one version of the legend, seven sleepers would join the Mahdi. However, this matter was not mentioned in the court process nor touched upon in the official reports. The perpetrators did not mention that they adopted the identity of the *ashab-ı kehf* in the trials. Only the newspapers alleged this point. As it will be discussed in the relevant section, much misinformation was fabricated after the event, especially by the newspapers. Umut Azak, another scholar who wrote about the Menemen Incident in detail, took this situation seriously and stated it in her study. Azak remarks that according to the story, Eshab-ı Kehf, the seven sleepers, were to be the helpers of the Mahdi. For Azak, even the number of Derviş Mehmet's own group, seven, was not accidental, "showing that he wanted to enact the Koranic story of Eshab-ı Kehf with his disciples". Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, 26.

⁴⁰ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

marked, Derviş Mehmet's mother-in-law and brother-in-law resided in Paşa. As villagers stated in the court, Derviş Mehmet, used to come to the village previously along with some others as well. That is to say, villagers were familiar with, at least, Derviş. If Öz's statements are true, the villagers knew of Derviş from his times of banditry as well. Since Derviş could arrive at Paşa armed with his disciples and manifest his Mahdism comfortably, there seems to have been no hostility between him and the villagers. The population of the village at the time is not clear. Neither is proportion of the ones who believed in Derviş is known. Still, no matter how sincerely some of the villagers believed in him, not a single one of them joined the company and dedicated himself to Derviş's purposes. Moreover, as stated by perpetrators in the court, Derviş's mother-in-law warned and advised him not to go in pursuit of his intentions during their stay and when they left the village. Derviş did not heed the advice.

Derviş and his followers left the village of Paşa for the village of Bozalan. They arrived in a district named Sünbüller after an eleven-hour walk at night. They sat in a pinetum beside running water. Ramazan, a member of the group, left to relieve himself. However, he did not return. Sütçü Mehmet went to look for him but could not find him. Ramazan had run away from the group. According to the statements of three perpetrators in the court, Derviş Mehmet began to keep a close watch on his followers in the aftermath of Ramazan's escape. He intimidated and threatened to shoot them in case any one else would tend to run away. In Sünbüller, Derviş spent time interpreting his companions' dreams, and they carried on smoking hashish.⁴¹

1.1.4. In the Village of Bozalan

When they approached Bozalan, they spent the night on a hill close to the village. In the morning, Sütçü Mehmet went to the village and returned to the company with his younger brother Hacıismailoğlu Hüseyin, an inhabitant of Bozalan. They were taken to the village and initially hosted by Hacıismail.⁴² Sütçü Mehmet's older

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Another misinformation about the motions of the company before the Menemen Incident is that they visited nearly a dozen villages before arriving at Bozalan. (See Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 415.) Neither the statements of the defendants nor the official records mention that insurgents had been to any villages other than Paşa and Bozalan. They

brother, Hacıismail's son, whose name was also Hüseyin, put them into a house where they continued to chant God's names for a week. Initially, Derviş told the villagers that they were there for hunting.⁴³ Yet, later on he declared his Mahdism and, according to Küçük Hasan, some of the villagers blessed him and rendered their thanks to God, saying *elhamdülillah* for letting them witness the arrival of the Mahdi and see his face. Derviş explained his duty to summon people to the religion and told villagers to join him. Moreover he stressed that as soon as he succeeded in his goal, he would distribute official duties (*memuriyet*) to them.⁴⁴

When they were in the house supplied for them in Bozalan, Derviş Mehmet assigned two of the villagers, who were relatives of Sütçü Mehmet, to go to Manisa. Those two villagers were to pretend that they were to buy things, but in reality they would check out whether the government officials realized the absence of the members of his company. The two villagers went to Manisa and learned from Sütçü Mehmet's wife that their absence was noticed and the police officials were trying to get additional information about them. However, this does not mean that a warrant was issued for their apprehension or any other legal action was taken by the law enforcement agencies.⁴⁵ When he got the news that the police were aware of their absence, Derviş Mehmet became concerned. On the excuse that they could not concentrate on reciting God comfortably in the village, he asked Sütçü Mehmet to construct a cottage for them on the hill on the outskirts of the village. Sütçü Mehmet assigned this task to his brother-in-law Mustafa.

might have passed by some villages, but evidently they entered only the aforementioned two villages.

⁴³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵ Another allegation about the company's activities, again mentioned by Öz, is that the rumors about Giritli Mehmet's departure from Manisa spread to rural regions. Whispers of an imminent rebellion reached even Menemen. Furthermore, the issue was discussed in the Menemen office of the Türk Ocakları, which was an official organization that aimed to propagate the nationalist ideals of the republic. Öz asserts that Kubilay as well was presumably involved in that discussion. In this presumed meeting, participants talked about their loyalty to Atatürk and the virtues of the republic. (See Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 418.) There is no source to verify this information. There were meetings held in the Menemen Türk Ocağı, yet no rumors about the company spread in the neighboring regions. Öz's statements imply that the law enforcement agencies became alarmed and began to follow the company around. However, the company's journey was not so serious as to cause such an alarm. Their absence was noticed in Manisa since Küçük Hasan's father had reported the departure of his son with others to the police station. There was neither a legal action nor an emergency measure taken upon this news.

Mustafa built the requested cottage, and the group proceeded to perform their chants there. According to Nalıncı Hasan, they were praying day and night. At the recommendation of Derviş, they used to recite the phrase of *lâilâhe illallah* 200,000 times at night. They also kept on smoking hashish in the cottage. Derviş asserted that the Prophet Muhammed as well had smoked hashish and it was after doing so that he experienced the ascension (*miraç*) to the level of God and had been able to speak to God.⁴⁶ Mehmet Emin further claimed that Derviş told them that God appeared to him on several occasions.⁴⁷ They stayed in the cottage for fifteen days. During their lodging, villagers from Bozalan, named Hasan and Hacıismail, brought food to the group.⁴⁸

According to the statements of the insurgents in the court, Derviş Mehmet frequently exemplified the circumstances of the Prophet's period while defining his intentions to redeem the religion and re-establish the former religious institutions. He remarked how and in what ways the Prophet handled the issues that he faced in his time. Derviş took advantage of the anecdotes about the methods the Prophet used to convince his followers and to increase their commitment to the way they were on. Derviş presented his plans by drawing analogies with the Prophet's. He used the presumed correspondence of his approach to the Prophet's to consequently enhance his deeds and aims, and to increase the legitimacy of his position in general in the eyes of his disciples.⁴⁹ He told them that the center of the Nakşibendi order was the Prophet himself.

Mehmet Emin accounted that in their last days in the cottage, Derviş asked Küçük Hasan about who knew the town of Menemen best. Küçük Hasan pointed Nalıncı Hasan, since Nalıncı had frequently been visiting Menemen bazaars for merchandise. Derviş asked Nalıncı about the number of gendarmes in Menemen. Nalıncı said gendarmes were small in number there. Derviş then, mentioned of going to Menemen to listen to the teachings of Saffet Hoca, a person he knew. Planning to

⁴⁶ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

⁴⁷ According to the newspapers Derviş Mehmet told his disciples in the cottage that the time had come and he had reached the level of the Prophet. *Cumhuriyet*, December 27, 1930. No other source verifies this information. Kemal Üstün, another author who wrote about the event, took this datum for granted and stated it in his book along with other ungrounded information. Kemal Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1978), 66.

⁴⁸ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

stay at Saffet Hoca's house, he intended to send telegrams to Şeyh Esat and other sheiks to bring them together in an effort to hold down the government,⁵⁰ re-establish the dervish lodges and suspend the government for two months. On this journey to redeem the Islamic order, Derviş's aim was to arrive at İstanbul, proclaim the caliphate and to appoint sheikhs to each city of the country, such as Şeyh Saffet to Menemen.⁵¹ All three of the perpetrators accounted in the police station as well as in the court that these were Derviş's goals. Newspapers, official accounts and subsequent writers presented these plans as if they were very realistic. Six people took the road from Manisa, and finally headed for entering Menemen with only three of them armed. On the eve of their entrance to Menemen, they still upheld their aims, although these goals were impossible to actualize under the aforementioned circumstances. The only reasonable explanation of how on earth they could suppose to fulfill those goals is that they were blunted by the hashish they had been smoking.

When they left the cottage in the outskirts of the village of Bozalan and took the round to Menemen on the night of December 22, villagers Abdülkerim and Hacıismailoğlu Hüseyin accompanied them until the Gediz River. Abdülkerim told Derviş not to forget about him and wished success and Godspeed for their purposes. Abdülkerim also told that they would follow him. They were to observe Menemen from Bozalan and if they heard a gunfire burst, they would bear their arms and arrive at Menemen.⁵² Lastly, he gave them cigarettes and sent them off.⁵³ It is notable that not a single villager of Bozalan participated in the company though they hosted them. The villagers of neither Paşa nor Bozalan reported anything about Derviş Mehmet, his armed company and their purposes to the gendarme. The reasons why

⁵⁰ These statements indicate that Şeyh Esat, the leader of the Nakşibendi order of the era, did not know about the so-called mission of the company. As it will be discussed in subsequent sections, Mehmet Emin, along with other perpetrators, sought to leave the impression that their actions were planned within the knowledge of the order. For them, the leader of the order, notably Şeyh Esat, not only knew about the upcoming rebellion, but also motivated it. However, as it will be designated in the relevant section, there is no proof of a connection between Derviş Mehmet's company and Şeyh Esat. Here Nalıncı Hasan seems to be stating unwittingly that Esat did not know about their actions. Otherwise, why should Derviş plan to send telegrams to Şeyh Esat to inform him?

⁵¹ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

⁵² When they departed from Bozalan, Derviş Mehmet gave a gun to Küçük Hasan as well. Yet, Küçük Hasan claimed in the court not to have used it. T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25, 14. In that case, almost every one of them had a gun when they were about to enter Menemen.

⁵³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

they were taken for granted in Paşa is also pertinent for their hosting in Bozalan. There were relatives of the members of the company living in Bozalan as there were in Paşa. Besides, the extent to which the inhabitants of Bozalan had faith in Derviş to be the Mahdi is unknown. Still, the case that no one joined the group indicates that the villagers refrained from stepping into armed action against the government.

The company arrived at the Gediz River where they needed to get across. The boatman was asleep and they awakened him. Derviş Mehmet named himself as the Mahdi even to the boatman and told that they were going to summon people to the religion under their banner. Derviş said that they had no money, and asked the boatman to help them to cross the river through giving a verbal guarantee that they would please him afterwards via appointing him to a government office.⁵⁴ Early in the morning, they sat in an olive grove near Menemen. There, they smoked hashish again and read the *ayetel-kursi*, a specifically significant verse of the holy Quran, to ask help from God. Before their departure, Derviş gave his company instructions of how they would enter the town.⁵⁵

1.3. Events in Menemen

This section gives details about the events that happened in Menemen on 23 December 1930. The development of these events is constituted here mainly in reference to official records. Statements of the perpetrators made in the court and official reports prepared after the events are taken into account as the primary sources to reconstruct the actions. There is hardly any contradiction between the statements of the company members and official reports. However, newspapers of the era published much misleading information about the movement in Menemen as well as about the background of the event. Many of those distortions are discussed in relevant parts of this thesis. Still, some of them are specified in this part as well. The purpose here is to determine what exactly happened so as to provide the basis of subsequent evaluations.

1.3.1. Entrance to Menemen and Initial Activities

Menemen is a town, located thirty-three kilometers northwest of İzmir, the third big metropolis of Turkey. According to the population census results of 1927,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10.

Menemen's population, including affiliated villages, was 28,000.⁵⁶ According to the results of the 1935 census, 13,000 people lived in the town itself.⁵⁷ That is to say, when the Menemen Incident occurred, there were approximately 12,000 habitants living in Menemen.

The group came to an olive grove near Menemen in hunter clothes before dawn on 23 December, 1930.⁵⁸ After smoking hashish one last time and reading Quranic verses, they took action. They entered the Menemen town center chanting the holy words *lâilâhe illallah* (there is no god except Allah) and *Allahuekber* (God is supreme). They initially went to the mosque named Müftü. A few people were in the mosque to perform their morning prayers.⁵⁹ In the mosque Derviş Mehmet introduced himself as the Mahdi. When he did so, some of them cited the words of testimony (*kelime-i şehadet*), a special religious phrase that implied they approved and believed in him.⁶⁰ Thereon, Nalıncı Hasan took a green banner on which Islamic holy phrases were written and left the mosque with a couple of men.⁶¹ The number of the prayers in the Müftü Mosque is unknown. Still, there were not many people inside and not all of them followed Derviş. They came to the town square after leaving the mosque. There, they performed *zikr* for a while. Then, Derviş wished to go around the neighborhoods in the town. He asked one of inhabitants⁶² to guide them.⁶³ They walked in the quarters of the town while chanting God's names and prayers and shouting Islamic slogans loudly with the banner in their hand. Derviş began to announce that a caliphate army of 70,000 soldiers was waiting outside of Menemen for his sign to intervene. The ones who were not willing to join him would be slaugh-

⁵⁶ "T.C. İzmir Vilayeti 1930 Senesi Yıllık İstatistiği," in *T.C. İzmir Vilayeti İstatistik Yıllığı* (Başbakanlık İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, 1930), 12.

⁵⁷ Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, *Genel Nüfus Sayımı 1935* (Devlet Basımevi, 1936), 333–4.

⁵⁸ Hikmet Çetinkaya made interviews with two residents of Menemen who witnessed the incident. Their names were Osman Yurtsever (Singer Osman) and Ragıp Dere. Osman Yurtsever stressed that some of the townspeople initially took the insurgents for hunters because they wore hunting clothes. Hikmet Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1997), 19.

⁵⁹ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶² The names of the people who participated in the actions of the company are indicated not here but in the section on court sessions later in the thesis. The point here is that all of the townspeople who were explicitly or implicitly related with the events in Menemen were arrested and taken to court.

⁶³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 14.

tered.⁶⁴ He claimed that they had no other purpose except to redeem and replenish the religion of Islam in Menemen. According to Nalıncı Hasan, while they walked through the districts, some of the townspeople believed in their claims, joined their crowd and tagged along with the company, but many others did not. Derviş indicated the dog by his side as the evidence of his Mahdism to townspeople as well.⁶⁵

Before coming to Menemen, Derviş Mehmet mentioned Saffet Hoca, who lived in Menemen. According to the Derviş, they would receive help from Saffet and reside in his house when they took control of the town. According to Küçük Hasan, Derviş Mehmet encountered Şeyh Saffet during their tour of the streets.⁶⁶ When Saffet saw Derviş, he began to walk to his home in discontent. Derviş followed him to his home and called his men. He made them stand in line and perform a formal bowing for Saffet while he was getting into his home.⁶⁷ However, Saffet did not pay attention to them and went inside his home and closed the windows.⁶⁸

After the wander in the streets, they came back to the municipal square at 07:40. They planted the banner they carried to the ground with the help of an inhabitant of the town who did the digging.⁶⁹ According to Nalıncı Hasan, when they came to the town square, there were approximately a hundred people in their group, participating in the *zikr* led by Derviş Mehmet. There were also a hundred more who were waiting around and observing the events.⁷⁰

Derviş repeated in the town square as well that there was an army of 70,000 caliphate soldiers nearby.⁷¹ He kept intimidating that whosoever did not get under the banner and join them would be beheaded by midday.⁷² The company was constantly chanting *Allahuekber* in the square under the banner.⁷³ Derviş Mehmet pro-

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁷ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 45.

⁶⁸ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 14.

⁶⁹ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 45.

⁷⁰ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 12. The point that there were 200 people in the square in total is compatible with official reports: “Büyük Erkânı Harbiye Riyasetinin 26/12/930 Tarihli ve 6747 nolu Tezkeresi Sureti,” Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 57.

⁷¹ This matter was voiced in different terms. For instance, Küçük Hasan stated the army consisted of 70,000 saints (*evliya*). Some newspapers alleged that Derviş and his followers declared they had conquered İzmir and İstanbul. (See *Yeni Asır*, December 24, 1930.)

⁷² “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 15.

⁷³ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 19.

claimed that wearing hats was a sin. Both the religion and the state would be redeemed eventually.⁷⁴ They further asserted to have cut the telegraph lines so they hindered the communication of the town with the outside.⁷⁵

1.3.2. Attitude of the Officials During the Events

The first official who came to interfere with the demonstrators was a certain gendarme clerk named Ali Efendi. It was an attorney clerk named Mehmet Tevfik Efendi who informed Ali Efendi of the situation. When he learned what was happening, Ali Efendi took four armed gendarme privates with him and went to the square. Ali Efendi came and asked Derviş Mehmet what he wanted. Derviş stressed that he was the expected Mahdi and said they were to summon the townspeople to return to Islam and to invite them to join the order. Ali Efendi refused his claims, urged him to call off the meeting and warned the crowd to scatter. Yet, Derviş repeated his statement that he was the Twelfth *Imam* and 70,000 soldiers surrounded the town. He ignored the gendarme and proceeded with *zikir*.⁷⁶ Neither the crowd nor the company intended to disperse. In the face of this antagonistic situation,⁷⁷ Ali Efendi went to the house of the commander of gendarmes, along with the four soldiers accompanying him. The Commander Captain Fahri Bey came directly to the square with Ali Efendi.⁷⁸ Derviş repeated his assertions and purposes to him as well. Fahri Bey mentioned they, too, were Muslims and asked the group to disperse. Derviş again rejected the warning. As accounted in the official reports, Captain Fahri Bey plainly invited the crowd composed of inhabitants of Menemen to disperse. However, they did not budge and remained in the square with and around Derviş.⁷⁹ As soon as Fahri Bey realized his commands did not make any effect, he left the crowd and got inside the state house in the square along with Ali Efendi and four armed gendarme pri-

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The official reports preserved in the ATASE Archives of the General Staff include the testimonial statements of Nail Bey, a post office clerk in Menemen at the time. Nail Bey explains that as soon as he heard the allegation that they had cut the lines, he checked them. He found that the wires were not cut and worked properly. Nail Bey further informed the İzmir Governorate of the situation. (See “Menemen Telgraf Memuru Nail Bey’in Olaya İlişkin Tanıklık İfadesi,” *Genelkurmay Başkanlığı ATASE Arşivi*, http://www.tsk.tr/Content/img/tarihten_kesitler/menemen6.jpg)

⁷⁶ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 11.

⁷⁷ Küçük Hasan moreover stated in the court that Derviş Mehmet pulled a gun on the gendarmes. Ibid., 15. However, official recordings do not refer to such an incident.

⁷⁸ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 46.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

vates. Thereafter Fahri Bey did not leave the government office until the end of the events.⁸⁰ When the captain was leaving the square after the Derviş's disregard of his warnings, a part of the crowd applauded,⁸¹ acclaiming his success in repulsing the law enforcement officers.⁸² This applause uplifted and encouraged Derviş.⁸³

As indicated above, the state officers heard about the happenings in the town center and began to step into action. The situation was serious. Plain intervention without using active force would not suffice to disperse the company. There was a series of phone calls made by state officers to each other to pave the way for effectively dealing with the situation. However, according to official reports that assessed the officers' acts, the process of conveying the armed forces to the scene of incidents was not conducted efficiently. That inadequacy in coordination of the state offices culminated in the brutal murder of a reserve officer.

After getting inside the state office, Fahri Bey phoned the Third Regimental Command Headquarters in Menemen and recounted the situation to the officer on duty and the deputy commander Nedim Bey. He requested from the command headquarters a battalion to be deployed to the government square. He sought to reach the district governor by phone but could not. Moreover, Fahri Bey phoned the governor's office in İzmir to inform them of the situation in Menemen. He ordered the four gendarme privates to defend the building in the case of an offensive action until backup arrived.⁸⁴ The captain also sent the gendarme clerk Ali Efendi to meet and

⁸⁰ "Büyük Erkânı Harbiye Riyasetinin 26/12/930 Tarihli ve 6747 nolu Tezkeresi Sureti" *ibid.*, 57.

⁸¹ *ATASE Arşivi*, "Nail Bey'in Olaya İlişkin Tanıklık İfadesi."

⁸² According to other assertions, Derviş stated to the mass in the square after Fahri Bey's departure that the state forces actually supported them. Bahriye Acar, "İzmir Basımında Menemen Olayı," *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Çağdaş Türkiye Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8 (1998): 61; Another allegation about the events in the square is that people got fired up due to Derviş's apparent firmness in the face of the gendarme's attempts to scatter them. Therefore they began to shout; "No more government." (*Artık hükümet yok.*) Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 418. Although the state administration responded harshly to the townspeople's approving attitude, there is no record indicating that the crowd shouted the aforesaid slogan attributed to it.

⁸³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 11.

⁸⁴ He is reported to have placed two of the gendarmes to window ledge so they could commence fire in case of need. Yet, there was no gunshot from the state building when Kubilay was shot or Derviş Mehmet beheaded him twenty minutes later. This situation invites the question whether the governmental square was within the state building's range of view or not. We may assume that if soldiers had seen Kubilay's being shot, they would have opened fire. It makes sense that they did not see what was happening in the square. Thus, their pur-

accompany the battalion that would be sent from the regiment headquarters.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, an unknown inhabitant of Menemen saw the goings-on in the square and went to regimental headquarters to inform them. Before entering the headquarters, he came across the reserve officer Kubilay Bey, who was preparing his detachment for morning drills, and conveyed to him what he observed. According to the records, that inhabitant went into the headquarters and recounted the situation there as well. Meanwhile, Captain Fahri Bey also required a battalion from the regiment. Deputy Commander Nedim Bey dispatched an order to Kubilay to delay his departure. However, this order could not be conveyed to Kubilay since he had hit the road as soon as he learned the situation from the aforementioned inhabitant.⁸⁶

Ten minutes after the entrance of Fahri Bey into the building, another soldier, the mess officer Mehmet Ali Bey, on duty of the Fourth Regiment, came to the square and encountered the movements. Derviş Mehmet saw Mehmet Ali Efendi, and called him to talk.⁸⁷ He loudly preached him about *tevhid*, the oneness of God, the sharia, and finding the rightful path. As soon as Mehmet Ali realized the seriousness of the circumstances, he too called for a battalion from the deputy commander Nedim Efendi. Nedim Efendi mentioned the request made by Captain Fahri Bey and that a battalion was already on its way to the square. Nedim Efendi also told Mehmet Ali Bey to contact the forthcoming squad. Mehmet Ali Efendi waited for the arrival of the unit for a while and dispatched his orderly to bring his gun from his home. However, without waiting for his gun, he went on to enter the government office. In the building Captain Fahri Bey gave him a rifle and told him to stay there with him.⁸⁸

As indicated above, Fahri Bey had ordered the gendarme clerk Ali Efendi to meet the division sent from the headquarters. Kubilay and his detachment however, took a shortcut to arrive at the square. Therefore Kubilay missed Ali Efendi and confronted the demonstrators without knowing about the state of the other law enforcement units.⁸⁹

pose to stand by the windows was to resist in case the crowd came close and intended to enter the building.

⁸⁵ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 46–7.

⁸⁶ “Erkânı harbiye riyasetinin 26/12/930 tarihli ve 6747 nolu tezkeresi sureti” *ibid.*, 58.

⁸⁷ Summoning an officer to talk to seems to derive from the exaltation Derviş felt after the encouraging applause of the crowd for his deeds.

⁸⁸ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 58.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

When Fehmi Efendi phoned the district governor, he could not reach him due to a connection problem. He then called the post office and talked to the postmaster to deliver the information. It was the Postmaster of Menemen Hüseyn Sabri Efendi who informed the district governor and the regiment commander of the developments. As soon as he witnessed the group performing *zikir* in the square, he decided to let the state executives know. Sabri Efendi initially went to the home of the district governor. Thereon they found the regiment commander. Afterwards, the district governor and the regiment commander came to the regiment headquarters together. They ordered three more battalions to get prepared and to bring the incident under control.

The report prepared by an inspector of General Staff Headquarters after the incident refers to and criticizes the lack of healthy communication between state officers. The report remarks that the captain neither mentioned the extent of the event nor expressed the reason why they demanded the division. Due to the poor information Fahri Bey provided, the first group was sent to the scene of the incident unarmed.⁹⁰ However, this seems to be untrue. As accounted in the archival documents of the police and indicated above, Fehmi Bey informed the regimental commanders about the situation.⁹¹ Although assistant regiment officer Nedim Bey gave the instruction for Kubilay to stand by, the order was not conveyed to Kubilay. Hereon, there seems to have been two possibilities to explain why Kubilay did not order his detachment to put bullets into their rifles. First, the information Kubilay received from the inhabitant may not have made him realize fully the severity of the situation. The second possibility is that Kubilay simply forgot to order his men to put bullets into their rifles.

1.3.3. Mustafa Fehmi Kubilay

Before explaining the following events, providing information about Kubilay's character will help to understand why his murder made such a tremendous impact. State administrators, newspapers, and writings in the aftermath of his murder, have condemned the incidence ever since. Though neglected during some periods of republican history, there have been regular ceremonies conducted to commemorate Kubilay and the two wardens, as martyrs of the Republic up to the present.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 46–7.

Kubilay⁹² was a reserve officer who sought to intervene in Derviş Mehmet's actions and was brutally murdered by him in Menemen. He was twenty-four years old when he was murdered. His real name was Mustafa Fehmi. He took the name "Kubilay" at Teacher's Training School in İzmir during his studentship. Taking the name of famous persons or the places they had lived in Turkish history was a current trend in those years. Under the influence of this tendency, Mustafa Fehmi got the name "Kubilay".⁹³ After his graduation, he began to work as a teacher in Aydın. There he met Fatma Vedide,⁹⁴ who was a teacher as well and they got married. On May 10, 1929 their son Vedat was born. However, later on they divorced due to irreconcilable differences.⁹⁵ Meantime, Mustafa Fehmi was at Menemen doing his military service as reserve officer at the 43rd Infantry Regiment.

Fatma Vedide's interview with Hikmet Çetinkaya, a Kemalist journalist writing for the *Cumhuriyet*, includes information about Mustafa Fehmi's personality. Vedide mentioned that they got married in Aydın and this was the first civil marriage, namely the first matrimony that took place according to the new code of civil law. Vedide placed importance on this matter.⁹⁶ Vedide and Kubilay used to talk about national matters a lot. For Vedide, they both loved their country very much and had strong nationalist feelings. They also adhered to "The Great Redeemer" Atatürk's revolutions such as "rescuing the woman from *çarşaf*, adoption of the new alphabet, closure of the *madrasas* and dervish lodges". For Vedide, they both were not devoutly religious or conservative. Atatürk had abolished the order of sharia and they were both teachers of the era and dedicated to Atatürk's principles.⁹⁷ For Vedide, Kubilay neither was an alcoholic nor a gambler. He did not go to coffeehouses. He only used to do sports and teach his students about Atatürk's reforms.⁹⁸

⁹² The name "Kubilay" was written differently in various newspapers of the era as well as in witness statements such as Kublay, Koplay, and Kuplay.

⁹³ Kubilai Khan was one of the grandsons of Cengiz and the fifth emperor of the Mongol Empire. He reigned in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

⁹⁴ Fatma Vedide was at the age of 76 when she gave the interview. Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 7.

⁹⁵ Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 417. Their divorce has been mentioned very rarely both right after the event and in the related literature. For the most part of the related writings, Kubilay has been a heroic figure. Therefore not a single piece of information that may overshadow this image has been given place in the writings on Kubilay.

⁹⁶ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 11.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Vedide depicts Kubilay as a hot tempered and impulsive person.⁹⁹ He used to play volleyball with his students at break times. He was ambitious to win and when he lost the game, he became upset. Vedide told that once when Mustafa Fehmi's team lost the game, he yelled and created havoc so much so that nobody could come near him due to his temper.¹⁰⁰ Vedide added that he was a persistent person who defended his opinions to the end, yet he did not act hostilely. He entered into tough discussions but did not pick a fight. Mustafa Fehmi was a member of the Turkish Hearths and participated in its meetings held in the Menemen office.

One of his friends from the Turkish Hearths and the football team was Bedri Onat. Çetinkaya's book includes an interview with him as well. Onat also lived through the Menemen Incident and served as the city manager of Menemen town ten years. According to Onat as well, Mustafa Fehmi was quick-tempered and intensive in football matches.¹⁰¹ Onat remarked about the discussions they held in the Turkish Hearths about various matters. Mustafa Fehmi became excited and insisted on his ideas. However he calmed down as soon as the discussion was over.¹⁰² Neither Onat nor Vedide witnessed him fighting with someone. Onat stressed that Kubilay was an affectionate and courageous person.¹⁰³ Kemal Üstün, who also wrote about the Menemen Incident, states that he knew Mustafa Fehmi. Üstün also refers to Mustafa Fehmi's hotheadedness nervous treatment.¹⁰⁴

Mustafa Fehmi's temperament helps to understand his actions in Menemen. Mustafa Fehmi buttonholed Derviş Mehmet in the government square and was shot due to this of his action. Official pronouncements, newspapers reports, and other writings harshly condemned his murder. Along his being a reserve officer on duty to maintain order, his personality traits contributed to the intensity of the reactions to his murder. He was a successful student at school.¹⁰⁵ After his graduation, he began to serve as a teacher of the republic. He was dedicated to his job. He had taken the name of a legendary emperor, and became a member Turkish Hearths regularly attending to its meetings. In short, he was a prototype of Republican ideals. The brutal

⁹⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰² Ibid., 20.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰⁴ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 14.

murder of such an iconic citizen in the hands of “Islamist reactionaries” caused great resentment and indignation in the official circles and others who shared republican ideals.

1.3.4. Kubilay Rushing to the Scene

Kubilay and his unit arrived at the town square at 08:30. He ordered his soldiers to fix bayonets to their rifles and left them thirty to forty meters away from the crowd.¹⁰⁶ He went to face Derviş Mehmet and his cohort alone. Derviş repeated his claims to Kubilay as well. When Kubilay warned the group to disperse, in the way the former officers did, Derviş ignored him too, and rejected Kubilay’s warnings. There, due to his hot-tempered characteristic, Kubilay suddenly buttonholed¹⁰⁷ Derviş and yelled at him to do as he said. Then Derviş pushed back Kubilay. At that point, Derviş¹⁰⁸ shot Kubilay in the chest.¹⁰⁹ Having been heavily wounded, Kubilay fell down there.

After the gun shot, Kubilay’s platoon fled. They neither commenced fire¹¹⁰ nor made any kind of intervention.¹¹¹ Therefore, they had no information about what happened to their commander afterwards. At that point, a part of the crowd dispersed

¹⁰⁶ The number of soldiers in Kubilay’s unit is unknown. It is recorded that the sergeants and corporals in his detachment were put on trial afterwards. However, how many of them were there and waiting behind is unclear.

¹⁰⁷ It was asserted in various writings, including the statement of a witness, Mustafa Şengönül, that Kubilay slapped one of the insurgents in the face. (See Can Dündar, *Gölgelikler*, 1st ed. (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 1995), 64.) But it is not true. The perpetrators unanimously mentioned that Kubilay buttonholed Derviş.

¹⁰⁸ There are different accounts about who shot Kubilay as well. In their court statements, perpetrators Küçük Hasan and Nalıncı Hasan stressed that it was Derviş himself who shot Kubilay. “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 15. However, the General Staff’s report mentions that it was one of Derviş’s followers who shot Kubilay. *ATASE Arşivi*, “Nail Bey’in Olaya İlişkin Tanıklık İfadesi.”

¹⁰⁹ There are rumors about this point as well. For instance, Sami Özyılmaz, one of the witnesses of the incident who was a child at the time and was interviewed by Can Dündar, described Kubilay having been shot in the foot. Can Dündar, “Menemen’in Son Tanıkları Anlatıyor” (www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/12/25/yazar/dundar.html) But the autopsy report leaves little doubt that he was shot in the chest. The bullet busted Kubilay’s rib cage bones and his lung. “Otopsi Raporu” Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 67.

¹¹⁰ It was alleged that soldiers fired blank shots to no effect. However, there was not any sort of bullets in their rifles, including blank cartridge. *ATASE Arşivi*, “Nail Bey’in Olaya İlişkin İfadesi.”

¹¹¹ “Büyük Erkânı harbiye riyasetinin 26/12/930 tarihli ve 6747 nolu tezkeresi sureti,” Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 57. Witnesses also remarked that the soldiers fled. Dündar, “Menemen’in Son Tanıkları Anlatıyor.” Specifically non-reaction of the soldiers was harshly criticized in the official reports prepared in the aftermath of the incident.

as well. Some of them, including the gendarme clerk Ali Efendi, entered the post office. Post officer Nail Bey mentioned that it was illegal for people to enter the post office and asked them to leave. Ali Efendi requested to use the back window to exit. They broke the back window and Ali Efendi went away. Nail Efendi advised him to get a gun and return to the scene. Ali Efendi did not do so.¹¹²

After getting shot, Kubilay was on the ground for fifteen seconds.¹¹³ Then he stood up and could walk to the courtyard of Gazez Mosque, which was twenty to thirty meters away.¹¹⁴ However, under the influence of the heavy wound, he fell on the ground in the courtyard.¹¹⁵ Kubilay waited there for a while since insurgents did not intend to chase him initially. However, after fifteen to twenty minutes, one of the insurgents learned about Kubilay's condition, and told it his friends. Derviş and Şamdan Mehmet went to the courtyard and held Kubilay.¹¹⁶ There, Derviş Mehmet cut Fehmi's head off with a knife by Şamdan Mehmet's help.¹¹⁷ Later on, Derviş brought Kubilay's head to the square and tried to attach it to the tip of their ban-

¹¹² *ATASE Arşivi*, "Nail Bey'in Olaya İlişkin Tanıklık İfadesi."

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ According to an eyewitness, Sami Özyılmaz, and some other narrations, Kubilay sought to enter the state building at first. The locked door obliged him to walk to the mosque. Özyılmaz comments that in case Kubilay had entered the government office, he would not have been beheaded. (See Dündar, "Menemen'in Son Tanıkları Anlatıyor.") But these statements do not make sense. The captain of gendarmes, the regiment officer Mehmet Ali and four gendarme privates were in the building. They would certainly have intervened in the situation and taken Kubilay inside. Such unreasonable explanations paved the way for conspiracy accounts about the event, which claim that the law enforcement officers deliberately abandoned Kubilay to his fate and watched him murdered from the windows.

¹¹⁵ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 45.

¹¹⁶ The newspapers of the time, together with many others later, gave wrong information about this point as well. It was asserted that having been wounded, Kubilay sought to escape from the hands of insurgents, but could not. Meanwhile, there were people around watching the scene and applauding Derviş and they even cried "*Allah Allah.*" *Vakit*, January 16, 1931; *Milliyet*, January 16, 1931. This is a faulty assertion, putting the townspeople under severe suspicion. The number of people in the square at the time or the number of those who followed Derviş to the courtyard is unknown. As discussed later in the relevant section, the Chief Judge of the martial court persistently clamped down on people charged with applauding in the square, but there was no one accused of acclaiming Kubilay's beheading.

¹¹⁷ *ATASE Arşivi*, "Nail Bey'in Olaya İlişkin Tanıklık İfadesi." There was some misinformation about Derviş's knife as well. As discussed in the literature review section, some writers claim that the knife was blunt and therefore the process of beheading took a while, implying the depth of the hatred of the reactionists and Kubilay's suffering. However, the knife was keen-edged. "23 Aralık 1930 tarihli hükümet tabibi imzalı Keşif Zabıt Varakası", *Genelkurmay Başkanlığı ATASE Arşivi*, http://www.tsk.tr/Content/img/tarihten_kesitler/menemen1.jpg.

ner.¹¹⁸ But the head fell down from the banner. Then, they asked a rope and a townsman brought it. They fastened the head to a pole with the rope.¹¹⁹ Under the circumstances, two district wardens engaged in combat with the insurgents and were killed.¹²⁰ Another part of the crowd dispersed after this shootout.¹²¹

Before long, the three battalions dispatched by the regimental commander and district governor arrived at the scene. Troops encircled the company, warned the remaining spectators to disperse, and called the insurgents to surrender, while firing their guns into the air.¹²² But Derviş was in absolute trance claiming invulnerability. Other insurgents were in a similar state as well. Although they saw the arrival of the armed troops, they did not give in and lay down their arms. Then the troops opened fire with their machine guns. Three of the insurgents, Derviş Mehmet, Şamdan Mehmet, and Sütçü Mehmet were killed. Mehmet Emin was wounded. Nalıncı Hasan and Küçük Hasan took the advantage of the disorder that erupted after gunshots, and fled.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Newspapers of the next day reported that Derviş said; “Drinking blood is forbidden in our religion, but it is *halal* to drink this blood,” and then drank Kubilay’s blood. (*Anadolu*, December 24, 1930.) There was no reference to such an incident or words in any official report or court statement. We have to conclude that this news as well was fabricated. However, it found a place in later narratives, particularly in Kemalist accounts of the incident.

¹¹⁹ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 15.

¹²⁰ Yet the precise time or conditions in which they engaged in combat with the insurgents and got shot are quite uncertain. They might have clashed with the insurgents before the arrival of the regimental troops. It was also claimed by some writers that the two wardens were killed by the machine gun fire of the troops. No source supports this claim. The records indicate that the troops warned the insurgents to surrender before starting the gunfire. Therefore it is quite impossible that the wardens would remain standing within the fire range of the divisions.

¹²¹ Certain newspapers published news that Derviş cried to the crowd not to run away because the Messenger Mahdi was invulnerable and immortal. (*Anadolu*, December 24, 1930) Eyüp Öz, who believes this point, argues Derviş Mehmet relied on an amulet, which Ahmet Muhtar, an associate of the Nakşibendi order in Menemen had given him previously. (See Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 415.) There is no evidence to indicate the background of this amulet. Derviş was able to send away three officers who came to ask the crowd to disperse. He did the same with Kubilay’s troops. These incidents combined with the killing of Kubilay and two district wardens probably made him feel that he could succeed in taking hold of the town center. Furthermore, being under the influence of the hashish he smoked must have convinced him of his immortality.

¹²² Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 48.

¹²³ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 15.

1.3.5. On the heels of the Events in Menemen

Some townspeople were wounded during gun shooting.¹²⁴ Witnesses of the incident accounted that the law enforcement forces searched all the houses in the town center to capture the fugitives.¹²⁵ The crime scene investigation team examined Kubilay's dead body. Soldiers waited beside his blood in the square. Mehmet Emin was captured and immediately interrogated. As reported by the newspapers, he was talking nonsense when he was seized.¹²⁶

In the town center, machine guns remained to stay deployed all day. It indicates that the armed forces were ordered to provide security in case of an offensive action. They stayed on alert against the rumor that Derviş had spread about the arrival of an army of 70,000 soldiers. Until they determined whether this was true in any measure, the officials maintained the safety.

Menemen townspeople related with the incident may be divided into four categories. The first group consisted of the ones who solely stood still as spectators in the square. They neither participated in the activities of Derviş and his cohort nor helped them in any way. The second group assumed an appreciative attitude. They joined the people who gathered under the banner, took part in *zıkr* performance, and applauded Derviş. Third, a small part of the crowd de facto helped the insurgents. One inhabitant guided the company through the neighborhoods. Another person dug the hole into which the banner was planted. Yet another gave cigarettes to insurgents. Also, a man brought rope to attach Kubilay's head to the banner. Furthermore, two townspeople were charged with shooting during the actions.¹²⁷ The ones on the side

¹²⁴ For the official records and some of the newspapers, merely one inhabitant was wounded. "Büyük Erkânı harbiye riyasetinin 26/12/1930 tarihli ve 6747 nolu tezkeresi sureti," Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 57; Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 24; *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 25, 1930. According to some other newspapers, four people got wounded and taken under treatment. *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930. Kemal Üstün was a teacher and friend of Kubilay. He remarks that there were bullet holes on some walls and broken glass pieces in the square. This shows that troops may have fired the machine guns quiet randomly.

¹²⁵ Dündar, "Menemen'in Son Tanıkları Anlatıyor."

¹²⁶ Indicating his unconscious condition, he said his friends did not die and the Mahdi would be resurrected soon. He also said that they were like the prophet Ibrahim who was thrown in the fire and came back alive. *Yeni Asır*, December 24, 1930.

¹²⁷ According to a local researcher, at the time of the incident, there was a rifle in almost every residence of Menemen for protection against wild animals and burglars. Oktay Özengin, *Kubilay Olayı Tarihi: "40 Gün"* (İzmir: Özengin Matbaası, 1996), 31. Still, the extent to

of the government may be categorized as the fourth group. As mentioned above, there were people who de facto acted against the insurgents. Post officer Nail Efendi served as a witness and expressed what he had seen during the events to government inspectors. He as well helped the gendarme officer to run away and informed them about the fleeing of two insurgents. An advocate clerk Mehmet Tevfik Efendi, instantly reported the happenings to gendarme officers. Postmaster Hüseyin Sabri Efendi¹²⁸ rushed to the home of the district governor to inform him of the developments as soon as he received Fahri Bey's call. People from the first three groups were detained and put on trial.

This chapter sought to filter the primary sources in order to present as accurate a picture as possible. It provided details of actual events and developments to reconstruct a reliable narrative of the Menemen Incident. Activities of the perpetrators, on the whole, occurred in the ways expressed above. Additional actions attributed to the perpetrators and mentioned above when relevant are mostly fabricated and therefore misinformation. Misinformation about this incident spread to many narratives and evaluations made subsequently, beginning with the official statements and newspapers of the era. Furthermore, the supposed intentions and criminal behavior were attributed to people who were not on the scene in Menemen. The notables of the Nakşibendi order in particular were accused of inspiring the incident implicitly by inciting the perpetrators. A great part of the accounts of the incident defined it as a reactionary rebellion executed by a malicious organization. Others pointed to the opposition circles in general, and the former Free Republican Party, in particular as instigator of such acts.

which the people in the square had their rifles with themselves is unknown. There were only two inhabitants charged with shooting their guns during the incident.

¹²⁸ Sabri Efendi was the father of Sabahat Erkal, who was a little girl at the time and gave an interview to Can Dündar many years later.

CHAPTER 2

THE OFFICIAL REFLECTIONS AND THE MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MENEMEN INCIDENT

This chapter investigates the general reactions of officers and the media elements displayed after the Menemen Incident. The event initiated quite a great impulse and remained on the agenda until the judicial process was over. I begin with the meeting Mustafa Kemal held in İstanbul and Ankara with the RPP leaders. These meetings determined the court rulings. Namely, court verdicts had already been decided at the very beginning of the legal proceedings. I will then discuss the government's condemnation of the event and its preparations for formal investigations. The establishment of the martial court and details of internal inquiries are among the subject matters of the chapter. These inquiries also signify the dimensions of the event. Newspaper reports on the incident are discussed in depth and grouped in accordance with the differences in their approach. In this regard, reflections discussed here will constitute a meaningful whole as to what the Menemen Incident meant for the Early Turkish Republic.

Official statements and pro-government newspapers, announced the incident as a serious and well-rounded revolt shortly after the event. For them, the perpetrators aimed at overthrowing the republican regime as well as re-establishing the Caliphate order and a state upholding the sharia. Along with this prejudgment, much misinformation about the actual happenings was published in these newspapers. Initial reactions to and representations of the event influenced the subsequent narrations of the event deeply and led to recursively recounted misinformation.

