

Age of Rogues
Rebels, Revolutionaries
and Racketeers at the
Frontiers of Empires

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The latter was a particularly contested issue: the increase in the number of pastoralists who arrived in Sasun to graze their animals increased in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman district governor of Genc attributed this increase to