2.1. Determination of the Government's Stance in the Aftermath of the Incident

This section discusses mainly the meeting held by Mustafa Kemal in the Çankaya Palace on 7 January 1931. In a previous meeting in Dolmabahçe on 2 January 1931, Mustafa Kemal met Şükrü Kaya and received detailed reports about the event as well as about sufi organizations in the western region of the country. The meeting of 7 January is significant since it determined the procedures and policies observed in the aftermath of the incident. Top government officials such as Prime

Minister İsmet (İnönü) Paşa, President of the Assembly Kazım (Özalp) Paşa, Interior Minister Şükrü (Kaya), Minister of National Defense Zeki (Apaydın) Bey, Chief of the General Staff Fevzi (Çakmak) Paşa, and Fahrettin (Altay) Paşa the Commander of Martial Law in the region attended the meeting held by the President of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal. How the judicial process would continue and be concluded were issues particularly addressed during the meeting. Moreover, the statements expressed in the gathering synoptically reflected what the event meant for the state from that day on. The meeting prejudged the incident officially as a collective action planned by a religious order. The main sources of the meeting in question are the notes of Fahrettin Paşa and Kazım (Özalp). In his memories, Fahrettin Paşa remarks that the content of the meeting was like instructions for him, and hence he wrote down the details carefully.

Mustafa Kemal was unusually angry, nervous and upset about the Menemen Incident.¹²⁹ He indicated the importance of investigating the background of the event and looking for political organizations behind it. He stressed that the investigation would aim at revealing whether it was politically motivated or not.¹³⁰ He also stated his concern that if the former members of the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası) were involved in the event in any manner and for political interests.¹³¹ He further emphasized that the investigations should not be limited to the town of Menemen alone.¹³²

In the meeting, İsmet İnönü put forward the issue of the Free Republican Party, which had been closed down one and a half months before the event.¹³³ He stated

¹²⁹ In his memoir, Özalp wrote that Mustafa Kemal would never forget about the event. Kazım Özalp and Teoman Özalp, *Atatürk'ten Anılar* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1992), 48.

¹³⁰ Taylan Sorgun, *İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete: İmparatorluk, İttihat ve Terakki, Cumhuriyet 1902-1938 Üç Devrin Galerisi: Fahrettin Altay Paşa Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1988), 434–5.

¹³¹ Ibid. However as partly remarked in the previous chapter, when the course of events and the judicial process are examined, it is difficult to establish a substantial connection between the insurgents and political actors.

¹³² Fahrettin Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş: 1912-1922 ve Sonrası* (İstanbul: İnsel Yayınları, 1970), 438.

¹³³ FRP was the second opposition party set up primarily by the instructions of Mustafa Kemal. He expected Fethi Okyar to help take some tension off the political arena of the republic. Instead, the establishment of the party led to a rise of political tension, especially in the western regions of the country. In some places, in İzmir above all, people welcomed the new party with cheers and rendered it as “the savior” of the people from RPP. The political tension became so unbearable that the party abolished itself.

that a probable relationship between the insurgents and former members of FRP should be looked into.¹³⁴ Such suspicion derived from a few substantial issues. For instance, during his trip in the Aegean region, Fethi Okyar visited Menemen and was welcomed with joy and acclamations.¹³⁵ As soon as the party was established, the Menemen office was set up. Upon settling in the town center, FRP planned to expand into the villages and sought to open offices in districts as well.¹³⁶ During the Municipal Elections held on 14 October 1930, it was the FRP candidate who was elected to the mayorship of Menemen. Furthermore, Sami Özyılmaz, one of the witnesses of the event, mentioned that there had been rivalry among a few people in the town on the political party issue. This meant that members of FRP and RPP had been having quarrels, to some extent.¹³⁷ This was the reason why İsmet İnönü brought forward the issue of FRP in the meeting. Since the day after the incident, there were newspaper articles and deputy statements accusing FRP implicitly or explicitly as being responsible for the eruption of such a reactionary event, occurred against the very existence of the republic.

As recounted by Kazım Özalp, Mustafa Kemal was extremely angry about the people of Menemen. He was concerned for the matter that an officer of the army could be beheaded at the governmental square in the name of religion, and no one among the people would report anything to the officials.¹³⁸ According to Mustafa Kemal, instead of preventing such an incident, the people of the town preferred to encourage the beheading by shouting *Allahuekber*.¹³⁹ Mustafa Kemal, filled with anger, asked where the appreciators had been during the Greek invasion and why they did not protest the Greeks. According to him, the townspeople believed that a ruthless attack on an officer of the army would save their honor and religion. Therefore,

¹³⁴ Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş*, 435.

¹³⁵ *Hizmet*, September 9, 1930

¹³⁶ *Hizmet*, September 22, 1930.

¹³⁷ Can Dünder, "Menemen'in Son Tanıkları Anlatıyor," (December 25, 2005), www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/12/25/yazar/dunder.html

¹³⁸ It seems that Mustafa Kemal was not aware that a few of the Menemen townspeople reported the events to law enforcement officials, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

¹³⁹ Let me repeat that Kubilay was not beheaded on the square but in the courtyard of a certain mosque. Also there was not a crowd of thousands of people but about 200 people. Moreover, there probably was not anyone around when Derviş was cutting the head of Kubilay in the courtyard. However there might have been some people who acted in an approving manner when he returned to the square with the head in his hand. Still, in the trials, the chief judge did not charge anyone with appreciating the beheading though he frequently drove the defendants into a corner.

not only the traitors who killed Kubilay, but also the townspeople ought to be punished severely. Mustafa Kemal emphasized that beheading an officer meant beheading the republic itself. As the entire town was responsible for the rebellion in his mind, Menemen should be declared as *Vilmodit*.¹⁴⁰ For Mustafa Kemal, the least guilty of the townspeople were the ones who stood as onlookers to the actions and would all be banished.¹⁴¹ He further stated that particular new laws should be implemented to announce the accused towns and villages as uninhabitable.¹⁴² Villagers received their share of verbal reactions in the meeting as well. For instance, İsmet Paşa mentioned that some of the villagers could dare to suggest to the insurgents to raid a certain gendarme station and take their guns in order to achieve their goals.¹⁴³

One major subject of the meeting was the Nakşibendi order. As mentioned above, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya had been to the Dolmabahçe Palace on 2 January and filed a report for Mustafa Kemal. It was about the order's operations in the country, its members, and intensive activities in the regions of İstanbul, İzmir, Manisa, Alaşehir, Balıkesir and Antalya.¹⁴⁴ During the Çankaya meeting, Mustafa Kemal stressed that the order had many disciples in the country,¹⁴⁵ and while not all of them could be harmful, the prominent ones were dangerous and able to cause much harm. Members in the locations where the order was active must be scattered and eliminated.¹⁴⁶ Some unrealistic and extreme words were uttered in the meeting as well. For instance, Kazım (Özalp) defined the Nakşibendi order as a political institution that

¹⁴⁰ Özalp and Özalp, *Atatürk'ten Anılar*, 47–8. In its French origin, the word *ville maudite* meant the punished city. If a city or town were declared as “*Vilmodit*,” all families who lived there would be one by one exiled to other cities and the city set afire entirely. To make an example of it all, a huge black column would be planted in the city square. Taking Mustafa Kemal's overreaction into consideration, others neither objected immediately to this idea nor accepted it. They opted to appease him and suggested to wait for the official reports. Though in the end of the meeting Mustafa Kemal was still quiet angry, the idea of making Menemen a “*Vilmodit*” did not recur.

¹⁴¹ Sorgun, *Fahrettin Altay Paşa Anlatıyor*, 434–5.

¹⁴² Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş*, 438.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 434.

¹⁴⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, January 3, 1931. The title of the report: “*Menemen'deki irtica hareketi ile birlikte ülkedeki tarikatlar ve bunların mensupları ve bu tarikatların İstanbul, İzmir, Manisa, Alaşehir, Balıkesir ve Antalya'da yoğun faaliyetleri.*”

¹⁴⁵ Sorgun, *Fahrettin Altay Paşa Anlatıyor*, 434–5. Laz İbrahim was one of the alleged planners of the incident and also a prominent member of the order. He was detained and interrogated by the investigating magistrate. As recorded in the archives of the Turkish General Staff, he stressed that before the abolishment of the dervish lodges, Şeyh Esat had approximately 20,000 disciples. ATASE Arşivi, CDİ Koleksiyonu; Kls.: 135; D.:1; F.:2-272/273.

¹⁴⁶ Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş*, 438.

incited all former revolts. To him, Abdülhamit II was also a member of this order. Furthermore, Şükrü (Kaya) recounted that the protagonists of the 31 March Incident were associates of order as well. Kazım Özalp defined the Nakşibendi order as a vicious snake, which had to be exterminated. To him, dervish lodges should either be transformed into public schools or be set on fire.¹⁴⁷ Mustafa Kemal expressed similar thoughts. He stated that women disciples of the order should not be tolerated. “All administrators of the state must know that this order must be annihilated. There must remain no *qutb*¹⁴⁸ or *qutbu’l-aktab* (leader of leaders).”¹⁴⁹

One other issue dealt with during the meeting was the oppositional press. Mustafa Kemal expressed that such newspapers as *Son Posta* and *Yarın* were used to publishing any sort of negative materials that aimed to poison the public opinion. They sought to cause damage to the government as much as they could and made every effort to overthrow it. Mustafa Kemal expressed that these newspapers created and incited the impression that “the government was not something to be feared of.”¹⁵⁰ “Therefore, the responsible managers of these newspapers must be court-martialed.”¹⁵¹ According to the president, the journalists in question must thus be taught a lesson, showing them that what they had been doing so far had nothing to do with the freedom of press.¹⁵²

The procedures of the martial court were also addressed in the meeting. Mustafa Kemal stated that the martial court must be able to decide the forced migration of the townspeople of Menemen.¹⁵³ He also introduced a new criminal code imposing heavy penalties to the sheikhs and their disciples who were found guilty of the charge of regularly practicing the order’s ritualistic activities.¹⁵⁴ Kazım Paşa pointed out that the court should decide that the Nakşibendi order was a political organization and the activities it maintained after the abolishment of dervish lodges were a

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 436.

¹⁴⁸ *Qutb* means the spiritual leader of an Islamic sufi order. As for *qutbu’l-aqtab*, it implies the most prominent of all the spiritual leaders in a given era.

¹⁴⁹ Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş*, 437.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 435.

¹⁵¹ Sorgun, *Fahrettin Altay Paşa Anlatıyor*, 434–5.

¹⁵² Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş*, 436.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 438.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 439.

reactionary conduct. The sheikhs of the order should gradually be taken to court.¹⁵⁵ It was also decided that the capital punishments decided by the court ought to be confirmed by the National Assembly.¹⁵⁶ Mustafa Kemal urged that the martial court should act quickly. For him, particularly the ones who received the death penalty should be executed immediately.¹⁵⁷ Other detainees who were sentenced to different punishments would also be penalized one by one, rather than leaving all to the end.¹⁵⁸ Finally, Mustafa Kemal gave directions for the trials to take place in public. He also indicated that some closed sessions may be arranged if considered necessary.

In brief, subject matters of the meeting were the Nakşibendi order, the townspeople of Menemen, villagers of that area, issues related to the already closed FRP, and the opposition press. The meeting was held on 7 January 1931, two weeks after the incident. Remarks expressed in the meeting correspond to the earlier official accounts and newspaper reports as well as to the subsequent statements of administrative officials. It was in this meeting that the course of the subsequent judicial process was decided. The martial court reached verdicts as indicated by the attendants of the meeting.

2.2. Official Assessments

This section presents the initial official reactions to the event. In its discourse and de facto actions, the state administrators responded harshly to the event. The most prominent feature of the event was that it received public appreciation, although to a small extent. Therefore, the common element of government officials was the condemnation of the people of Menemen. The remarks of the administrators, including İsmet İnönü, in the aftermath of the incident involved also criticism and accusation of the former FRP for encouraging reactionary elements to dare to undertake such a rebellion against the republic. The opposition press as well received their share of criticism. According to the Republican People's Party leader and deputies, these journalists attempted to overthrow the government through constant fault-finding in its conduct. By doing so, they instigated the enemies of the republic to riot. Officials who were on duty during the events in Menemen were also criticized. To

¹⁵⁵ Sorgun, *Fahrettin Altay Paşa Anlatıyor*, 436. The judicial process was conducted in almost the same way as Kazım (Özalp) remarked here.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 437.

¹⁵⁷ Altay, *10 Yıl Savaş*, 438.

¹⁵⁸ Sorgun, *Fahrettin Altay Paşa Anlatıyor*, 434–5.

some, law enforcement forces of Menemen were responsible for the development of the events that culminated in the brutal murder of Kubilay. Some official accounts drafted after the events involved misinformation. Thus, in the very early days after the event, it was declared that what happened in Menemen was a planned attack against the very existence of the state. However, virtually all accounts agreed in extolling the republic and the emphasizing on the state's eternity.

The funeral ceremony of Kubilay and the two district wardens took place on 24 December 1930. Newspapers reported that thousands of people attended the ceremony. Members of the Türk Ocakları offices of Menemen and İzmir, the deputies and the governor of İzmir, associates of teaching school, military and civil officials of Menemen and nearby districts, and students in Menemen constituted the crowd during the ceremony. Many wreaths were sent to the funeral as well. Three funeral prayers were performed for each of the martyrs. Kubilay was buried in his uniform, which was still bloody.¹⁵⁹

The first account condemning the public attitude was the Governor of İzmir Kazım Bey's report of 24 December 1930 written to the Ministry of the Interior. Kazım Bey indicated some of the townspeople were watching during the murder of Kubilay, which was by itself a cause of misery.¹⁶⁰ When the Minister of Internal Affairs Şükrü Bey and the Commander of Martial Rule in the region, Fahrettin Paşa, arrived at Menemen on 28 December, they went to the cemetery straight away. At the graveside of Kubilay, Şükrü Bey stressed that the most grievous aspect of the event was that, several people among the public appeared undisturbed, approving and even encouraging in the face of such a disastrous murder of an officer.¹⁶¹

Mustafa Kemal, in his letter of 28 December, offered his condolences to the Commander of the Turkish Armed Forces Fevzi Paşa. He underlined that it was a shameful situation for all republicans and patriots that in the presence of such reactionary ferocity, some inhabitants acted in a confirmatory manner by clapping hands.¹⁶² In his speech in the parliament, Prime Minister İsmet Paşa stated that the striking point in the initial reports about the event was the people watched the devel-

¹⁵⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, January 26, 1930; *Yeni Asır*, December 25, 1930.

¹⁶⁰ Belge No: 13212-5/1, "Menemen", Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 54–5–6.

¹⁶¹ *Yeni Asır* 29 Aralık 1930; *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 30, 1930.

¹⁶² *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri-IV* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1991), 601.

opments carelessly at the square. He remarked that some of them were even affirmative. İsmet Paşa added that during this action that defied the law, summoning the military force was the last option. Although Kubilay's vocational responsibility by his position was to use his gun in the first place, he, a young man in his twenties, appealed to the people to bring them to their senses and to end the rebellion without resort to violent measures. What he received in return for his nobility was in no terms acceptable. İsmet Paşa asked to what extent could that neighborhood be poisoned so as to have been deprived of their senses. Inhabitants watching the scene in cold blood was in itself utterly intolerable.¹⁶³ Ağaoğlu Ahmet Bey, current independent deputy and former magnate of the FRP, also drew attention to the nonreactive public. To him, this was a tragic and vulgar mental attitude, and when he first heard of it, he would have liked to curl up and die out of embarrassment.¹⁶⁴ Ağaoğlu Ahmet Bey in his parliament speech said that the idea of republic itself was a religion from top to bottom. This religion, this faith meant to have a sacred book, a type of praying, and believers. There was supposed to be men working day and night to disseminate the virtues of the republic in order to educate ignorant communities. For Ağaoğlu, the pioneers of the republic had failed in fulfilling this responsibility. If they admitted this failure as their share of the sin in the spiritual presence of the martyr, if they awoke and carried out their duties, Kubilay's holy blood would not be wasted. If the intellectuals of the country came to the government's help, only then the measures of the state would be able to have an impact. Otherwise, the enemy of the republic, the giant (reactionary elements in general) had forty thousand heads and when one was cut, another one would emerge. The main point was to kill the sinister giant itself.¹⁶⁵

Although Ağaoğlu made speech against reactionism, it triggered discussion, which was likely to erupt soon. Ali Saip Bey, a deputy of the RPP, asked Ağaoğlu to beg for the forgiveness of the nation from the platform of the parliament. For Ali Saip, Ağaoğlu was wrong when he said they were all responsible for what happened. He remarked that three months earlier, Ağaoğlu travelled to Menemen where he was welcomed with the same banner on which Kubilay's head was attached later.¹⁶⁶ Almost all members of the parliament were RPP deputies and already accusing the

¹⁶³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn'ikat," January 1, 1931, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 7.

former FRP of instigating reactionism. For them, the presence of FRP heartened the puritans who were eager to get into action to subvert the republican regime. FRP was considered politically responsible for the rise of the reactionaries from the grave and providing them with a political sphere to work toward their goals. However, there was neither explicit nor implicit connection between associates of the former FRP and the agents of the Menemen Incident.

In his speech in the parliament, İsmet Paşa also claimed that the perpetrators of the Menemen Incident could act such defiantly because they assumed a weakness in government. “They had this impression because of the irresponsible and exaggerated criticisms directed against the government.”¹⁶⁷ For İsmet Paşa, the incident was nothing short of using religion as an instrument of politics.¹⁶⁸

Officials on duty during the events in Menemen became targets of politicians. The Governor of İzmir Kazım Bey, mentioned in his first report to the Ministry of Interior that they were investigating the reason why the troops under Kubilay’s command withdrew. They were looking into whether they feared and fled in a rush or were confused due to becoming leaderless.¹⁶⁹ İsmet Paşa, again in his parliament speech, stressed that the citizens and law enforcement agencies were supposed to know clearly the conditions under which military forces should be summoned and what their missions involved in such cases. He asserted that military intervention should be sought as a last resort in the case of internal threats to public security.¹⁷⁰ RPP deputy Mazhar Müfit Bey in his parliament speech, also accused law enforcement forces and city officials for not taking the necessary steps in the face of the developments.¹⁷¹

Official interpretations of the event in its aftermath involved misinformation as well. For instance, while evaluating the Menemen Incident in the assembly, Mazhar Müfit reported that it took the rebels twenty minutes to cut Kubilay’s head off with a blunt knife. Witnessing the event, thousands of townspeople kept their silence. Müfit Bey said one could assume they were terrified, but there was no defense for

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶⁹ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 54–5–6.

¹⁷⁰ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn’ikat,” 6.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 7.

their appreciative applause of the beheading.¹⁷² Aġaoġlu Ahmet stated Kubilay's beheading took twenty minutes without any outside intervention.¹⁷³ However, as remarked in previous sections, there was no record indicating how many of the townspeople were there, watching the beheading of Kubilay by Derviş at the mosque courtyard. It is true that some of the public applauded particularly when Derviş chased away the gendarme officers and the commander. Still, the extent to which townspeople welcomed Derviş when he beheaded Kubilay and brought his head to the square, is unknown. Moreover, the doctor's report clearly stated that the knife Derviş used for the beheading was sharp. Exaggeration of the actions by adding misinformation served to increase the reactions to the event and left the impression that the enemies of the republic could become furious.

Along with the disinformation, the prejudiced belief that the incident was not of a small scale became considerably pervasive. Thus the belief that the event was the initiation of a planned overthrowing of the government by a religious organization. The first official account, drawing a frame for the background of the event was Kazım Bey's second report to İzmir dated 25 December. In the report, he marked the Nakşibendi order to have backed up the reactionaries. Derviş Mehmet, who announced himself as the Mahdi, had been under the influence of and encouraged by certain leaders of the order in Manisa, such as Şeyh Hafız Hasan, Şeyh Hacı Hakkı and Hacı Hilmi Efendi.¹⁷⁴ That is to say, Kazım Bey's report was a pioneer that shaped the following official accounts.

As can be understood from the following process of the incident, Mehmet Emin was interrogated as soon as he regained his consciousness. He must have recounted the names he had known from earlier times related to the event. The issue of group members having been smoking hashish was also mentioned in the report. Kazım Bey accounted that all of the perpetrators were in possession of hashish. Derviş Mehmet had the habit of giving hashish to his disciples in Manisa and had been increasing his influence over them this way.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷⁴ "Dahiliye Vekaletine," Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 61–2.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 62. Insurgents smoked hashish beyond any doubt. Given their condition, they could not possibly achieve their alleged intentions. They were just six people who arrived at Menemen with only a few rifles. They had no back up forces that would follow them or any

One of the initial reports that was congruent with Kazım Bey's statement was that of Mustafa Muğlalı Paşa, the commander of the Second Corps. In his military report written on 26 December, he indicated that the Menemen Incident was not a movement of "six punks." For Muğlalı, it was apparent that a number of traitors provoked the reactionaries of Menemen.¹⁷⁶

Mustafa Kemal, in light of the initial information from the scene of the incident, touched upon the essence of the event in his letter of condolences. For him, the nation regarded the outrage to the young and heroic soldier, as a conspiracy against the Republic itself.¹⁷⁷ The same assessment of the incident was verbalized in the National Assembly of Turkey as well. İsmet Paşa, in his speech on 1 January 1931, remarked that the reports from the region in question were being examined. For İsmet Paşa, reports indicated the event to be a reactionist and savage incident. The issue they were facing was an attempt against the very existence of the republic.¹⁷⁸ For İsmet Paşa, investigations demonstrated that the perpetrators had previously gone to Menemen to explore it and in this way they were able to plan their rebellion. This was not an impromptu attempt undertaken by three-four men, but one organized in Manisa in the last three months. There had been meetings in Manisa after the act of rebellion was decided. Moreover, İsmet Paşa accounted, there had been many goings back and forth between big cities in the preparation process. Furthermore, there were collaborators in Menemen who waited for the arrival of the rebels in order to provide them with assistance.¹⁷⁹

Many of İsmet Paşa's statements were inaccurate. Statements of the perpetrators in the court did not involve anything about a former exploration of Menemen. Derviş did not tell them they would go to Menemen before leaving Manisa.¹⁸⁰ The

assistance awaiting them in Menemen. Their initiation of a pseudo-rebellion ended as soon as the armed battalions arrived at the town square in the first place. So there was no sensible frame or concrete evidence that their actions were rationally planned. Still, the authorities and the press kept announcing the incident as a wide-ranging and planned rebellion.

¹⁷⁶ "Büyük Erkânı harbiye riyasetinin 26/12/930 tarihli ve 6747 nolu tezkeresi sureti" Ibid., 59.

¹⁷⁷ *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri-IV*, 601.

¹⁷⁸ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn'ikat," 3.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ It must again be noted that the activities of the insurgents were not as planned as the authorities alleged them to be. They had been smoking hashish both in Manisa and on the way. They were moving so extemporarily that in the end they halted immediately when they faced the armed troopers.

aforementioned travels between big cities referred to the visits made to Şeyh Esat's home in İstanbul. One of the three perpetrators in the court accounted that he stayed at Esat's house and he mentioned that there had been talks, though he himself was not included. He alleged that the republican state was criticized in these talks. But no substantial connection was constituted between the talk and Derviş, his intentions, or the Menemen Incident. Moreover, there was no one waiting for the group to arrive in Menemen. Not a single person was charged with this in the court. For İsmet Paşa, when the initiation failed in Menemen, the situation in other regions remained hidden. Here he implicated that the Nakşibendi order organized a nationwide rebellion, and was suggesting that while no such movement occurred in other areas, this did not mean there would not be upcoming events. The state officers had not uncovered the other actors who were supposed to start the riots in other districts as of yet.¹⁸¹

When Mazhar Müfit Bey took the floor in the assembly to speak for the RPP group, he said they were convinced of İsmet Paşa's statement that the Menemen Incident was a large-scale and prearranged movement.¹⁸² In a petition given to the speakership of the parliament, RPP deputies named the Menemen Incident as a direct conspiracy against the republic itself. For them, the treatment to which the heroic officer was subjected proved that this was not an act of a few bandits and hashish addicts but an organized and far-reaching movement.¹⁸³ Interior Minister Şükrü (Kaya) Bey prepared a report about the event upon his arrival at Menemen and investigations. He initially indicated that the event occurred locally and did not pervade to other regions. The substance of the event, however, was extensive in his opinion. Fellows of the order in Turkey gave their support to the event in such a way that a multitude of men from a lot of cities had become associated with the events. The incident was "the result of the greed of some ill-minded people."¹⁸⁴ Thus, Şükrü Bey's report is quite ambiguous in terms of defining the extent of the event. This might be due to the lack of substantial evidence to depict the incident as wide-ranging.

¹⁸¹ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn'ikat," 4.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2–3. Deputies of the parliament made these expressions on 1 January 1931. As seen above, these inferences regarding the essence of the event derived from İsmet Paşa's statements. İsmet Paşa himself, predicated his conclusions on the reports written by state inspectors sent to Menemen. However, these reports were based not on substantial evidence but rather the words of the captured perpetrator Mehmet Emin.

¹⁸⁴ *Vakit*, January 3, 1931.

As soon as the nature of the incident was declared as a well-rounded organization planned by a religious order targeting the very existence of the republic, deputies expressed their severe condemnations. They stressed their absolute loyalty to the republican principles in impassioned enthusiasm. Reactionism was presented as the ultimate internal enemy of the republic. The fight against it would continue with determination. Within the general political atmosphere, as previously remarked, the opposition press and the former FRP were regarded as responsible for encouraging the reactionists and for favoring the adoption of antagonistic attitudes against the republic. For instance, RPP deputy Ali Saip Bey stated that the newspapers opposing the regime were sold for a price ten times higher than the ones supporting it. For Saip Bey, the perpetrators of the Menemen Incident gave rise to the 31 March Incident as well. He further alleged that they waged war against the republicanists during the war of independence. They were responsible for the Şeyh Said Rebellion also. Once again, the same enemies now brought Derviş Mehmet forward against the republic in Menemen.¹⁸⁵

Political agents of the early republican period often stated that the nation would prevail despite many antagonisms. For them, no trouble could discourage or frustrate the progress of the nation under republican regime. Moreover, any problem the nation had would contribute to the betterment of the republic. Mustafa Kemal, this way, emphasized in his letter of condolences that the pure blood of the protagonist young soldier Kubilay, an element of the community of idealist teachers, would strengthen and intensify the vitality of the republic.¹⁸⁶ In the parliament, Mazhar Müfit addressed the “damned force.”¹⁸⁷ He stressed that the army, which provided a new homeland for them, had always been and would permanently be the guardian of the republic and the reforms. He asked the deputies in the parliament not to worry because honorable souls would rest in peace. The republic and the reforms were Kubilay’s ideals and no one would be able to hinder them. These principles would be

¹⁸⁵ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn’ikat,” 9. Denouncing any expression and action that opposed RPP as treachery was in fashion in the early republican era. Whenever an event that expressed dissatisfaction occurred, it was called as “an act of the enemies of the republic.” As seen here, it was not important for the RPP deputies to prove their allegations. They charged their opponents in any adverse development with damaging the nation and its independence.

¹⁸⁶ *Atatürk’ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri-IV*, 601.

¹⁸⁷ Here Müfit Bey implicated the Nakşibendi order as well as all the reactionists.

preserved continuously. For him, the Turkish youth included thousands of Kubilays who were determined to constantly choke and crush the “black snake” and prevent it from poisoning its environment.¹⁸⁸

The official accounts expressed after the occurrence of the event corresponded to many of the newspaper reports. The event was announced as a planned rebellion, designed by the Nakşibendi order and therefore detailed investigations had to be executed in the first place. As it is discussed in another section of this chapter, contradictions arose between the partisan press and the opposition newspapers. The Menemen Incident was not the only issue of dispute for the newspapers. The political atmosphere of the country had already tension lines and the press reflected this situation. As official statements demonstrated, internal investigations were on the way. Not only the perpetrators and their explicit and implicit supporters would be arrested, but also the state officers would be interrogated to detect and punish whoever did not perform his duties properly and promptly.

2.3. Proclaim of the Martial Law

Before the enactment of martial law, the Council of Ministers submitted a law for the preservation of reforms (inkılabı koruma kanunu) to the Turkish National Assembly for approval. The code gave exceptional powers to the government in the case of such reactionist movements. The law authorized the government to constitute an emergency court or to assign an established court to hear a specific case. Verbal and actual interference with the republican reforms would be severely punished. The government would be at liberty to take extraordinary measures for the duration it deemed appropriate in the event of attacks against the reforms.¹⁸⁹

After the aforementioned speeches took place, the deputies voted for the declaration of state of emergency in Menemen and putting it under martial law on 1 January 1931. The draft of this decision was prepared by the Council of Ministers and undersigned by the Prime Minister İsmet Paşa. The draft remarked that the council took the preparation phase of the incident into consideration and determined that it was a far-reaching organizational act against the republic. It was thus decided to put the town of Menemen and the cities of Manisa and Balıkesir under state of siege for

¹⁸⁸ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn’ikat,” 7. Mazhar Müfit’s words were applauded in the assembly.

¹⁸⁹ *Anadolu*, December 30-31, 1930; *Hizmet*, December 30-31, 1930.

one month. Along with the approval of the parliament, martial law went into effect in these places as of 1 January.

Although the state of emergency was approved by the parliament on 1 January, the executive order was announced on 7 January. After the martial law went into effect, all civilian officials in the involved regions delegated their duties and authority to the military.¹⁹⁰ Martial law rules imposed a curfew from 08:00 PM. to 07:00 AM.¹⁹¹ when no one could be outside except the security forces. If someone was seen he would be warned immediately, and executed by a firing squad if he disobeyed the firing.¹⁹² Every workplace had to be shut down before 08:00 PM. All inhabitants would deliver their weapons to the officials. Defiant ones would be punished.¹⁹³ Hunting was prohibited.¹⁹⁴ People could go to Menemen only with the courtesy of a credential taken from the district governorate, with the photo of the person on the document. Leaving the town required the same permit. Identities would be controlled at the train station.¹⁹⁵ The post office was closed down. Letters were subject to censorship. Any letter had to be short and delivered to the officer unclosed. They had to be written in Turkish, using other languages in letters was forbidden. The writings would be plain and could not be encoded. Legal actions would be taken about anyone who would not conform to the instructions. All gatherings and celebrations were prohibited, including circumcision feasts, weddings, birth celebrations etc.¹⁹⁶ All directives were publically announced.¹⁹⁷

2.4. Internal Inquires

Under the stunning effect of the incident, not only the perpetrators and their supporters, but also the state personnel, both civilian and military, related with the event, charged with inattentiveness began to be interrogated. These officials included mainly those from the municipal police of Manisa, Governorship of Manisa, District Governorate of Menemen, Gendarme Commander of Menemen, and the soldiers of

¹⁹⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, January 8, 1931.

¹⁹¹ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 11, 1931.

¹⁹² *Cumhuriyet*, January 9, 1931.

¹⁹³ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 9, 1931.

¹⁹⁴ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 11, 1931.

¹⁹⁵ *Vakit*, January 8, 1931.

¹⁹⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, January 9, 1931.

¹⁹⁷ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 11, 1931.

Kubilay's battalion. Internal and external investigations began amid politicians' grim talk and condemnations of the Menemen Incident.

The first detailed official report indicating the negligence of state officers and soldiers was written by the Deputy Commander of First Corps Mustafa Muğlalı Paşa¹⁹⁸ on 26 December in detail. He was appointed by the Headquarters of the General Staff. This report recounted all officers who were supposed to execute their duties in a much more responsible way than they actually did. All officers mentioned in the report under this charge had to be interrogated and punished in various forms. Muğlalı Paşa stressed that the evildoer insurgents initially came to public sight in Manisa. They regularly met in a coffeehouse of hashish-addicts and turned that place into a dervish lodge. Recently, they had grown beards and adopted an utterly suspicious appearance. Muğlalı Paşa mentioned that the municipal police of Manisa had been aware of this situation. Rebels' immediate disappearance from Manisa was denounced by a family member of one of them. Even so, the Governorship of Manisa did not take any action against the group. The governor's office neither informed the nearby towns about the insurgents nor investigated whether they were organized in Manisa and outside. The situation was thus left to chance. None of the public authorities were aware of what went on in the adjacent regions and Derviş Mehmet's and his gang's inculcations to villagers for fifteen days.¹⁹⁹ The district administrators in Menemen were in no way aware of the armed group's arrival at Menemen, their morning prayer performance, their leaving the mosque with a banner in their hands along with few of the townspeople, and their arrival in front of the government office. The district governor of Menemen came to the government office only after it was surrounded by soldiers. Until then, he was a mere spectator. Muğlalı Paşa's statements about the gendarme commander were quite insulting. He described him to be "womanly," hiding in his office with four privates while one of his fellow soldiers was being butchered.²⁰⁰ Muğlalı also condemned the soldiers of Kubilay's unit for leaving their commander and running away while bandits slaughtered him. "Due to their cowardice, those soldiers should instantly be sent away from Menemen to other regiments. Starting a legal process about their misconduct is also necessary."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Mustafa Paşa would also be appointed as the chief judge of the martial court.

¹⁹⁹ Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 59.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 60.

The deputies in the parliament as well criticized those who breached their duties were acutely. For instance, Mazhar Müfit Bey questioned, “Where have our civilian administrators been in the preparation phase? Were not there a governor, municipal and city polices, a gendarme commander?”²⁰² Local civil servants were to be treated as required by the applicable legislation for failing to carry out their duties. The newspapers as well addressed this issue. For instance, a reporter from *Yeni Asır*, İsmail Hakkı Bey, asserted that the gendarme commander of Menemen was not aware of his responsibilities. This situation gave six punks the opportunity to perform malicious acts in the middle of the town for five or six hours.²⁰³ This plain case of incompetent management required substantial investigation. For İsmail Hakkı, such improvidence might have culminated in more disastrous consequences.²⁰⁴ The same newspaper questioned, “Were not there any other bullets in the rifles of the battalion except plastic ones?”²⁰⁵

In the same manner as in Mustafa Paşa’s report, the newspapers severely criticized the Gendarme Commander Fahri Bey and, to a lesser extent, the District Governor Cevdet Bey. Fahri Bey was defined to be a mere spectator of the insurgents’ activities. It was further alleged that when the privates with him in the building wished to commence fire on the rebels, he prevented them by saying “This is not a matter for you to decide.”²⁰⁶ *Vakit*’s columnist Mehmet Asım Bey expressed that subsequent support force “fortunately” caught up and banished the reactionists. Otherwise, the cowardice of the *qaimaqam* (district governor) and the commander would undoubtedly have cost the nation more heavily, according to Asım Bey. “The negligence of civil servants and gendarmes in the face of such reactionism was incomparable to anything else. The *qaimaqam* and the commander’s failure to act against the rebels’ felonious deeds made not much difference than directly obeying Derviş.”²⁰⁷

²⁰² “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn’ikat,” 6.

²⁰³ From the group’s entrance to the mosque to the firing of machine guns, there elapsed a maximum of three hours. The events did not take place as long as it was asserted by İsmail Hakkı Bey.

²⁰⁴ *Yeni Asır*, December 26, 1930.

²⁰⁵ *Yeni Asır*, December 30, 1930. However, this question reflects a misinformation, rather than a criticism. As indicated earlier, the soldiers under Kubilay’s command ran away without any shooting because they did not have bullets of any kind in their rifles.

²⁰⁶ *Vakit*, December 31, 1930; *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 29, 1930. Fahri Bey’s alleged saying in Turkish: “Bu sizin bileceğiniz bir iş değildir.”

²⁰⁷ *Vakit*, December 31, Aralık 1930.

After the Interior Minister Şükrü Bey and the Commander of the Martial Law Regions arrived at Menemen, they examined the scene of the incident. Then, they went to the state house and interrogated Fahri Bey and Cevdet Bey. Then, Fahri Bey was arrested for not executing his duty.²⁰⁸ Cevdet Bey was regarded as negligent of his responsibilities in the course of the event and was moved to the central office of the ministry.²⁰⁹ Baha Bey, the District Governor of Urla, was temporarily appointed to Menemen.²¹⁰ Some rumors spread among the press as well that the Governors of İzmir and Manisa might be dismissed. There were further allegations that the prosecution of the Governor of Manisa was about to begin.²¹¹

After inquiries were made about Fahri Bey, he was released. Still, his file was sent to the martial court.²¹² After the martial court pronounced rulings regarding the detainees of the Menemen Incident, it heard the cases of the state officers who were charged with negligence of duty. In the court, Fahri Bey stated that he waited in the building so as to take precautions and protect the state offices. Besides, he stressed that he had informed the regimental commander of the happenings immediately. As for Cevdet Bey, he stated that he went to the regimental headquarters and ordered them to send soldiers to the scene of the incident. Thereon in the court, he began to cry by saying he had been appointed to Menemen just recently and was not familiar with any one.²¹³ The regiment guard officer Mehmet Ali Efendi, who was sent by Fahri Bey to meet Kubilay's battalion, was also put on trial. The court appealed to the testimony of the deputy commander of the Menemen regiment Major Şefik Bey about the details of the incident.²¹⁴ The sergeants, captains and corporals of Kubilay's platoon were charged too, for having left their commander behind and escaped. They were expelled from Menemen, and relocated somewhere else. The Martial Court of Menemen determined that the trials of Mehmet Ali Efendi and Fahri Bey had to be conducted by a superior military court since their crimes were in the cate-

²⁰⁸ *Vakit*, December 29, 1930; *Cumhuriyet*, December 29, 1930.

²⁰⁹ *Vakit*, December 29, 1930; *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 30, 1930.

²¹⁰ *Yeni Asır*, April 1, 1931. He would return to Urla later on. Still, due to carrying his duties successfully in Menemen in the state of emergency, Baha Bey would receive a letter of appreciation from the ministry of the interior.

²¹¹ *Milliyet*, December 29, 1930; *Vakit*, December 29, 1930; *Cumhuriyet*, January 6, 1931.

²¹² *Vakit*, 2 Kanunusani, 1931.

²¹³ *Vakit*, February 13, 1931.

²¹⁴ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, March 9, 1931.

gory of military offence.²¹⁵ Court files of the two officers were sent to the military court of the First Army Corps.²¹⁶

Another group of officers put on trial by the martial court included the gendarmes of Manisa. Officer Hamdi and Platoon Commander Lieutenant Kemal were charged with dereliction of duty regarding their conduct when they heard about Derviş's departure. Lieutenant Kemal was accused of not paying attention to and taking legal action about Küçük Hasan's joining of Derviş Mehmet and others, though he had been informed about it. Küçük Hasan's father Bedevioğlu Ali Ağa and his entourage were called to the court. It was understood that Küçük Hasan's father, along with few friends, went to the gendarme station in Manisa fifteen days prior to the Menemen Incident to report his son's leaving the city with others. Ali Ağa had reported to officer Hamdi and explained clearly the details of the circumstances and requested the officers to save his son. According to the newspapers, Ali Ağa had also explained the group's political intentions to officer Hamdi. Hamdi Efendi, in front of Bedevi Ali Ağa and his companions, phoned Lieutenant Kemal and clarified the situation.²¹⁷ Officer Hamdi was being charged for not applying to a higher authority and not reporting the situation to another superior unit, and thus not stopping at the outset a development that caused such damage to the state.²¹⁸ However, when Bedevi Ağa and others testified about Hamdi's phone call to Kemal Bey, the court ruled that he performed his duties and released Hamdi. As for Kemal Bey, he was sentenced to imprisonment of three months and suspension from state service for his carelessness and misconduct.²¹⁹

The aforementioned officers charged with neglect and misconduct were treated tightly in the course of interrogation and trials. This situation, too, indicates the seriousness of the issue and the tense mood that emerged after the incident. So to say, the state brought its officers to account for their misconduct both in the days leading to the incident and when it occurred.

²¹⁵ *Milliyet*, March 5, 1931; *Akşam*, March 5, 1931; *Cumhuriyet*, March 5, 1931.

²¹⁶ *Anadolu*, March 6, 1931.

²¹⁷ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, March 4, 1931.

²¹⁸ *Anadolu*, March 2, 1931.

²¹⁹ *Milliyet*, March 4, 1931; *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, March 4, 1931.

2.5. Newspaper Reports

National and local newspapers gave considerable space to the Menemen Incident starting as early as the day after it occurred. All the internal and external investigations and detentions had widespread media coverage. Including the executions of the penalties and judicial processes, all developments were followed and represented on a daily basis. This way, the incident and its aftermath were kept on the agenda. There was one distinct uniformity in the newspapers, coverage of the incident. All of the press reported the event as a reactionist movement bearing religious goals and condemned it for this. Apart from this overall label and unanimous condemnation, there were sharp contrasts in the presentation of the details of the event. The press displayed great disintegration and tension particularly when regarding the background and context of the incident. A major part of the press promoted and echoed the official statements. They described the incident as a preplanned action implemented by an organization that aimed at overthrowing the republic. This study refers to this press, which echoed the government as “officially-biased.” A minor fragment of newspapers, which were already known for their oppositional stance, defined the event as “not that big of a deal”. This study defines the newspapers of this sort of content as “counter-official.” The reactions of the newspapers to the event corresponded to the political atmosphere. In other words, the tension of the political arena was represented in the contradictions of the newspapers’ coverage of the Menemen Incident. Some information the newspapers conveyed was true, while others were apparently false. A part of the newspapers reported information which can not be confirmed or falsified because their sources remain unknown or unverifiable.

2.5.1. Officially-Biased Newspapers

The officially-biased newspapers, along with official statements, harshly criticized the townspeople who were at the square at the time of the incident. For *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, the citizens of a contemporaneous and secular republic watching the events so motionlessly was the true catastrophe about the Menemen Incident.²²⁰ It was shameful that Menemen’s townspeople stood there without reaction as if they were looking at a table while bandits beheaded a young soldier and displayed his

²²⁰ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 31, 1930.

head by attaching it to a banner.²²¹ Had the people of Menemen born civic ethical values, they would have prevented the occurrence of the incident.²²² Such civic social consciousness had not developed among them. They did not consider the fact that the public itself may have had a set of liabilities and duties of their own. Therefore, they held that Turkish revolutionists must direct all their efforts to teach the public to nurture civic moral values of which the people were deprived.²²³ Newspaper *Vakit* defined the townspeople's applause as disgusting. Whoever acclaimed the unprecedented homicide would be revealed one by one and be spat on the face.²²⁴ For *Cumhuriyet*, there was no difference between applauding that ferocity and de facto participating in it.²²⁵ *Akşam* named Menemen "the land of the cursed."²²⁶

Misinformation about the activities that happened in Menemen appeared particularly in officially-biased newspapers. *Hakimiyeti Milliye* asserted that when Derviş Mehmet and his group approached Menemen, they met with someone outside the town and proceeded to subsequent actions. They also had supporters in the town. They arranged the banner inside the mosque earlier. In Menemen, Derviş went to the home of "a sheikh" and had a talk with him.²²⁷ However, according to the statements of the perpetrators and official records, the group did not meet with any one outside the town. There was no assistant waiting for them inside the town either. The aforementioned sheikh was Saffet Hoca and he did not talk with Derviş, though they met in the town. He merely went to his home and did not leave it after then. For the same paper, Kubilay's beheading for twenty minutes in front of the eyes of the townspeople.²²⁸ Again, twenty minutes was not the correct time period of Kubilay's murder. As discussed in the first chapter, Kubilay could move away from the square after getting shot and then fell in the courtyard of a mosque. He waited there for some time. After a while, Derviş Mehmet and Derviş Mehmet came there and cut his head off. The knife was sharp and there was definitely no evidence as to indicate that his beheading took twenty minutes. Instead, twenty minutes was the time between Kubi-

²²¹ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 1, 1931.

²²² *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 16, 1931.

²²³ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 30, 1931.

²²⁴ *Vakit*, December 29, 1930.

²²⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, December 29, 1930.

²²⁶ *Akşam*, January 7, 1931. The definition of the town in Turkish was "mel'unlar diyarı."

²²⁷ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 29, 1930.

²²⁸ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 31, 1930.

lay's getting shot and Derviş's bringing his head to the square. As for the people watching his murder, the only official report that gave this information was written by Muğlalı Paşa. However, as will be shown in the following chapter, Mustafa Paşa himself did not charge someone with acclaiming the beheading of Kubilay in the court, although he frequently gave the detainees a hard time.

Another fabricated fact was the part about the drinking of Kubilay's blood. *Hakimiyeti Milliye* and *Cumhuriyet* stated that after Derviş murdered Kubilay, he cried out "although drinking blood is forbidden by the religion, the blood of Kubilay is lawful" for him since he had killed on behalf of religion and became deserving of heaven. Thereon Derviş is asserted to have drunk Kubilay's blood.²²⁹ This has been one of the most fictive information regarding the actions in Menemen. No official report involved this information, nor did any perpetrator account for such story. Still, for the sake of exaggeration as to what extent those crazed reactionists had been, this sort of disinformation was given space in newspapers.

According to some periodicals, after he was seized, Mehmet Emin stated they would not burn in fire but that they would return from it as did prophet İbrahim.²³⁰ As for *Anadolu*, Mehmet Emin asserted that his friends were not dead and would be resurrected at night. Moreover, he was also alleged to have said that the world would be falling apart that night. He told the officials to bring the *mufti* of Menemen to whom he would confess everything. It was reported that although the *mufti* came, Mehmet Emin talked nonsense and summoned him to religion.²³¹ Indeed, it is quite impossible to determine whether Mehmet Emin told such things when he was captured. No official report refers to these statements and they did not come up during the court process either. Consequently, we can consider them a fabrication. However, because the members of the group had been smoking substances, they were not sound-minded in general, and Mehmet Emin might have talked such absurdly for this reason. The most significant point here is the newspapers' treatment of the subject. For *Milliyet*, Mehmet Emin's presumed statements indicated their dedication to what they were doing.²³² However, it is quite explicit that such words demonstrate the senseless and distracted mood in which Mehmet Emin and his friends were, rather

²²⁹ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 2, 1931; *Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 1930.

²³⁰ *Milliyet*, December 26, 1930.

²³¹ *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930.

²³² *Milliyet*, December 26, 1930.

than their dedication as alleged. As for *Anadolu*, the expressions of Mehmet Emin were ridiculous.²³³ However, the same newspaper asserted that a uniform secret organization centered in Manisa was exposed. This organization had been in operation for a long time and gave instructions to perpetrators of the Menemen Incident.²³⁴ The periodical might have sensed no contradiction between the news and interpretations it conveyed on the same issue. For *Anadolu*, the “black force”, which revolted in Menemen was, in full sense of the word, an outbreak of a prepared, rooted reactionist movement. “The investigation pointed to this conclusion without hiding anything.”²³⁵ However, this report was dated 25 December, two days after the incident. Since no investigation had been concluded by this time, apparently, the newspaper prejudged the events. *Anadolu* was not the only paper that defined the incident as a preplanned action of an organization. Many other newspapers, compatibly with official statements, announced the incident as a planned movement of a religious order, aiming to subvert the republican regime, at a very early stage even before the drafting of any official report. *Anadolu* further asserted that when looked from a broad perspective, it was clear that though it was an extensive and widespread plan, it broke out in the most convenient region, Menemen.²³⁶

Unfounded stories related to the event were narrated as well. For instance, a certain draper Akif Efendi was asserted to have reported a significant issue to the public prosecutor. One week before the event, Akif Efendi bought walnuts from three women living in a Manisa village, Türkmen or Sarınasuhlar.²³⁷ It was asserted that these women told Akif that in one-week *fes* would be worn, sheikhs and dervishes who were banished from Manisa would return and Muslimism would revive. Thereon, “the officials began to look for the women in question.”²³⁸ This was nothing short of a fictive story aiming to mislead the public to presume the presence of early plans of revolting against the state.

Cumhuriyet as well depicted the event as a planned action. “The armed insurgents believed in their cause and agreed among themselves beforehand upon pretend-

²³³ *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930.

²³⁴ *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ The name of village was given either to be Türkmen or Sarınasuhlar.

²³⁸ *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930.

ing to be mad if they failed.”²³⁹ According to *Cumhuriyet*, the situation was not the doing of a few lunatics as some newspapers asserted. The country faced a pre-planned reactionism. The six perpetrators men took strength from the ones who were behind the movement. The reactionist movement was not restricted to Menemen and had the Menemen uprising worked, plans regarding other regions would have been executed. “The movement was instigated by an organization, which had spread to various parts of the country, including İstanbul.”²⁴⁰

According to another newspaper *Vakit*, the situation was so serious and a number of “malicious microbes” were perceived in the heart of the Menemen events.²⁴¹ Insurgents intended to re-establish the theocratic state. Toward that end, they intended to riot against the republican regime, to re-establish the caliphate and to bring Caliph Abdülmecit Efendi to power.²⁴² A reader of such news might have supposed that the government repressed an immense uprising. The newspapers conveyed the perpetrators as if they were well-minded and determined people whose intentions to overthrow the republic were realistic. They represented the situation as though a massive rebellion was precluded on the brink. Newspaper *Vakit* based its own reasoning on signifying the presence of a concealed organization. Insurgents bore arms and came to Menemen by crossing the mountains and hills. They waited until the morning twilight to enter the town and went straight to a mosque. For *Vakit*, the activities of the perpetrators proved to what extent they had thought over their plans and determined to succeed before stepping into action. “The plan could not have been prepared by a number of ignorant and inexperienced young people at the age of 18-20.”²⁴³

As already indicated above, although these newspapers represented the events as a consequence of a planning process, they were in fact simple in nature. Basically, six insurgents came together, found a few arms, went to two villages and finally arrived at Menemen where they attempted to initiate an inconsequential movement. Alleging that these simple happenings derived from an extensive plan does not make sense. Nevertheless, officially-biased newspapers saw no harm in making these crude

²³⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 1930.

²⁴⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, December 28, 1930.

²⁴¹ *Vakit*, December 26, 1930.

²⁴² *Vakit*, December 30, 1930.

²⁴³ *Vakit*, December 27, 1930.

actions look as if they reflected a huge foundation. Besides, they undertook the task of embellishing the official statements about the incident.

Milliyet depicted Derviş Mehmet not as a crazy and raving person but rather one who was trained by an association, and a shadow of that background structure.²⁴⁴ According to the newspaper, he gathered his team, dedicated himself to climbing the hills and colliding with law enforcement forces in a sound-minded manner. To repeat, the presence of an organization backing up the perpetrators was enunciated as early as two days after the incident.²⁴⁵

The reports of the officially-biased newspapers did not ascribe the event only to a religious order. There were also references to Derviş Mehmet's former and present connection with Çerkez Ethem.²⁴⁶ It was asserted that he had worked with Çerkez Ethem at the time of the Independence War. Furthermore, he was alleged to have served the Greeks.²⁴⁷ Derviş Mehmet had participated in robberies Çerkez Ethem committed. Thereon he had been corresponding with Çerkez Ethem.²⁴⁸ As it was mentioned during the trials, Derviş Mehmet's being a bandit for some time was true. Still, it was uncertain whether he was a follower of Çerkez Ethem or not. The prominent matter here is that Derviş Mehmet was not as significant a person as he was depicted in the newspapers. The reports about his ties to Çerkez Ethem were rather aimed to make people think he had leadership ability. Although there was no a substantial evidence about his working with Çerkez Ethem, he was represented as such, even as a co-leader.

A portion of the officially-biased newspaper contents sound to be far-reaching conspiracies in nature. For instance few periodicals claimed that the rebels had made a deal with a factory in Vienna and had placed an order for a great number of *fes*. This was because they would have repealed the hat act and liberated wearing *fes* if

²⁴⁴ *Milliyet*, December 30, 1930.

²⁴⁵ *Milliyet*, December 25, 1930.

²⁴⁶ Çerkez Ethem was a commander of the local Turkish militia who fought against the Allied Forces that invaded Western Anatolia. Later, he refused to join the regular army established by the republican regime. When the government of Ankara acted to disperse his forces, he took refuge in Greece. Therefore he was proclaimed as a traitor and was among the famous list of the 150 discredited individuals ("Yüzellilikler"). The people on the list were not allowed to enter the country. Before waging war against invaders of Anatolia, Ethem was engaged in banditry for a while.

²⁴⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, December 25-26-27, 1930; *Vakit*, December 28, 1930; *Anadolu* December 25, 1930.

²⁴⁸ *Anadolu*, December 28, 1930.

they succeeded in their revolt.²⁴⁹ In other words, after a certain point, assertions about the incident completely exceeded realistic grounds and became eccentric fiction. In reality, members of the group were utterly penniless so that they even needed a boatman to bring them across the river for free. All support they got such as hosting, harboring and weapons were provided by their relatives and acquaintances.

Another early predication of many officially-biased newspapers was that certain political institutions, notably the former FRP, was responsible for the incident. The evidence for this argument was Mehmet Emin's alleged statements. For such papers, officers questioned Mehmet Emin as soon as they seized him. They immediately asked him the reason why Menemen was chosen for a reactionary action. Mehmet Emin gave the answer that FRP had won the mayoralty of Menemen in the last elections. Then they had decided that if they initiated the rebellion in a district where FRP had been elected, they might succeed.²⁵⁰ Thus, Menemen was not a random choice. As the townspeople had voted for the mayoral candidate of FRP, the insurgents believed they would now support them.²⁵¹ This account was included in the newspapers published two days after the incident, but it was a total fabrication. From the beginning of their gatherings in Manisa, during their departure, and travel to the nearby villages, neither FRP nor anything related to it entered the agenda of the company. The matter of FRP connection was mentioned neither in the official reports written in the aftermath of the event nor in the statements of perpetrators given in court.

The pro-government newspapers continued to blame the opposition, though none of the oppositional parties was active at the time. For *Vakit*, the actions towards provoking people to revolt in Menemen were the consequences of previous ideas, which were brought forward in several districts of the country under the name of partisanship.²⁵² For them, the seeds of intrigue that were spread in various regions of the nation in the name of a political party burgeoned in Menemen.²⁵³ The same journal remarked that Abdülkadir Kemali Bey, the leader of the Community Party,²⁵⁴ had disappeared three days before the incident. The newspaper insinuated his involve-

²⁴⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, January 8, 1931; *Vakit*, January 10, 1931.

²⁵⁰ *Milliyet*, December 27, 1930, *Cumhuriyet*, December 31, 1930.

²⁵¹ *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930.

²⁵² *Vakit*, December 25, 1930.

²⁵³ *Vakit*, December 25, 1930.

²⁵⁴ Turkish translation: Ahali Fırkası. A short-lived former political party centered in Adana.

ment in the event also.²⁵⁵ Although CP had no influence in the political arena of the country, its leader was depicted to be another agent responsible for the Menemen Incident since he was in an opposition position. But the perpetrators had no implicit or explicit connection to the man in question. This was yet another fabricated interpretation of the newspaper.

According to officially-biased papers, opponents in the political arena and the media had to learn from the Menemen Incident. They needed to recognize that the event was a consequence of excessive opposition. The antagonism against the republic reached up to the level of blind passion. The antagonists unconditionally attacked everything related to RPP and the government just for the sake of opposition. For the pro-government papers, under such circumstances, it was not difficult to determine who encouraged the insurgents of Menemen.²⁵⁶ Recently, the opposition abused freedom in the country at the utmost due to the government's neglect and tolerance. In a society that underwent a radical transformation, the government's exposition to such harsh attacks in the name of the liberty of press paved the way for deviants to undertake such events as the insurgence in Menemen.²⁵⁷ "Some ill-minded writers raved each day in the name of the freedom of press so much so that the springing up of such events was not surprising at all."²⁵⁸

Facing such charges and accusations, the opposition press took the line of defending freedom of the press and emphasizing the significance of the opposition in democratic regimes. They argued that what happened in Menemen had nothing to do with the opposition media. For them, the event was completely local in nature and there was no reason to dramatize it as if the republic encountered a reactionist threat.

2.5.2. Counter-Official Newspapers

Counter-official newspapers, issued both locally and nationally, approached the event and its details differently. Their main arguments were that the activities of the insurgents of Menemen did not reflect the characteristics of the entire nation. According to them, the incident was not as big a deal as the pro-government press made of it to be, and there was no nationwide reactionism in the country.

²⁵⁵ *Vakit*, December 30, 1930.

²⁵⁶ *Anadolu*, December 24, 1930.

²⁵⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 1930.

²⁵⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, December 25, 1930.

One of the arguments of the counter-official papers was that the inadequacy of the police department gave the dervish lodges and the reactionist networks a ground to operate.²⁵⁹ Counter-official newspapers regarded the incident to be the action of “six punks” who certainly did not have significant and extensive origins. “The perpetrators were miserable followers of sharia. The Republican regime was in no way in danger and it was safe.”²⁶⁰ It would be more accurate to name the event as an insolence of six lunatics rather than calling it “the Menemen Incident.”²⁶¹ The event was not political by nature, and had nothing to do with the former FRP.²⁶² These papers published the accounts of Ağaoğlu, a prominent member of the former FRP, to prove their points. He remarked that the government circles held FRP liable for the blood spilled in Menemen. Moreover, RPP asserted that FRP leaders had been in touch with Derviş Mehmet. According to Ağaoğlu, holding the former FRP responsible for the Menemen Incident was a mistake.²⁶³

Counter-official newspaper accounts as well tended to exaggerate their points. For instance, some of them stressed that although the reactionists had arrived at Menemen with the hope of receiving support, they did not find the attention and support they had expected to receive.²⁶⁴ Among the inhabitants of Menemen, there was not “a single brainless” soul who would follow the insurgents.²⁶⁵ For these newspapers, if the townspeople had born reactionist ideas, they would have fallen for the traitors’ cries to save the religion. However, the periodicals argued that the townspeople of Menemen did not listen to these traitors and waited consciously and patiently. “Although the people of the town were ignorant, they still properly recognized and embraced the virtues of the state and the republic. Nothing could convince the people to betray the state.”²⁶⁶ This picture drawn by the opposition press did not reflect reality. In order to maintain a counter stance against the officially-biased newspapers and to suppress their exaggerated accounts, they resorted to covering the attitude of the townspeople. It was quite apparent that though the crowd was small in

²⁵⁹ *Serbest Cumhuriyet*, December 28, 1930.

²⁶⁰ *Yarın*, December 26-27, 1930; *Serbest Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 1930; *Yeni Asır*, December 28, 1930.

²⁶¹ *Yeni Asır*, December 24, 1930.

²⁶² *Son Posta*, January 7, 1931.

²⁶³ *Son Posta*, January 12, 1931.

²⁶⁴ *Yeni Asır*, December 24-25-26, 1930; *Hizmet*, December 26, 1930.

²⁶⁵ *Yeni Asır*, December 24, 1930.

²⁶⁶ *Serbest Cumhuriyet*, December 25, 1930.

proportion to the town's population, an approximate number of 200 people stood in the square. Half of this number participated in the *zikir* performance of Derviş and his group. They merely looked on when the military officers came to talk to Derviş and they stood still when warned to disperse.

Apart from the last issue just pointed out, many of the counter-official accounts, although exaggerated, were on a large scale accurate. As discussed in the previous sections of this study, official records and the statements of the perpetrators by no means mentioned the involvement of FRP or any other political organization in Derviş's doings. Moreover, Derviş Mehmet's aim in declaring himself as the expected Mahdi was to takeover the republican state and to re-establish a religious order. These aims had nothing to do with supporting another political party instead of RPP. For the opposition press, the government circles and newspapers supporting them used the Menemen Incident to annihilate the opposition.²⁶⁷ Surely, such an incident was not an issue the secular republican regime wished to face. Politicians and administrators affiliated with RPP, along with many of the newspapers published to support the republican regime, constantly advocated the republican principals, particularly secularism. The state was established and the main reforms were already put into practice. What the RPP administrators expected from the Turkish public was to interiorize the republican principles and become modernized in desired ways. The republican state had no tolerance for those who initiated an undertaking intended to bring back the "old order". In other words, there was no room for a movement that sought to interfere in the political sphere hailing such religious references. This intolerance against a riot using religious slogans is perhaps understandable. However, this notion of RPP transformed into a political monarchy that rejected almost all kinds of contrarian attitudes in the political arena as well as in the press.

As for the FRP issue, it was established on 12 August 1930 by Fethi (Okyar), as a second attempt to transition to a multi-party system. It was Mustafa Kemal who wanted this "deliberate opposition" party to be founded. However, its establishment revealed the dissatisfaction of the public with the new regime, including certain aspects of its secularist policies. After the municipal elections held on 14 October 1930, harsh discussions took place in the parliament and on the eve of the closure of the party. Deputies of RPP asserted that on the election day, FRP members went door

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

to door to cry the slogan “no more taxes, God and the Prophet are with us, do not vote for RPP” in cities such as Konya, Balıkesir and others.²⁶⁸ The district heads of FRP were asserted to be crying out “Damn the government and the Republican People’s Party!” Moreover, it was alleged that they threatened those who ignored them with death.²⁶⁹ There were sheikhs gathering people in the mosques and ordering them how to vote. Villagers were looking for *fes* to put on in the crowd and crying out ecstatically that religion would be recovered on the election day.

According to the statements of RPP deputies, the events in question presented a situation of sedition and anarchy.²⁷⁰ In the parliament, RPP deputies in this way urged upon the motivations of people who voted for FRP with the expectation of the establishment of a religious order soon. A specific example of this was an old man who stood over the ballot box and cast his vote by saying in the name of religion and sharia. RPP deputies stated that this man was Şeyh Halil Efendi, father of İbrahim Sururi, who was the General Secretary of FRP. According to RPP members, similar instances occurred in many regions.²⁷¹ RPP representatives took such events into account to conclude that the public expected FRP to bring back “the old regime”.²⁷² FRP deputies were accused of not condemning explicitly those who acted and spoke with ill against the republic on behalf of FRP until that day. For them, FRP members solely gave vague replies.

The situation threatened to become uncontrollable for RPP. The members of FRP were presented to have estranged from the republican and revolutionary principles. FRP members were introduced as if they exploited the naiveté of the public for easy success, and thus, they were responsible for damaging the state and the nation.²⁷³ These accounts reflect the extent to which FRP was considered responsible for reactionist activities. RPP deputies envisioned the country to be on fire, and FRP as resurrecting reactionism from the grave. FRP deputies, including the leader Fethi Bey, rebutted the accusations and accounts of RPP members by pointing out their exaggerated and fictitious aspects. However, the accusatory attitude of RPP leaders did not change. Convinced that conflicting views in the political arena undermined

²⁶⁸ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:22 Beşinci İn’ikat,” November 15, 1930, 47.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 47.

the republican reforms and principles, they decided to end FRP. The party was forced to dissolve itself on 17 November 1930, thirty-six days before the Menemen Incident.

That is to say, the political atmosphere of the country had already been tense, particularly regarding issues considered to be provoking reactionism. Along with FRP, the opposition press as well was blamed for inciting the reactionists in the country. After the Menemen incident, opposition newspapers were charged with being responsible for yet another reactionist act.

2.5.3. Blaming the Opposition Newspapers

Many of the newspapers reporting the details of the event gave place to officially-biased interpretations and accused the opposition press of causing reactionism. As discussed above, the newspapers can be divided into two separate groups. Most of them accused the opposition press and politicians. A minor part of the newspapers defended freedom of the press and stated that the opposition had no relation to the incident. This sharp contrast was evident in the coverage of the Menemen Incident but not new. A battle of words had already been raging between the two media groups.²⁷⁴

Accusatory papers asserted that the encouraging content of the opposition press had stimulated the reactionists.²⁷⁵ For them, articles published by the opposition press were like declarations of counter-revolutionary positions.²⁷⁶ This criticism intensified when Mehmet Emin replied in his interrogations that a series of articles named “Kan Kalesi” published in the İstanbul newspaper *Köroğlu*.²⁷⁷ Aside from the content of the articles, this news itself was fabricated. As discussed previously, there were many statements Mehmet Emin was asserted to have made when he was captured. However, these words were attributed to him most likely inaccurately. Mehmet Emin’s accounts in question, including his making an analogy with Prophet İbrahim, were inconsistent. While few of the newspapers described his words as “nonsense,” for some others, they indicated the extent to which the group acted with determination. In the court, neither Mehmet Emin nor other perpetrators projected

²⁷⁴ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1998, 141.

²⁷⁵ *Milliyet*, December 25, 1930.

²⁷⁶ *Hürriyet*, December 26, 1930.

²⁷⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, December 25, 1930; *Vakit*, December 27, 1930; *Milliyet*, December 27, 1930; *Anadolu*, December 25, 1930.

the image of having read any newspapers or followed other sorts of publications that might have inspired them. According to their expressions, Derviş Mehmet was not a scholar, whether in religious or secular terms. Officially-biased newspapers made a deliberate effort to impress their readers so that they assumed the insurgents well-minded and thoughtful men who acted knowingly and decisively.

This chapter presented the official statements and the newspaper reports made after the incident. The starting point has been the meetings held by Mustafa Kemal. These meetings are especially significant, because they demonstrate two issues regarding the incident and have been ignored by many subsequent writers. First, they revealed, contrary to officially-biased narrations, that the state already knew about the activities of orders. The Nakşibendi order in particular did not have underground activities outside of the government's knowledge, as alleged by many. Second, the outcome of legal proceedings, including capital punishments and executions, were determined in advance. This chapter also discussed the statements of RPP leaders and the reports of officially-biased newspapers. The latter case revealed the extent to which prejudgments and disinformation influenced the publications about the event and how this distorted information spread. It indicated how the incident was conceived and reflected upon in the overall political medium of the republic at the time. Subsequent writings recounted these early reflections made after the event and relied on them almost exclusively.

CHAPTER 3

THE JUDICIAL PROCESS OF THE MENEMEN INCIDENT

This chapter discusses the judicial process of the Menemen Incident. The trial records of the case along with the court decision documents were sent to the parliament for approval. The written records and documents include all the conversations between the court board, particularly the Chief Judge Mustafa Muğlalı and the defendants. The defendants in the trials were divided into four groups. The first group was composed of the three perpetrators who gave basic information about their activities prior to and in due course of the happenings in Menemen. The second group was composed of the people who provided substantial support to the group such as hosting and food, or provision of arms and the like. The third group included the townspeople who participated in the activities of the insurgents in Menemen. The notable Nakşibendi dervishes and sheikhs constitute the fourth group, and they were charged with instigating Derviş and his followers.

Although the number of arrestees was high, there were not too many charges brought against them, because there was not enough evidence against many of the defendants. The interrogations did not take long. It was the statements of the three perpetrators and the defences of the alleged promoters of the event, namely a few notables of the Nakşibendi order, which took much time. Statements of these prominent figures and other defendants and the questions and interpretations of the chief judge constitute certain patterns. This chapter will discuss the content of trials in sections that correspond to those patterns.

One of the arguments of this chapter is that the verdicts the court reached had already been determined before the trials began. The intention had been to declare the Nakşibendi order as the organization behind the event. It was determined beforehand as well to give death sentences to certain defendants including prominent figures of the order and to those who provided substantial support to the group and the core perpetrators. This chapter will show the lack of evidence needed to define the Nakşibendi order as the true agent of the incident by discussing the trials of each of the aforementioned groups. Beginning with the establishment of the martial court, this chapter will discuss the trials and the issues they brought in, including the behav-

jour of the perpetrators, other defendants and the chief judge. Thus, I will discuss the defendants' fear before the court, due to which they occasionally turned against one another. Another subject matter is the perpetrators' very eagerness to denounce the Nakşibendi order and blame the respondents. In addition, I will argue the pressure put on the arrestees by the chief judge in the name of the republic. I will further focus on several suspicious issues within the judicial process and demonstrate how the newspapers published distorted reports about the trials. Lastly I will analyse the court decisions and touch upon the second phase of the judicial proceedings.

3.1. The Constitution of the Martial Court

Preliminary inquests were launched the day after the incident by an investigation committee under the leadership of the state attorney of İzmir. This committee acted until the specially formed martial court reported for duty on 2 January 1931.

When Mehmet Emin was able to stand up, since he was captured injured, and Küçük Hasan and Nalıncı Hasan were seized, they pointed to certain inhabitants of Menemen who had participated in the activities.²⁷⁸ As it was asserted by the newspapers of the time, the Menemen office of Türk Ocakları accused fifteen inhabitants of Menemen for applauding the actions of the core group of insurgents. Türk Ocakları organization was involved because one of its members had been martyred. Reportedly, the members of the organization wandered around the neighbourhoods of the town to determine the ones who applauded the reactionists in order to get them arrested.²⁷⁹ Based on the statements of Mehmet Emin, Nalıncı Hasan and Küçük Hasan, additional people were detained in various cities, towns and villages.²⁸⁰

Colonel Mustafa Muğlalı Paşa, Deputy Commander of the First Corps, who as mentioned previously, wrote a report on the incident for the Headquarters of the Turkish General Staff, was appointed as the chief judge of the martial court of

²⁷⁸ As a witness, Sami Özyılmaz described this situation later on. According to his account, the law enforcement officials confronted the perpetrators with the townspeople. Through facing the inhabitants respectively with insurgents, the officials asked the perpetrators who participated in their activities during the course of the events. The gendarmes picked up those identified by the perpetrators. According to Özyılmaz, things looked bad for whoever the insurgents pointed to. (See Dündar, "Menemen'in Son Tanıkları Anlatıyor.")

²⁷⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, January 1, 1931; *Hizmet*, December 30, 1930.

²⁸⁰ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, December 30, 1930. Some false arrests were also made during the investigations. For instance, a certain lawyer named Hasan Fehmi was detained erroneously. But he was released as soon as the mistake was realized. *Cumhuriyet*, January 1, 1931; *Son Posta*, January 1, 1931.

Menemen. Among the members of the court board, there were four other military officers and four prosecutors as well as three investigating judges.²⁸¹ Still, it was almost always Muğlalı, who interrogated and dealt with the defendants.

The path that the martial court followed to decide whether a trial would be held for a particular detainee, was as follows: The investigating judges conducted the preliminary inquiries, evaluated the files and made their decisions as to whether to bring a particular detainee to trial. Thereon they delivered the files to the attorney general to get his opinion.²⁸² The examining committee prepared nine investigation files, each of which was of 200 pages. These files were delivered to and examined by the board of the martial court once it assumed its judicial duty.²⁸³ An approximate number of 220 people were arrested during the investigation process in the first phase of the tenure of the martial court.²⁸⁴

The martial court's area of jurisdiction was not limited to the districts put under martial law. Whenever seen necessary, the court could summon a certain citizen from anywhere in Turkey as a witness or suspect. The verdicts of the martial court could not be appealed and they had to be executed immediately.²⁸⁵ In the proceedings of the court, detainees were not permitted to have advocates. Thus, the arrestees of the Menemen Incident would prepare their own defence.²⁸⁶

The trials of the Menemen Incident began on 15 January 1931. Interrogations took place until 24 January and the court adjudicated the following day. Proceedings of 105 defendants, implicitly or explicitly related to the Menemen Incident were held at this stage.²⁸⁷ After the execution of sentences, the court board dealt with the cases of other detainees accused of being associates or notable members of the order.

Prior to the trials, Fahrettin (Altay) Paşa, the Martial Law Commander, gave an interview to newspapers. He was asked about the probable death sentences that

²⁸¹ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn'ikat," 3. Still, these other members of the court hardly ever talked during the trials. The Chief Judge Muğlalı remained in the forefront and dealt with the defendants himself.

²⁸² *Anadolu*, January 11, 1931; *Hizmet*, January 11, 1931.

²⁸³ İsmail Kurtoğlu, "Menemen Olayı" (unpublished master thesis, Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2000), 102. Those files in question are lacking that no information about where they had been archived is unknown and might have been disposed.

²⁸⁴ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 16-17, 1931.

²⁸⁵ Serap Tabak, "Menemen Olayının İzmir Basını'nda Yankıları," *Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 10 (1995): 322.

²⁸⁶ *Anadolu*, January 12, 1931; *Hizmet*, January 12, 1931.

²⁸⁷ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 5.

the court might pass. He merely stated that the death penalty was subject to the approval of the parliament. What attracts attention here is the presence of an expectation of death penalties. The harsh reactions of state administrators and the disputes in newspapers reflect the tense atmosphere that emerged in the country following the Incident. In compliance with official statements, Fahrettin Paşa described the beheading of Kubilay, a lettered son of the country, in front of the very eyes of many townspeople as an outrageous incident.²⁸⁸ Muğlalı Paşa also spoke to newspapers before the trials. His statements were in concordance with what he had written in his report of 26 December. He indicated that “following the traces” of the incident revealed a secret organization that used religion only for its members’ own interest under the mask of a *tarikât*.²⁸⁹ His explanation did not amount merely to a mere preconceived opinion, but reflected the prejudgement of the court. He recounted this statement during the trials word for word. Consequently, regardless of almost all the defences, the court reached rulings according to the same early assumptions.

The proceedings of the martial court were to be open to the public. Yet, closed sessions could be held if considered necessary.²⁹⁰ If needed, trials would continue in the evenings and nights.²⁹¹ Audiences could attend the proceedings provided that they submitted credentials from the District Governorate of Menemen.²⁹²

3.2. Attitudes and Expressional Patterns of the Perpetrators

The court based its verdicts primarily upon the statements of the perpetrators. In other words, the perpetrators’ words were judicially prevailed over the assertions of others. When one of the perpetrators spoke about someone’s illegal actions, such as performing a collective *zîkr*, or talking against the state and the like, he was very likely telling the truth, according to the judge. This was because, in the eyes of the judge, the perpetrators had nothing to lose for reporting the crimes. A perpetrator was not asked to prove his allegation. Rather, it was the denier who was supposed to somehow demonstrate that he had not committed the crime of which he was accused. The perpetrators, namely Mehmet Emin, Küçük Hasan, and Nalıncı Hasan cooperated with the court and provided detailed information in the hope to receive relatively

²⁸⁸ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 14, 1931.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1931.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, January 14, 1931.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1931.

²⁹² *Yeni Asır*, January 15, 1931; *Anadolu*, January 15, 1931.

light sentences. There was almost no contradiction between their statements about the general course of the event as well as about the participation of others.

It was only these perpetrators who accepted their roles in the events as they considered it was of no use to deny. Still, all three of them asserted their delusion. For them, they were unaware of what they had been doing, which was indeed, the only defence or excuse behind which they could take refuge. However other inmates, without exception, utterly rejected all the accusations. In general though the perpetrators explained their previous doings explicitly, they abstained from providing details regarding the events in Menemen. It was the happenings in Menemen, particularly the brutal murder of Kubilay (and the two wardens) that mostly drew reaction. For instance, Mehmet Emin stated that while they were wandering around Menemen, he was unconscious, so he had no recollection of what exactly happened.²⁹³ For the perpetrators, their acquaintance and companionship with Derviş Mehmet remained because they were, in a sense, captivated by him. Under his influence, they acted in the way he wished, as if they had no other option. They had no choice other than following him, because they were frightened, spiritually overwhelmed, and unconscious.²⁹⁴ Mehmet Emin, for instance, during his statement in the trial, defined himself as insane, and stated he could not remember many things as he had lost his mental balance for the last three months and he was not even aware of himself, of whether he was in the sky or on the earth.²⁹⁵ He held that he had been so frightened that he could not escape from Derviş.²⁹⁶ He also repeatedly mentioned that Derviş Mehmet's words were meaningless and regretted to have known him.²⁹⁷

Moreover, Mehmet Emin frequently discredited the Nakşibendi order. He described the order as a center of malignity and poison. According to Mehmet Emin, the order should be exterminated. Unless the organization was eradicated, the republic would not be able to find safety. He even personally requested the Chief Judge Muğlalı to annihilate the order in the trial.²⁹⁸ Although all three men asserted the same thing, Mehmet Emin put much more emphasis on being deceived by Derviş Mehmet and the order. Compared to the other two men, he gave much more infor-

²⁹³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 21.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹⁵ His saying in Turkish was: "Yerde miyim gökte miyim belli değil."

²⁹⁶ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 10.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

mation to the court against the other detainees. He consistently extolled the republican government and the court. The reason why he kept on talking so much about his regret was because he wanted to gain the favour of the chief judge. As for Küçük Hasan and Nalıncı Hasan, they knew they would get over the judicial process by receiving only imprisonment since they were under twenty-one years of age. However, Mehmet Emin was much older and he desperately hoped to elude the death penalty. Therefore he adopted an excessively reconciliatory attitude towards the court.

Nalıncı Hasan, likewise, defined his acquaintance with Derviş Mehmet as a matter of deception. He expressed that Derviş deceived them by reciting the verses of the Qur'an and emphasizing the virtues of the order. Nalıncı described himself as having lost his consciousness ever since he became attached to the Nakşibendi order.²⁹⁹ Küçük Hasan mentioned being threatened by Derviş Mehmet frequently even before the retreat of Ramazan. He asserted that he was in fear, because he had been inwardly fascinated by religious invocations and prayers. He identified Derviş as an evildoer who had malevolent intentions of which they did not know beforehand.³⁰⁰ He, as the other two defendants did, defined himself as an insane person, and said he could not even understand whether he was on earth or in the sky at the time.

Ramazan was one of the insurgents, yet he had fled the company on the way. He as well asserted to have been deceived by Derviş Mehmet's spiritual remarks and suggestions. Derviş used to advise him to cite God as much as he could, in order to get closer to God. Ramazan also described the journey to Menemen as an indispensability for him, because he was forced to go. For instance, on their way to Bozalan, which took eleven hours on foot, he claimed to have walked under compulsion. He and Küçük Hasan were following the others, and they were not among the leading ones.³⁰¹ Ramazan stated Sütçü Mehmet made him join the order. Yet according to Ramazan, Sütçü had did not tell him what the meaning of the order was. Thus, he expressed that he was completely ignorant about the issues of the order except for reciting the name of God.³⁰²

These critical accounts of the perpetrators stimulated the other detainees to denigrate the order. They frequently indicated that the Nakşibendi order was a malef-

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 11.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 13.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 18.

³⁰² Ibid., 46.

icent organization for the republic and the nation. They talked this way since they thought discrediting the order would help them get acquitted. All the arrested people refuted any sort of allegations of association with the order. Furthermore, some of the defendants told in trials that they were invited to become a member of the order in the past but refused the invitation on grounds that joining the order was not a religious necessity. They also alleged that when they encountered someone who dedicated himself to the order, they sought to dissuade them from this commitment. Those, who gave statements along these lines, portrayed the perpetrators and Derviş as fractious and malevolent liars who always talked nonsense.³⁰³ Many of the detainees agreed on several issues such as this one. Still, they did not protect one another during the trials all the time. Instead, they often resorted to give information against each other to become cleared of the blames.

3.3. Informing Against One Another

There were three ways of speaking against one another in the court. First, though rarely, the perpetrators refuted each other's statements. For instance, court judges asked Ramazan why Derviş had preferred him as a disciple. In his interrogation, Ramazan replied that he had not been acting in his own free will. Mehmet Emin stood up and expressed that Ramazan willingly adhered to Derviş. He also stressed that Ramazan used to give them food. Ramazan immediately replied to have been frightened and said he rarely provided them with food.³⁰⁴

Second, the perpetrators provided information against other detainees. Generally when asked by the judge, Nalıncı Hasan and Küçük Hasan gave information about the defendant who was being interrogated. In comparison to the other two, Mehmet Emin was more ready to incriminate others. Because he was quite sure that he would be condemned to capital punishment, he tried desperately to change the opinion of the court. He was eager to demonstrate that he was at the side of the court, and hence of the republic. Even so, when someone unfamiliar to them was interrogated, they honestly told the court that they did not know that person. For instance, Hacıalıoğlu Mustafa from Bozalan was charged with not reporting the arrival and acts of Derviş and his followers. He denied to be aware of someone named Derviş. Küçük Hasan and Nalıncı Hasan acknowledged that they did not see this man.

³⁰³ Ibid., 45, 51.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 18.

During his interrogation, İbrahimiođlu Mehmet from Bozalan claimed to have gone to welcome the company of Hacı İsmail's brother Sütçü Mehmet, but then, he went to his field where he remained ten days and did not know about Mahdi. Mehmet Emin intervened to express that everyone knew about their presence in the village including İbrahimiođlu Mehmet. Mehmet Emin told that İbrahimiođlu brought them food during their stay at the cottage. Nalıncı and Küçük Hasan confirmed this statement. Mehmet Emin referred to the villagers as "microbes." İbrahimiođlu Mehmet refused the assertion. İsmailođlu İsmail, another inhabitant, also stated that he did not see the insurgents in the village nor was he seen by them. However, the perpetrators said İsmail visited them, once every night and once again during mid-day.³⁰⁵

Derviş's brother in-law Ahmet from Paşa Village claimed he had a conflict with Derviş about an issue of heritage. Because of this hostility, he did not follow any activities of Derviş, including his coming to the village. The three perpetrators, however, again appeared determined to tell the truth. They told the court that it was impossible for Ahmet not to notice their arrival at the village with their guns and *zıkr* performances. Thus, perpetrators rebutted Ahmet's defence. They did the same to many others who were being interrogated and making false statements.³⁰⁶

Derviş Mehmet's mother-in-law Rukiye from Paşa was questioned about hosting and feeding Derviş with his companion and not reporting their actions to the officials. Rukiye stated that Derviş came to her house with two guests and a dog. They explained they were there for hunting. Rukiye told the court that she believed them because of the dog. She was reminded that Derviş Mehmet had declared his Mahdism there. Thus, chief judge asked how it was possible that she did not know this. Rukiye asserted that Derviş Mehmet did not say anything about his Mahdism in her village. Yet, Mehmet Emin stood up and stated that she was lying.³⁰⁷

Hacı İsmail, Sütçü Mehmet's elder brother from Bozalan, as well asserted that he was unfamiliar with the intentions of Derviş and his companions. At that point, the chief judge questioned him as to whether he asked the group what their intentions were while he hosted them in his house. Hacı İsmail claimed not to have

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 30.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 18.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

asked anything, as they used to come over on a regular basis to his house. The judge stressed that he should have suspected their intentions, as they were acting strangely. Hacı İsmail said they were not acting weirdly and seemed to have been right-minded. Again, Mehmet Emin interfered and cried out: “Shame on you!” He recounted that they had been in their village for a while, performing *zıkr* even so they were denying this. Hacı İsmail was also questioned about the cottage he constructed for the company. He disclaimed this and said he had nothing to do with the cottage. Nalıncı Hasan interfered and repointed that the cottage was repaired by them and even Hacı İsmail’s son Hüseyin helped them set up a pole for the cottage. Hüseyin denied this.³⁰⁸ Nalıncı Hasan claimed that Hacı İsmail and his sons Hasan and Hüseyin came to the cottage.³⁰⁹

When questioned, İbrahim Ethem and Fırıncı Ahmet from Manisa emphasized they had nothing to do with Derviş. Yet, Mehmet Emin intervened, again, to indicate that both men were dervishes of Derviş Mehmet. They knew about performing the *zıkr* and Derviş’s teachings though they pretended as if they did not.³¹⁰

Third, the detainees denounced each other. Along with asserting their innocence, they occasionally pointed fingers to the “true criminals” in their own terms. For instance, Çulha Mehmet Çavuş, who was accused of participating in the gatherings in Manisa, denied any sort of connection with the *zıkr* activities. He brought up some certain inhabitants of Manisa such as Hacı Mehmet Emin Efendi as the dervish of Hafız Ahmet. Fırıncı Ahmet and Mutaf Süleyman were also dervishes according to him. He added that the real criminals were slandering him. Hacı Hasan Efendi from Manisa was accused of participating in the gatherings and performing the *zıkr*. He rejected the allegations and said that he had not heard of such a thing before. He indicated that Hacı Emin, Nalıncı Hasan, Hacı Hasan, Mehmet Çavuş, Fırıncı Hafız Ahmet and Süleyman Çavuş were the disciples of Hafız Ahmet and continued to gather at Hafız Ahmet’s house to perform the *zıkr* on Thursdays and Fridays. He added the windows of Hafız Ahmet’s home were covered with paper to prevent being seen from the outside. Hacı Hasan intervened and said he had nothing to do with the assertion.³¹¹ It must be noted there was not even a single villager who spoke

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 20.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 45.

³¹¹ Ibid., 34.

against another villager in the court. The ones who gave counter testimonies were from Manisa, and few were from Menemen.

3.4. The Court's Pressure on Detainees

The chief judge of the court grilled the detainees about certain points of the incident. These questions were mainly about why they did not report anything to government officials, or why they did not suspect the behaviour of the insurgents and similar points.

It must be noted that the atmosphere of the court was tense. The chief judge was the dominant figure in trials. None of the defendants were able to withstand or resist the successive interrogations of the judge. They could in no terms behave in an adverse and negative manner in the court. No one was able to question the attitude of either the chief judge or other members of the court board and the prosecutor. Fear was the ultimate determinant of the statements of the arrested. They were on trial and accused of participating in and/or supporting a revolt against the state. If found guilty, they would be sentenced to capital punishment. As they were quite sure of what would happen to them, the detainees were merely defending themselves. At the expense of making inconsistent statements, they were declining all the pressed charges.

One of the common questions the chief judge asked to all of the detainees was why they did not let the government officials know about the actions of Derviş and his companions. Some of the defendants indicated that Derviş and his followers were insane, and therefore they did not suspect they might be involved in a conspiracy against the regime. For example, Tütüncü (tobacconist) Haydar from Menemen, stressed that when he heard of the insurgents creating trouble, he thought they were only a few mad men. He alleged to have considered that the government would surely seize them soon. He further told he recommended to the people around him in Menemen, not to believe the words of the company. According to Haydar, his recommendations were sensible and everyone agreed with him.³¹²

For some others, the insurgents were acting in a normal manner. Thus, there was no reason to doubt their actions. Nearly all of the defendants stated that if in any way they had known about the malicious intentions of the company, they would most

³¹² Ibid., 26.

definitely have informed the officials of the situation. Some of them asserted that they would themselves shoot the insurgents if they had been aware of their purposes. Hacıoğlu Mustafa was another person charged with not reporting the arrival and acts of Derviş's company. Hacıoğlu Mustafa stated he would have informed the officials if he had known the men, in any way, had malicious intentions. He stated he had been the village headmen previously and knew how things worked. Further, he claimed he would have shot the fellows himself if he knew about their plans.³¹³ Some of the villagers asserted that their homes were far from the place where Derviş and his company stayed. That is why they had not been informed about their arrival or any other actions. As for some others, they saw only one or two people. For instance, Şerif Ahmetoğlu Eyüp from the village of Paşa claimed to have seen only Küçük Hasan coming to the village.³¹⁴ The villagers claimed that the persons they saw were usually someone's relative.

When counter evidence was brought forward by the court, the detainees insisted on their denials as far as they could. Many of them swore oaths for they were entirely innocent. The judge was quite aware that the initial aim of the arrestees was to reject the charges against them in any way possible. Therefore he frequently told them to tell the truth. Whenever such a dialogue occurred, the subject defender proceeded to refute the alleged crimes in different terms. When the judge questioned the detainees persistently, many of them gave desperate answers. They only sought to save the moment. For instance, the judge questioned Ramazan as to whether Derviş had talked to them about the places they would go to in their walks. When Ramazan answered no, the judge in return questioned whether he was not able to ask the townspeople about Derviş's intentions, since they provided them weapons. Ramazan's replies remained desperate. According to Ramazan, he instantly ordered the company to depart as soon as Derviş got the guns. He said, there was no time left for him to inquire about their destination and their goals. The judge further asked what the time period was exactly between their getting guns and the departure. Ramazan answered it was around a quarter of an hour. Yet, the judge objected, and stated that there was an extended period of time and asked Mehmet Emin the same question. Mehmet Emin replied as 1-1,5 hours.

³¹³ Ibid., 19.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 73.

The judge persistently questioned the arrestees as to why they were not thinking about the consequences of their actions. He asked the villagers repeatedly why they had not become suspicious of the company. Furthermore, he asked some of them why they had not questioned Derviş or other disciples about their aim since the defenders constantly denied any knowledge of the purposes of the company. The court's persistence about this issue mainly derived from two facts. First, the insurgents carried guns with them on their way. Second, Derviş Mehmet declared his Mahdism in the villages of Paşa and Bozalan.³¹⁵ Thus, the chief judge grilled the villagers how they did not doubt his intentions and report the situation to law enforcement agents.

When the judge questioned Haliloğlu Hasan from Bozalan along these lines, he said he saw them but thought they were there for hunting as they had come to the village for that purpose the previous year. This is why he did not become suspicious upon their arrival. Sarioğlu Halil, another resident of Bozalan, stated he did not know when the insurgents arrived at the village. He said Hacı İsmail informed them about his brother's arrival. Later, Halil went to welcome him and thought he was there for hunting as they had done two years ago. So there was no reason for Halil to become doubtful of the men in the village.³¹⁶ The judge was not satisfied with this answer and continued to ask the men how they could so easily believe they came to hunt. But the arrestees had no considerable reply to this question.

On occasion, the judge implicitly repeated questions he had asked before when dealing with another issue. His purpose was to provoke the detainees to unwittingly confess what they had been accused of. Still, the situation did not change in general and they maintained their refusal of all the accusations.

The Chief Judge Muğlalı kept looking for contradictory or inconsistent statements. He questioned Hüseyin, the warden of Bozalan, who gave him a gun and why. He replied that the government had given him the gun to protect the village territory against strangers with suspicious behaviour. He was then questioned as to how he could not see six armed men coming into the village planning to do violence against the government. The answer of the warden was similar to those of the others. He claimed he did not see the group. The judge insisted that it was his duty and obli-

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 30.

gation to know, and kept on questioning him relentlessly. He asked Hüseyin, where exactly he had been so that he could not see the group. His answer was that he had been with the tax collector. The judge questioned for how long he had been with the official and Hüseyin replied it was for one day. Then the judge asked how he possibly could not see the men as they had stayed in the village for fourteen days. He then claimed he had been busy elsewhere distributing coal. The judge asked how long that work took, and Hüseyin replied he arrived at the village after two days. The judge turned and asked the village headman Mustafa whether the tax collector had been at the village during the time in question. The headman confirmed, but he mentioned that during the collector's stay, the company was not in the village. The judge understood that Hüseyin was lying, and turned to another person to ask the same questions as to whether he had seen Derviş Mehmet and his companions or how he had seen them.³¹⁷

Thereon, the chief judge interrogated Mustafa, the village headmen of Bozalan, about how he was not informed of the rebels' presence in the village for fourteen days. The headmen replied that he was a newly appointed official in the village and had been there for only eight days, living in a house far from the village. Besides, he was busy attending to the tax collectors who were in the village.³¹⁸

The detainees from Menemen asserted that they were compelled to obey Derviş Mehmet. Arabacı (driver of municipality) Hüseyin, for instance, was accused of digging a hole for the rebels to plant the banner. Hüseyin claimed that the rebels threatened him and held a rifle against his head. He stated he left his house in order to buy medicine as he had a sick person at his house. But the insurgents withheld on his way, gave him a shovel, and obliged him to dig the hole. He claimed to have refused initially, pretending that the ground was firm, yet they pressed him to do as said. When he hit the ground, the shovel was bent. He asserted to hit the ground for only two times. However the judge objected that a shovel would not be bent by hitting the ground only twice. Still, Hüseyin insisted on his statement and on the firmness of the ground. The defendants, similarly, objected to the accusatory arguments of the chief judge and kept on purporting the truthfulness of their claims. Kamil from Menemen was charged with providing the rope with which the insurgents tied Kubi-

³¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

lay's head to a pole. He told he was a shoemaker and he had the rope in his pocket already when Derviş detained him. He claimed that Derviş held a gun to his chest and forced him to give the rope. He was frightened so he did as said.³¹⁹ As it seems, these defences were not reliable in the eyes of the court board so that the two men were executed in the end.

3.5. Grudge and Consent

Another attitude pattern in the trials was the defendants' occasional assertion that they were slandered. For them, the charges brought against them were the denigration of specific people. These people carried a grudge against them and this was why they were blamed for the Menemen Incident and the events that led to it.

An arrestee did not have to know his accusers to call them slanderers. For instance, Süleyman from Menemen was charged with standing among the crowd that gathered around Derviş Mehmet and his companions when they performed *zikr* with the banner in their hands. He claimed he had no connection to the company and to what happened in Menemen. For him, anyone who asserted a relationship between him and the events had hostility towards him. Süleyman added that he did not have a single enemy in Menemen and he did not even realize why such an allegation was made against him.³²⁰ Tütüncü Haydar Efendi was charged for applauding the movement at the government square. Yet, for him, whoever denounced him ought to have been either a debtor or a competitor.³²¹

Harputlu Memet from Menemen was yet another person charged with applauding. He said he was accused because someone had a grudge against him. According to Harputlu, he had seen Hacı Hasan, the witness who said he had applauded, drinking *rakı* in his shop on a Ramadan day. When Harputlu warned him not to drink, at least not during the holy month of Ramadan, Hacı Hasan developed a grudge against him since then. That was the reason why he cast blame on him. To evoke pity, he also mentioned that he was a man loyal to the government for sixty years and an old man who could hardly see or hear.³²²

³¹⁹ Ibid., 25.

³²⁰ Ibid., 24.

³²¹ Ibid., 68.

³²² Ibid., 67.

Driver Ali was accused of firing a gun during the actions in Menemen. However, he stated, there was hostility between him and Kepekçi Mehmet Efendi, the witness who accused him of such action. One day Ali was standing by the fountain to fill his container. He accidentally broke Kepekçi's pitcher. Thereon Kepekçi held a grudge against him. According to Ali, this was why Kepekçi accused him. He further mentioned that Kepekçi's house was located far from his, and he asked how Kepekçi could have seen him firing a gun.³²³

Jözef was as well interrogated with the charge of applauding. The judge addressed Jözef that he was there from the beginning to end and applauded, as there were witnesses who saw him do so. Jözef opposed the allegations. He claimed that he had neither stayed among the crowd nor clapped his hands. He mentioned two witnesses, Tahsin and Mehmet Efendi with whom he went to his house since they were all scared. He claimed he had been quite sure the government would punish the rebels.³²⁴ Hoca Mehmetoğlu İbrahim was the witness who indicated that Jözef had been applauding. Jözef stood up and accused İbrahim of bearing a grudge against him and hence speaking ill of him. İbrahim further asserted that everyone had applauded; yet he had not been able to see exactly who had, so he stated he did not want to accuse anyone wrongly.³²⁵ Jözef stated that he was detained on charges of applauding, although there were no witnesses who saw him actually doing so. The only thing he had done was "to be loyal to the government."³²⁶ Yet, the witnesses he mentioned were not brought to the court and he could not change the situation in his favor, so he was hanged.³²⁷ There were others who struggled to prove their innocence, but their defenses were similarly disregarded by the court. Thus, none of the witnesses mentioned by the detainees were brought to the court.³²⁸

³²³ Ibid., 71.

³²⁴ Ibid., 23.

³²⁵ Ibid., 28.

³²⁶ Ibid., 68–9.

³²⁷ Ibid., 23.

³²⁸ There were other witnesses present in the trials, but in general they shunned accusing other, unlike Mehmetoğlu İbrahim, who informed against Josef. As a matter of fact, statements of witnesses did not have a huge effect on the trials. Many of them indicated that Derviş Mehmet and his followers were lunatics. The witnesses in general did not want to put the detainees in a difficult position. Rather than giving details about the activities of specific individuals, who implicitly or explicitly participated in the demonstrations, the witnesses refrained from providing illustrative information. Some of them remarked that they did not remember the happenings in detail or on the commonly known aspects of the events. Some

Kerimoğlu İbrahim, an inhabitant of Menemen, was charged with supporting Derviş's actions. He denied the accusation and added that the ones who accused him were Hulusi and Deveci Mehmet. According to İbrahim, Deveci's camels had once entered his field and damaged the crops. Then, İbrahim took a certain tool of Deveci, in return. This was why Deveci had borne a grudge and testified against him.³²⁹ He was then questioned about particularly summoning people to see the company and announcing them to be saints. Although he denied it, there were witnesses who testified that he actually did this. Mehmetoğlu Hulusi, a witness under oath, testified that İbrahim was telling the townspeople that Derviş and his disciples were invulnerable and no bullet could hurt them. In return, İbrahim asserted that Hulusi as well was his enemy, because of an earlier dispute. He claimed he had been at home with two of his neighbours during the demonstrations of the company.³³⁰ The judge reminded him the opposite assertion that he had been outside. In reply, İbrahim suggested that if his witnesses told the same story, he would consent to the punishment. The judge in return tested whether İbrahim would retract his denial of being outside. The judge expressed that standing outside was not itself a crime and that he might express it without hesitation if he had done so. Still, İbrahim maintained his claim to have been at home. Another witness, Mustafaoğlu Mehmet, a municipal guard, agreed with Hulusi's claims against İbrahim. İbrahim had something to say against Mustafaoğlu Mehmet as well. He asserted that this was all because he had taken Mehmet's felt cloak after a certain camel issue.³³¹ Clearly, the detainees were determined to defend themselves however they could.

Kerimoğlu İbrahim was not the only person accused of helping Derviş and his company. Hasan and Ahmet, two villagers, were accused of advising Derviş and the company to invade the Emiralem station, kill the officers and take their weapons since it had fewer officers on duty. Both men denied the accusations. Ahmet stated he did not even know where the Emiralem station was located.³³² Hasan said if the allegation were to be proven, he would consent to his punishment.³³³

witnesses, however, told that they recognized the people who attended the demonstrations in Menemen. *Ibid.*, 29.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

³³² *Ibid.*, 18.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 19.

Another prisoner Molla Süleyman was charged with providing cigarettes to the rebels. His excuse was, once again, the grudge of Çolak Hacı Hasan, the owner of the adjacent shop. Süleyman stated they had traded stamps years ago and he had made a greater profit. Çolak spoke against him because of this rivalry. They resented one another for six years and everyone in the town knew about this.³³⁴ Molla Süleyman mentioned three civil servants working in the neighbourhood. If they were to testify as to his giving cigarettes to the rebels, he would consent to the penalty. He also stated to have taken Fehmi and Hacı Hasan to his house during the events. He added that his son had been outside and he could not go out to look for him because the soldiers prevented him. Thus, he returned home and waited.³³⁵ Nevertheless, his explanations were not taken into account. None of the names he mentioned as witnesses were brought to the court. Regardless of whether he consented to the verdict or not, he was executed at the end.

The respondents often claimed that they were being wrongly accused, and expressed their consent to the forthcoming punishment. A substantial part of the detainees was composed of the villagers of Bozalan and Paşa. Some of them were the relatives of Derviş's followers while others were familiar with them. Although none of the villagers joined the company, they hosted them and did not report them to the officials. As for the Menemen inhabitants, they were acquainted with neither Derviş nor his friends. Still, a proportionally small group followed them into the town. They had no previous preparation, nor did they know anything regarding the upcoming events. Therefore, the defendants did not have many arguments with which they could defend themselves. They certainly denied all charges and made simple arguments to defend themselves against the accusations. Claiming that their accusers were a slanderer who nurtured a grudge against them was indeed a simple defence. Stressing the willingness that they were ready for the punishments in case proven truly guilty was as well a desperate attitude of the defendants. These naïve defences did not benefit them.

3.6. Tragicomic Statements

Some statements of the detainees could be seen as tragicomic for they were so unreasonable. For instance Ramiz, charged with participating in the company's

³³⁴ Ibid., 27.

³³⁵ Ibid., 28.

activities, said he was following the group in Menemen from thirty steps behind in order to observe where they were going. When the judge asked the reason why he followed the group, his answer was “to prevent them from harming the country.” The judge further questioned Ramiz why had he not reported the company to the gendarme station if he truly doubted their intentions. Ramiz claimed he was not able to report to the station. He told to have been afraid the company would escape while he went to the station to report. He was also worried that the gendarme would interrogate him about why he had let them get away, if he reported the company. He recounted the happenings as if he was an official and it was his duty to follow the group. Nevertheless, Nalıncı Hasan intervened and indicated Ramiz followed the group, because he participated in the demonstrations. Ramiz further asserted how he encountered a doctor and a man named Tefvik at the square, and asked them whether they had reported the situation to the gendarme. When they said “yes,” he continued his mission of tracking the insurgents.³³⁶

Another person charged with standing among the Derviş’s crowd was Harputlu Mehmet from Menemen. He stated he was in the coffeehouse observing the rebels. He stressed he foresaw the probable consequences of the insurgents’ actions and that the group consisted of shady and bad men. Then, he lost his interest in the insurgents.³³⁷

Mustafa, a member of the administrative council of the Bozalan Village was questioned about not informing the authorities about the insurgents. He said he had been very busy in his field all day and was not able to talk to anyone else. Other members of the village administration, İbrahim and Mustafaoğlu Mustafa, were interrogated regarding the same issue. İbrahim said he had been ill during that period. As for Mustafa, he stressed that his house was located at the upper edge of the village and it was only natural for him not to be aware of the company. Mustafa claimed to have been ill as well, and he said he was home all day playing with his children.³³⁸

Fırıncı Hasan from Manisa was accused of being an associate of the Nakşibendi *order*. He claimed he did not have any connection with the order. He said

³³⁶ Ibid., 22, 23.

³³⁷ Ibid., 24.

³³⁸ Ibid., 20.

he never attended the meetings in Manisa, nor did he know Laz İbrahim. The judge questioned Fırıncı Ahmet as to why he had been arrested and brought to the court then. Fırıncı said he did not know why.³³⁹

Ali Koç, an inhabitant of Horos, was questioned about his visit to Şeyh Esat. He said they went to İstanbul and travelled around the mosques and subsequently visited Şeyh Esat's mansion. He stated they could not see him as he had been ill. They visited his son and stayed there for one night. The judge asked the reason of their stay, if not for sufi issues. Ali Koç replied the reason was that Esat was old. Then the judge stressed there had been a certain man named Zaro Ağa in İstanbul who was 150 years of age, much older than Esat. He asked Ali Koç if their purpose was to visit the old, why had they not visited Zaro Ağa instead. Ali Koç replied that if they had heard of Zaro Ağa, they would have visited him too.³⁴⁰

As previously mentioned, these kinds of defence did not influence the attitude or perception of the chief judge Muğlalı. He was not to be deluded. On several occasions he grilled the detainees on specific issues, but when the interrogations ended up in a vicious circle because the detainees kept denying all the charges, he passed on to the next issue by realizing they did not have much to say and were merely trying to save themselves. Still, these accounts prove that the people, who were connected to the events in one way or another, did not act in a pre-planned manner. They were not highly motivated contrarians expecting someone to emerge to lead the way to a revolution against the republic. Rather, as it seems, their different levels of dissatisfaction against the republican ideology could merely present itself by watching Derviş to see what would happen.

According to the statements of all the detainees and witnesses as well as the official records, followers of religious orders in Manisa were speaking out against the government. Thus they were, to various degrees, opposing the republican regime. This was a passive opposition in the sense that no disciple of the Nakşibendi order, except Derviş and his fellows, participated in the demonstrations. The villagers of Bozalan and Paşa might have been displeased with the government as well, perhaps particularly in regards to their perception of secularist politics. However, there is not substantial information to verify this premise. Thus, what explains their hosting of

³³⁹ Ibid., 35.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 40.

Derviş or his fellows is the fact that they were relatives of some of these villagers. Therefore, their relationship of affinity or acquaintance with insurgents was the defining reason of their treatment of the company. In other words, the villagers' relationship with perpetrators might have taken precedence over their dependence on the government, regardless of the extent to which they were discontent with the policies of the government.

3.7. Extolling the State

Another pattern one can observe in the trials is the exaltation of the state by the detainees as well as the chief judge. The defendants revered the state in various ways to specify their intimate loyalty as they had absolutely nothing to do with an action undermining the republic. Some of the detainees declared their loyalty to the republic by mentioning their civilian or military services as proof of their innocence. For instance, Halil from Manisa remarked that a young Turkish man's fundamental duty was to love his country and to defend his honour. He asked, therefore, how could one ever turn against the state. Keçeci Süleyman expressed he had been in the service of his country for eight years. To arise pity, he also spoke of his two children left in miserable conditions in Manisa.³⁴¹ Manisalı Ali Çavuş emphasized his eleven-year of military service for the sake of the country and nation. He claimed he had not been guilty of treason.³⁴² Ömeroğlu Hafız Ahmet indicated he had been a poor man who had lost his mind at the time of the Greek invasion, since he loved his country so much. He asserted to have regained his mental abilities when the country was taken back.³⁴³

Hafız Hilmi Efendi from Manisa was charged with being an associate of the order and for laying the groundwork for a rebellion. His initial words were that he had always been loyal to the government and had never committed any offense against it. He had worked in favour of the ideal of Turkish victory during the period of the Greek occupation.³⁴⁴ He had monitored every step the Greeks took and informed the government. When the Greeks realized what he was framing, they retained him. He stated he would absolutely shy away and abstain from reacting

³⁴¹ Ibid., 71.

³⁴² Ibid., 67.

³⁴³ Ibid., 71.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 64.

against the government, which definitely saved the vulnerable nation from brutality. He was so loyal to the government that if he had any contrary idea inside him, he would have committed suicide. He swore an oath in the name of his knowledge of the Quran and religion, and told he regarded opposing the government as a sin. He told the judge to inquire about his personality in the RPP organization and Türk Ocakları.³⁴⁵

Hafız Hilmi's words are representative of the statements of other accused persons who were charged with providing necessary material and moral support for the rebellion. Cases in point are Mehmet Ali Efendi, Laz İbrahim, and Saffet Hoca.³⁴⁶ They all asserted to have done their utmost in the service of the country and pointed to the contradiction between their previous services and the recent charges. However, the chief judge did not take such claims into serious consideration. Whenever someone started to praise himself by mentioning former services, the judge told him to get to the point and address the accusations. Indeed, when someone began to extol the republic, it could affect the judge adversely. When the respondents dignified the state, the judge told them that since the state was sacred, then how come they dared to undertake counteraction against it.

The chief judge, representing the court, was evidently convinced that the people before the court had betrayed the state in various degrees. Although it was a company of six people who initiated the revolt actively, their action brought to light that the fellows of the order in Manisa were speaking out against the government on their own. According to the state, this was also considered to be disloyalty or even betrayal. By hosting the company, villagers already committed serious offense against the state in the eyes of the court.

The chief judge did not take seriously the arguments of even the ones who brought forth that they were members of RPP. Due to the prevailing tension in political grounds between RPP and former FRP, defendants sought to take advantage and gain the favour of the chief judge by mentioning that they were associates of RPP. For example, Gözlüklü Mehmet Ali was accused of applauding the rebels. He mentioned he was a member of the RPP's local committee. He expressed he had never participated in such sedition against the government. As many others did, he told he

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 65.

³⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 59.

would have definitely informed the officials of the situation, if he had only known about it. When disorder occurred in Menemen, he claimed he was suspicious of a party conflict and refrained from possible violence as he had been a member of RPP. He swore several times that he was far from collaborating with the insurgents, and he did not see any of them. He said he could most certainly prove this.³⁴⁷ He also added that none of the perpetrators cited his name while accounting the details of the events. He ended his last words by asserting that revolt against the government did not conform to his character.³⁴⁸

Another respondent, Topçu Hüseyin was charged with attending the gatherings at Tatlıcı Hüseyin's house in Manisa. He denied his alleged presence in those meetings. The persons who asserted that such meetings were held had a grudge and hence sought to ruin his name. The key element of this grudge against him was the conflict between political parties. Topçu stated he supported RPP, while his accusers were from the FRP, and this was a good and sufficient reason for them to slander him.³⁴⁹ However, the chief judge did not take much notice of the defendants' party memberships. Instead, he remarked that association with political parties was not an issue in the trials and required the ones who brought up their party affiliation to move on and get to the point.³⁵⁰

3.8. The Court Searching for Behind the Scenes

The court's major objective was to reveal the background structure and the agents of the Menemen Incident. As previously mentioned, the court intended to rule that the Nakşibendi order organised the event. Nevertheless, the statements of the perpetrators in this regard were quite unreliable and controversial. Therefore, the most equivocal stage of the trials involved the effort to elaborate the origins of the event.

Throughout the trials, the perpetrators mentioned three separate phases of meetings held in Manisa. The first was the gathering of Derviş and his followers in a certain coffeehouse. In these meetings, they performed the *zikr* and smoked hashish. After the municipal police found out what they had been doing there, the coffeehouse

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 25.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 67–8.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 76.

was closed down. Then Derviş's disciples continued to gather in Tatlıcı Hüseyin's house. There was nothing disputable, since all three perpetrators said the same thing until this point. However, ambiguities emerged with regard to two other groups of people who were not Derviş's disciples. The first group consisted of people gathering in each other's homes, such as those of Manifaturacı Osman Efendi, Ragıp Bey, and Mutaf Süleyman Efendi. The second group consisted of some notable associates of the order, who were active locally and in general, such as Hafız Ahmet, Laz İbrahim, and Şeyh Esat. Perpetrators asserted that Derviş Mehmet was fully under the influence of the persons of the latter group. They alleged it was these sheikhs from whom Derviş learned all the maleficent ideas on which he acted.

Mehmet Emin stated that after Derviş Mehmet made him a disciple of the order, they attended, along with their own gatherings, the sermons of certain preachers in Manisa, such as Hafız Ahmet, Hacı Hilmi, Şeyh Hakkı, and Saffet Hoca. In his statement, Mehmet Emin referred to a conversation that took place between Derviş Mehmet and Hafız Ahmet. Derviş Mehmet asked Hafız Ahmet from where the expected Mahdi would come. Hafız replied he would emerge from among mankind, yet he, who recited the name of God the most would be assigned the task. He also indicated that the Prophet Muhammed was the general soul of the order. Allegedly, Derviş Mehmet declared his Mahdism to Hafız Ahmet and Hafız acknowledged it and recommended him to others. However, they fell into bad terms with each other later on.

When the judge questioned what he would say about the issue, Hafız Ahmet Efendi rejected all allegations. For him, there were many taskmasters, officials, and civil servants among those who had come to listen to his preaching. His sermons attracted about three hundred people each time. Therefore, Hafız Ahmet stated if the asserted conversation between him and Derviş Mehmet had actually occurred, somebody would have reported it to the authorities. He indicated that all the assertions against him were outright lies. When asked again by the judge whether a quarrel had occurred between them, he claimed he had never seen or heard about Derviş Mehmet before.³⁵¹ Nalıncı Hasan and Küçük Hasan said they did not know whether Hafız Ahmet had met Derviş or not. Then, Hafız Ahmet accused Mehmet Emin of casting aspersions on him. He further referred Mehmet Emin to God's punishment and told

³⁵¹ Ibid., 45.

their accounts would be settled in the greatest court, after death. Mehmet Emin's answer was "The greatest court is right here." Thereon, Ramazan began to speak and said Mehmet Emin was not telling the truth about the issue between Hafız Ahmet and Derviş Mehmet. The judge later turned to Hafız Ahmet and told him that there were written documents and testimonies indicating his affirmation of Dervish Mehmet as the Mahdi. Still, Hafız Ahmet rejected the materials in question, and brought forward several names as witnesses who could assert that he did not know Derviş.³⁵²

At that point, although the chief judge referred to documents indicating the reality of the dialogue between Derviş and Hafız Ahmet, he did not go into detail. As will be demonstrated later in this section, the judge introduced the content of substantial materials, such as letters written between the prominent figures of the order, in order to prove the activities of the order. The judge thus cornered the authors of these letters. For this reason, it is quite surprising why the judge did not display all the evidence that the court supposedly held regarding the alleged conversation between Hafız Ahmet and Derviş.

As stated, other perpetrators, Ramazan, Nalıncı, and Küçük Hasan continued to state their ignorance about that conversation. Mehmet Emin further emphasized that he had heard it from Derviş and Fırıncı Ahmet, another inhabitant of Manisa, who was also charged with being a disciple of the order.³⁵³ When questioned about the topic, Fırıncı Ahmet expressed he had heard this story from Sütçü Mehmet, another member of Derviş's company, who was killed by soldiers in Menemen.³⁵⁴

Thus, the story about Hafız Ahmet's ratification of Derviş Mehmet as the Mahdi is unfounded. It seems Mehmet Emin's ungrounded story intended to discredit all leaders of the order. As opposed to Mehmet Emin's account, Hafız Ahmet's sounds reasonable. Indeed, he had a large audience and one of them would have reported to the authorities if he made an inappropriate statement.

There were other equivocal matters stated by the perpetrators. Still, no matter how equivocal, expressions of the perpetrators formed the basis of the charges brought against the Nakşibendi order that it arranged the Menemen Incident. The

³⁵² Ibid., 46.

³⁵³ Ibid., 8.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 46.

idea was to adduce the accusations in perpetrators' testimonies as substantial proof. According to the court, the perpetrators' accounts would indicate the specific role that the order played in the incident. As the judge had already said previously in the court, he considered the statements of the perpetrators as true as their crimes were apparent. They had nothing to lose while others were seeking to hide the truth. In addition, as demonstrated before, the court process had already been determined to inflict the responsibility of the Menemen Incident on the Nakşibendi order. This had been decided prior to the trials. Given this decision (and presumption), the perpetrators appear to have taken instructions from officials to make accusatory statements against the members of the order. It was evident that two of the perpetrators could not be sentenced to death due to the age limit. Only Mehmet Emin's condition seemed fit for capital punishment and he pinned his hope on the court's mercy for a probable pardon. Under such circumstances and particularly to reveal the supposed-backstage of the event, the perpetrators attributed it to the malevolent aims of the Nakşibendi order and its members. The court kept on giving credence to the perpetrators' sayings.

The judge told Mehmet Emin that praying at home was not legally prohibited. Yet, he questioned him and friends about the cruel purposes of the prayer meetings they held at home. He replied that the meetings discussed how the government's aim was making every Muslim become disbelievers and infidels. According to Mehmet Emin, these statements subverted the republic and poisoned young minds. He said Derviş Mehmet served two ideas. First, he abused people to serve his intentions. He poisoned their faith and made them smoke hashish. Second, he intended a crime against the republic by dreaming to re-establish the order of sheikhdom and dervish lodges. During meetings in Manisa, Derviş Mehmet continuously condemned the officers of the republic, for letting their family members, particularly the women, walk outside without clothes to cover their bodies fully.³⁵⁵

Nalıncı Hasan initially mentioned Derviş Mehmet's aims were put into words during their meetings in Tatılıcı Hüseyin's house, in Manisa.³⁵⁶ He said additional meetings took place, to which Laz İbrahim, İzmirli Mehmet Ali Hoca, İmam İlyas Efendi, Şeyh Hakkı, Hacı Hilmi, Hafız Cemal, Hafız Ahmet, Ragıp Bey and Mutaf

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 8, 9.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 11.

Süleyman attended.³⁵⁷ He signified these gatherings as other occasions when the targets of the order were discussed. He emphasized that Laz İbrahim used to go to İstanbul and return to the gathering with books relevant to the order. They used to perform the *zikr* after the night prayer. Later, as Nalıncı conveyed, Laz İbrahim mentioned the arrival of Sultan Abdülhamid's sons as well as the re-establishment of the caliphate. Having retrieved the old regime, they would be able to easily perform their reciting. In other words, their fundamental aim and the subject matter of their meetings was, according to the perpetrators, to overthrow the republican regime.³⁵⁸

In this regard, the chief judge questioned Manifaturacı Osman Efendi as to the goals and content of the meetings and about his relationship with Laz İbrahim. He identified Laz İbrahim as his customer who used to come to his shop and that he had taken him as a guest to his home a few times. He said they would gather in each other's homes, along with Ragıp Bey, Süleyman Efendi and İlyas Hoca. However, they never discussed anti-government concerns in any of the meetings. Osman Efendi told the court that those who asserted the opposite did not know what they were saying and named them as "mad." He requested the chief judge to be deaf to the perpetrators' allegations.³⁵⁹ Mehmet Emin intervened and asked Osman Efendi, "Then, from whom did Derviş Mehmet take his denominational inspiration, since he had no education from school or madrasa?"³⁶⁰ It must be re-noted that the only evidence for the disparagement of the republican regime during the gatherings in question was the accounts of the perpetrators. The extent to which the attendants of the meetings criticized the republic remains quite uncertain. This allegation might be true due to the aforementioned displeasure, particularly in religious terms, against the

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 31.

³⁵⁹ The publication of the General Directorate of Security Affairs of Turkey about the Menemen Incident includes an anecdote about these meetings, albeit without mentioning its source. It was asserted that at the home of İlyas Efendi, who was a regiment imam, Laz İbrahim came from İstanbul where he visited Şeyh Esat and brought important news. Laz İbrahim allegedly accounted that Selim Efendi, the son of Abdülhamid II, would occupy Ankara and the entire country with a major military force. He would ascend to the position of caliphate as well as sultanate. The sharia would be reconstituted. All these issues were discussed and approved in İstanbul. (See Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü, *Polis Arşiv Belgeleriyle Gerçekler*, 43.) Although this matter was not brought to the fore in the court, its inclusion in an official publication reflects the extent to which information about the Menemen Incident has been twisted. The secondary literature about the incident has taken this official account for granted to a large extent and reproduced it recurrently.

³⁶⁰ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 32.

secularist politics of the republic. The wish for the ancient regime might have lived on for a long time in conservative circles. However, the perpetrators' statements do not prove this point. Their allegation that they stepped into action because of the people's discontent with republican policies, as if people were ready follow them, is ungrounded. Their activities were of small-scale and flimsy. Despite the presence of displeasure with the republican policies in different extents and terms, the event was not an arranged riot rested on people's support.

Hafız Cemal, another person accused of participating the meetings in Manisa, initially defined himself as dignified and self-respecting. He told he despised going to coffeehouses and he met with his friends only at each other's homes. There were only around four or five of them in total. They did not even think of talking about politics or the government. He told he respected İlyas and İbrahim Hoca since they were government officials. Osman Efendi was one of his colleagues, and Ragıp and Süleyman Efendi were his neighbours. Therefore, he knew all of them well, and they regularly went to each other's houses and had heart-to-heart talks. At that point Nalıncı Hasan interrupted the conversation and claimed Hafız Cemal had been a member of the Nakşibendi order and made the villagers of Horos perform the *zikr* in a certain mosque.³⁶¹

As seen, the crimes to which Nalıncı referred were the activities of those who adhered to an order. Although dervish lodges were closed down in 1925, they were still present, but they remained underground. Indeed, the court's charge was not to determine the extent to which the associates of the order were active. Nevertheless, the Chief Judge Muğlalı was probing the agents operating under the roof of the sufi order, in a manner that the court's concern was to reveal whether the order was active or not.

Thereafter, Nalıncı turned to Ragıp, another participator in the Manisa meetings, and asked him why they were denying the facts. Ragıp replied they were not as crazy as to act in opposition to the government's prohibitions. He added he was not that mad to perform the *zikr*. For Ragıp, the perpetrators were criminals and were able to say anything they wanted. Nalıncı Hasan shouted "As long as these men in point stay present, the Republican regime would not be everlasting."³⁶²

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

Cemal Efendi stated later that it was irrational and insensible for a few men to oppose the government.³⁶³ The judge then aggressively questioned Cemal Efendi as to whether he had known about Laz İbrahim's previous detention for making a stimulating speech in a sermon in Manisa. Cemal Efendi expressed that Laz İbrahim was released after the initial inquiry, and cleared of the charges. He asked the judge if Laz İbrahim would be released if he were guilty. When Mehmet Emin argued against him, Osman Efendi asked the judge how possibly a criminal, Mehmet Emin, could speak out against him. He required the court not to pay attention to Mehmet Emin's assertions and not to rely upon them. Still, according to the judge, if Mehmet Emin had not seen Cemal Efendi, he would not have spoken about him.³⁶⁴ Here again one comes under the impression that the court had already decided to depend on the statements of the perpetrators and rule accordingly.

Next, Ragıp Bey admitted his presence in Osman and Cemal Efendi's houses along with Laz İbrahim. The judge asked the topics Laz İbrahim spoke about in the meetings. Ragıp Bey expressed they were religious issues and advice. The chief judge further questioned Ragıp Bey why he needed to be taught as if he did not know religious rules and conventions. Ragıp Bey described the topics as ordinary ones about praying to God.³⁶⁵ At that point Nalıncı Hasan accounted that Laz İbrahim told them to be extremely quiet in order not to alert the police while they were performing the *zikr* at İlyas Hoca's house. Evidently, the judge was rather trying to uncloak religious gatherings and *zikr* performances as the background of the incident.

Another defendant, Şeyh Hakkı Efendi, was accused of being a sheikh and gathering disciples around him in Manisa. He asserted that he did not know about the gatherings and had no claim to be a sheikh. Nalıncı Hasan and Mehmet Emin, however, indicated that he was indeed a sheikh. Hakkı Efendi said his brother was a sheikh before he died, but he himself was not. He also emphasized that one needed to have a certificate to become a sheikh, but he had none. At that point, Mehmet Emin

³⁶³ Ibid., 32. Such sensible statements made in the court by some of the defendants reveal that something was not right. Indeed, how could those people be in charge of an attempt to overthrow the republican regime? The movement those insurgents initiated ceased quickly as soon as the battalions with machine guns arrived at the scene. Three of the insurgents were killed on the spot. Meanwhile, people were detained regardless of the extent of their participation in the event.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 33.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

took the floor and asked how a certification for sheikhdom could still be present after the abolition of sheikhdom.³⁶⁶ Still, the trial records indicate that the attenders of the meetings in question did not contribute to Derviş's actions in any way. Their only crime was to be in a meeting with Laz İbrahim, who was considered to be one of the main protagonists of the events that led to Kubilay's killing.

A letter written by Hafız Ali Osman to Şeyh Esat was read in the court as a concrete evidence. The date of the letter was 1930. The judge stated that Hafız Osman had previously said he was no longer interested in issues regarding the order. The letter proved otherwise. Another letter to the same effect was written to Hacı Hilmi, who was also charged with being a member of the order.³⁶⁷ The judge expressed that there were such as words as *tarikât* (sect) and *ihvan* (Muslim brotherhood, fellows) that were signs of Osman's relationship with the order.

Another person accused of being a disciple of the order was Ahmet Muhtar Efendi. During his interrogation, the judge referred to an amulet found on Derviş. Ahmet Muhtar's name was written on the amulet. He denied the charge and said he did not give it to Derviş. Yet the judge stated that the writing on the amulet was compared to his writing and found similar. Küçük Hasan stated that he saw Ahmet Muhtar once entering Derviş Mehmet's house. Küçük Hasan also added how Derviş's wife told him that Ahmet Muhtar had stayed at their home once. Ahmet Muhtar insisted that these statements were false. Nalıncı Hasan stressed that Derviş Mehmet was a disciple of Ahmet Muhtar. According to Nalıncı, once Ahmet Muhtar Efendi had asked Derviş Mehmet if he had wished to become a saint (*veli*). Derviş Mehmet said he wanted to and asked him to make him one. Thereafter Ahmet Muhtar told him to commit himself to the order. Derviş accepted the offer. Then Ahmet Muhtar brought forward the issue of his smoking hashish. When Derviş admitted it, Ahmet Muhtar made him promise not to smoke hashish again. Afterwards, Ahmet Muhtar taught him the many names of God and made him his dervish.³⁶⁸ Mehmet Emin also confirmed Ahmet Muhtar stayed at Derviş's home.

Nalıncı Hasan accused three additional inhabitants of Manisa for being dervishes with Hafız Ahmet as their sheikh. These individuals, Ahmetoğlu Mehmet

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 34.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 55, 56.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 47.

Çavuş, Tütüncü Hasanoğlu Hasan and Hüseyin Mazlum who were present in the trial.³⁶⁹ The issue continued to be elucidating the memberships of the order. Although substantial evidence indicated that the order was active, there was by no means any element pointing to an attempt to riot. The transition of the court's agenda towards establishing the activities of the membership of the order and uncovering the times and places of their *zikir* meetings was not incidental. After a certain point, the subject matter of the trials turned into testimonies regarding the existence of the order and the activities of certain detainees in this regard. Revealing the persons who were disciples did not shed light on the background of Derviş Mehmet's attempt to revolt. The three men Nalıncı mentioned were acquitted. Among the aforementioned names, those charged with organizing meetings in their homes, Manifaturacı Osman Efendi, Hafız Cemal, İlyas Hoca, Ragıp Bey and Mutaf Süleyman Efendi were sentenced to capital punishment. The owner of the coffeehouse in which Derviş and his fellows initially gathered, Çırak Mustafa, who did not speak one single word during the trials and Tatlıcı Hüseyin whose home was the second meeting place were also given the death penalty. The aforementioned members of the Nakşibendi order, Hafız Ahmet and Ahmet Muhtar, shared the same fate. As for Hafız Ali Osman and Hacı Hilmi, they received imprisonment for one year, while Şeyh Hakkı Efendi was acquitted.³⁷⁰

3.8.1. Laz İbrahim

Laz İbrahim had been an *imam* in a military regiment of Manisa for three years. He was introduced as the real intriguer behind the Menemen Incident. He allegedly motivated Derviş Mehmet to initiate a rebellion against the republic. The judge asserted that Laz İbrahim did not commit such an act on his own but he took instructions from Şeyh Esat, the leader of the Nakşibendi order at the time. Nalıncı Hasan's accounts were the primary evidence on which the charges against Laz İbrahim were based crimes. Nalıncı stated he had become a disciple of the order via Laz İbrahim.³⁷¹

Laz İbrahim was charged with recruiting people from Manisa and nearby villages for the Nakşibendi order. He convinced people to dedicate themselves to the order. He spoke of the republican politics critically and talked about the re-opening

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 51.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 90–1.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

of dervish lodges. The judge questioned Nalıncı as to whether Laz İbrahim organized secret meetings in the villages or not. Nalıncı replied that he did not know about any secret organization, but he remarked that Laz İbrahim made people perform the *zikr* after the prayers (*namaz*). He stated that Laz İbrahim advised people not to be afraid of the government. He further said the government could not prevent their reciting.³⁷² Mehmet Emin as well stated Laz İbrahim was an important person in the Nakşibendi order and an enemy of the republic. He added that the organization and its members acted against the republic by hiding behind religion. Laz İbrahim was reported to have referred to people who wore hats as infidels.³⁷³

Laz İbrahim was not consistent in his replies. He initially mentioned having a poor memory and an impairment of consciousness. He said he had a heart condition and an eye disease as well and he was not able to see clearly. It is quite difficult to determine to what extent these weaknesses were true and affected him during the trial. It is apparent that he tried to avoid the pressure which the judge put on him. When asked about whose home they had been gathering in in Manisa, he said he did not remember, but their meetings did not involve conversations about politics or the government. He said they only discussed the Prophet's sayings and he gave advice only about religious issues.³⁷⁴ To support his claims, he cited some verses from the Qur'an, and stressed he was ready to take an oath.

Laz İbrahim's restless attitude, together with his other manners, reflected that he had been speaking against the government. He had also been organizing *zikr* rites and summoning people to the order. For example, when *imam* Mustafa Asım Efendi was brought to the witness stand, he said he knew Laz İbrahim in the past. Laz İbrahim talked to him about the favours of being a dervish on several occasions. Mustafa Asım was not interested in becoming a dervish. Yet, Laz İbrahim insisted on the favours of being a dervish and suggested to Mustafa Asım to enlighten those who came to his mosque. At that point, Laz İbrahim became annoyed with Mustafa Asım's resistance and told him "A person must take initiative actively and not be [driven like] an animal."³⁷⁵ This report (and others) suggested that Laz İbrahim looked for *imams* to participate in the order organization and to train others and was

³⁷² Ibid., 13.

³⁷³ Ibid., 9.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 37, 63.

³⁷⁵ The expression in Turkish: "İnsan müteaddi olmalı hayvan olmamalı."

tense about the persistent rejection of the *imams* of his request -judging by his harsh words which Asım Efendi could clearly remember.³⁷⁶

Another witness Uncu Mehmet Emin Efendi explained in his sworn statement that the villagers of Horos had no connection with the order previously. Yet, Laz İbrahim came to the village in 1928 and recruited the villagers into the order. He took three of his fellows to İstanbul to kiss Şeyh Esat's hand. When questioned by the judge about other issues, Uncu said Laz İbrahim was taken to court for saying that anyone who dances is an infidel.

Another incident of Laz İbrahim was that he had argued against the hat act and was reported by the village headman of Horos, İbrahim.³⁷⁷ Laz İbrahim reminded the court that those charges against him were dropped and asked the judge if it were legal to be interrogated again for the same charges. The judge responded that he wanted to examine Laz İbrahim's past.³⁷⁸ The judge asked him about the *zıkr*. Laz İbrahim expressed he recited God's name at home on his own. He referred to a verse from the Qur'an in which reciting the name of God is advised. He also added that since *zıkr* is a form of prayer, he performed it in the mosque as well. Nalıncı Hasan interrupted and said, "You are standing in the presence of a *paşa* of the republic but you still lie!" Mehmet Emin added, "What might the ignorant and illiterate ones do if scholars like Laz İbrahim act in such impulsive ways." Laz İbrahim said reciting God's name was not a crime. In return, the judge stressed everyone can pray at home or recite, but he blamed Laz İbrahim for gathering naive people around him and poisoning their minds behind the mask of the order. Laz İbrahim stressed the purpose of his reciting was not what the judge claimed. He added he did not break the law.³⁷⁹ Thus, this interrogation as well developed along similar lines to previous ones. Instead of investigating the degree and forms of the role Laz İbrahim played in the Menemen Incident, his interrogations revolved around his organization of *zıkr* performances and his working for the benefit of the order.

Nalıncı accounted for his visit to the mansion of Şeyh Esat in Erenköy in detail. This narration is significant in indicating the unreliability of the statements of the perpetrators about the position of the order's notable leaders. Nalıncı told the

³⁷⁶ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 39.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 40.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 63.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 37, 63.

court that he stayed there for eleven days. During his stay, Laz İbrahim was there as well. One day, while Nalıncı, Laz İbrahim, Şeyh Esat and others were having a conversation, they asked Nalıncı to leave the room and let them talk in private. Nalıncı said he left the room but stayed in front of the door to listen to the conversation. He alleged that, in the room, Laz İbrahim told the others that the caliphate would be re-constituted, and the dervish lodges would soon be re-established. The Hat Act would be repealed and wearing the *fes* would be brought back. In other words, allegedly they were engaged in conversations against the republican government.³⁸⁰ In response, Laz İbrahim admitted that they stayed at Şeyh Esat's house. Moreover he agreed that they asked Nalıncı to leave the room. So Nalıncı did not hear what was said. But he stated that obviously Nalıncı was lying about the nature of their conversation.³⁸¹ Indeed, it is quite uncertain whether Nalıncı could have heard the talks behind closed doors. Still, the authenticity of the story did not have great influence on the profile of Laz İbrahim due to his prevailing antagonism against the republic, in the eyes of the court. However, Nalıncı's account made Şeyh Esat liable for hostility against the state. Regardless of the truthfulness of the story and because the court did not care to verify it, Şeyh Esat became implicitly connected to the Menemen Incident.

As it will be further discussed below in detail, Esat had nothing to do with the event in reality. Nalıncı's story provided the basis of the court's opinion about Şeyh Esat's antagonism to the republic. In addition, Esat was accused of and charged with instructing Laz İbrahim to undertake a rebellion. Again according to Nalıncı, at one point, he and Laz İbrahim were walking in İstanbul, and Laz İbrahim pointed to two battleships and told him that the sons of Abdülhamid II were waiting inside for the caliphate order to be re-established soon.³⁸² This was only an assertion by Nalıncı, and there is no way to know whether or not Laz İbrahim told such things.

The concrete materials against Laz İbrahim were letters written by him, Şeyh Esat's son Mehmet Ali Efendi, and Şeyh Esat himself. In one letter written by Laz İbrahim to Mehmet Ali in 1928, he mentioned he had no fault in a certain matter and begged Şeyh Esat's pardon. In addition, Laz İbrahim stressed his efforts to increase

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 12.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 37.

³⁸² Ibid., 12–3.

the public's sympathy towards Şeyh Esat in the region.³⁸³ The letter in question was a reply of Laz İbrahim to a former letter by Mehmet Ali. In the former one, Laz İbrahim was warned to know his own bounds. He was told not to go over Şeyh Esat's authority while conducting the order's work. The judge interpreted what was written in these letters as evidence of Laz İbrahim's full commitment to the betterment of the Nakşibendi order.³⁸⁴

Other letters written by Şeyh Esat to some others about Laz İbrahim were mentioned in the trials as well. In one of these letters, Şeyh Esat notified a certain person about where to find Laz İbrahim.³⁸⁵ In another one, Esat informed someone that Laz İbrahim was with him in İstanbul³⁸⁶ Another letter included Esat's statement that a district governorship was established in Sarıyer, and Laz İbrahim had applied to the mediators and their "dear friends (*muhib*)" to be appointed as *mufti* there.³⁸⁷ The letters in question evidently show the mutual acquaintance between Şeyh Esat and Laz İbrahim. Thus, they can be seen as implicit evidence that the order remained active. Nevertheless, the letters provide not a single piece of information about the Menemen Incident or Derviş Mehmet and his followers.

Afterwards in the trials, facing the judge's insistent questioning, Laz İbrahim altered his statements and pretended to be confessing. Addressing the judge, he said he was at fault for performing the *zıkr* and regretted to be advising everyone to do so.³⁸⁸ He told giving people religious advice was his fault. He pretended as if he had just comprehended that the order was harmful. He took a step back and yielded to the judge's negative attitude and adverse interpretations. But he never admitted anything related to the Menemen Incident.

However, the judge did not seem to be convinced by his explanations. He continued to question him harshly. He asked him why did he invite others to join the order. Moreover, he questioned why he tried to attract supporters to the order even

³⁸³ The relevant part of the letter was published in a newspaper. Laz İbrahim's words were as follows in Turkish: "Ben kendi namıma çalışmıyorum; ilanı istiklal etmedim, ben gittiğim yerlerde bütün halkın size karşı aşk ve muhabbetini temin yolunda çalışıyorum. Sizin hatırıma gelenler doğru değildir. Ben bu vazifemi yaparken vazifemin, cazip ve sehhar tesirleri altında bazen ne yaptığımı unutuyorum, affediniz. Bütün mevcudiyetimle emrinizi ifa ediyorum." *Anadolu*, January 12, 1931.

³⁸⁴ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 57.

³⁸⁵ ATASE Arşivi, CDİ Koleksiyonu; Klasör.: 135; D.:4; F.:3-10.

³⁸⁶ ATASE Arşivi, F.:3-5.

³⁸⁷ ATASE Arşivi, F.:3-12.

³⁸⁸ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 57.

though Şeyh Esat had retired after the abolition of the lodges. At that point, Laz İbrahim expressed one of the vital points of the case. He stated that, because of the atmosphere of the period after the abolition of the lodges, the Menemen event was made to look as an undertaking of dervishes. He implied that the three perpetrators were intentionally casting aspersions on him and on others. However, according to Laz İbrahim, the members of the Nakşibendi order were loyal to the government.³⁸⁹

These last statements of Laz İbrahim were truthful. As discussed in various sections of the present work, the state officers were completely aware of the presence of the order. In the meeting in Dolmabahçe on 2 January 1931, Mustafa Kemal received a report from Şükrü (Kaya) about the Menemen Incident as well as the sufi activities of religious circles in certain regions of the country. Mustafa Kemal's following meeting on 7 January in Çankaya plainly demonstrated that top government officials had inherently known about the activeness of the order and stressed their determination to annihilate all religious orders for the sake of the republic.

3.8.2. Şeyh Esat

Şeyh Esat, was the leader the Nakşibendi order at the time of the Menemen Incident. As it is stated above, Nalıncı Hasan claimed to have overheard a conversation in Şeyh Esat's mansion, where anti-government issues were discussed. He stated that the people taking part in the conversation said the caliphate order and the dervish lodges would soon be reconstituted. This was the only testimony implicitly hinting that Şeyh Esat was involved in the Menemen Incident. Şeyh Esat as well gave temperate statements, seeking to refrain from any kind of tension between him and the judge. He was 83 years old and exhausted at the time. His initial sayings indicated he had no criminal record and a clean past, and the government had never had any issues with him.³⁹⁰

Şeyh Esat admitted the guests came to his mansion and stayed for days. He stressed he remained to preach people after the abolition of the sheikhdom. The judge asked if there had been any kind of procedure with which a guest had to comply, prior to coming to his presence. The judge pointed out few letters in which there were instructions for guests to follow.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 58.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 62.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 60.

The Judge further questioned Esat to what extent the order was concerned with the superficial events. Having presumed that the sects had been depending primarily on esoteric and internal issues, the judge asked if they were involved in any physical action in the world. Esat said the order had no connection to superficial matters. Another question was what were the essences and features of the order. Esat recounted five elements: heart, mystery, soul, privacy/secretcy and faith (*kalp, sır, ruh, hafa, iman*). The Judge further asked him to elaborate on the element of mystery. When Esat defined it as a divine grace of God, the judge inquired what the intention of the order was regarding this element. Esat spoke of some mystical details, none of which were relevant to the society or policy, so the judge changed the topic.³⁹²

There were other letters brought forth during the trials. They were written by Şeyh Esat to his son Mehmet Ali. The letters involved Esat's recommendations to his son about the development of the order. The judge told Şeyh Esat that it was good for a father to advise his son, but as far as he could understand from the letter, Esat had assigned the organization of the order to his son. Esat stressed that his letters were not specifically about the order. He alleged to have been merely advising his not to lose his way.³⁹³

Later, the judge asked Şeyh Esat whether he was on good terms with Laz İbrahim. He answered he knew Laz İbrahim as a sincere person. When questioned about his son's warnings about Laz İbrahim, Esat's reply was the same; he said he knew Laz İbrahim as a well-intentioned man.³⁹⁴ However, Esat's son Mehmet Ali told that he had warned his father against Laz İbrahim, in view of his blameworthy actions. Despite this concern, according to Mehmet Ali, his father was a naive old man and kept in touch with Laz İbrahim.³⁹⁵

Mehmet Ali said he did not take care of the order's business. He also emphasized his loyal services to the country. He asserted that he had not been involved in any counter political movement against the government.³⁹⁶ He added that he had been away from his father and did not intervene in his affairs. He was not aware of the *zikr* recitals and it would not have been suitable for their social status to be en-

³⁹² Ibid., 61.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 62.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 59.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

gaged in such activity, which was forbidden by the government. He claimed Laz İbrahim did not listen to him. Mehmet Ali asserted that he had been worried about Laz İbrahim's probable actions when Laz İbrahim told him he was going to Manisa. Mehmet Ali said he advised Laz İbrahim not to go, yet he did not listen.³⁹⁷ Nevertheless, particularly the last statement of Mehmet Ali was rather ostensible. He appears to be seeking to impress the court that he was really concerned about Laz İbrahim's presumptive and harmful conduct. In order to justify himself and to prove his innocence, Mehmet Ali further implicitly accused Laz İbrahim of being the agent of subsequent happenings upon his arrival at Manisa. However, as mentioned before, there was no substantial evidence revealing that Laz İbrahim or any other local associate of the order contributed to the Menemen Incident.

When the prosecutor indicted Şeyh Esat for being among the instigators of the Menemen Incident, Şeyh Esat told he was astonished at the prosecutor's opinions. He stated that they loved the government and remained very obedient to it. He told that the government banned performing the *zikir* and founding orders, but not welcoming guests and advising them. If hosting guests was banned as well, then he had nothing else to say. He repeated that he had no former criminal reports. He refused the allegation that his greeting of guests and advising them caused any damage. He asked the judge to clarify the terms by which he was charged guilty. He asked what offenses had he committed exactly. He said he did not accept charges based on presumptions and probabilities. He added that he was uncomfortable and had not slept, so he had become confused and tired. He also asked for the mercy of the court. The chief judge assured him about the justice of the court and expressed his best wishes.³⁹⁸

Şeyh Esat was right in being surprised about the charges brought against him. Similar to other members of the order, a link was somehow established between him and the actions of Derviş Mehmet. The judge maintained his pursuit to ultimately prove that the order remained active. Interrogations of Şeyh Esat aimed to indicate the presence of a leader whose words were still welcomed, respected and obeyed. These steps of the court aimed at establishing the basis of the punishment of a crime, although they were not about the Menemen Incident. The interrogations focused on

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 68.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 72.

revealing that the order had a leader and followers and continued its (religious) activities –but did not (could not) prove a connection between these activities and the Menemen Incident. Nevertheless, prominent figures of the order mentioned here were eventually sentenced to the death penalty for their involvement in the Menemen Incident.

None of Esat’s objections were taken into consideration. His interrogation consisted of his affairs related with the order while he was charged with instigating the insurgents involved in a reactionist revolt. Furthermore, as mentioned above, his activities had already been under surveillance. Laz İbrahim during his interrogation had remarked that the provision of the law regarding the closure of dervish lodges did not include restrictions for people to pay visits to sheikhs. Moreover, the mansion of Şeyh Esat had always been under police surveillance.³⁹⁹ Police officers and the police captain occasionally came to the mansion to observe the situation. Therefore the activities in the mansion were not illegal or clandestine. If an incident or movement had occurred against the government there, it would instantly become evident and officials would have intervened.⁴⁰⁰

There were as well newspaper reports about the surveillance of Şeyh Esat.⁴⁰¹ The martial court sent an information request to the attorney general of İstanbul regarding this issue.⁴⁰² The Prosecution Office assigned the request to the Police Department of İstanbul on 5 February 1931. In reply, the Security Directorate stated that the mansion of Şeyh Esat had been under surveillance de facto. It was determined that visitors came to the mansion from various cities, bearing gifts. Particularly on Fridays, many guests from the city centre of İstanbul visited the sheikh and this was reported to the Department of the Interior. The Security Directorate emphasized that they infiltrated the order by placing an officer who knew Esat to work as a servant in the mansion. The agent reported back and stated that no religious ceremonies

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ The article was entitled “A Rumor in Erenköy” and referred to “some whispers” about “a sheikh” conducting religious ceremonies in his mansion in Erenköy. *Vakit*, July 28, 1930. Authors who adopted counter-official way of accounting the event would render this “impassivity of official authorities” as “too noteworthy.” Mustafa Müftüoğlu, *Yakın Tarihimizden Bir Olay: Menemen Vak’ası* (İstanbul: Risale Yayınları, 1991), 79.

⁴⁰² The details about this correspondence appeared in a series of articles written by a Kemalist writer in 1966. (See Cemalettin Saraçoğlu, “Menemen İrticarı Adı Altındaki Cinayetin Esrar Dolu İç Yüzü,” *Tarih Konuşuyor* 29 (1966): 2490–94, 2429–33, 2513–16.) The interpretations of the writer in question are discussed in the next chapter.

or *zıkr* performances happened in the mansion. The Security Directorate stated the officials sought to “create” grounds to necessitate legal intervention. In this way, they had been in touch with the Security Chief Office of Konya, where a relevant event had taken place. They asked information, which would be sufficient for them to start the investigation on Şeyh Esat’s work regarding the order’s activities. The police department of İstanbul stressed that the officials had not received any confirmation from Konya at that time. Consequently, the Security Directorate of İstanbul could not commence an investigation about Şeyh Esat.⁴⁰³

3.9. Suspicious Aspects of the Judicial Process

This section aims to discuss certain suspicious situations that came to light during the trials. For example, the names of some detainees who were present in the trials were not included in the decision text of the court. Some of the defendants claimed their statements were falsified. Certain others asserted they were forced into admitting to accusations when they were first interrogated in the gendarme or police stations. For instance, İbrahimoğlu İsmail said he had not applauded while the events were taking place. However, when he was first taken to the station, the captain promised him he would be set free as soon as he confessed and admitted to applauding.⁴⁰⁴ By false persuasion, he confessed he applauded, but then he was arrested.⁴⁰⁵

Another defendant who faced the same situation was Berber (Barber) Hafız Ahmet. He was accused of firing a rifle from the mosque minaret to the gendarme while the insurgents were beheading Fehmi.⁴⁰⁶ Hafız Ahmet stated that a disorder occurred after a gunshot (probably the shooting of Mustafa Fehmi). There he encountered a soldier who asked him to climb to the minaret and check whether Menemen was surrounded by 70,000 men or not. When he climbed the minaret, another gun was fired, but he could not go up to the balcony of the minaret. Later in the day, he was called to help gather the corpses. He went to the office of the gendarme to give his statement. The officers told him to admit to be reciting the *ezan* (call to the prayers) while he was up in the minaret, so they could save him. Hafız Ahmet claimed he did not say he recited the call, and he told them he did not witness any-

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 2293–4.

⁴⁰⁴ The defendant referred to the captain’s words as follows: “Yüzbaşı Bey, ‘el çırtım’ de, ‘namussuzum seni koyuvermezsem,’ dedi.”

⁴⁰⁵ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 70.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 26.

thing. Moreover, he directly addressed the judge and told him to interrogate the perpetrators and ask them if he had done anything wrong.⁴⁰⁷ In other words, İbrahimoğlu İsmail and Berber Hafız Ahmet made the same assertion that they were imposed on to admit the charges made against them. Nevertheless, Hafız Ahmet was acquitted while İbrahimoğlu İsmail was executed due to perpetration in the second degree. The judicial basis of these different verdicts remains unclear.

Another intriguing matter is related to Laz İbrahim. The judge questioned him about a letter he wrote to Hafız Osman Hoca when he was arrested.⁴⁰⁸ He admitted to the letter in which he asked for pocket money from Hafız Osman as he was detained unexpectedly and did not know where he was being taken. However, according to Laz İbrahim, an anonymous sentence was added to the letter. He said he brought this point to the attention of the examining magistrate earlier and asserted that the sentence was added to the letter by government officers. The statement allegedly added to the letter was “Do not worry.” The judge did not press the matter since it was obvious that Laz İbrahim only asked for money in the letter.⁴⁰⁹ However, Laz İbrahim’s assertion is quite interesting in revealing the extent of the lack of evidence. The officers might have tried to plant evidence particularly to pave the way for the court to conclude that the event was pre-planned. Since Laz İbrahim’s assertion was neither falsified nor verified, it remains as a point that needs to be used with caution.

Ayanoğlu Mehmet was among the ones whose names were not included in the decision text. He was questioned as to whether he was acquainted with the captured villains or the ones who fled. He asserted that he was detained and brought to Menemen anyway although he did not know the insurgents. It was not clear whether Ayanoğlu Mehmet told the truth or not.⁴¹⁰ It seems, he was not charged with any crime but was detained and taken to the court. Nevertheless, his name was not included in the decision text.⁴¹¹ Memetoğlu Halil was in the same situation. He said

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁴¹¹ His statements indicate that Ayanoğlu Mehmet was from Menemen. The court documents refer to only “Ayan Mehmet” from Manisa, close to this name. However there was no statement made in the trials and recorded in the name of Ayan Mehmet. Such miswriting instances create ambiguities but not to an extent that would block our understanding of the issues

that although he told the officials he was innocent and unaware of anything, the investigating magistrate issued his arrest warrant and he was brought to the court.⁴¹² There was no court decision regarding Memetoğlu Halil either.

Some of the anomalies observed in the trial process were probably the result of the regime's strong reaction to the Menemen Incident. The distinctive point of Kubilay's cruel murder was its attribution to Islamist reactionists. The perpetrators were seen as reactionists, and this perception ascribed significance to the event. Six armed men in a republican town, with a banner in their hands, declared Mahdism. They encouraged and attracted the interest of the townsfolk as spectators, although to a very proportion of them. The townspeople's explicit and implicit support to the group, along with the beheading of Kubilay received harsh response from the regime, notably from the republican leaders. Given this reaction, the local law enforcement agents might have acted in a rush to prove that the inhabitants supported the demonstrators. They used many means to achieve this end, including deceptive promises to make them admit to the accusations. In return, officers assured some of the respondents that they would soon be set free. However, the reason why some of the defendants came to the stand only once and then were never seen again was that the court probably recognized they had nothing to do with the event and sent them away.

Two accused persons were sentenced to the death penalty by the martial court but the decision was reversed by the parliament. One of these persons was Talat Bey. During the trials, Mehmet Emin said Talat Bey was a dervish. For him, Talat was an important member of the order and had a significant position in the eyes of Şeyh Esat. He stated Talat Bey and Derviş Mehmet used to meet at Ali Çavuş's coffeehouse. When the judge questioned Ali Çavuş as to whether Talat and Derviş Mehmet had met in his coffeehouse, he answered they had.⁴¹³ Although the court decided on capital punishment for Talat Bey, the Justice Commission of the Parliament reversed the decision and gave him two years of imprisonment instead.

Keçeci İsmail⁴¹⁴ from Paşa Village was the second detainee whose verdict was changed to two years of imprisonment. His situation was, at the same time, the first of the two cases in which the perpetrators changed their testimonies. Based on

and events completely.

⁴¹² "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 67.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 51, 52.

⁴¹⁴ He was also recorded as Kahya Ahmetoğlu İsmail from Paşa Village, in the records.

the initial statements of the perpetrators, he was accused of taking Derviş Mehmet and his company into his car. He was found guilty as charged. The accusations held that Derviş Mehmet got in Kahya (Keçeci) İsmail's car and set off to the village of Paşa along with others.⁴¹⁵ Later in the concluding remarks of the trials, Mehmet Emin stated that his mind felt fuzzy previously when he said Keçeci had taken them into his car. He changed his statement and said they only had been in Keçeci's home but not in his car. Küçük Hasan as well said they stayed at Keçeci's home for an hour.⁴¹⁶ Still, the alterations in the statements did not influence the court decision at first. Keçeci İsmail was among the persons who were sentenced to capital punishment. However, as in the case of Talat Bey, the Justice Commission of the National Assembly changed the decision and sentenced him to two years of imprisonment. The commission's justification of changing the court's sentence in these two cases is unknown.

The second case involving a change in the perpetrators' statements took place during Saffet Hoca's interrogations. The distinctive point of Saffet Hoca is that he was charged with being an instigator of the actions of Derviş Mehmet and his fellows. As pointed out in the second chapter, testimonial statements and official narrations agreed on Saffet Hoca's doings in the scene of the event. He had not joined in Derviş's group. While the group went around the town, Derviş met Saffet, then summoned his men, and lined them up. He made them show their guns in the presence of Saffet. Still, Saffet did not join to the group, and went home.

During the interrogation regarding Saffet's acquaintance with Derviş, Nalıncı Hasan said that he came across Derviş Mehmet and Şeyh Saffet one day three weeks prior to the incident. They were next to a pine grove and were talking in Greek. They offered him a cigarette, and shortly after, Nalıncı left them. But he stayed close in order to spy on them. Although Nalıncı stated that they talked to each other for an hour, he did not give details about the conversation. Another day, again according to Nalıncı, Saffet saw him and took him to an olive grove. Saffet pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, wrote something down on it and gave it to Nalıncı to deliver to Derviş Mehmet. He took the note, but he had no information about what was written

⁴¹⁵ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 74.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

in it. What is interesting in this case is that even the court judges did not ask what was written in the note.⁴¹⁷

In the court, Saffet Hoca initially gave details about his life to prove his point that he was not involved in the crime. He emphasized his full commitment to the betterment of the country, as did many of the defendants. He gave well-known names of some generals with whom he had fought side by side during the War of Independence. He also mentioned some important names as mutual acquaintances. All these acquaintances were of the intellectual class. He told that after the occupation, he applied to jobs and was appointed as the Preacher of Manisa. His preaching was in complete accordance with the instructions of the programme assigned by the Directorate of Religious Affairs. He claimed his preaching he had nothing to do with the opposition to the government and included explicit, self-evident topics.⁴¹⁸

Saffet rejected all the allegations and stated that if it were established that he had known even the name of Derviş Mehmet previously, he would comply with the decision of the court. Saffet's statements were at a higher intellectual level compared to most others. He pleaded his innocence in an effective and literary discourse. He swore an oath to the effect that he by no means had any relationship with the reactionist movement and was ready to do anything to justify that his hands were clean.⁴¹⁹ He stated it was him as a scholar who declared there was no such thing as the Mahdi twenty years ago. He warned people not to believe in such superstitions.⁴²⁰ However, according to Mehmet Emin's statements, they went to the mosque and listened to Saffet Hoca's sermons.⁴²¹ According to Mehmet Emin, though he did not see any personal contact between them, Derviş had been inspired by Saffet Hoca. Again according to Mehmet Emin, everyone knew that Derviş depended on Saffet Hoca.⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 8.

⁴²² Ibid., 8, 18. Moreover Ramiz from Menemen, who was charged with following the group in Menemen, asserted that when Derviş Mehmet saw Saffet Hoca, he asked him why he had been standing away and told him to get under the banner; *ibid.*, 22–3. Apart from the perpetrators' accounts, which could occasionally be fabricated particularly when they talked about prominent detainees, Derviş's direct appeal to Saffet and Saffet's calmly going away without saying anything also demonstrates an acquaintance between the two of them. However, the extent of this acquaintance remains uncertain.

Saffet Hoca's defence, thus, did not influence the court's decision. In the general opinion as to the accusations, he was considered among the principal actors of the crime.⁴²³ However, during the concluding remarks of the detainees, an interesting situation occurred. "As the chairmanship of the court considered necessary," Küçük Hasan was "re-questioned" about a dream he had while residing in Bozalan. He gave a statement conflicting with other accounts. Küçük Hasan, in his new statement, alleged that on the day of their departure to Menemen, Derviş Mehmet questioned the members of the company as to what they dreamed of during the former night. Küçük Hasan said he saw a *hoca* who would help the company when they arrived at Menemen. Since Nalıncı Hasan had often been to Menemen to sell pattens, Derviş asked him: "Who would be the *hoca* to help us upon our arrival at Menemen?" Nalıncı Hasan replied the *hoca* must have been Saffet in Menemen. At first, the judge had not questioned any of the perpetrators regarding any dreams in the course of the trials. Nalıncı had emphasized earlier in the trials that Derviş had said they would go to the home of Saffet Hoca in Menemen and would take measures against the government.⁴²⁴ Mehmet Emin also stated Derviş informed them that they would stay at Saffet Hoca's house for one night.⁴²⁵ As for Küçük Hasan, it was Nalıncı who had mentioned Saffet Hoca, not Derviş himself.⁴²⁶ That is to say, the judge intentionally brought up the subject of dream and made Küçük Hasan change the content of the aforementioned conversation. In other words, it was an intervention at the end of the trials on the way to proclaim Saffet's innocence.

Saffet Hoca's wife wrote a letter and submitted it to the chief judge. It was highly literate and stated Saffet's innocence by praising the government and expressing their trust in the court's justice. It touched upon the lack of evidence against him.⁴²⁷ At the end of the trials, Saffet was acquitted due to lack of evidence.⁴²⁸ Saffet's situation was quite unusual compared to others who were charged with support-

⁴²³ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 78.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 73. The documents including the concluding remarks of the defendants are situated before the prosecutor's opinion as to the accusations in the relevant file in the parliament archives.

⁴²⁷ A similar letter to the court was submitted by the sister of Josef, charged with applauding the company. In the letter, the sister expressed that jews were absolutely loyal to the Turkish state. However, it was not taken into consideration and Josef was executed. (See *ibid.*, 84.)

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 89.

ing Derviş's actions. All the other prominent detainees were sentenced to heavy penalties, most of them to capital punishment. Although the evidence against the other prominent figures was as unjustifiable as that against Saffet, his name was somehow cleared. The real reason why he was acquitted still remains as unknown.

A final point that needs to be mentioned here is the judge's attitude towards the detainees regarding the alleged crimes. The persons whose crimes were obvious did not have much to say. They merely rejected the accusations, but did not defend themselves from various aspects. For example it was plain that the villagers hosted the company, and they pleaded themselves in simple terms. In some of the cases though, such as the case of the defendants from Manisa who were assumed to be behind the events, the chief judge brought forward evidence such as letters and statements, pointing to the crime of the person in question. Nevertheless, he usually did not expand on the assumed concrete proofs that he mentioned to be present, and passed on.

The trials did not only exhibit counter evidence and statements against the detainees. It became apparent that there had been suspicious situations that occurred during the interrogations made by the gendarme, police and investigating magistrate. Some respondents were misled by officers, records disappeared, and there were allegations that officers planted evidence. Such suspicions cast doubt on the judicial process. It can be argued that the court had already made its final decision at the very beginning that the event was planned by a religious order to harm the republic, and this is why the contradictions in the judicial process did not matter.

3.10. Court in the Name of the Republic

The attitude and statements of the chief judge demonstrated that he was positioned as the representative of the republic. He was acting on behalf of the regime rather than seeking to establish the justice. Thus, examining his expressions help understand various aspects from which the Menemen Incident was perceived by the state. He explained what the republic would have expected the people to do in the case of such an incident. Moreover, when religious issues were brought forth, the judge's explanations reflected the general policies of the republic on public-religion relations. Among the interrogations, he frequently assured the defendants of the ultimate justice of the court.

The chief judge stated there had never been such an incident in history in which an officer was slayed in front of many citizens. He condemned the defendants for standing by as spectators.⁴²⁹ He occasionally questioned the defenders one on one to see why they did not take a stand against the six insurgents as a crowd collectively. He asked if they had been so afraid of Derviş that they became paralyzed.⁴³⁰ He further questioned them angrily if their lives were much more precious than that of the officer who was killed. Another question was if they would run away when a robber entered their homes and cut their wives and children, as “unmanly” as they did in Menemen. He argued that they could have intervened in the shameful event in one way or another, even though they were unarmed. By not doing so, for the judge, the defendants dishonoured Turkish history.⁴³¹

As for the chief judge’s accounts on personal and religious affairs, he stated that fulfilling the duties of Islam was a necessity. Every Muslim was to know God, recognize the Prophet, and pray.⁴³² Anyone could perform *zikr* when alone, since worship was the most sacred duty of Muslims. In one particular interrogation, an accused person, as a strategy of defence, stated that far from being a dervish, he did not even perform *salaat*. The judge admonished the man, telling him he ought to perform *salaat* and if he did not, he was at fault. For the judge, saying “I do not perform *salaat*” was not a defensive argument; “a Muslim man could not talk in such manner,” it was shameful for him to say “I do not even perform *salaat*” to defend himself.⁴³³ When he asked the detainees to tell the truth about the issue, he sometimes evoked religious phrases such as “God is the helper of the one who tells the truth.”⁴³⁴

During his interrogation about his connection with the villagers of Horos, Laz İbrahim said some of the peasants did not know how to perform ablution. They were so ignorant that some of the inhabitants even thought God was situated in İstanbul. He said this was why he preached to the villagers. When the chief judge asked the villagers of Horos about this, they admitted their ignorance. They stated Laz İbrahim taught them the rules and conventions of Islam. In return, the judge expressed his surprise and asked how they possibly had not known how to perform their ablutions.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 26.

⁴³² Ibid., 62.

⁴³³ Ibid., 70.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 31.

He asked them if they were not Muslims, since they did not know such a fundamental element of Islam.⁴³⁵ According to the judge, there were preceptors who possessed scholarly competence and were assigned by the government to explain and educate people about religious matters. He then asked, why would one regard being directed by someone else about religion necessary? Laz İbrahim said his purpose was to recruit people to do good and be benevolent. He taught people that doing good things was among the provisions of the Qur'an and asked the judge if what he did was a sin. The judge replied that illiterate people might seek a scholar to learn from. Laz İbrahim metaphorically responded that "the people are so much ill that the doctor is supposed to visit him personally." He recounted that many of the villagers of Horos did not know how to perform *salaat* either. The judge's response was that a patient ought to call a doctor himself, implicating that it was not their duty to go to people and instruct them about religion.⁴³⁶ The judge said a *hoca* might pray and recite God's name in his home, which was praiseworthy. However, in this case, others were coming together in houses to discuss damaging issues.⁴³⁷ "One must not gather people around him and use religion as a means for other purposes. It is wrong to poison people this way. Evil would occur if people come together to justify their intentions religiously."⁴³⁸

After these statements of the judge, Laz İbrahim provided political examples. For him, until then, there had been approximately 10,000 *pashas* and deputies depended on the government. Yet, for him, the *hocas* did not object to governmental acts since they had no intention of getting political positions in the state. However, the judge had a different opinion. For him, the nation had suffered much from the so-called enlightened and scholarly members of the order. If one were to examine the four hundred years of Turkish history, one would realise that the followers of the Nakşibendi order had been poisoning naïve and poor Muslims under the roof of the order. For the judge, the order used the Turkish nation as an instrument. The judge then said that people who acted secretively had done harm to the country. Laz İbrahim restated that the people who had harmed the government were inside the parliament, or were among other important state officials, but there was no notable

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 70.

religious person among them. However, the judge's response was immediate and harsh. He referred to the rebellion of Şeyh Said and said the leader himself and his sixty followers were sheikhs.⁴³⁹ The judge stressed that the republic had no more endurance and patience left for them. Reactionist movements and revolts constantly occurred so that consequently foreigners ridiculed the country. He asked the detainees how could this be possible.⁴⁴⁰

The judge said the government of the country worked day and night for these lands, which had been blessed with the pure blood of Turks. For him, the court had been conducting detailed investigations in order to expose and punish the betrayers who tried to damage the state and the nation. The court was capable of distinguishing the cruel from the innocent. He stressed it was necessary to stop those who damaged the country. Common good and public interest required this action. Instead of fourteen million Turkish people crying because of the actions of the traitors, it should be the insurgents who must shed tears.⁴⁴¹

3.11. Distortion of the Newspapers

The officially-biased newspapers reported the judicial proceedings in their own terms. Along with conveying distorted information, they made the perpetrators' statements particularly those related to the order, look trustworthy. As discussed earlier, starting immediately on the day after the event, these newspapers described the incident as the planned revolt of a religious organization. Subsequently, they maintained and promoted this position. They analysed the perpetrators' statements in terms of the malevolent and harmful intentions of the Nakşibendi order. The martial court facilitated great convenience for these reporters of these newspapers to observe the court process at all phases.⁴⁴²

After the first session, Küçük Hasan was interestingly depicted as very intelligent in the media.⁴⁴³ Küçük Hasan and Nalıncı Hasan were most probably ordered to tell everything they knew with exaggeration. They were probably told to degrade the Nakşibendi order and its associates, its leaders who were present in the trials.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁴² *Yeni Asır*, February 5, 1931.

⁴⁴³ *Cumhuriyet*, January 16, 1931.

⁴⁴⁴ The newspapers described both of them as being calm in their cells to convey the psy-

In return, they would be rewarded and not be sentenced to death because of the age limit. That praise of Küçük Hasan also provided the basis for the presumption that the perpetrators would tell the truth about everything. However, there were also false reports that the newspapers made up about the statements of the defendants. For instance, it was asserted that Şeyh Esat told his son Mehmet Ali about his regret and that he wished he had not “become involved in such bloody affairs.”⁴⁴⁵ As discussed earlier, Şeyh Esat never said anything that implied his involvement in the incident.

Mehmet Emin was asserted to have said in the first session that Derviş Mehmet had not performed the *salaat* but made his disciples do it. Nevertheless, Mehmet Emin did not say anything such as this in any session of the trials.⁴⁴⁶ A quarrel was also alleged to have taken place between Mehmet Emin and Ramazan in trials. While Ramazan was making statements, Mehmet Emin was reported to have intervened by saying: “Do not tell a lie to the court of the republic. Did you not adore Derviş Mehmet as if he were God?”⁴⁴⁷ Again such a dispute never occurred during the proceedings.⁴⁴⁸

Another misleading article was about Raşitoğlu İbrahim, who allegedly said to the public, “You will get what you deserve three days later.” before the incident.⁴⁴⁹ According to the newspaper, although the accused refused to confess saying so, “some witnesses” asserted the truth of this statement. It is necessary to discuss this matter because the newspapers relied on these stories to indicate that the events had been pre-planned. As the issue came to the fore in the trials formerly, İbrahim was not addressing the “public” or telling the people publically about what was going to happen. This was merely a conversation between him and a certain Yusuf in

chology of the defendants. They were sorrowing because they would rot in jail, but were glad also because being younger than twenty-one saved them from the death penalty. *Cumhuriyet*, January 23-24, 1931; *Milliyet*, January 23, 1931. However, it was not the same for Mehmet Emin who was twenty-nine years old and could not take advantage of the age limit. He was more eager to cooperate with the court to reveal “the truth” in trials and more distressed outside the court room than the other two perpetrators. He kept telling that he was innocent and deceived by Derviş Mehmet in desperate sadness. *Yeni Asır*, February 2, 1931.

⁴⁴⁵ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 9, 1931.

⁴⁴⁶ *Milliyet*, January 16, 1931.

⁴⁴⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, January 17, 1931.

⁴⁴⁸ These newspaper reports are significant not only for reflecting the extent of the misinformation fabricated by the media, but also for showing how a good part of the literature published on this matter later relied on these reports as their source, as if they conveyed true information.

⁴⁴⁹ *Milliyet*, January 20, 1931.

Menemen. During the trials, the judge as well initially took this account as evidence that İbrahim knew what would happen. Later, Yusuf Efendi and Mehmetoğlu Abdullah, inhabitants of Menemen, were asked about the issue. They explained that while talking about the RPP organization in the town, İbrahim jokingly said, “Although you established the party organization, you will see what will happen.” Witnesses said İbrahim had been a supporter of FRP and he attended the party rally, which had been organized before the local elections in Menemen.⁴⁵⁰ That is to say, there were no “witnesses” insisting on the accuracy of the aforementioned sayings as alleged by the newspaper. Besides, Raşitoğlu İbrahim would be among the persons who were acquitted.

There was distorted information about Saffet Hoca as well. Certain newspapers reported Nalıncı Hasan to have stated that when they arrived at Menemen, first they went to the home of Saffet Hoca. Saffet did not answer the door initially. But then, he came and talked to Derviş Mehmet. There, Derviş promised him that if they were to achieve their goals, he would appoint Saffet’s uncle as a civil servant.⁴⁵¹ One newspaper even defined him as “the would-be *qaimaqam* of Menemen under the aspired reactionary order.”⁴⁵² However, news about Saffet Hoca had to be reversed because of his acquittal. The papers wrote “Saffet Hoca’s acquittal may seem bizarre at first glance” since the perpetrators had blamed Saffet Hoca for having a hand in the incident during the trials. As explained above, however, the concluding remarks of the detainees cleared Saffet of the blemishes. Nalıncı stated that what he had said about Saffet Hoca was only a dream and not true. This change of statement was as well reported and the court’s decision regarding the acquaintance of Saffet was commented as rightful.⁴⁵³

3.12. Verdicts of the Martial Court and Executions

The decisions of the court were read on the last day of the trials. There were serious judicial contradictions and ungrounded statements in the decision text. This was the case because the court was to rule reach certain designated verdicts after all. As previously discussed, the prosecutor’s arguments in the opinion as to the accusa-

⁴⁵⁰ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25,” 36.

⁴⁵¹ *Cumhuriyet*, January 16-17, 1931.

⁴⁵² *Anadolu*, January 22, 1931.

⁴⁵³ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 30, 1931; *Vakit*, January 30, 1931. Indeed, according to these newspapers, each verdict of the court was just in any case.

tions conflicted with the facts. The offences with which the prosecutor charged the detainees in the opinion as to the accusations were almost the same with the initial charges of the court. Decisions of the court accorded with initial charges and prosecutor's opinion. So to say, the arguments of the defendants do not seem to have influenced verdicts. Only the women from the aforementioned villages, the female relatives of the perpetrators, and some men who had no direct connection to the events or the order, were unconditionally released due to lack of evidence.

In the opinion as to the accusations, the prosecutor had inferred that the event was not local but extensive in nature. He stated that the evidence revealed the presence of an organization as the real actor behind the incident. According to the prosecutor, the details of the intended event had been discussed and the attendants agreed on the steps to be taken in the last meeting held at Tatlıcı's home in Manisa on 6 December 1930. This was a strategic point to link the actions in Menemen to Manisa. However, nothing about Menemen was mentioned in Manisa. As all the perpetrators expressed, though they took action with the purpose of declaring Mahdism, Derviş Mehmet firstly stressed his plan to go to Menemen in Bozalan. This is among the crucial points, which undermines all allegations that the riot had been pre-planned. As the newspapers of the era as well as subsequent narrations asserted, the insurgents chose Menemen deliberately because of the opposition of its people to government policies. But this reference to a deliberate choice is not true. As the perpetrators stated, Derviş asked them questions about Menemen just before they left Bozalan. It is difficult to determine whether Derviş had set his mind to going to Menemen from the beginning. Still, it is clear that the company did not depart from Manisa especially to arrive at Menemen. Although the prosecutor mentioned that Derviş gave hashish cigarettes in pairs to each of his disciples and that they entered the town under its influence,⁴⁵⁴ he still insisted they were acting according to plan.

In the opinion as to the accusations, the prosecutor expressed that he would bring the origins of the events to light. He emphasized it was the Nakşibendi order that trained the actors of Menemen and it was again the same order that had deceived the people by operating under the mask of the order. In the document, he gave some general information about the order and named Laz İbrahim the caliph of caliphs (*halifeler halifesi*). He stated that by traveling almost all over Anatolia, Laz İbrahim

⁴⁵⁴ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi C: 25," 75.

made the roots of the order stronger. He was trying to empower it, while spreading his corrupt thoughts as an enemy of the state.⁴⁵⁵ In other words, the prosecutor defined Laz İbrahim as a nemesis of the regime without remarking in detail on his allegedly hostile and maleficent actions.

As for Şeyh Esat, the prosecutor stressed that as all the notebooks, letters and the like, found in the search during the investigations demonstrated, the order was “still active and he was its sheikh.”⁴⁵⁶ However, establishing this was not on the agenda of the court and hence it should not concern the prosecutor. For him, the evidence about the Nakşibendi order explicitly revealed that it was a political organization.⁴⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the way the Nakşibendi order was defined as a political agency was a fabrication. Neither a single political movement of the order was specified, nor a collective attempt of its members to intervene in the political arena was found.

The issues pointed out by the chief judge about the background organisation were recounted by the prosecutor as well. For instance he mentioned that there were meetings held in Manisa to which Laz İbrahim, Osman, Ragıp and others attended, and *zikrs* were performed. He expressed some of the men frequently went to İstanbul to visit Şeyh Esat. These were among the points made to justify that the order was the actual agency behind the events. He further spoke of Hafız Ahmet testing Giritli Mehmet to see if he were fit for Mahdism.⁴⁵⁸ The story was most probably a fabrication, as discussed earlier. However this story implicated that not only Hafız Ahmet but all *hocas* in question were associated with the events.⁴⁵⁹ The fact that Laz İbrahim made villagers of Horos disciples of the order was further irrelevantly defined as a pointer of the incident as a planned action of the Nakşibendi order.

The aforementioned letters of Şeyh Esat and Laz İbrahim were brought forth as evidence as well.⁴⁶⁰ As the most important element, the prosecutor emphasized

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁶⁰ The statement in the document was as follows: “Anadolunun bir tarafında bulunan bir şeyhin diğer bir tarafta şayanı itimat bulduğu bir şahsa tarikat yolunda faaliyette bulunması için mektuplar göndermesi gibi deliller, bize Menemen faciasını doğuran esas faillerin, başında Kutbülazam olduğu halde, oğlu Mehmet Ali ve Laz İbrahim ve Laz İbrahim’in muhiti faaliyetine aldığı aynı tarikata mensup yukarda isimlerini arzettiğim maznunlardan mürekkep bir şebeke tarafından yetiştirildiğini maddeten ortaya koymaktadır.” Ibid., 81–2. The aforementioned letters were examined in the relevant section, and yet it must be repeat-

that “all perpetrators claimed that the *hocas* in question were involved in the events”. In other words, the statements of the perpetrators were the justification of their accusations against others. The perpetrators’ explanations regarding the purpose of the Nakşibendi order to overthrow the government, re-establish the dervish lodges and bring back the sultanate order reflected the reality because they said so. The only evidence was Nalıncı’s supposed eavesdropping on a conversation in which “re-constituting the caliphate order was discussed” in the mansion of Şeyh Esat.⁴⁶¹

With a few exceptions, such as that about Saffet Hoca, the court’s verdicts corresponded to prosecutor’s charges. The detainees were sentenced to penalties on various grounds. Some of them were charged with forcibly attempting to change the constitution of the Republic of Turkey by declaring Mahdism. Another group was found guilty for joining the said attempts. Several others were convicted for helping insurgents, while some were accused of encouraging the public to join the riot. Punishments were inflicted according to the relevant provisions of the criminal code.⁴⁶²

The martial court passed sentences for 105 detainees on 25 January 1931. Seventy-eight of the arrested people were punished while twenty-seven were acquitted, including all of the women. There were thirty-seven death sentences, however, six of them were later changed to imprisonment for twenty-four years, because of the age limit. Capital punishment verdicts of thirty-one men were submitted to the parliament for approval, along with the interrogation records of the court process. The Justice Commission of the Parliament examined the file, then approved twenty-eight of the capital punishments and submitted it to the Speaker’s Office for voting.⁴⁶³ The decision of the Commission was put to vote in the parliament and approved on 2 February 1931.⁴⁶⁴

All the notable dervishes and sheikhs charged with implicitly or explicitly participating in the Menemen Incident, those who hosted the group and supplied ma-

ed that they were entirely about religious issues or the business of the order such as performing *zikrs* and reciprocal regards. There was nothing about Menemen in those letters, or any indication that Laz İbrahim or others “trained” some activists as pioneers of forthcoming rebellions. Nevertheless, later on newspapers would define Laz İbrahim as “the Lawrence of reactionism.” *Milliyet*, February 5, 1931.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 87–9.

⁴⁶³ One of the convicts died a natural death. The commission reversed the judgement of Talat Bey and Keçeci İsmail and converted them to imprisonment for two years. As accounted in the relevant section, the reason of this change was not specified and is still difficult to tell.

⁴⁶⁴ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:25 Yirmi Beşinci İn’ikat,” February 2, 1931, 11.

terials for them, and the townspeople who were asserted to have applauded the demonstrators during the events were sentenced to capital punishment. Şeyh Esat was condemned to death and his punishment as well was changed since he was over-age. He died in hospital.⁴⁶⁵

The newspapers published news about the executions. The executions of the convicts were carried out one by one on 4 February, in various districts of Menemen including the governmental square and the market place.⁴⁶⁶ Mehmet Emin was hanged exactly the same place where Kubilay was beheaded.⁴⁶⁷ In order to make it be a lesson and make sure that all people observed, officers did not remove the bodies but let them wait for several hours.⁴⁶⁸ There was a piece of paper on each of the bodies in which their crimes were written.⁴⁶⁹ Later on, the corpses were loaded on a truck and taken to the cemetery.⁴⁷⁰

Newspapers published the pictures of the hanged ones along with the photographs of the killed perpetrators on the day of the event as a deterrent to others. According to some newspapers, the executions were a sign showing that those who committed murder under the name of religion and *tarikât* would certainly be punished. “Within the boundaries of the Republic of Turkey, all such attempts would end the same way.”⁴⁷¹ Newspaper reports in general conveyed the exact message that the republican regime intended to give. It must be noted that although the chief judge Muğlalı recurrently stated the maleficence of the order during the trials and the prosecutor defined the Nakşibendi order as the enemy of the republic, the case of the Menemen Incident did not evolve into an operation to annihilate it. By inflicting se-

⁴⁶⁵ *Milliyet*, February 1, 1931.

⁴⁶⁶ One of the convicts, Hacıismailoğlu Hüseyin from Bozalan, waiting on the line, ran away by taking advantage of the officers' preoccupation with an ongoing execution. A reward was announced for the informant of his whereabouts. He was detained on 16 February in a village of Manisa, denounced by villagers. He was taken back to Menemen and executed on 18 February. *Son Posta*, February 19, 1931.

⁴⁶⁷ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, February 5, 1931. After Mehmet Emin, the Jewish (Jözef) was executed with a religious procedure conducted by a rabbi who came from İzmir. *Anadolu*, February 5, 1931. He was reported to have shouted “Long live the republic” when he was to be hanged. *Vakit*, February 4, 1931. He might have done so in blind hope. He is reported to have cried very much during the trials as well.

⁴⁶⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, February 4, 1931.

⁴⁶⁹ Dündar, *Gölgedekiler*, 70.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ *Yeni Asır*, February 5, 1931.

vere punishments,⁴⁷² the regime demonstrated its intolerance against the reactionist movements, no matter how they may have occurred. Apparently that was deemed as a sufficiently strong message that religion was for private life and should have no place in politics and governance.

3.13. Subsequent Trials

The martial court examined 606 files, which were prepared by investigating magistrates during the martial law. The court decided to hold trials for 272 files. It also decided non-prosecution for 255 and it had no jurisdiction for seventy-nine files.⁴⁷³ After the sentencing of the 105 detainees of the Menemen Incident, the martial court resumed the proceedings to hear the cases of the remaining 167 people. This second phase of the trials continued until the martial law was lifted on 8 March.⁴⁷⁴ In this second stage, the trials were not conducted in the same way as the former ones. The trials were separated into various categories.⁴⁷⁵

There were detainees from Bozalan, Alaşehir, Balıkesir, İstanbul, Eskişehir and other places. They were generally accused of breaking the law regarding the closure of dervish lodges, working to rebuild the orders, particularly the Nakşibendi order, and subverting the regime by exploiting religion.⁴⁷⁶ Particular charges included membership in the order; continuing to be engaged in the activities of an order; visiting, writing and receiving letters from sheikhs, performing rituals through gatherings at mosques and homes; not informing the law enforcement agencies about such activities and the like. Sixty-one of the 167 detainees were given imprisonment sentences ranging from two months to five years. These accusations as well as the evidence regarding the associates of the order were almost the same as the ones in the

⁴⁷² Öz alleged that all the prisoners would be released by courtesy of the amnesty proclaimed to honor the republic's tenth year anniversary. Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 421; Nevertheless, Öz did not mention his source for this information. There is no other source that mentions it. What is known is that Bedri Onat, a friend of Kubilay and a witness of the event, accounted in an interview that he had been in jail in Manisa for a while and saw Küçük Hasan and Nalıncı Hasan there in 1936. In other words, at least two perpetrators were still in prison after the tenth anniversary of the republic. Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 28.

⁴⁷³ *Anadolu*, March 1, 1931; *Cumhuriyet*, 1 March 1931.

⁴⁷⁴ *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, January 27, 1931.

⁴⁷⁵ Kurtoğlu, "Menemen Olayı," 179.

⁴⁷⁶ Somehow a case about an attempt to assassinate the district governor of Foça was combined with the Menemen files by the martial court. Twenty people were arrested for this attempt and all of them were released eventually. *Yeni Asır*, January 28, 1931.

case of the Menemen Incident. Still, the martial court inflicted much lighter sentences in this second phase of the trials where half of the people in the sixty-one cases were given imprisonments for three months.⁴⁷⁷

The martial law in Menemen was removed on 8 March 1931, when the martial court resolved all the cases before it.⁴⁷⁸ Life in Menemen returned to normal and a bronze statue of Kubilay was erected in the governmental square.⁴⁷⁹ As soon as the trials in Menemen were concluded, National Assembly as well completed its third term and went on a break until the next elections.

This chapter focused on the trials of the court process of the Menemen Incident. Rather than constituting a fair judicial process, it appeared to be a formalistic procedure intended to mark the Nakşibendi order as the planner of the incident. Despite the apparent lack of evidence, the leader of the order was found guilty of instigating Derviş Mehmet to initiate a revolt against the republic. The conclusion of the legal proceedings that the event was a pre-planned anti-government rebellion, would be taken for granted unquestioningly by authors who wrote on this event in the following years.

⁴⁷⁷ *Yeni Asır*, February 27, 1931. Almost all of the convicts received cash fines in varying amounts. Only two of them received an imprisonment penalty of five years. These two were charged with being regional leaders of the order. Another man was sentenced to two years of imprisonment. Three people were merely fined. Twenty-four convicts were sentenced to imprisonment for periods ranging from two months to one year. The punishments of ten people remain unclear. Some imprisonment periods were shortened due to old age and/or taking into consideration of the time spent in detention. (See Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 180–210, which is based on the February and March issues of *Hakimiyeti Milliye* newspaper mainly.)

⁴⁷⁸ *Anadolu*, March 9, 1931.

⁴⁷⁹ *Milliyet*, March 9-12, 1931.

CHAPTER 4

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND EVALUATIONS ABOUT THE MENEMEN INCIDENT

A variety of diverse accounts make up the literature on the Menemen Incident. All of the writers we will review here claim that the information they present is based on the primary sources of the time. However, there are many contradictions between their accounts of the incident. Subsequent literature on the event is categorized here in accordance with the statements and news reports, made right after the event by RPP leaders, officers and newspapers. I divide the accounts about the event that I discuss in this chapter into three main groups: officially-biased and misleading; counter-official and presumptive of conspiracy; and unbiased. Officially-biased narratives mainly rely on official statements made after the incident by RPP leaders as well as pro-government newspapers. Along with their biased approaches, almost all of the accounts discussed under this category include wrong information about specific aspects of the incident as well. Thus, bias and misinformation explored in this chapter are inseparably intertwined.

Counter-official accounts include the similar manner as well. On the one hand, they specify noteworthy issues and ask questions which profoundly challenge officially-biased accounts. On the other hand, they also recount misinformation and speculations about the event. Their speculations even verge on presumptions of conspiracy. Thus, the significance of their critiques against officially-biased explanations fall short because of their fictively conspiratorial stories.

There are unbiased descriptions of many aspects of the incident, made by scholars. These studies constitute a third category. They are not prejudiced in the ways the former two categories are. Still, although they seek to understand the actions as well as the conditions under which the incident occurred, they make ungrounded evaluations to provide causal explanations. Besides, these unbiased scholars also recount, though to a small degree, misinformation particularly on the activities that took place prior to and on the day of the event. Some of the misleading information, rooted principally in newspapers and official statements of the era, has penetrated all the writings in a way that influenced even unbiased scholars.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss all these categories of literature and to correct misleading information through grounding on substantial primary sources. By doing so, the context of the event is discussed, analyzed and interpreted from different angles.

4.1. Officially-Biased and Misleading Accounts

I will not discuss officially-biased accounts separately in this section. I divide these biased narrations into subtopics since they generally repeat the same issues as well as give the same sort of wrong information. I will indicate that officially-biased accounts converge on defining the Nakşibendi order as the agent of the incident. In this way, I will discuss the misleading information on the historical background of the order provided by these accounts. I will also argue how the order has been depicted as the enemy of the republic. The support that the people allegedly gave to “reactionism,” according to officially-biased narrations, is another subject matter of this section. I will also discuss the false presentations of the perpetrators. Another issue of this section is the substantial infrastructure that the order was alleged to have prepared for such revolt. I will discuss the extent to which the relevant literature exaggerated the insurgents’ actions. I will further explore the officially-biased accounts’ coverage of the responsibility of the officers when the incident occurred. I will also point to the flaws of recent literature particularly concerning the actions of the company. Finally, I will discuss the officially-biased narratives’ attacks on FRP as being politically responsible for the event.

4.1.1. The Nakşibendi Order as the Ultimate Culprit

The basic point of the officially-biased literature is that the Nakşibendi order was the driving force behind the Menemen Incident. These authors did not fabricate this point on their own. Their sources were the newspapers of the era, official statements and most significantly, the decision text of the martial court of Menemen. Once the court delivered this judgment about the order, that it was the agent that instigated the incident, a large part of the subsequent narrations have taken it for granted. Thus, they have reiterated the decision of the court.

RPP leaders announced and continued to define the event as an act of the Nakşibendi order. For instance, in an interview he gave to a French journalist, İsmet Paşa expressed that someone was trying to hurt their reform efforts for civilization,

freedom and the republic. For this purpose, “Nakşibendi members carried out the incident to revive an order that the republic can not tolerate any more.”⁴⁸⁰ This official notion has remained identical and the agents of the event are still thought of as associates of a reactionist organization in the eyes of state.

The predetermined verdict of the court has been the primary mainstay for officially-biased literature. On the whole, they narrated the event as far-reaching and organized by Nakşibendi followers with the specific phrase “according to the official records of the martial court of Menemen.” According to the officially-biased writers, official investigations and legal process revealed that it was not the act of a few miscreants and hashish addicts. Rather, for them, the Nakşibendi order was “its real supporter,” “planner,” “effective power,” and “organizer.”⁴⁸¹ “Inquiries uncovered that Derviş Mehmet was just a front man.”⁴⁸² The center of the event was Manisa⁴⁸³ and many other arrangements were made elsewhere.⁴⁸⁴ Menemen was just one of the targets of the insurgents. Had the reactionist revolt not been suppressed, it would have expanded to other places. Therefore the Menemen Incident was nationwide in nature, rather than local.⁴⁸⁵ Newspaper accounts have also been a primary source for this type of narration. Such newspapers as *Cumhuriyet* “certainly validated” that the incident was preplanned.⁴⁸⁶ “Under the circumstances of 1930, national press made a

⁴⁸⁰ *Vakit*, February 9, 1931.

⁴⁸¹ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 33–8; Erdiç Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler” (unpublished master thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, 2007), 101–3.

⁴⁸² In other words, the writer insinuates that the Nakşibendi order decided to step into action once Derviş Mehmet attracted supporters and claimed himself as the Mahdi. However, in the same article, the writer contradicts himself. He states; “Since it was brought to the light in the court process that the event was not broad in scope, subsequent trials dealt with giving an intimidation to religious orders. Capital punishments were executed but the inhabitants of Menemen were not banished.” Necdet Aysal, “Yönetmel Alanda Değişimler ve Devrim Hareketlerine Karşı Gerici Tepkiler ‘Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,’” *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü* 11, no. 44 (2009): 601, 610. In other words, Aysal is quite aware that the incident was not broad in scope, but he maintains his officially-biased position that the incident threatened the republic.

⁴⁸³ Tabak, “Menemen Olayının İzmir Basını’nda Yankıları,” 315.

⁴⁸⁴ Aslan Tufan Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1984), 239. Yazman states that he was a former neighbour of Kubilay.

⁴⁸⁵ Nihal Gonca, “Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Menemen Kazası (1923-1933)” (unpublished master thesis, Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2005), 72.

⁴⁸⁶ Hikmet Çetinkaya as well described the event as a planned reactionist action, referring to the relevant reports of *Cumhuriyet* of which he was a reporter. As mentioned previously, he had an interview with Bedri Onat, a friend of Kubilay and a member of the Türk Ocakları.

significant contribution in conveying the truest and broadest information about the Menemen Incident to the country.”⁴⁸⁷

4.1.2. On the Background of the Nakşibendi Order

Some of the officially-biased accounts provide background information about the Nakşibendi order. They usually depend on secondary sources about Islamic faith and mysticism. The information they offer is limited and superficial. For instance, a master thesis asserts that in the essence of Nakşibendis there are some remnants of old Persian cults, particularly Zoroastrianism. “Nakşibendi rituals of reciting the names of God have adopted some patterns from Zoroastrianism.”⁴⁸⁸ This explanation does not only consider a grand order as simple and uniform, it also fails to substantiate its comparison of two religious practices. İsmail Kurtoğlu, the writer of the thesis, does not point where and how these rituals resemble each other. He also does not give a single reference to scholarly studies regarding either the Zoroastrian or the Nakşibendi rituals.

Another assertion of the officially-biased authors is that the Nakşibendi order was the sole social, political and ideological force which formed the cultural history of Asian Muslims, particularly under the Ottomans in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸⁹ “Those establishments were initially constituted as religious and cultural centers but degenerated in time. On the one hand, they were addicted to lazing around and self indulgence, relying on the donations of rich Muslims to good causes and the poor, while on the other, they collected money from the humble folk under the name of sheikhdom.”⁴⁹⁰

Onat’s expressions about the event and the inferences of Çetinkaya, all in the same book, are explicitly contrasting. Çetinkaya quotes Onat, “if we had known anything previously, we would have caught the insurgents tightly and prevented the incident. Those men had nothing in their minds. They were all exhausted and beaten up from smoking hashish.” Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 16, 21, 27, 28. In other words, people there knew that the incident was an isolated, unexpected and simple event in nature. Nevertheless, Çetinkaya, under the influence of the official position regarding the event, did not notice and consider these important details.

⁴⁸⁷ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 101.

⁴⁸⁸ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 36.

⁴⁸⁹ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 52.

⁴⁹⁰ Neşet Çağatay, *Türkiye’de Gerici Eylemler* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınevi, 1972), 18.

According to İsmail Kurtoğlu, “they became organizations that brought every sort of harm in the name of religion.”⁴⁹¹ Moreover, he claims the Nakşibendi order to have been influential in various regions of Anatolia at different times, taken a stand against every type of renewal attempts and given rise to great riots.⁴⁹² Yazman’s assertion is that “the only thing this order brought to Turkey since the eighth century is the rebellion of Şeyh Said and the reactionist Menemen Incident.”⁴⁹³ That is to say, what the officially-biased accounts express about Nakşibendi order is that they either degenerated in time or already had some deviations. The Nakşibendi order, in this regard, is indicated as a uniform and invariably harmful organization, beginning from its origin and throughout the time. The writers referenced above make no explanations about how and in what ways did the Nakşibendi order become transformed into a detrimental organization that arranged revolts every now and then. They present no political or religious historical context for their argument nor explain how the order instigated any specific riot. Therefore, these unsubstantiated narratives on the order’s history are not useful academically.

According to officially-biased accounts, religious orders, particularly the Nakşibendism, has been using religion as a tool to maintain their interests. The prestige of the members of the order rested on the religious sensibilities and fears of people.⁴⁹⁴ “By means of secret exercises, it exploited the weakest and most delicate subject of the society, namely its religious thoughts.”⁴⁹⁵ “Whenever its interests were in danger, it intensified the exploitation of people’s religious senses and prompted them to fight against progressive reforms.”⁴⁹⁶ This was the case for the Menemen Incident as well. “It was understood from the Menemen Incident that the disciples of the order were not busy with just mysticism and religion but also engaged in political issues.”⁴⁹⁷ “Although some notables of the order recommended waiting and leaving everything to time, they could not make others hear them.”⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹¹ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 35.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 37.

⁴⁹³ Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 242.

⁴⁹⁴ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1998, 137.

⁴⁹⁵ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 33.

⁴⁹⁶ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 100.

⁴⁹⁷ Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 242. These words, too, come from the statement of the Menemen prosecutor that characterized the order as a political organization.

⁴⁹⁸ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 53.

Indeed, the notion of “using religion as a means” has been a common element in many accounts regarding religious issues in the republican period. The authors of such accounts have generally been speaking for the republic itself by extolling the new state, its revolutions and castigating opposition elements. Describing opponents as “exploiters of religion” was a usual practice of this officially-biased point of view. However, the content of this repeated statement has been rhetorical and poorly substantiated. Like the case here, sufi organizations are described to have been deceiving the common people, who fail to see that they are exploited. This general type of expression is not accompanied usually by specific instances or details indicating how the sufi orders use religion to preserve their interests. The members of the order in question are described as if they are insincere in their religious beliefs in the reality. That is to say, these biased accounts are not seriously interested in showing how these orders use people and oblige them to make donations to the orders.

4.1.3. The Enemy of the Republic

Officially-biased narrations allege that religious orders, particularly the Nakşibendis, sought to sustain their elevated positions in the republican era as well. “Factions whose interests were harmed by the transformation from theocracy to a secular state described laicism as irreligiousness and strived to stir up opposition to the reformists.”⁴⁹⁹ Thus emerged the problem of “reactionism” against the republic, according to the biased writers. They state radical religious groups did not embrace the abolition of the dervish lodges, and religious orders continued to exist in secrecy.⁵⁰⁰ “They watched for an opportunity to regain their interests”⁵⁰¹ and “tried to antagonize their followers, who made up the lower class of society, against the government.”⁵⁰² “They intended to deceive ignorant citizens with the motto that “Religion is at stake!”⁵⁰³ “The Menemen Incident occurred under these conditions the Nakşibendi order, which was weakened, sought to stir up a revolt by appealing to the religious senses of the people so as to recover its former strength.”⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁹ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1998, 137.

⁵⁰⁰ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 33.

⁵⁰¹ Bahriye Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı” (unpublished master thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1997), 10–1.

⁵⁰² Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 50.

⁵⁰³ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1997, 10–1; Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 126–7.

⁵⁰⁴ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 100.

According to the authors who adopted officially-biased points of view, the event was exactly a reactionist movement.⁵⁰⁵ “It was an attack of the Nakşibendi order, which did everything possible to deceive society and demolish the public order⁵⁰⁶ as well as the republic⁵⁰⁷ and Atatürk’s Reforms.⁵⁰⁸ The purpose was to overthrow the republic and the secular system.⁵⁰⁹ “The republic of Atatürk prohibited underdeveloped organizations like sheikhdom, and yet the order aspired to establish a sharia state.”⁵¹⁰ Even after the suppression of the rebellion of Şeyh Said, a prominent member of the order, it dared to raise its voice⁵¹¹ and to attempt to achieve its dream of reviving the old regime.⁵¹²

The only other rebellious figure associated with the order in the officially-biased accounts, in addition to the case of Menemen, is Şeyh Said. His rebellion too is depicted as a movement carried out by exploiters of religion who did nothing but harm for the country. It is somehow taken as an element of an element of truth that the Nakşibendi order watched for an opportunity to step into action to overthrow the government. That is to say, the order operating to the detriment of the republic was so powerful that state administrators and law enforcement agencies were unable to prevent it from doing harm. This explanation is unconvincing in many respects. Firstly, mystical circles and rituals continued after the legal abolition of orders within the knowledge of government officials. Indeed, public administrators did not regard the orders as an enemy which needed to be eliminated. Secondly, officially-biased accounts do not give details about the secret plans that Nakşibendis allegedly make and how they managed to operate behind the scenes. As the official reports indicate, the mansion of Şeyh Esat was not only under surveillance but also there was a secret

⁵⁰⁵ According to Köse, when one takes into consideration the insurgents’ intention to found a theocratic state, their preparation for the event, their financial situation and their educational level, it does not “sound reasonable” that they did it on their own. Moreover, writers like Köse stress that it is crucial to reveal the real agents behind the incident, thus, they look for background figures and structures carefully. *Ibid.*, 1, 3, 47–8.

⁵⁰⁶ For Kurtoğlu, “it could be said that” among religious circles, it was the Nakşibendi order that reacted to the abolition of the caliphate and the proclamation of the republic most. Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 28, 33.

⁵⁰⁷ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 126–7.

⁵⁰⁸ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 21.

⁵⁰⁹ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1997, 10–1.

⁵¹⁰ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 16.

⁵¹¹ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 38. Kurtoğlu’s words intend to show that the Nakşibendi order stirred up a riot as occasion served.

⁵¹² Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 48.

police put inside it. This is just a synoptic example of the extent to which state officers kept an eye on orders.⁵¹³

4.1.4. People's Support for Reactionism

Some of the officially-biased accounts assert that the masses, whose level of education was low and who were blindly attached to the “old social order”, reacted against the innovations made in the early years of the republic. The Menemen Incident was also a consequence of this reaction.⁵¹⁴ One of the stories discussed in the third chapter is told in the later literature as well. Erdinç Köse's master thesis refers to *Milliyet* of 27 December 1930 that a certain citizen had heard some rumors from two women while shopping in the villages of Menemen that wearing the *fes* and the old order would be restored within a week. Köse expresses that after this instance was reported in newspapers, the opinion that the event was a prearranged action became even stronger.⁵¹⁵ This story was most likely fabricated, in that it depended on third person narrations and was devoid of substantiality. Questions about the identity of those women and why a legal procedure was not conducted remain unanswered.

The significant matter here is that the later authors writing about the event see no harm in taking this sort of stories for granted without making an effort to verify their accuracy. By doing so, they frame a certain group of people as being hostile towards the republic, ready to participate in opposition movements,⁵¹⁶ and involved in one when the opportunity arose as in the case of the Menemen Incident. In other words, officially-biased authors imply that ordinary people were somehow informed about the approaching riot, while law enforcement agencies were not.

This opinion applies to villagers as well. It is asserted that each inhabitant of Bozalan, including village headmen, assured Derviş Mehmet and his followers that

⁵¹³ The reason why this type of account defines religious sub-groups as enemies of the republic and keeps on reproducing this expression partly lies in those writers' perception of the republican reforms. The primary mistake of these writers however, is their projection of themselves as representatives of the republic without considering the actual implementation of the republican reforms and their adoption by the people. They seem to make normative evaluations with respect to their positions rather than regarding people's cultural and religious diversity and the process of how long and in what ways they would keep pace with the republican type of ideal citizen.

⁵¹⁴ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 31.

⁵¹⁵ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 71–2.

⁵¹⁶ The number of people who gathered at the municipal square in Menemen was exaggerated, arguably to make it look like that the townspeople supported the so-called rebellion in great numbers. (See the explanation of this point below in this chapter.)

they would raid a gendarme station, take their guns and come to assist them as soon as the group arrived at Menemen.⁵¹⁷ This anecdote is not true either. According to the statements of the perpetrators, merely one man named Abdülkadir, while accompanying the group outside the village, wished them Godspeed and told that he would come for help if needed. Still, Abdülkadir told it for the sake of conversation and he was not speaking for the whole village. There is no evidence indicating that the villagers of Bozalan and Paşa, inhabitants of Menemen or Manisa were anticipating an opportunity to stir up a rebellion against the republic. Not a single scene of action against the republic was recorded in the regions in question. All the defendants in trials seemed to be afraid of what might happen to them. They did not leave this impression that they would or could oppose the republic. On the contrary, they tried to keep on the right side of the chief judge no matter all the hard time the judge gave them.

Some of the officially-biased writers make demi-fair evaluations about the inhabitants of Menemen. They want the republic to have mercy on them. Another master thesis states that it would be unrealistic to expect the republican principles to spread in a society that was accustomed to absolutism for 600 years. According to Bahriye Acar, the author of this thesis, the reason why local inhabitants did not react too strongly against reactionists in the Menemen Incident was that they did not comprehend the republican regime adequately yet.⁵¹⁸ As for Köse, newspapers right after the event reported that the inhabitants of Menemen did not engage in the reactionist movement but condemned it vehemently.⁵¹⁹ Nevertheless, the majority of newspapers harshly disparaged all the people of Menemen, and not just the ones who participated in the events.

Another case in point is Kemal Üstün's account, which contradicts itself.⁵²⁰ On the one hand, he defines the incident as the incitement of ignorant masses by those people whose interests had been negatively affected by republican reforms.⁵²¹ On the other hand, he talks about the role of inhabitants as follows: "Elders who

⁵¹⁷ Barış Ertem, "Resmi Belgeler ve Basında Menemen Olayı," *International Journal of History* 5, no. 1 (2013): 160.

⁵¹⁸ Acar, "İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı," 1997, 76.

⁵¹⁹ Köse, "Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler," 68.

⁵²⁰ Üstün was a colleague and a friend of Kubilay in Menemen. He stresses that he was among the audience in trials of the martial court. Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 8.

⁵²¹ Köse, "Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler," 126–7.

were at the mosque for dawn prayer were taken to the square by the insurgents at gunpoint. Other people on their way to work were stopped and forced to participate. That was how the crowd gathered around reactionists. In other words, they were compelled to do so.”⁵²² This information is also misleading. Though small in proportion,⁵²³ about a hundred people were engaged in the demonstrations either by merely taking part in reciting God’s name or by substantially assisting the company. Their applause was the principal act that received the sharpest reaction from officials as well as newspapers. Yet, writers like Kemal Üstün and Aslan Tufan Yazman try hard to acquit all of the townspeople. The point they seek to emphasize is that the people of Menemen had unhesitatingly embraced the principles of the republic nationalistically.

4.1.5. Specifying the Agents of the Event

Officially-biased accounts describe the notable figures of the Nakşibendi order as the true agents of the Menemen Incident. Much the same as previously mentioned accounts, the information being discussed here also derives from the fact that the writers take court verdicts and newspaper reports for granted. They adopt the existing primary sources in their narrations unquestioningly and without examination, and present them as true. This is expressed in statements like “as a result of the proceedings, it became clear (or was revealed) that...” In other words, the judicial process is treated as if it did what it had to do and concluded justly. Thus, these accounts bear a notion that they are to recount the truth as reached by the court.

The role played by different figures varies in diverse officially-biased accounts. For instance, it is alleged that “Şeyh Esat played an active role in the preparation phase of the riot as it became clear in the trials of the martial court.”⁵²⁴ Since the judicial process ended with the verdict that the event was preplanned and carried out by the Nakşibendi order with its leaders and associates, each named one by one, sub-

⁵²² Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 13–4. He depicts the period as a time in which every Turk was full of the joy of living, which Mustafa Kemal had ignited, and was engaged in a struggle to rise and reach up to the level of contemporary civilization.

⁵²³ The best evidence indicates that about a hundred people participated in the demonstrations of Derviş’s company in the square, while another hundred stood nearby merely watching. The population of the town was approximately 12,000. Thus, namely 0.83 % of its population was in the square.

⁵²⁴ Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 610. This writer further alleged that Saffet Hoca was among the masterminds of the event according to the court. On the contrary, Saffet Hoca was acquitted of all charges.

sequent accounts recounted those names as the agents. “The murder of Kubilay was planned by the leader of the Nakşibendi order, Şeyh Esat.”⁵²⁵ “It was the 84-year old leader of the order, living in a mansion in İstanbul, who gave the instructions.”⁵²⁶ The event took place with the incitement and instruction of the notables of the Nakşibendi order, and primarily their leader Şeyh Esat⁵²⁷ who was able to operate freely and propagandize for the order in moral and material terms.⁵²⁸ Early writings on the case, particularly Üstün’s and Çetinkaya’s books, influenced the later literature. For instance, an article about the incident refers to Çetinkaya’s definition of Şeyh Esat as “pervert” and continues that he did not merely impress the naïve and ignorant mass but also the educated and cultured people.⁵²⁹

Again with reference to the court decisions, Esat’s son Mehmet Ali is indicated as another designer of the incident.⁵³⁰ “The head of the Nakşibendi order and his son took advantage of the appropriate conditions, made arrangements and stepped into action at a place whose inhabitants they regarded as opponents of the government.”⁵³¹

Officially-biased narrations claim that, since those unschooled, ignorant hashish addicts could not have implemented the plan of bringing the political system down and establish a theocratic order by themselves, there must have been more

⁵²⁵ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 16.

⁵²⁶ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 126–7.

⁵²⁷ Kurtoğlu asserts that all three perpetrators stated in trials that they were in continuous contact with Şeyh Esat. Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 38, 40. However, the perpetrators neither said anything of this nature during the trials nor could they provide meaningful information to support their asserted connection to Şeyh Esat.

⁵²⁸ Saraçoğlu repeatedly comments on the agonizing news of the beheading of Kubilay in later issues of the journal. In his introduction, he mentions that critical and in-depth accounts of this incident based on the evaluation of official and other sources were needed. He defines his study as a consequence of several months of hard work. Saraçoğlu, “Menemen İrticacı Adı Altındaki,” 2290, 2293. Nevertheless, he provides deficient accounts due to flawed interpretations of the official evaluations of the event. For instance, he points to the newspapers of July 1930, which reported rumors on Şeyh Esat’s presence in Erenköy, to comment that Esat had been acting against the republic for a long time. He then asks law enforcement agencies did not intervene in his wrong-doings. In other words, Saraçoğlu appears convinced that Esat was an enemy of the republic and does not reflect on the information available to him. He does not take into consideration that security officers knew about Esat and others. Instead, Saraçoğlu argues that Esat could operate in pursuit of his own benefits and against the republic for months despite the close surveillance under which he lived.

⁵²⁹ Nurşen Mazıcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Sosyo-Kültürel ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Analizi,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 90 (2001): 132.

⁵³⁰ Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 235; Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 610.

⁵³¹ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 19.

agents behind the scenes.⁵³² “One of these agents was a deviant named Laz İbrahim who was appointed as his top caliph in Manisa by Şeyh Esat.”⁵³³ Some authors offer descriptions of Laz İbrahim based on journalist Çetinkaya. For instance, a statement in an article is as follows: “Hikmet Çetinkaya adduced Laz İbrahim’s dispatch to the region by Şeyh Esat as the most explicit proof of the incident’s instigation by the Nakşibendi order.”⁵³⁴ Though he did not engage in actions, Laz İbrahim was among the think-tank of the organization, defined himself as ‘the caliph of the caliphs,’⁵³⁵ and established contacts between Şeyh Esat and other caliphs.⁵³⁶ “He selected Menemen as a target since he knew the town and many of its inhabitants. He poisoned the people’s minds, attracted many supporters, and staged the incident.”⁵³⁷ Another master thesis recounts the latter argument and emphasizes that Laz İbrahim’s choice of Menemen is very conceivable since he knew like-minded people lived there.⁵³⁸

Officially-biased accounts also rely on evidence brought forth in trials, such as the evidence on meetings in Manisa and letters. For instance, a specific meeting in Manisa, in which Laz İbrahim and some others participated, is asserted to demonstrate the preparations and determination of the agents. In this gathering, Laz İbrahim talked about a conversation made in İstanbul. There, it was discussed that İstanbul Selim Efendi, son of Abdülhamit II, would occupy the country with a great force, become the caliph and the sultan. “Nevertheless, since the reactionists could not speak their thoughts out loud, they began to prepare and watch for an opportunity in secret.”⁵³⁹ In other words, it is beyond question for officially-biased accounts that these agents were able to make plans and take action on their own. It is not considered whether they had enough facilities, infrastructure and material organization to actualize such a large-scale goal. Instead, those figures are indicated as enemies of the government and seeking its overthrowing.

⁵³² Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 57–8.

⁵³³ Çetinkaya, *Kubilya Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 16; Oğuz Aytepe, “Menemen Olayı,” *Anıtkabir Dergisi* 18 (2004): 28.

⁵³⁴ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 53.

⁵³⁵ Mazıcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Analizi,” 132.

⁵³⁶ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 40.

⁵³⁷ Aslan Tufan Yazman, “Menemen Olayı’nın İyüzü ve Serbest Parti,” *Sigorta Dünyası* 160 (April 1973): 20.

⁵³⁸ Gonca, “Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Menemen Kazası,” 72.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

The issue of letters is remarked as well in the literature: “The court obtained the letters Laz İbrahim and Şeyh Esat had written to each other, which proved that they took steps against the republic.”⁵⁴⁰ However, those letters in question neither included a simple anti-republican stance nor implied such an opposition. But these details are not addressed, and the evidence offered by the court is accepted unquestioningly in much of the officially-biased literature. For instance, Laz İbrahim’s bringing books from İstanbul for the betterment of the order is mentioned as one of his malignant doings.⁵⁴¹ Typically, officially-biased authors do not elaborate on details of the information provided by the court as evidence.

Derviş Mehmet is defined as having had a close relationship with Şeyh Esat in this line.⁵⁴² “He was one of the accredited and prominent disciples of Esat.”⁵⁴³ Derviş Mehmet’s acquaintance and collaboration with Çerkez Ethem is also brought forward. Related assertions do not merely say that he was a former fellow of “the traitor” Çerkez Ethem, but also that he was a homosexual.⁵⁴⁴ “Derviş Mehmet fled from the country with Çerkez Ethem but returned since he was not among the list of the 150 *persona non grata*.”⁵⁴⁵ A further allegation is that both of them aligned themselves with the Greeks.⁵⁴⁶ These are almost entirely mere immaterial allegations. The extent of Derviş Mehmet’s previous relationship with Çerkez Ethem is unknown. Writers in question give no substantial references to the expressions related to Çerkez. They neither doubt nor examine the extent of the reliability of this information and how such a supposedly detrimental figure could act freely against Turkey for quite a while.

4.1.6. Material Support of the Nakşibendi Order

These biased authors also explain the commitment of both Derviş Mehmet and his followers to the Nakşibendi order. “As it became evident, the leader of the Nakşibendi order Şeyh Esat and Laz İbrahim gave money to poor people as well as

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 39.

⁵⁴² Nihal Eyrice, “Tarih Eğitiminde Yerellik: 1922-1950 Döneminde Menemen Kazası” (unpublished master thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, 2005), 14.

⁵⁴³ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 25; (See also Melih Cevdet Anday’s 1977 essay, titled “Bir Yıldönümü: Kubilay.” Ibid., 140.)

⁵⁴⁴ Mazıcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Analizi,” 131.

⁵⁴⁵ Eyrice, “1922-1950 Döneminde Menemen Kazası,” 15.

⁵⁴⁶ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 43.

to unemployed youth.”⁵⁴⁷ “Laz İbrahim took the money that Şeyh Esat collected from surrounding people, and distributed it to the unemployed youthful disciples of the order.”⁵⁴⁸ “The leaders of the order selected Derviş Mehmet as the protagonist and put miserable wretches together with him.”⁵⁴⁹ In other words, it is claimed the perpetrators were very poor in economic conditions. Due to their dependence on handouts, their primary concern was “to gain happiness in the afterlife since there is no way for me to be happy here.”⁵⁵⁰ Their dedication to the order increased by this means. “However, since they were not knowledgeable about religion, they easily fell into the trap of wealthy notables, operating for their own benefit backstage.”⁵⁵¹ Similar to previous statements, this matter of giving money to youth for deception is not validated. Rather, it is a general argument of writers whose accounts regarding religious issues run in parallel to official statements. Neither the perpetrators’ statements in trials nor the official reports refer to any money or other type of support provided by the order notables. To promote the assertion that the event was carried out by the Nakşibendi order, these biased writers seek to form an unreal material background.

It is also claimed that Derviş Mehmet and his company received support in the form of money, clothes, guns etc., on their way to Menemen from people, who were Laz İbrahim’s followers.⁵⁵² This is another unverified assertion. All the support the group got derived from affinity and acquaintanceship. They were hosted in homes, were provided food and guns and were not reported to law enforcement agencies for their probable actions since they were known around the region.

4.1.7. Exaggerating the Capacity of Insurgents

Just like the newspapers of the period and many official statements, officially-biased accounts introduce the actions and aims of the insurgents as if they were realistic. Although the aims of Derviş Mehmet, as stated in the trials by the perpetrators, were completely infeasible, they are depicted as tangible plans. According to the authors in question for instance, the company’s choice of Menemen was not ac-

⁵⁴⁷ Mazıcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Analizi,” 145.

⁵⁴⁸ Aytepe, “Menemen Olayı,” 28.

⁵⁴⁹ Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 242; Yazman, “Menemen Olayı’nın İçyüzü ve Serbest Parti,” 20.

⁵⁵⁰ Çağatay, *Türkiye’de Gerici Eylemler*, 16; Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 32.

⁵⁵¹ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 32.

⁵⁵² Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 243.

cidental. Laz İbrahim was ranked as “the caliph of caliphs” and sent to Anatolia by Şeyh Esat to augment the disciples of the order. “He came to Menemen where his acquaintances were living and there he poisoned them.”⁵⁵³ However, this account of Yazman is full of incorrect information. According to the perpetrators’ statements and official reports, the inhabitants of Menemen did not expect Derviş and his followers. There is no information indicating the presence of Laz İbrahim’s acquaintances in Menemen whom he organized to revolt. Yazman seems to have used unreliable second-hand information and not made careful research.

According to other similar narrations, “Menemen was among the places that insurgents selected as targets and if the reactionist movement had not been stopped there, it would have expanded to other locations. Therefore the Menemen Incident was not local but national in nature.”⁵⁵⁴ “In order to announce that the caliphate had been revived, insurgents chose of a small town populated by 4000-5000 people, and not a big city such as İzmir or Manisa where security forces would instantly bring the situation under control.”⁵⁵⁵ These arguments as well are problematic. Menemen had a population of about 12,000 people and hence was not as small as alleged. Moreover, Menemen was thirty kilometers away from İzmir city center. Therefore the observation is not very sensible.

Another exaggeration about the insurgents is their so-called religious objectives. They are portrayed as trying to establish a theocratic state and spread Islam to the entire world. “After they constituted a state based on sharia in Turkey, they would go as far as China and to all the European countries in order to make every non-Muslim accept Islam.”⁵⁵⁶ Authors of these arguments give references to court records and express the forementioned purposes, which were mentioned by perpetrators, as realities. The perpetrators are framed as if they were organizationally prepared and the conditions were proper for them to actualize their purposes.

However in the same court records, there are so many anecdotes which present the true circumstances and the pitiful state of the insurgents. Still, writers take these claims as well seriously. For instance, when the company wanted to cross the

⁵⁵³ Yazman, “Menemen Olayı’nın İyüzü ve Serbest Parti,” 242.

⁵⁵⁴ Gonca, “Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Menemen Kazası,” 72.

⁵⁵⁵ Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 601.

⁵⁵⁶ Kurtođlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 33; Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 56.

Gediz River, they had no money and nothing to pay the boatman. They told him that they would appoint him as a civil servant as long as he helped them cross the river. Rather than regarding this state as another indicator of the company's lack of resources to carry out their plans of overthrowing the government, it is interpreted as evidence of "the detailed plans the insurgents made in advance."⁵⁵⁷ Their arrival at Menemen is accounted as an incoming of "the army of sharia."⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, it is suggested that if Derviş Mehmet waited longer instead of taking the road with a few men, there might have occurred a much larger event with a lot more disciples joining the group, since the order had sufficient resources.⁵⁵⁹

Another exaggeration is describing the incident as a threat against the very existence of the republic.⁵⁶⁰ Referring to the parliamentary minutes, it is mentioned that "the rebellion was an attempt to change the constitution of the Republic of Turkey by force and establish the rule of a caliphate and sultanate depending on sharia."⁵⁶¹ "The newly-founded republican regime and its ideology overcame a significant challenge in Menemen."⁵⁶² Another repeated assertion is that the regime recognized the potential of the opposition.⁵⁶³ "It was further perceived that the foundations of the new regime had not yet been secured and it was under a severe threat."⁵⁶⁴ However, this is not a reasonable evaluation since the government was already aware of the discontent of a part of the population as well as the presence of religious orders. This situation is obvious in the debates of the deputies at the parliament. Although the terrifying beheading of Kubilay and the applause of some people concerned the government, no specific legal regulation was made to suppress public's opposition. In other words, although the event was not extensive and far-reaching in nature, authors who assume the responsibility and duty of speaking for the regime, depict the event as another menace that the republic overcame.

⁵⁵⁷ Köse, "Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler," 57–8.

⁵⁵⁸ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 25.

⁵⁵⁹ Gonca, "Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Menemen Kazası," 89.

⁵⁶⁰ Tabak, "Menemen Olayının İzmir Basını'nda Yankıları," 328.

⁵⁶¹ Kurtoğlu, "Menemen Olayı," 32.

⁵⁶² Tabak, "Menemen Olayının İzmir Basını'nda Yankıları," 315; Kurtoğlu, "Menemen Olayı," 260.

⁵⁶³ Sertaç Solgun, "Menemen Olayı Sonrasında İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na Türkiye'nin İç Güvenliği (1931-1939)" (unpublished doctoral thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü, 2010), 261.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 263.

4.1.8. Responsibilities of the Security Forces

Although the issue of the security force officers was given a wide place in the newspapers of the era, officially-biased accounts do not pay it much attention. They approach the matter differently and are divided into two types: one criticizes the gendarme officers, the other praises them highly. According to the latter approach, Gendarme Captain Fahri Bey realized the severity of the situation, entered the state house to take measures and demanded a support force from the regiment as required by law.⁵⁶⁵ The critical approach disparages the captain as well as the privates in Kubilay's battalion. Fahri Bey is accounted to have become so terrified by the reactionists and by the crowd that gathered around them that he could not stop the event. Fahri Bey, in this opinion, assumed that he would not halt the insurgents with the unit under his command. "However, if he had fired his gun into the air at once, he would have brought the situation under control. But he ignored that possibility and was unable to prevent the murder of a young Turkish officer."⁵⁶⁶

4.1.9. Wrong Information on Moves Before, During and After the Incident

There is much misinformation and exaggeration about the concrete actions of the company as well in line with the assertions about the event that it was an inclusive and far-reaching revolt carried out by furious enemies of the republic. The misinformation is presented according to the chronologic flow of events.

It is alleged that the dervishes had been on a diet of merely eating figs and drinking water as an element of their preparation.⁵⁶⁷ However, the perpetrators did not make such a statement in the trials and there is no report referring to it. So this anecdote is a fabrication.

The number of townspeople standing around Derviş Mehmet is another instance of information pollution. For one account there were 1000 impertinent people "unconsciously gathered together under the influence of herd mentality and scared by threats."⁵⁶⁸ According to another account, there were 1500 people and none of them sought to prevent the traitorous movement but rather gave support by saying

⁵⁶⁵ Saraçoğlu, "Menemen İrticacı Adı Altındaki," 2432.

⁵⁶⁶ Köse, "Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler," 60.

⁵⁶⁷ Yazman, *Atatürk'le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 235.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 243.

Allahuekber.⁵⁶⁹ Kubilay entered the scene with a battalion to disperse the crowd, but the number of soldiers under his command is indeterminate. Although some writers assert that there were twenty-six privates with him,⁵⁷⁰ no official record verifies this number. We have confusing information also about the rifles of Kubilay's unit. Journalist Hikmet Çetinkaya conveys from a witness of the event that Kubilay and his soldiers came to the square with blank cartridges in their rifles.⁵⁷¹ Another allegation of Yazman is that Kubilay ordered his privates to fire blanks into the air.⁵⁷²

Later literature refers to these initial narrations as well as the newspaper reports of the time.⁵⁷³ It is additionally alleged that there had been a military maneuver recently and Kubilay forgot to change the blank cartridges with real bullets.⁵⁷⁴ When privates fired rifles and no one got hurt, according to these stories, Derviş Mehmet began to shout: "You see, I am invulnerable!"⁵⁷⁵ For another account, a certain *hoca* among the crowd cried to people: "As you see, bullets did not hurt them, those are saints (*evliya*)!"⁵⁷⁶ Thus, "Derviş Mehmet and his disciples took courage very much."⁵⁷⁷ They "considered themselves to be immortal"⁵⁷⁸ and "attributed this situation to Derviş Mehmet's being the true Mahdi."⁵⁷⁹ However, as previously discussed and as official reports explicitly indicated, there were no bullets in the rifles of the privates under Kubilay's command. They had only bayonets and fled when Kubilay was shot at. Given this situation, the story of the blank cartridges was fabricated most likely because of the oddness that those rifles did not have bullets. In order not to tarnish the image of law enforcement agencies, and thus of the republic, this untrue

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 46–7.

⁵⁷⁰ Ertem, "Resmi Belgeler Ve Basında Menemen Olayı," 162; Aysal, "Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı," 603.

⁵⁷¹ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 21.

⁵⁷² Yazman, *Atatürk'le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 236–7.

⁵⁷³ Aysal, "Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı," 603; Mazıcı, "Menemen Olayı'nın Analizi," 144; Kurtoğlu, "Menemen Olayı," 258.

⁵⁷⁴ Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 417–8.

⁵⁷⁵ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 21.

⁵⁷⁶ Yazman, *Atatürk'le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 236–7.

⁵⁷⁷ Aysal, "Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı," 603.

⁵⁷⁸ Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 417–8. Öz's article can not be categorized as officially-biased since he does not blindly repeat what the official statements, newspaper reports and court records say. The information he provides is not a simple effort to denigrate the agents, to reveal the backstage and praise the state. In his own way, Öz seeks to account for the details of the incident, although some unsubstantiated and ungrounded information is found in his article.

⁵⁷⁹ Mazıcı, "Menemen Olayı'nın Analizi," 144.

information was published by newspapers as well as the initial narrators of the incident, who seem to have considered themselves as representatives of the government or its ideals.

Reports and perpetrator statements point out that Kubilay was ignored by Derviş Mehmet at first. After this underestimation, Kubilay became angry and seized Derviş by his collar. Another allegation is that Kubilay slapped Derviş.⁵⁸⁰ However this is another exaggeration and not true.

A different sort of disinformation is about the way he was beheaded.⁵⁸¹ According to the claim, “raving, rabid and punk zealots” beheaded Kubilay with a saw.⁵⁸² However, it is certain that he was beheaded by a knife. Furthermore, one account asserts that Kubilay’s head was cut off slowly and in an agonizing way.⁵⁸³

Based on the newspaper reports of the time, it is also proclaimed that the townspeople applauded the beheading of Kubilay as they did Derviş’s former actions. While one writer states that it was only a small part of the crowd that applauded the demonstrations,⁵⁸⁴ for another, Kubilay was beheaded with the applause of all of the one hundred people gathered at the square.⁵⁸⁵ However, it is quite uncertain whether the townspeople witnessed the beheading and applauded him. The extent to which they kept on applauding when Derviş brought Kubilay’s head to the square is also uncertain. Although the chief judge of the martial court mentioned a certain number of defendants had applauded Derviş’s actions, he did not charge any of them with doing so at the scene of Kubilay’s beheading. Therefore, asserting that “the townspeople of Menemen applauded the martyrism of Kubilay” is unjustified. The publication of such exaggerated and uncertain information is also defamatory for the townspeople in nature.

As previously mentioned, officially-biased authors base much of their information on newspaper reports. For instance, the 30 December 1930 issue of *Yeni Asır*

⁵⁸⁰ Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 417.

⁵⁸¹ Bernard Lewis’s account is in this category. He narrates the event as follows: “A young Kemalist officer called Kubilay heard a local dervish leader addressing the populace and attacking the Regime. When he remonstrated, he was seized by the mob, held down, and slowly beheaded, amid the acclamation of the sheikh and his supporters.” Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 417.

⁵⁸² Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 237; Anday, “Bir Yıldönümü: Kubilay,” in Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 138.

⁵⁸³ Saraçoğlu, “Menemen İrticacı Adı Altındaki,” 2293.

⁵⁸⁴ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 57.

⁵⁸⁵ Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 417.

reported that “onlookers clapped the beheading of Kubilay for twenty minutes, and that some merely grinned in the face of this atrocious murder.” For the newspaper, they further acclaimed Derviş’s drinking the blood of Kubilay.⁵⁸⁶ Although such an issue was not brought to the agenda of the court in any session, the decision text of the justice commission of the parliament included a phrase about the drinking Kubilay’s blood.⁵⁸⁷

Though there is no evidence for it whatsoever, blood drinking became another subject repeatedly narrated by officially-biased authors. Thus they wrote, for instance, “unsatisfied with beheading, Derviş Mehmet drank Kubilay’s blood by handfuls in the sequel.”⁵⁸⁸ It is additionally alleged that prior to drinking Kubilay’s blood, Derviş shouted: “Although it is forbidden (*haram*) by religion, drinking the blood of this (addressing Kubilay) is legitimate (*helal*).”⁵⁸⁹ “When he said this, other perpetrators drank the blood of the young officer as well.”⁵⁹⁰ “Derviş subsequently said *Allahuekber* with his bloody mouth.”⁵⁹¹ It is further stated that Derviş put the head of Kubilay on a stone in the courtyard of the mosque and said: “You see! Infidels end up just like this!”⁵⁹² Nevertheless, none of the perpetrators mentioned such an issue, nor did the chief judge. Official reports written right after the incident did not mention any blood either. Clearly, it was a fabrication of republican administrators and pro-regime newspapers.

Other trivial instances of misinformation about the actions of the perpetrators include assertions that they fled into the corners of a the Gazez mosque as soon as support forces arrived at the square.⁵⁹³ However, the onlookers are not reported to have left the square and hidden in the mosque. Rather, they were still there in the square when the troops arrived. Although one account alleges that all the remaining

⁵⁸⁶ *Yeni Asır*, December 30, 1930; *Anadolu*, December 24, 1930.

⁵⁸⁷ “Kubilay Bey’in silahla yaralanması ve sonra da bıçakla başını keserek ve kanını içerek ellerindeki bayrağa bağlamak suretiyle cürüm ika etmek.” “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:25 Yirmi Beşinci İn’ikat,” 90.

⁵⁸⁸ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 27; Anday, “Bir Yıldönümü: Kubilay,” in *ibid.*, 141; Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 604.

⁵⁸⁹ Özalp and Özalp, *Atatürk’ten Anılar*, 46–7.

⁵⁹⁰ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1997, 30.

⁵⁹¹ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 27.

⁵⁹² Gonca, “Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Menemen Kazası,” 74.

⁵⁹³ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1997, 30.

three perpetrators were seized while trying to flee after the shootout,⁵⁹⁴ only Mehmet Emin was captured and the others ran away.

There is wrong information about the attitude of the perpetrators after their detentions. “The national press described the perpetrators to be in good mood.”⁵⁹⁵ According to another account, many of the Nakşibendi disciples shouted at the prosecutor of the martial court saying “You are an infidel! Derviş Mehmet will be resurrected and kill you!” during the interrogations.⁵⁹⁶ These assertions do not reflect the reality and even distort it entirely in certain respects. To start with, contemporaneous newspapers do not describe dispositions of the detainees all together. The available evidence indicate that the detainee were concerned about their situation and were afraid of what would happen to them. They were aware that they would possibly be condemned to capital punishment. Indeed, officially-biased authors as well knew that the defendants repeatedly stated their loyalty to the republic, but they evaluated these statements as the result of the hypocrisy and slyness of the arrestee.⁵⁹⁷

4.1.10. Literature on Political Reasons of the Incident

Recent accounts about the political motives of the insurgents, likewise, depend on contemporary newspaper reports. To a large extent, these narrations repeat those news reports. They do not look for substantial causal connections but insist that the perpetrators took advantage of the internal and external political conditions of the era. Some authors mention the general circumstances under which the insurgents stepped into action while others directly refer to and blame FRP as a primary cause or instigator.

For instance, the economic situation of the era is indicated as a determinant.⁵⁹⁸ Acar states that the great world economic depression of 1929 influenced the economy of Turkey.⁵⁹⁹ According to her, some armed groups from Iran crossed Turkey’s border and raided some villages in Eastern Anatolia in the second half of 1930. “Those activities strained the relations between the two countries, and Turkey sent

⁵⁹⁴ Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 604.

⁵⁹⁵ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 78.

⁵⁹⁶ Çetinkaya, *Kubilay Olayı ve Tarikat Kampları*, 22–23.

⁵⁹⁷ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1997, 77.

⁵⁹⁸ Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 47; Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 599–600.

⁵⁹⁹ Acar, “İzmir Basınında Menemen Olayı,” 1997, 8.

diplomatic notes to Iran a few times. This topic remained on the agenda of the country until September of 1930. Alongside these external problems, the government was obliged to tackle the newly founded FRP in domestic policy.”⁶⁰⁰ However, Acar does not establish a substantial connection between the Menemen Incident and these developments. Moreover, she seems to be unaware that FRP was established with the instructions of Mustafa Kemal. In other words, it emerged under the control of RPP and not by itself.

Economic conditions are also considered important in other accounts. According to Öz, the effects of the 1929 great depression and progressively intensifying social displeasure led the government transit to a multi-party system.⁶⁰¹ This explanation does not make much sense in that the political atmosphere of the country was already intense. Officially-biased authors describe the repealing of the law on the maintenance of order (*takrîr-i sükûn*) on March 1929 as an inception of a more liberal period. However, for them, the opposition media exploited the freedom of the press. “Still, although it was absolutely apparent that some press agents abused their liberty, the government sought to act consistently regarding the freedom of the press.”⁶⁰² “[This act] that set the opposition free on the way of democratization in 1930 prompted reactionist circles to step into action to overthrow the republic.”⁶⁰³ “Proceeding to another political stage made the disguised fanatic reactionists think the conditions were ripe for revolt.”⁶⁰⁴

“The discontent of the masses became apparent with the foundation of FRP.”⁶⁰⁵ The municipal elections of 14 October 1930 triggered debates on FRP’s encouragement of reactionists. Long discussions took place in the parliament in which RPP deputies, notably ministers, often mentioned FRP as a reactionist party. For instance, Interior Minister Şükrü (Kaya) Bey once told that the notion of reactionism

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 422.

⁶⁰² Köse, “Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler,” 55. In the long run, on 8 August 1931, the Press Law was introduced and opposition newspapers were prohibited. (T.C. Resmi Gazete, August 8, 1931.) Surely it was not a consequence of the Menemen Incident, but a reaction to accumulated criticism of both the RPP administrators and the partisan press.

⁶⁰³ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 257; Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 599–600.

⁶⁰⁴ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 18.

⁶⁰⁵ Tabak, “Menemen Olayının İzmir Basını’nda Yankıları,” 183.

(along with communism and anarchy) was inherent in FRP.⁶⁰⁶ People's support for FRP as opposed to RPP in the Aegean Region allegedly gave hope to cloaked disciples,⁶⁰⁷ first and foremost of the Nakşibendi order.⁶⁰⁸ "The real reason of the Menemen Incident was the tendency of the people close to FRP to encourage the sheikhs and followers of the order."⁶⁰⁹

Officially-biased accounts vary in their coverage of FRP. While some of them specifically blame FRP, others indicate that it was innocent in itself, but taken advantage of. On the one hand, some descriptions assert that although FRP was founded by people bound to the republic in their hearts, they were unable to prevent some enemies of the revolution from infiltrating the party organization.⁶¹⁰ On the other hand, penetration of reactionists is regarded unexceptional. "In the party meetings, the government was plainly being accused; from time to time it was said that religion was at stake, that women had been uncovered and that wearing the hat became obligatory. These issues attracted some anti-revolutionist sharia-seekers and groups to either join the party or to become its partisans. Thus they were provided the political opportunity to fight for their own ideas."⁶¹¹ Nevertheless, these writers give no information about who participated in and manipulated the FRP organization. This opinion remains as an assumption that lacks both specificity and adequate support. Some writers also argue that FRP pursued concessive policies that provided incentive to reactionists in the Aegean Region.⁶¹² "The planning of the Menemen Incident was made possible under these circumstances."⁶¹³

The most significant issue within this context is the mayoral elections in Menemen. Many of the townspeople voted for the candidate of FRP.⁶¹⁴ Kurtoğlu

⁶⁰⁶ "T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:22 Birinci İn'ikat," November 1, 1930, 50. The FRP was linked with the event to such an extent that Ahmet Aġaođlu, vice chairman of the party, later commented that they were described as if they participated in Derviş Mehmet's actions. *Son Posta*, January 12, 1931.

⁶⁰⁷ Kemal Üstün, *Devrim Şehidi Öğretmen Kubilay: 60. Yıl (1930-1990)* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1990), 18.

⁶⁰⁸ Kurtoğlu, "Menemen Olayı," 27, 32.

⁶⁰⁹ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 19.

⁶¹⁰ Köse, "Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler," 53.

⁶¹¹ Aysal, "Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı," 601.

⁶¹² Köse, "Menemen Olayı ve Ulusal Basındaki Tepkiler," 47.

⁶¹³ Üstün, *Menemen Olayı ve Kubilay*, 145; Anday, "Bir Yıldönümü: Kubilay," in *ibid.*, 142.

⁶¹⁴ I could not refer to original sources to double check this information, but according to Öz, FRP received 1009 votes while PR received 544. Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 416, 420.

makes an unsubstantiated assertion in his thesis. He argues, For him, “as the court records show, insurgent reactionists considered Menemen an appropriate place [to initiate revolt] since it was the FRP candidate who won the municipal elections there.”⁶¹⁵ However, such a matter was not brought to the fore in any of the trials. Tabak makes a similarly unverified assertion: “the prosecutor of the martial court of Menemen specified in the bill of indictment that insurgents deemed Menemen a suitable place to achieve their goals since FRP had won the municipal elections there.”⁶¹⁶ However, the prosecutor did not touch upon this issue implicitly or explicitly as best we can tell from the available evidence.

Eyüp Öz states that “the question of ‘Why Menemen?’ leads us to the identity of the town as well as to its strong bond with FRP.”⁶¹⁷ For Öz, Menemen becomes prominent with its former intense opposition to the government.⁶¹⁸ Nevertheless, this issue is itself complicated. İsmet Paşa, in his parliament speech, stressed the enlightened character of the western regions of Turkey, including Menemen, and expressed his surprise at how such an incident could occur there. This case is recounted by some others too as follows: “Menemen was not situated in a region from which an attempt at revolt was expected.”⁶¹⁹ Yet, when looking for the political causes of the incident, the town’s opposition to the government comes to mind. One should make a distinction between opposing the government religiously, sympathizing with a religious order, onlooking a demonstration and participating in one actively. Since proportionally a very small number of the town population participated in Derviş Mehmet’s actions, the events there had little to do with the general characteristics of the people of Menemen, as previously explained.

⁶¹⁵ Kurtoğlu, “Menemen Olayı,” 34, 258.

⁶¹⁶ Tabak, “Menemen Olayının İzmir Basını’nda Yankıları,” 316.

⁶¹⁷ Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 416.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., 425.

⁶¹⁹ According to Mazıcı, among the revolts that occurred between 1924 and 1938 only the Menemen Incident took place in Western Anatolia. She purports that rates of literacy and economic development were higher in Menemen than in central, eastern and southeastern Anatolia. Moreover, feudal personages and agencies were less influential there, so the new regime could easily reach it. She finally concludes that the Menemen Incident is an aberrant instance of revolts. Her interpretations appear to have been based on suppositions or general impressions rather than clear information based on an in-depth study. Consequently, the value of her account remains limited. Mazıcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Analizi,” 131. Thus, along with the previously mentioned officially-biased wrong information, she does not provide significant contribution to accounts on the event.

Öz adds another unverified piece of information. He asserts that according to the statements made in the trials, all of the defendants were followers of FRP. “They tended towards the party since they considered it as the sole remedy for their situation. Thus, the closure of FRP meant for them the collapse of the legitimate political roof. They then directed their expectations to a call for divine salvation.”⁶²⁰ This is an unsubstantiated and misleading argument. As mentioned in trials, only a few of 105 defendants were affiliated with FRP. Besides, the chief judge did not regard this affiliation as an important matter. The judge neither used the party issue as a point in his considerations nor mentioned it in the final charges and decisions.⁶²¹

Another argument brought forward in recent works is that the Menemen Incident was another indicator of the prematurity of the transition to a multi-party system.⁶²² This point is generally made about the closure of FRP and the failure of that second attempt to shift to a multi-party system. FRP was accused of being reactionist and creating an opportunity for reactionists to operate. The Menemen Incident is viewed in the same equation⁶²³ as if it were a politically motivated revolt, planned and carried out by the remaining followers of FRP. In reality, the perpetrators of the event had nothing to do with the former FRP or any other political group.

There are also ambiguous arguments in point. According to Mazııcı, the Menemen Incident occurred under some intersecting conditions. In addition to the closure of FRP, the Popular Republican Party (Ahali Cumhuriyet Fırkası), which did not adopt a reactionist political line, was closed as well by a cabinet decree on 21 December, 1930. The request to establish the Workers and Farmers Party of the Republic of Turkey (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Amele ve Çiftçi Partisi) was also refused, on the grounds that it tended toward communist purposes. Mazııcı argues that the occurrence of the Menemen Incident after the termination of those three political projects is significant.⁶²⁴ Her account holds that there was potential for political opposition in the country. This potential became manifest in the attempts to establish political par-

⁶²⁰ Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 435.

⁶²¹ Although Eyüp Öz diverges from the officially-biased writers in general, his study involves misleading or weak information in no small measure. His emphasis on the FRP connection is a case in point. Öz’s account is discussed in the “Unbiased Accounts” section below.

⁶²² Aysal, “Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası - Menemen Olayı,” 581.

⁶²³ Ertem, “Resmi Belgeler Ve Basında Menemen Olayı,” 177.

⁶²⁴ Mazııcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Analizi,” 144.

ties. Mazıcı implies that when these initiatives were precluded, oppositional circles took action in Menemen. This is a misleading and misinformed deduction. Neither the agents of the incident nor the supposed backstage actors were associated with any political organization. Such inferences appear to be the consequence of attempts to portray the incident as a well-rounded revolt, carried out by networks determined to oppose the regime.

Not all of the officially-biased writers ascribe direct responsibility to FRP for the Menemen Incident. According to Yazman, for instance, “although critics assert that it gave rise to the rebellion, FRP was not a reactionist party. It was only indirectly connected to the incident. FRP opened a road to a broad range of freedom in the country if for a short time of three months. Under these liberal circumstances, those who secretly nursed a grudge against the republican revolutions found encouragement and took off their masks.”⁶²⁵ Yazman continues by mentioning the İzmir meeting of FRP, held on 7 September, 1930, and to which 50,000 people attended. Yazman holds that the İzmir meeting revealed how tens of thousands of people turned against the hat and wished to wear the *fes* again. “Owing to that meeting, under the assumption of attracting a wide range of supporters, reactionists chose Menemen to initiate their revolt.”⁶²⁶

This explanation is weak. Defining the participants’ wish to wear the *fes* again in the FRP’s İzmir meeting as an hostile attitude against the republic is not convincing. Opposing the hat or even the party in power does not mean opposing the regime itself. Although Yazman tries to make his explanation plausible by not charging FRP directly, he describes its supporters as potential rebels who, in due time, attempted a revolt against the republic. Moreover, the link between the participants of the FRP meeting in İzmir and the Menemen Incident is missing in his argument. He presumes that secret protagonists of actions against the new regime attended the FRP meetings and then undertook a rebellion, Yazman does not explain who these protagonists were and how their opposition evolved into a revolt. Thus, Yazman’s narrative remains flawed and unconvincing.

Mazıcı as well offers explanations about the conditions that facilitated the Menemen Incident. “Despite all its efforts, RPP could not lead the country out of the

⁶²⁵ Yazman, *Atatürk’le Beraber: Devrimler, Olaylar, Anılar (1919-1939)*, 234.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

economic crises that occurred after eleven years of war. Additional factors were the aridity of the summer of 1927 and the impact of the great world depression of 1929. These adverse conditions affected Western Anatolia particularly hard. Under the influence of these economic troubles, the Menemen townspeople voted for FRP in the municipal elections. Having fallen short in resolving the country's economic problems, RPP adopted a populist policy in order to retain power. RPP appealed to fears of 'reactionism and communism' to condemn FRP indiscriminately. RPP used these notion provocatively to blame the political alliance that FRP represented and thus depicted FRP as a meeting ground of anti-republicans and opponents of laicism."⁶²⁷ Indeed, as previously discussed, MAZICI offers some officially-biased arguments to explain the background of the Menemen Incident. This study is not the place to elaborate on the reasons why people voted for FRP, but one can argue that MAZICI's account about Menemen townspeople's choice of FRP and why people in general supported it makes the most sense among the officially-biased recent interpreters of the Menemen Incident. However, her explanation is ultimately flawed for the same reason. Asserting that "RPP's definition of FRP as reactionist stimulated anti-government agents to gather under the roof of FRP and prepared the ground for the Menemen Incident" is untenable. MAZICI does not show how and where did the protagonists of the Menemen Incident connected to opposition leaders affiliated with FRP.

4.2. Counter-Official and Conspiracy Narrations

The second group of the recent literature about the Menemen Incident differ from others by their bent on counter-official and conspiratorial arguments. In this section, I discuss two kinds of narrations. The first one is marked with its contrast to official arguments as well as reliance on conspiratorial explanations. In order to claim that the incident occurred in a different way than that described in officially-biased accounts, these authors incorporate misinformation peppered with conspiracy arguments. The second group of accounts are distinguished by containing conspiratorial arguments predominantly, regardless of being officially-biased or moved by counter-official concerns.

⁶²⁷ MAZICI, "Menemen Olayı'nın Analizi," 140.

The counter-official perspective⁶²⁸ stresses that although many years have passed since the event, it is still used to defame religious figures and Muslims in general.⁶²⁹ Counter-official authors thus describe the incident as an organized plot aimed at putting believers and Islamic orders, as well as Islam itself (as a religion) in a difficult position. In this regard, the initial point of the plotline is a decision of RPP administrators allegedly made in Bursa, “in the summer of 1930, [when] Şükrü Kaya, Mahmud Esat Bozkurt, Vasıf Çınar, and other prominent figures of RPP were staying in a hotel in Bursa.”⁶³⁰

According to the story, Şeyh Esat was also in the city and went to a hotel across from the one in which RPP leaders stayed. It is alleged that RPP leaders observed the crowd gathered in front of Şeyh Esat’s hotel, welcoming Esat, presenting their affection and respect.⁶³¹ “There, RPP magnates decided to crush all religious figures, starting with Esat.”⁶³² They had a conversation among themselves as follows: “It’s time to annihilate those men. An incident shall be stirred up in Menemen under the guise of rebellion against the regime. Religious protagonists will be grabbed and crushed one by one.”⁶³³ That is to say, Kemalists allegedly condemned Şeyh Esat much earlier than the Menemen Incident. These authors do not seem to have been concerned with providing evidence to back their story. Therefore, we do not have a clue where to check whether such an encounter happened or not.

Counter-official accounts thus describe the event as a staged revolt,⁶³⁴ part of a game plan to condemn “reactionism.”⁶³⁵ According to Mustafa İslamoğlu, his ar-

⁶²⁸ The first influential author who accounted the event in a counter-official context is Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. The arguments of subsequent authors are based on his explanations.

⁶²⁹ Recai Kömür, “Menemen İstismarı Artık Bitmeli”, *Aksiyon*, December 31, 1994, http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/kapak/menemen-istismari-artik-bitmeli_500412 ; Mustafa Armağan, “Menemen’de Ajanlar Cirit Atıyordu!” *Zaman*, December 28, 2014, http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazarlar/mustafa-armagan/menemende-ajanlar-cirit-atiyordu_2267024.html

⁶³⁰ Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak’ası*, 73.

⁶³¹ Mustafa İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler ve Menemen Provakasyonu*, 7th ed. (İstanbul: Denge Yayınları, 1998), 78.

⁶³² Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 25th ed. (İstanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2009), 159.

⁶³³ İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 86.

⁶³⁴ Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 129.

⁶³⁵ For these writers, “some would show displeasure for the suspicion that the Menemen Incident was a provocation of the Kemalist regime.” The incident is defined as having been organized to satisfy both İsmet Paşa’s desire to punish the public for its support of FRP and Mustafa Kemal’s wish to annihilate the Nakşibendi order. As for FRP, it discovered that the

guments “would be described as another conspiracy theory. Those, who will describe them in that way, believe what the official history and state chroniclers say. However, there are proofs that demonstrate the presence of some dirty hands in the incident.”⁶³⁶ “Based on the narration of a certain private, who did his service in the unit under Kubilay’s command, some secret agents were working undercover in Menemen in those days. A specific bearded agent was instigating the townspeople on the day of the event. He was detained but did not appear in the court, and no one ever saw him again.”⁶³⁷ “Since the perpetrators of the incident did not truly intend to stir up a revolt, but were rather directed by the state, the work of the secret agent was not difficult.”⁶³⁸ “The agent in question observed the events in black sheet from afar.”⁶³⁹ Although the narrators of this story refer to people who witnessed or knew about these situations,⁶⁴⁰ they neither give names nor provide details. Therefore, this account of a secret remains a fictional story.

According to these authors, none of the actors engaged in the incident was qualified to initiate such a religious movement. “In addition to the fact that they utterly lacked any sort of religious perception and sensibility, the leader of the company was also an ignorant pervert and psychopath.”⁶⁴¹ “All these prove the presence of a secret background without the need to offer further support.”⁶⁴² “Kubilay was sac-

people were yearning for a religious order. Thus, the label of “reactionism” attributed to the FRP, would be proven through staging “the game of Menemen.” (See Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak’ası*, 60, 61.; İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 93; Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 128.)

⁶³⁶ İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 81.

⁶³⁷ Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak’ası*, 69. Mustafa Armağan, “Menemen’de Ajanlar Cirit Atıyordu!” This writer remarks that the British ambassador to Ankara at the time reported in an official document on 4 February, 1931, that a statement of Mustafa Muğlalı, the chief judge of the martial court, alleged that Şeyh Esat made an explicit declaration in his deathbed that Lawrence, the famous British agent, was connected with the Menemen Incident. Armağan thinks that this alleged British document was fabricated to cover the provocation executed by native secret agents.

⁶³⁸ Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 138.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 140; İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 85.

⁶⁴⁰ Kısakürek even says that one of those witnesses was still alive at the date of his writing. Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 140; İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*.

⁶⁴¹ They are also described to not have any sort of association with the Nakşibendi order. Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak’ası*, 83.

⁶⁴² Misinformation about the actions of the company are also present in these counter-official writings. The company members are described as having been so raving that hashish addict Derviş did not content himself with cutting the head off the poor officer but also drank his blood by handfuls in the manner of a mad man. Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 139; İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 76.

rificed for the sake of this conspiracy. He was deliberately sent in unarmed, with his privates' rifles loaded with blanks."⁶⁴³ In this account, the district wardens are asserted to have been shot with the bullets of machine guns of support units, and killed in the confusion.⁶⁴⁴ "There are witnesses of this last event as well."⁶⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the accuracy of this testimony is doubtful because the witnesses in question are untraceable.

A further allegation is that the perpetrators were shot in the crossfire to do away with the evidence instead of detaining them.⁶⁴⁶ The so-called plan involved a payment to the actors as well. "Those hashish-addicts were given 10,000 liras in exchange for what they would do. According to the testimonies of someone present there, Mehmet Emin said: 'What happened to the money which we were promised to get?' when he was apprehended."⁶⁴⁷ As the examples above should illustrate, these narrators who challenge the official accounts do not provide verifiable information and largely remain conspiracy theorists.

There are some reasonable points in the accounts of these counter-official authors. They indicate the incapacity of the insurgents to stir up as well-rounded a rebellion as argued in the officially-biased accounts. They plausibly note the ignorance and stupidity of the actors,⁶⁴⁸ though they reach the conclusion that they were directed by government agents.⁶⁴⁹ They also mention the implausibility of the overthrowing of the government by six hashish-addicts and drunks.⁶⁵⁰ "If the Nakşibendi order had been the organizer of the alleged rebellion to institute sharia, they would not assign the task to such ignorant hashish-addicts as Derviş Mehmet, but to respectable and esteemed persons."⁶⁵¹ "The perpetrators had nothing to do with either the Nakşibendi order or the Islamic religion. Smoking hashish is out of the question

⁶⁴³ "Kubilay's lamenters were the ones who sent him to his very death." İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 87.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁴⁵ Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak'ası*, 67.

⁶⁴⁶ The exaggeration here is that this way of removing proof is similar to the methods employed by the CIA, KGB and MOSSAD. İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 87.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁶⁴⁸ Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak'ası*, 83.

⁶⁴⁹ Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 140.

⁶⁵⁰ İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 97. In a former interview published in *Zaman*, 25 December 1988, Kubilay's daughter-in-law Müzeyyen is claimed to have said: "The killers of Kubilay were a few hashish-addicts. Yet, because of several bad seeds, all Muslims have been tarnished, I'm against this." Mustafa Armağan, "Menemen'de Ajanlar Cirit Atıyordu!"

⁶⁵¹ Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak'ası*, 83.

for a Muslim.”⁶⁵² İslamoğlu further argues that the government was aware of the perpetrators beforehand, and their families had reported them to the police.⁶⁵³ “Şeyh Esat was under surveillance as well.”⁶⁵⁴ İslamoğlu stresses that the prosecutor based his charges regarding the incident, which was carried out by six hashish-addicts, on a ridiculous assertion⁶⁵⁵ and the court ascribed the responsibility of the incident to the Nakşibendi order in an unlawful way.⁶⁵⁶

Within this context, counter-official accounts indicate that the real purpose of carrying out the incident was to destroy the Nakşibendi order, frustrate religious people,⁶⁵⁷ and annihilate notable religious figures,⁶⁵⁸ Şeyh Esat especially.⁶⁵⁹ The assertion here is that Şeyh Esat did not die a natural death due to his old age and disease, but was murdered.⁶⁶⁰ “As he could not be legally executed because of his age, the executioners of the government resorted to murder.”⁶⁶¹ Nevertheless, Şeyh Esat was already eighty-four years old at the time and was so ill that during the trials he was excused by the chief judge several times to rest. The idea that he was murdered by state officers lacks any sort of substantial proof and hence it remains merely a rumor.

⁶⁵² Recai Kömür, “Menemen İstismarı Artık Bitmeli.”

⁶⁵³ İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 87.

⁶⁵⁴ Kısakürek explains on this issue basing upon Saraçoğlu’s account. Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 144.

⁶⁵⁵ İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 97.

⁶⁵⁶ İslamoğlu says that anyone who wish to write the history of “radical irreligiousness” and to know how cheap life is in Turkey should read the prosecutor’s opinion as to the accusations that justify the death sentences issued in the Menemen Incident. *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁵⁷ It is alleged that İsmet Paşa, as usual, incriminated all Muslims in his parliament speech on January 1, 1931. *Ibid.*, 77; This is not true. The prime minister did not condemn all Muslims. He disparaged the actors who had been seeking to use religion as a means to intervene in the political arena. Furthermore, for Eyüp Öz, Jewish Jözef’s sentence with capital punishment for applauding the demonstrations of Derviş Mehmet and his followers was “a price paid in the name of all non-Muslims.” Öz, “Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek,” 429.

⁶⁵⁸ Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 128–9.

⁶⁵⁹ Müftüoğlu, *Menemen Vak’ası*, 75.

⁶⁶⁰ Kısakürek alleges that Şeyh Esat’s food was poisoned several times, but “they” obtained no result, except that, he became sicker. Later, they injected poison with a syringe to his body at night, finishing Şeyh Esat off and reaching their goal. Kısakürek mentions that this information is based on rumors and there is no document to justify these news, but he adds that the logic of the flow of events leaves no room for doubt. Kısakürek, *Son Devrin Din Mazlumları*, 160–1.

⁶⁶¹ İslamoğlu says: “What I have heard from Şeyh Esat’s old disciples, who were dedicated to him, agrees with the news of his being martyred by poison injection.” İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 116.

These counter-official conspiracy theorists express significant points regarding the contradictions of the accusations against the entire Nakşibendi order. However, their arguments are flawed for defining the incident as a plot and disregarding the crowd in the square. They ignore the people's implicit or explicit acclamation and support during the event. It was this support that invited the government's harsh response. The counter-official accounts discount the rationale behind the government's reaction and hold that "the republic showed extreme injustice, in punishing and hanging many people regardless of their involvement in the incident, [making one think of] a state terrorism"⁶⁶²

The republican regime had no tolerance for someone manipulating people with political-religious promises such as establishing a caliphate regime, abolishing the Hat Act, and the like. An even more unbearable matter was people's putting their support behind such movements. Thus, the regime wished to give a clear and intimidating message to everyone, particularly religious orders, so they would not dare to attempt such a rebellion.

Counter-official authors also suppose that the republican regime aimed to annihilate the sufi orders for good. According to these authors, "the regime was the enemy of the activities of all sufi orders."⁶⁶³ However, this is not true. As even the authors in question stress, state officers knew that the sufi organizations were still active. Moreover, they remained alive after the incident as well. Thus, the suggestion that the regime aimed to destroying all sufi and other religious activities is misleading.

The second category of this section covers the totally fictive arguments, regardless of official or counter-official perspectives. The accounts of Atilhan and Küçük top the list.⁶⁶⁴ For Atilhan, the incident was "a game planned by Zionist anarchists who used thousands of Nakşibendis as an instrument and made them play it

⁶⁶² İslamoğlu, *Devrimlere Tepkiler*, 77.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁶⁴ Cevat Rifat Atilhan (d. 1967) was a former military man and ideological writer. He wrote hundreds of articles and books from such ideological perspectives such Turkism, pan-Islamism as well as anti-Semitism. Yalçın Küçük (b. 1930), has similarly adopted quite various ideological positions ranging from Marxism to Nationalism. He writes on political and historical issues.

through using their naiveté and ignorance.”⁶⁶⁵ According to Atilhan, “the main purpose of the event was to blacken religion and religious figures in the eyes of the rising generation. Aegean people considered the abolition of FRP an affair of honor. Their dissatisfaction of the government grew day by day. Thus, it posed a danger for İnönü. Consequently, to frighten as well as to win the favor of the Aegeans, İnönü prepared a scenario of insurrection with the help of a few free-mason deputies. Nakşibendis were unwittingly used as a means of Zionist ideals and enabled İnönü and other masons to remain in power for many years.”⁶⁶⁶

Yalçın Küçük describes the incident as a mission, prepared and launched to set the Kemalist regime right. “An anti-regime revolt was considered necessary in order to discipline the society and suppress economic distress. Kubilay was deliberately sent to his death so that the government could bring its opponents to their heel and legitimate its oppressive regime.”⁶⁶⁷ Despite the ungrounded content of these conspiracy theories, they are recounted in proto-academic writings. For instance, Mazıcı remarks “although Küçük’s interpretations may seem to be speculative exaggerations, he makes thought-provoking points. ‘Why was an unarmed reserve officer with a few days of experience of military service sent to intervene’ is an important question. Another point is why the rifles of Kubilay’s troops did not have real bullets when the rebels could gather 1500 people around themselves.”⁶⁶⁸

The criticisms previously mentioned are also applicable for the last two authors. Rather than providing substantial proof to support their claims, they choose to speculate on the origin of the event and provide misleading, unverified and unverifiable information. While these accounts avoid the black-and-white thinking of the officially-biased or counter-official authors in their effort to draw a general picture and to capture the essence of the event, they can only produce basically fictional stories.

4.3. Unbiased Accounts

The accounts discussed here do not generally approach the Menemen Incident within narrow boxes as do the officially-biased or counter-official accounts. For instance, none of these researchers depict the purposes attributed to the perpetrators

⁶⁶⁵ Cevat Rifat Atilhan, *Menemen Hadisesinin İç Yüzü* (İstanbul: Yaylacık Matbaası, 1968), 50.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Yalçın Küçük, *Türkiye Üzerine Tezler* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1989), 236–7.

⁶⁶⁸ Mazıcı, “Menemen Olayı’nın Analizi,” 141.

as feasible –such as occupying Ankara and other cities or re-establishing the caliphate. In this sense, instead of describing the incident as a rebellion threatening the very existence of the republic, they seek to understand the causal relations within and behind the events discussed under the heading of the Menemen Incident. They also do not have a biased perspective and do not make normative-ideological interpretations. Therefore, these attentive scholarly works deserve to be examined one by one. The unique interpretations and arguments of this thesis will also be discussed alongside the relevant issues.

4.3.1. Hamit Bozarslan

Bozarslan is the first scholar who elaborated on the primary sources academically and brought forward path-breaking arguments against officially-biased and counter-official accounts. However, Bozarslan's explanations have weak points as well. Intended to focus on the event as a “millenarian movement,” Bozarslan discusses it in political, economic and religious terms. One of his main arguments is that even though the perpetrators of the revolt were associated with the order, “it was a local event rather than a rebellion.”⁶⁶⁹

Bozarslan explains the circumstances which led to the incident. For him, one of the reasons why people, particularly villagers, provided support in different degrees was that a social banditry tradition was still alive in the region.⁶⁷⁰ However, Bozarslan appears to be taking this point for granted. Bozarslan does not give reference to a primary or secondary sources that would help establish the existence of bandits and familiarity with bandits in this region.

According to Bozarslan, immigrants from Crete composed a large part of region's population. “Those immigrants were under pressure to gain acceptance by the native population. The region was suffering from the economic effects of the Great World Depression of 1929. In addition, taxes were high and peasants were in a really difficult situation. Moreover, the climate of the region at the time was arid, and floods occurred and killed many people while leaving many more of them home-

⁶⁶⁹ Hamit Bozarslan, “Messianisme et mouvement social : l'événement de Menemen en Turquie (décembre 1990),” *Cahiers d'Etudes sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien*, no. 11 (1991): 79.

⁶⁷⁰ Hamit Bozarslan, “Le madhisme en Turquie : L'« incident de Menemen » en 1930,” *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de La Méditerranée*, no. 91–94 (2000): 303.

less.”⁶⁷¹ Bozarslan underlines that these factors enhanced the people’s perception of the era as a chaotic one and raised their expectation of a messiah. Nevertheless, he does not give references to primary sources nor he provides detailed information about the extent to which these natural disasters affected the lives of people so much so that they came to expect a sacred savior. He does not substantially frame the conditions of the region as he describes them. He also does not establish the readiness of the people for such a messianic proclamation. He does not provide sufficient information to support his claim that the people of Menemen and the surrounding West Anatolian regions believed that they were living in the end of times (*ahir zaman*).

Bozarslan states that a large part of the population perceived that the republican regime was fighting an open war against religion.⁶⁷² This aspect of Bozarslan’s argument is correct. A common displeasure against the government’s religious policies might be indicated as a general reason for some people to show support. Indeed, the RPP’s policy of laicism would remain the subject of debate for a very long period in Turkish history. The transformation from a lifestyle, which was largely defined in religious terms, into a secularist political system and culture generated a perception among the religiously and culturally conservative people that their religion was at risk. This point thus explains to a significant degree why some people supported or acclaimed the actions of Derviş Mehmet and his friends. For Bozarslan, within this context, although major signs of the end of the world in Islamic literature, such as the sunrise from the west and sunset from the east, did not occur, there was tangible evidence to conclude that the *Dajjal*⁶⁷³ had come and that his name was Mustafa Kemal.⁶⁷⁴

Furthermore, according to Bozarslan, “Fethi Okyar was seen as a political messiah, a savior certainly unexpected but desired. However, Okyar was betrayed, or worse, betrayed his followers by leaving them alone to face their destiny. In Menemen, a town which had acclaimed FRP in the municipal elections of 1930, the religious messiah had only to take on the role of political messiah to fulfill the hopes of

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 303–5.

⁶⁷² Ibid., 306.

⁶⁷³ *Dajjal*, comparable to Antichrist, is an evil figure in Islamic eschatology. It is believed that he will emerge on Earth at the end of times and will deceive people to deflect them from the right way.

⁶⁷⁴ Bozarslan, “Le Madhisme en Turquie,” 305.

the crowd.”⁶⁷⁵ Nevertheless, these last statements of Bozarslan are not grounded on facts. Although Derviş plainly stressed the infidelity of RPP leaders, no record indicates that he mentioned the word “Dajjal.” In fact, Bozarslan can not point to a single official record or perpetrator statement or another source that would help him verify his point. Similarly, he can not produce any source that shows the perception of Fethi Okyar as a political Messiah.

Indeed, Bozarslan’s attempt to offer an esoteric explanation for the incident remains ungrounded in general. The villagers’ hosting of Derviş did not derive from their expectations of a sacred savior but from their relationship and acquaintance with him and his followers. Still, the reason behind a small proportion of the Mene-men townspeople’s seeming approval of Derviş Mehmet can be explained in terms of their disappointments and displeasure of the republican policies –rather than their specific anticipation of the Mahdi. Indeed, if the people had truly expected the emergence of the Mahdi and had followed Derviş Mehmet for that reason, they would have dedicated themselves to him sincerely and would not have hesitated to engage in a gun battle with law enforcement agencies.

The actions of the company were parts of a sacred ritual, according to Bozarslan. “They codified a discrete language for communication. It was incomprehensible to persons outside the group.”⁶⁷⁶ But not a single piece of supporting information is present on their using of a communication code. Bozarslan argues that the company’s smoking of hashish was also a part of their messianic ritual, “as seen in some Christian messianic experiences.”⁶⁷⁷ He takes Derviş’s presumed saying, “It’s a sin to drink blood, but his blood is lawful,” for granted as well and makes further contrived interpretations.⁶⁷⁸ For him, Kubilay’s beheading signals a return to the pre-Abrahamic age, in the sense that Derviş, in company with the crowd’s applause, transformed the killing of Kubilay into an ethereal sacrifice.⁶⁷⁹ These assertions indicate a break from the factual base. As a matter of fact, the gathering of townspeople around Derviş, though they were very small in number, emboldened him to carry out

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 308.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 299.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ For instance, Bozarslan recounts in his study that 1000 people gathered in the town square. He also relates uncritically the words Mehmet Emin allegedly uttered when he was detained, saying, “Derviş Mehmet will rise again. He will kill you all.” Ibid., 300, 302.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 300.

such a gruesome murder. However, he neither said Kubilay's blood was lawful nor drank it. With reference to these cases, Bozarslan's decision to assert the messianic aspects of the event influences his interpretation of the rumors as fact. His effort to set the actual happenings in a metaphysical messianic framework is ultimately unproductive.

Another claim of Bozarslan from the same perspective is the inability of Kemalist leaders to understand the violent incident in messianic terms. "Since they did not realize the eschatological nature of the event, they interpreted it as an act of subversion, a plot against the existence of the government."⁶⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the event was understood by RPP leaders very well. It was a naive attempt at rebellion, carried out by ignorant, senseless insurgents who frequently smoke hashish and acted in impertinent ways. The government's real reaction to the incident, including hanging twenty-eight people regardless of their substantial engagement in the events, amounted to a warning to everyone who would dare to initiate such a revolt, particularly in religious terms, and to people who would in any way participate in or approve of such an undertaking. In this regard, his expression that "the Kemalist government decided to overcome the Menemen townspeople's acute cry of insurrection" is an exaggeration.

For Bozarslan, the government showed an unprecedented rage against FRP and opposition media as well as sufi circles.⁶⁸¹ However, the harsh response of the government was not as unprecedented as Bozarslan states. A strict polarization affected the political atmosphere of the era and increased tensions. Conflicts between newspapers and the statements of RPP deputies make this situation clear. Bozarslan's expression of "the defense of the revolution" was already going on. All the opposition elements, including the members of FRP and opposition media, were under severe criticism. Bozarslan's argument that the government did not prioritize determining individual guilt after the incident however, appears reasonable. As he puts it, "the case, though conducted within the legal process, turned out to be an exemplary instance of revolutionary justice."⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 308.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., 301.

⁶⁸² Ibid., 302.

4.3.2. Eyüp Öz

Eyüp Öz, a student of Bozarslan, basically seeks to expand Bozarslan's arguments. For him as well, the incident was local in nature and there is no reliable proof of external connections of sufi orders or to Şeyh Esat.⁶⁸³ Still, his main purpose in the article is to discuss the causes which led the people of the district to support or acclaim Derviş in various ways as well as the motivations of the perpetrators in initiating such a revolt. Some of Öz's explanations are neither verifiable nor falsifiable, because there is no reliable primary or secondary source to rely on. Other assertions of Öz appear mistaken. For him, the reasons behind the uncertainties of Giritli Mehmet stem from his depiction as a pawn in both official and opposition accounts of the event. However, Öz asserts that examining his past reveals a fragile and disturbed portrait.⁶⁸⁴

In a similar vein to Bozarslan, Öz states that immigrants composed a vast amount of Menemen's population⁶⁸⁵ and were having housing problems as well as being marginalized by local residents. Therefore, they tended towards sufi orders, expecting acceptance and support.⁶⁸⁶ Indeed, an immigrant crowd of people might try to adapt to local organizations. Nevertheless, in the case at hand, such accounts remain to be guesses or suppositions. There is no evidence that indicates the general orientation of the district's people towards sufi orders. Thus, the assertion that this notion contributed to the Menemen Incident in terms of both the perpetrators and the locals remains unconvincing.

As for the specific motivations of the insurgents, Öz suggests that conditions such as "poverty, all kinds of illegitimacy, prostitution, homicide, family violence, and the sale and use of drugs" might have influenced Manisa's immigrant neighborhoods. "In order to ensure their security and to use in case of need, residents of these poor quarters were carrying weapons. Thus, Giritli Mehmet and his disciples' smoking hashish does not conflict with their social status and environment. The assassina-

⁶⁸³ Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 421.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 412.

⁶⁸⁵ Öz says the population was approximately 30,000, and yet it was the sum of the entire township. The town itself had a population of 12,000 people. Still, the number of residents is not the problem. It must be noted that a very small proportion attended Derviş's demonstrations anyway, irrespective of the size of the town's population. Otherwise, one would pave the way for the perception that the incident was a rebellion in which the townspeople of Menemen participated widely.

⁶⁸⁶ Öz, "Yasak Bir Hafızayla Yüzleşmek," 426.

tion of Kubilay might be defined as a type of violence generated with regards to the circumstances under which Derviş lived. Although Öz alleges that local newspaper reports support his accounts, he does not give reference to those primary sources. Thus, his reference point and further arguments in this line remain ambiguous.⁶⁸⁷

Öz offers details about the social structures of the villages as well. For him, “the number of foreclosures was incredible in size, so much so that villages had turned into uninhabitable places. Local newspapers had notices of thousands of acres of peasant lands in Manisa villages, including the land of Derviş’s wife, put on sale in exchange for unpaid loans.”⁶⁸⁸ For Öz, this issue “directly documents” the connection between the crisis of the agricultural sector and the event itself. It is also a reasonable answer to the question why Derviş was welcomed with respect, according to Öz. That is to say, Derviş Mehmet was elevated to become the religiously identified leader of peasants whose land had been seized, in terms of Öz’s explanations.

Another argument that Öz makes is that “deficiencies of the Menemen Municipality’s infrastructure services created another problem for the people. Access to drinking water was a particularly acute problem.”⁶⁸⁹ Öz is under the impression that “it is truly tiresome to stand in long lines to water fetch from a few fountains. Epidemics, marshes, transportation problems and natural disasters like floods occurred in the autumn of 1930, killing tens of people. Government support and relief efforts were inadequate and victims became helpless.”⁶⁹⁰ These were other issues from which the people of the region suffered, according to Öz.

Öz claims that although FRP had been closed, its “associates” remained active. “Under the stress of the government’s extreme surveillance, these masses were inclined to keep their ears open to any antagonist voice. Under these circumstances, several mahdis emerged in various Anatolian provinces and Derviş Mehmet was one of them.”⁶⁹¹ This point appears entirely speculative. It does not rest on any source or study that demonstrates the occurrence of similar claims of Mahdism, comparable to Derviş Mehmet’s emergence, in those years.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 427.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 427–8.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 428.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 428, 430.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 424–5.

Following Bozarşlan's lead, Öz also expresses that Derviş Mehmet appeared after the political Mahdi, namely Fethi Okyar, since the latter was welcomed in the Aegean regions as a savior.⁶⁹² This statement is partly correct. Okyar had been met with great excitement and expectations, primarily due to economic reasons. However, Okyar himself did not seem to have wished to be regarded as such a savior. What is more important is that Derviş Mehmet did not receive much support.” The incident took place within only a few hours. His intentions were wildly imaginary and unrealistic. He was by no means able to actualize what he promised. Thus, such comparison with FRP experience remains quite far-fetched.

Öz adds other reasons to the political ones to explain the messianic expectations of the people. “1930 was an extraordinary year. It was a time in which great crises, cultural breaks and state coercion were at their highest level. These factors were conceived as signs of the end of the world. Thus, expectations of the emergence of the Mahdi naturally arose.”⁶⁹³ However, the inference that all these troubles piled up in such an extraordinary degree as to create an expectation of a sacred savior still remains an unsubstantiated argument. According to the arguments of Öz and Bozarşlan, the villagers hosted the company and the townspeople of Menemen welcomed Derviş since they considered him as the rescuer who would change their dire situations. In other words, those people are described as if they would not have questioned whether Derviş Mehmet had the qualifications and the potential to address their difficulties. Without taking Derviş and his company's smoking hashish, ignorance and pennilessness into consideration, Öz and Bozarşlan allege people followed him blindly. By doing so, Öz and Bozarşlan repeat the mistake of officially-biased accounts. In the villages of Bozalan and Paşa, there were relatives of Derviş himself as well as of his followers. In other words, kinship and acquaintance were the ultimate determinants of the company's being hosted as well as the reason why they were not denounced. Villagers' bonds of kinship and mutual acquaintance precluded them from reporting the armed group's suspicious positions to law enforcement agencies. It must be noted that the villagers' silence on this issue does not indicate their disloyalty to the state. If they had truly turned against the state and dedicated themselves to Derviş Mehmet as a savior in religious terms, they would have fol-

⁶⁹² Ibid., 429–30.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., 430.

lowed him on his subsequent actions or at least strengthened his hand as much as they could. In addition, the company was able to remain uncaught since no law enforcement officers was on duty in these villages. Though a certain villager of Bozalan assured them that they would arm themselves and come for assistance if needed, nobody left his village or joined the group in any way. Derviş Mehmet's mother-in-law even warned him and asked him not to proceed.

Economic distress can not be offered as the main reason why some townspeople followed Derviş Mehmet in Menemen. It is an abstract explanation. One needs to show specifically how economic distress moved a part of townspeople in Menemen to follow some armed strangers. Those who put forward the economic misery of people as a cause, do not provide testable data.

The rationale behind the participation of a small number of the townspeople in Derviş Mehmet's demonstrations has to be sought in several overlapping factors. The initial point is the company's religious statements. Öz reasonably argues that the people's reaction to the republic's policies regarding religion was one of the strongest causes of opposition at the time.⁶⁹⁴ The group's promise of re-establishing the caliphate and reinstating sharia must have had an effect on people. Nevertheless, it does not suffice on its own to explain people's support. While wandering around in the neighborhoods and meeting in the town square, the insurgents declared that an army of the caliphate consisting of 70,000 soldiers, had captured İstanbul as well as İzmir, and now surrounded Menemen. They moreover purported to have cut the communication lines, and stated that the entrances to and exits from the town were under their control. These declarations must have excited and affected some of the townspeople to different extents but enough to persuade some of them to follow the armed Derviş Mehmet. Some of them must have believed these claims. The insurgents' threats against the townspeople, in that anyone who would not get under the banner would be slaughtered by mid-day. Under the influence of such rumors and threats spreading by word of mouth, some people probably wondered whether they would regret participating in the group or not. Those who were indecisive remained to stand still nearby and watched the events unfold. However, a very high number of inhabitants chose to stay at home. When one considers that there was not an armed intervention until the battalions with machine guns arrived 3,5 hours after the begin-

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 428.

ning of the demonstrations, some people's gathering around the insurgents does not become a surprise. The delay of intervention in the demonstrations enhanced the influence of the insurgents' words. Even so, the crowd was not determined to stay in the square at any cost, but was inclined to disperse. When the shooting started, people ran away. No one remained behind to become engaged in the gun battle with military units. There was not a single defendant in the trials charged with joining in the insurgents during the gunfight. It could be asserted that if Kubilay had not been murdered with such brutality, the gathered crowd would not have constituted such a problem in the eyes of the PRR leaders.

As for political consequences, Öz accounts that the incident became an opportunity "served on a silver platter for the government. The RPP government turned the crisis into an opportunity and was able to overcome the strong dynamics that favored the opposition, particularly the former FRP. The opportunity allowed RPP to justify suppressive policies."⁶⁹⁵ Öz's remarks make good sense to a certain extent. The characterization of FRP as a reactionist coalition was commonplace. In the political atmosphere of the era, RPP members condemned any dissenting opinion, criticism or critic as the enemy of the republic. Thus, they pointed to the occurrence of such an incident of the one in Menemen as evidence of the reality of the threat of reactionism. Nevertheless, it might be unfair as well as irrational to allege that the RPP government, in a sense, enjoyed the political consequences of the incident. On the contrary, such an attempt of revolt, carried out with religious zeal, was precisely what the RPP did not want. İsmet Paşa's statements on what the laic state meant was significant, particularly his emphasis that it did not amount to a notion of anti-religiousness. In İsmet Paşa's review, laicism was the opposite of irreligiousness in that it assured people to live their religion under the over-sight of the government. İsmet Paşa's words and similar statements neither relieved the culturally and religiously conservative masses of their worries nor made them embrace the government's laicist policies. Still, RPP leaders insisted on this line of policy and had no tolerance for any initiation of religiously motivated political movements. This was the reason why the Menemen townspeople were so harshly blamed to have allowed such an attempt.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 436.

4.3.3. Umut Azak

Umut Azak's study presents the most reasonable and modest account of the incident. Her research does not include exaggerations or unsubstantiated causal chains like those of Bozarlan and Öz. She mentions that her account differs from the Islamist as well as the Kemalist narrations of the rebellion. Azak initially gives a brief summary of the recent political history of the republic, including the attempts to shift to a multi-party system, the Şeyh Said Rebellion, the Law on the Maintenance of Order, and other key incidents or developments. She then outlines the different phases of the Menemen Incident.

Her account of the rebels' activities is largely based on the speeches they made during the trials. Though she offers a fair summary of the event, there is some misleading information as well in her narrative. For instance, she states that the guns of Commander Fahri Bey, who came to scatter the crowd prior to Kubilay, and his unit did not have real bullets. Here Azak implies that Fahri Bey and his battalion might have shot at the company. If so, Derviş Mehmet did not get hurt because of the use of blank cartridges and he appeared to have proved at least for a short time his invulnerability. Thus the crowd in the square applauded him.⁶⁹⁶ However, the evidence of hand shows that Fahri Bey went to the government building and did not stay in the square or intervene to halt the demonstration when Derviş paid no heed to him.

Another misinformation in her study is that Kubilay was shot in the leg by Derviş.⁶⁹⁷ Actually, he was shot in the chest. After Derviş beheaded Kubilay, as Azak accounts with reference to secondary literature, "he displayed his head to the crowd and received an acclamation in return."⁶⁹⁸ However, there is no reliable information on this point in the primary sources and it is most likely a myth fabricated afterwards.⁶⁹⁹

Azak asserts, "apparently shaken by the violence of the rebels and the people's alleged collaboration with them, the government aimed to restore its authori-

⁶⁹⁶ Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, 30.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ In addition, the extent to which this crowd remained standing in the square when Kubilay was shot and Derviş beheaded him is equally uncertain.

ty.”⁷⁰⁰ In fact, the RPP leaders did not seek to restore the government’s authority because the situation was brought under control immediately as there were merely six perpetrators in the so-called rebellion.⁷⁰¹ Rather, the government aimed at the intimidation of both the public and the religious figures. Azak as well purports that it was the alleged collaboration of the people with the insurgents that disturbed the political leaders most.⁷⁰² And yet, the vital point of the matter is not just the assertions about townspeople having provided support. Government officials knew the extent to which people gathered in the square to spectate Derviş’s acts or to participate in them. The government’s harsh response non-compliance of the people with the warnings of gendarme officers and their applause and acclamation of Derviş. In other words, the collective stance of some townspeople typically met with a punitive reply of the government.

According to Azak, RPP leaders truly regarded the incident as a reactionist rebellion, a real threat the state overcame. “The political leadership saw the still vibrant social network of the *tarikat*, despite the formal ban on them since 1925, as a major threat to the state’s authority, and was convinced that the rebellion was planned by Nakşibendi sheikhs who used Derviş Mehmet as a pawn.”⁷⁰³ Nevertheless, Azak misses the point that the government knew well that certain sufi orders continued to exist even after their formal ban. Thus, it was not the case that RPP leaders realized all of a sudden after the Menemen Incident that these orders, particularly the Nakşibendis, survived underground. It is clear from the situation that the second phase of the judicial process mostly aimed at the prosecution of the Nakşibendis in a small part of the country. In other words, the situation did not turn into a hunt of the Nakşibendis and other followers of sufi orders all over the nation as Azak asserts.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, 31.

⁷⁰¹ Azak uses the term “rebellion” to describe the incident. I believe the events that made up this incident can not be defined as a rebellion, as if they enjoyed the backing of a large number of people engaged in various forms of social and political conflicts, including violent confrontation with law-enforcement agencies. Defining the Menemen Incident as “an attempt at rebellion” makes more sense.

⁷⁰² Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, 31.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁰⁴ For her, the state leaders desired a general campaign against underground *tarikat* activities. *Ibid.*

Azak emphasizes the lack of evidence indicating the Nakşibendi order's role in the incident.⁷⁰⁵ For her, “the link between the group of Derviş Mehmet and sheikhs in the upper echelons of the Nakşibendi order remains obscure”⁷⁰⁶ and “there is no evidence that Derviş Mehmet planned the rebellion in collaboration with larger sufi networks. Prosecutor's claim in this regards, that Şeyh Esat not only engaged in the events but was also the leader of the riot is unproven.”⁷⁰⁷ In other words, the incident “was neither a plot of Şeyh Esat in İstanbul to overthrow the secular government nor a plot of the latter to oppress the Nakşibendis. It was an attempt at local rebellion conducted by minor and local members of the Nakşibendi order.”⁷⁰⁸

Azak also indicates that the reason why insurgents chose Menemen as the town to introduce their rebellion is unknown. “Neither the court speeches of the three companions of Derviş Mehmet nor the final indictment of the prosecutor include any substantial detail which could explain these points.”⁷⁰⁹ The reason why the company headed for Menemen is indeed obscure, but not so significant. This is to say, the actions of Derviş and his followers did not derive from sound minds. It is not very reasonable to look for logic in the acts of those hashish smokers as if they could have taken all their steps thoughtfully. Searching for a higher rationale behind all their deeds is pointless. Having taken courage from being hosted by his relatives and acquaintances in the neighboring villages, Derviş might have really supposed that Safet Hoca would welcome and protect them in Menemen. In this way, he might have dreamt of occupying the district governorate and taking the military forces under his control. There does not seem to be a clear motive for Derviş to choose Menemen aside from these premises.

As an answer to the writings that put responsibility on the former FRP for the incident, she expresses that there is no proof of a connection between FRP and the

⁷⁰⁵ However, when defining the Nakşibendi order, she recounts that it played an important role in the Kurdish rebellion led by Şeyh Said. Ibid., 23. This statement is misleading in that the order as such was a major and country-wide organization. *Tarikat* connections might have had an influence on such an anti-government movement. However, “the Nakşibendi order” refers to a widespread esoteric religious organization in nature. When one says it played a role in a political movement, one has to be careful not to create the misleading impression that the order, as a whole, including all its members, participated in that movement or event and supported it.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 31, 36.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., 30.

participants of the Menemen uprising.⁷¹⁰ As evidence for her argument, Azak mentions that FRP was closed one month before the incident. This is a plausible but insufficient explanation. She needed to show as well that there is not a single piece of evidence indicating a concrete relationship between members of FRP and any of the perpetrators or their alleged incentives in all the substantial materials available to us on the incident –as already indicated above in the present work.

In explaining the motives of the insurgents, Azak states: “We can only suggest that the rebels might have been inspired by the general expression of social and economic dissatisfaction and the consequent support that the masses extended to the opposition party in their region.”⁷¹¹ Her argument that insurgents had been affected by people’s general dissatisfaction is not substantial, as discussed in the previous sections in detail above. It makes more sense to argue that they were deceived by themselves rather than that they were encouraged by people’s probable support. Having been doped up under the influence of hashish, they must have fancied that the six of them would suffice to an attempt of a revolt that would attract people’s support – although nobody from the villages had joined in them.

Azak emphasizes that the people believed in Derviş to be the Mahdi and thus, hosted him. For her, villagers might have believed in Derviş not because of their mere expectance of a random savior but since they had been familiar with the notion, located in common vocabulary of Islamic belief.⁷¹² Azak explains that, whether they recognized or not, the villagers’ help to Derviş possibly rested upon their opinion that Islam needed to be restored.⁷¹³ Azak plausibly describes that “the villages where the rebellious group camped were the villages of their close relatives,” but, “the real motive of those who hosted the rebels is difficult to discern.”⁷¹⁴ Indeed, the extent to which the villagers believed in Derviş is a significant question since not a single one of them joined the company. The group merely stayed in villages, where they were hosted and provided with basic provisions. Villagers did not prepare to become collectively engaged in an upcoming revolt. Moreover, the company practiced their

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

⁷¹² She stresses that “a messianic expectation, i.e. the belief in the Mahdi who will come to redeem the world and to render it just, as the prophet Muhammed once did, has been part and parcel of both Shiite and Sunni traditions in Islam.” Ibid., 26.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 27.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

zikrs in a cottage where they lived on their own. Peasants did not attend the group's rituals. Therefore, it is quite implausible to infer that villagers believed Derviş Mehmet to be the Mahdi. In fact, it is quite probable that they grew suspicious of the group. Within this context, the most distinct reason why the villagers hosted them and not reported them to law enforcement agencies appears to be their kinship ties and acquaintance.

She asks why and in what ways the Menemen Incident deviates from other rebellions, since it has been commemorated more than the others. Her reply in this regard is that Kubilay has been iconized within Kemalist memory since the case of his beheading "revived the fear of reactionary Islam (*irtica*)."⁷¹⁵ Her expression of Kemalist commemoration of Kubilay as an icon is very accurate and demonstrates the significance of the topic. However, whose fear the beheading awakened is quite ambiguous. It would not make much sense to assert that the RPP leaders, including Mustafa Kemal, were concerned about reactionism arising as a great threat to the state. There did not exist not country-wide antagonist organizations that watched for an opportunity to initiate a revolt. Nor was there a domestic disturbance in the country. Law enforcement agencies were not fighting against reactionist rebels.

Still, it does not mean that culturally and religiously conservative people were pleased with RPP's policies regarding religion. The state had established his control of religious institutions and no reactionist organization constituted a threat to it. Therefore, Azak needed to explain her point if she had in mind certain social groups, that had embraced secularism culturally and politically, and felt threatened by armed reactionism after the incident. In other words, the argument that the Menemen Incident ignited the fear of reactionism in RPP's social base needs to be reconsidered. Reactionism had been on RPP's agenda for quite a while. Pro-government newspapers promoted it and presented reactionism as an enemy of the state as well as of the nation. Thus, it is more sensible to argue that the RPP government considered the beheading of its officers as a challenge to state authority rather than remarking that Kubilay's beheading renewed the fear of reactionism. For the government, the event was another proof of the damage that reactionism did and could do to the nation. Azak's statements about the Kemalist regime's use of Kubilay as a martyr appeals sounder. For her, "the Kemalist regime institutionalized the memory of the Menemen

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

Incident and used the martyrdom of Kubilay as a tool of national mobilization and reinstatement of its authority vis-à-vis the continuing popularity of *tarikats*.”⁷¹⁶

4.3.4. Barış Ertem

Barış Ertem is another researcher who made an important contribution to studies on Menemen Incident. His study as well relies on archival records. Ertem uses the documents competently and presents an unbiased summary of the incident. His main argument is that the Menemen Incident did not only leave a brutal and bitter mark, but also became one of the factors which retarded the building of a multi-party political system and reflection of the national will to the ballot box until the 1950s.⁷¹⁷ Ertem states this argument at the end of his article, but his study does not support this conclusion compellingly. Though plausible, his study is a short summary of the actions of the perpetrators, reactions to the event and the judicial process, without any critical assessment. He does not carry out an elaborate evaluation of the incident. He does not address the charges against the Nakşibendi order. He does not focus on insurgents’ motivations and the conditions under which they received support or the extent and reasons of this support.

Despite these shortcomings, his study is more reasonable than many others thanks to his balanced statements, careful summary and judicious use of the available primary sources. Still, his article involves some points that need to be corrected. For instance, he states (with reference to a contemporary newspaper) that there was a crowd of 1000-1500 people in the square during Derviş Mehmet’s actions.⁷¹⁸ According to him, similar to the discussions in the parliament and the press, the court searched for a tangible connection between the former FRP and the incident.⁷¹⁹ Thus the respondents mentioned that they were members of RPP when defending themselves in trials, but might accuse others as being associated with FRP.⁷²⁰ However, the Chief Judge Muğlalı did not question the defendants’ party membership. He explicitly mentioned that the court was not interested in this issue. Similarly, neither

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 43; For Azak, the consolidation of the authoritarian regime was such that after the incident, no toleration remained for an opposition party until the transition to a multi-party system in 1946. Ibid., 42.

⁷¹⁷ Ertem, “Resmi Belgeler ve Basında Menemen Olayı,” 177.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 162.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 171.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 171–2.

the prosecution's charges nor the final decision of the martial court referred to party membership or affiliation as an issue.

4.3.5. General Studies Touching on the Incident

This section examines the studies that do not focus on the Menemen Incident specifically, but include it as a subtopic. These studies diverge from the officially-biased as well as counter-official accounts in explaining the background of the incident. Mete Tunçay, for instance, expresses “such a serious order [Nakşibendis] would not have regarded an ignorant disciple's claim of Mahdism worthy of notice.”⁷²¹ Tunçay's explanation is sensible, but he does not expand on the issue to show that there is no tangible evidence that connects the order as an organization to Derviş's plot. This shortcoming is probably because Tunçay did not have the time to check the relevant primary sources about this particular case in detail.

Tunçay's statement that the incident was used to annihilate the Nakşibendi order needs to be revised. He contends that the martial court kept working in order to find additional evidence to condemn the order.⁷²² Indeed, the second phase of the trials did not expand the investigation on the Menemen Incident, but dealt with additional personages affiliated with the Nakşibendi order and charged them with violating the law that abolished the sufi orders. Surely, this second phase of the trials marked the government's attempt to intimidate the sufi circles, yet it differed significantly from the first phase. The accused were acquitted except for a small number of them who received light sentences.

Another point made by Tunçay is that the effort to associate the incident with the former FRP remained inconclusive and effectively groundless.⁷²³ This is a sound observation. However, Tunçay's point that the reactionists' smoking of hashish during their rituals was a presumption is inaccurate.⁷²⁴ Had Tunçay examined the rele-

⁷²¹ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)*, 6th ed. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012), 304; This is noteworthy in that Tunçay, in a previous account, described the Nakşibendis as the most prominent religious circle that objected to the abolition of the caliphate and the proclamation of the Republic. In the article in question, far from arguing against the official statement, he agreed with the charges that a religious order was behind the plot. He advocated as well other officially-biased points discussed above regarding religious organizations. (See Mete Tunçay, “Menemen Olayı,” *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983), 573.)

⁷²² Tunçay, *Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması*, 305.

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 304, footnote no. 13.

vant primary documents carefully, he would not question the insurgents' addiction to hashish. Tunçay is on firmer grounds when he deems Derviş Mehmet's drinking of Kubilay's blood by handfuls after his beheading as an agitating exaggeration. Likewise, he approaches with suspicion the accounts that described Derviş Mehmet as a former associate of Çerkez Ethem. Tunçay observes that attributing a connection between anyone who opposed the government and Çerkez Ethem became a custom in Turkey.⁷²⁵ Yet, Tunçay's statement that thirty-four people were executed by the martial court needs to be revised to twenty-eight.⁷²⁶

Carter Findley also briefly addresses the incident in his recent book and provides both correct and mistaken explanations. For him, the preeminent Şeyh Esat had no relation with the incident, while the order itself was unlikely to have been linked to it.⁷²⁷ "Blaming one of the most serious-minded religious orders for the acts of village millenarians was typical of an official attitude that equated the most learned religiosity with reaction and superstition."⁷²⁸

Nevertheless, Findley's account needs revisions on a few points. He argues that after the declaration of martial law, a "witch hunt" was initiated. Likely or unlikely suspects were detained including former FRP associates during that hunt.⁷²⁹ Findley probably has in mind the second phase of martial court, when approximately 120 people were brought to the court and charged with breaking the law related to the closing of the dervish lodges. Most of these people were acquitted. A small number received minor punishments, and even fewer of them received imprisonment for some years. The government's intention was to intimidate the religious orders to impress on them that they were being watched, rather than a witch hunt.

Zürcher is another well-known author who offers a brief summary of the event. His account too needs revisions. For instance, he says that over 1000 people watched Derviş Mehmet's demonstrations as spectators.⁷³⁰ In fact, about one hundred people and participated in the demonstrations while another hundred of them

⁷²⁵ Ibid., 304, fn. 13.

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 305.

⁷²⁷ Carter V. Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2010), 259.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ Ibid. Similar to Tunçay's account, Findley mistakenly recounts that thirty-four of those on trial were executed at the end. This number needs to be revised to twenty-eight.

⁷³⁰ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, 25th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 266.

were there as spectators. Zürcher's statement that insurgents attached Kubilay's head to the edge of a stick and roamed with it⁷³¹ is a fabrication. The demonstrators remained in the square after the beheading. Though they sought to attach Kubilay's head to the banner in their hands, they failed and hung the banner on a pole. Zürcher also says that over 2000 people, including many of the former FRP followers, were arrested after the event.⁷³² During the state of siege, the martial court examined 606 files, which were prepared by the investigating magistrates and FRP membership was not an issue on which these magistrates focused. Zürcher also mentions a law that was drafted with the support of Mustafa Kemal concerning the eradication of Menemen from the map, "but which was later dropped."⁷³³ This was not a draft law, but solely a wish Mustafa Kemal expressed in his meeting with RPP leaders on 7 January in Çankaya. The ministers and especially İsmet Paşa did not support the idea at the meeting and Mustafa Kemal never mentioned the matter afterwards.

The last scholar we will discuss here as an example of those who offer quite objective information on the Menemen Incident, but as a subtopic in a larger work is Mahmut Goloğlu. In his book on the history of the republic, published in 1972, he defines the Menemen Incident as a basically apolitical reactionist event carried out by Giritli Mehmet, who deceived some of his workers and relatives to act with them.⁷³⁴ Goloğlu notes, "five of the six perpetrators were shot and killed,"⁷³⁵ although only three of them died in the shootout. Goloğlu discusses İsmet Paşa's allegation that the oppositional groups played a role in instigating the incident. He criticizes the *paşa's* position for relying on speculations rather than fact.⁷³⁶ Goloğlu holds that the incident was neither a collective uprising of the local community nor directed from a political center. Indeed Goloğlu notes that some of the defendants' statements in the trials reveal that they were associates of RPP.⁷³⁷ Thus, Goloğlu insists on the apolitical nature of the incident, but he refrains from discussing the accuracy of the charges that a religious order was behind this reactionary incident.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Mahmut Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi I: Devrimler ve Tepkileri*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2011), 331.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., 333.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 333–4.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., 337.

This chapter analyzed the secondary literature about the incident. It depicted how the subject is treated quite contradictorily because the authors have opposite perspectives. All of the accounts include misinformation in different degrees. This literature review is an indication of the extent to which such a small-scale event might be narrated in so many diverse ways. Along with sensible statements and evaluations, there have been irrational and biased explanations on the incident as well. Misinformation and biased accounts are uncritically echoed by others who share similar perspectives. This perpetuation of misleading information and skewed perspectives makes it quite difficult to determine what exactly happened and to analyze the causal connections between the events. The official description of the incident was problematic. Officially-biased accounts adopted, recounted, and defended the official arguments. They have supported the official republican usage of Kubilay as a political symbol. Counter-official narratives challenged these accounts and created their own version of the incident as a plot of RPP against Muslims and have kept reproducing these arguments. Misinformation infiltrated even serious scholarly studies and it became difficult to tell fact from fiction.

CONCLUSION

This thesis probed into the Menemen Incident as an attempt to understand it from various aspects. It initially sought to establish a concrete base by explaining what happened in Menemen on 23 December 1930. It then put forth and analyzed the official statements and newspaper reports about the event. It evaluated the judicial process and focused on the trials of the incident. Finally, it reviewed the literature about the event in detail.

This study indicated that the event known as the Menemen Incident was fundamentally carried out by six uneducated insurgents with apparently questionable mental states due to their long addiction to hashish. Derviş Mehmet's claims to be the Mahdi and his goal of re-establishing the sharia order and restoring the caliphate were fictitious and unrealistic. They were evidently deprived of the sense of reality and lacked the infrastructural necessities to maintain a revolt. The inattention of law enforcement agencies, as it was recognized after the event as well, was the reason why and how they could leave Manisa and arrive at Menemen armed. It was also the negligence of gendarme officers, including the commander, in Menemen that paved the way for the insurgents to continue their activities in the town center for three-four hours. The eventual consequence of these negligent and careless behavior was the brutal beheading of a military officer by stoned perpetrators. Moreover, the events were immediately suppressed as soon as armed battalions arrived and none of the townspeople were engaged in the shootout with law enforcement agencies. Instead, they dispersed.

It was a minor incident and not a revolt that enjoyed public support. The defendants in the trials behaved in a subdued manner. They all appeared intimidated in the trials and did not object to the chief judge audaciously. Indeed, they were aware that severe penalties were on the way and tried to stay on the right side of the chief judge, hoping to be acquitted or at least to receive light sentences at the end. There is not a reasonable clue to define them as antagonists of the republic. They were not enemies of the state seeking to riot as soon as they found a chance. This behavior of the accused makes one wonder how such a minor event could be treated and described as a rebellion, reactionary uprising, and the nemesis of a nation or a regime.

However, the Martial Court of Menemen decided that the incident was a rebellion planned by the Nakşibendi order and supported by certain villagers and townspeople of Menemen. As discussed in this thesis, the court associated the event with the notable figures of the Nakşibendi order, primarily with its leader Şeyh Esat, without substantial evidence. This opinion of the court was preordained. The martial court had little choice but to impute the responsibility of the incident to the Nakşibendi order and give capital punishments to presumed antagonists of the regime. The dominant pro-government media as well strengthened the hand of the regime in denouncing the Nakşibendi order as a reactionist organization that strived to destroy the republic persistently and defining the Menemen Incident as yet another one of its attempts. The essential objective of the martial court was not to establish justice, but to reach certain pre-determined decisions. The court was driven by the RPP leaders to pin the insurgents' actions on the order and to condemn it as a plotter even before the beginning of the trials.

This study indicated that the judicial process in the case of the Menemen Incident is an example of political use of the law as a tool of intimidation. It tried to open a window to the political structure of Turkey at the time of the incident and demonstrated that there was no separation of powers thereat. A single party organization, RPP, led by a few significant figures, ruled the country. Their views and decisions carried ultimate authority. The handling of the Menemen Incident indicates that not only the law enforcement agencies but also the courts observed the decisions of the political center, but within the boundaries of certain procedures. An analysis of the historical background of this situation and the changes regarding the exceptional prerogatives of martial laws and courts from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey need to be addressed in future studies. The structure of martial courts, their legal status and boundaries as defined by the constitution and conventions in the early republican period might be examined. The regime's specific use of the martial courts in other instances and the legality of their decisions might also be studied. Portraits of the members of these courts as well should give us an idea about the notions of law, legality and state-society relations in this era.

The infliction of twenty-eight capital punishments and other prison sentences was a harsh reaction and indicative of the autocratic nature of the regime, as the thesis argued. The evidence at hand that helps explain this verdict points to concerns

about taking preventive measures to set an example against other probable attempts at appealing to religious sentiments to undermine the regime. It was an intimidating decision, a show of strength demonstrating what would happen to those who dared to initiate a riot against the republic, and aimed as a warning to religious circles in particular. Three fundamental elements of the incident instigated the regime to resort to intimidation: the beheading of Kubilay, acclamation of the crowd, and the religious slogans of the group.

The primary and the most abhorrent aspect of the Menemen Incident was the brutal beheading of a military officer. Indeed, the Menemen Incident would have been rarely accounted and remembered if Kubilay had not been beheaded. It was deemed by Mustafa Kemal as an attempt to cut off the head of the state itself. Such audacity urged the regime to punish everyone who were related with the events implicitly, explicitly, or presumably. The republican regime did not only revenge its officer, but upheld him as an ideal citizen of the republic, and transformed him into an iconic-hero of the Turkish nation.

Almost every year, condolences have been issued especially by the Headquarters of the General Staff. Commemorations of the anniversary of the incident have been organized to celebrate Kubilay as a hero who stood up to reactionary forces, a martyr killed by reactionists, an icon of progress and enlightenment, an embodiment of the republican principles, and an inspiration for all good (ideal) citizens. Newspapers have reported, and history textbooks for primary and secondary education have accounted the incident and celebrated Kubilay. Annual commemorations etched his memory into minds permanently. The Menemen Incident and Kubilay thus became one of the most widely known and symbolic topics of the history of the Republic of Turkey.

A further study in this regard might examine the iconization process of Kubilay as a politically and ideologically symbolic figure. One may search for the extent to which the memory of Kubilay and the incident have penetrated the minds. Under which specific circumstances and how often was the story of Kubilay evoked or triggered to condition political action and ideological reaction in the history of the Republic of Turkey? This is a question that needs to be studied in the context of the political use of symbols in the formation of nations and nation states.

Another reason why the incident invited harsh reaction was the gathering of some townspeople around the insurgents and the acclamation of a group of them of the demonstrations. The RPP leaders severely condemned this crowd. In his letter of condolence, written to the Chief of the General Staff, Mustafa Kemal described some of the crowd's approving and applauding of "the ferocity displayed by reactionists," as "a shameful incident that should embarrass all the republicanists." Deputies of RPP and pro-government newspapers as well criticized the crowd starkly. However, this censure of the participants turned into a damnation of the town itself. For a while, Menemen was mentioned as a town whose people supported an anti-government rebellion. After a certain point, what really happened in Menemen became insignificant in official statements as well as in the media representations of the incident. What remained in minds was that reactionists revolted against the republic, without asking whether it was a real rebellion with significant public support. Future studies should elaborate the transformation of the perceptions of the Menemen Incident in collective memories since then.

Third, the incident provoked harsh measures because of the insurgents' reference to religious terms to carry out and justify their activities. The republican regime was newly-established and had the decisive aim to instill its principals in people's minds. Laicism was one of those principles. The RPP regime did not have an issue with religious practices and personal religious preoccupations. However, in line with its purpose to make culturally religious citizens embrace laicism, it had no tolerance for someone who would attempt to use religion as a means to gain political influence and to intervene in the political arena.

The reaction of the regime that derived from these three aspects of the incident indicates its sense of insecurity as well. The perception that the beheading of Kubilay meant cutting the head of the regime, condemnation of the Menemen townspeople collectively as if many of them revolted against the government by supporting the demonstrations of Derviş Mehmet and his companions, and responding to the religious slogans of the insurgents by emphasizing the laicism of the republic were the reactions of a yet insecure regime. The confusion of the law enforcement agencies about the handling of such events was another indicator of the insecurity of a regime in the making. İsmet Paşa himself stated in the parliament after the incident that both citizens and military units were supposed to know under what conditions

law enforcement agencies must intervene in such situations. He mentioned it was required for the government to make a set of arrangements that would regulate the mutual duties and courses of action of both the military forces and the civilians in cases of emergency.⁷³⁸ Inefficient communication and the lack of clarity in the distribution of duties were echoed in the parliamentary debates, pointing to the yet unsettled aspects of the state apparatus.

Through its control of the terms of political debates, the regime defined “reactionism” as a nemesis of the republic and used the pro-government media to warn the nation against this enemy. Members of RPP used this concept in such a broad sense as to include not only those who appealed to religion in their political statements but almost everyone who opposed the government.

The sweepingly broad use of such concepts also signifies the insecurity of the regime. The statements of the deputies in the parliament after the incident indicated that they wanted to aggrandize the republican regime and degrade its presumed enemies, reactionism being on the top of their list. For them, reactionists harmed the nation whenever they found a chance. Although RPP deputies denigrated reactionism emphatically, the reactionary actors and organizations were not clear in their discourse. This notion of RPP deputies to ostracize reactionists in a sweeping-discourse is another sign of their sense of insecurity.

FRP, which was closed under the impression that it had been promoting the reactionist circles, received its share from the aggressive statements made after the Menemen Incident. Although none of the associates of FRP were involved in the event in any way, they could not avoid the accusations of instigating such a rebellion. This accusation as well point to the tendency of the regime to silence all opposition to its policies by generating a cursed category of opposition and then lumping together all opposition in that category. Repression of all the opposition words and deeds, including FRP and other short-lived small political parties also point to the authoritativeness of the regime.

It must also be stated that the widespread argument that claims that the Menemen Incident, along with the challenges of FRP, was a significant factor in delaying the transition to the multi-party system remains questionable. This is a misleading observation that adopts the officially-biased perspective. This is not the place

⁷³⁸ “T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi Cilt:24 On Yedinci İn’ikat,” 3.

to ask whether the Menemen Incident delayed the transition to multi-party system regime or not. Perhaps it is not even an appropriate question and we should ask instead why Turkey made the shift from a single-party into a multi-party system in 1946. The answers to that question would shed light on the political conditions of the transition.

This thesis however focused on generating images and information in an authoritarian era and the legacy or effects of such actions in light of the coverage and treatment of the Menemen Incident. Clearly, official (mis)perceptions and/or (mis)representations of the incident influenced not only popular imagination but also the scholarly texts. Much of the misleading information that was recounted subsequently, even reaching up to today, sprang from the initial press coverage and official statements. Subsequent officially-biased writings did not only take the early reactions for granted, but reproduced and extended them. Counter-official authors who challenged the officially-biased accounts created their own way of explaining the incident, but usually by reversing the same, polarized categories of thinking and judgment. The biased content of these two positions ensured perpetuation of disinformation about the incident until today.

This thesis tried to reconstruct the events and relationships that made up the Menemen Incident through careful examination and a critical analysis of the relevant primary sources and major accounts. If, in this process, the thesis has also generated a fuller awareness of the limitations of thinking with polarized categories, then it has achieved its purpose.

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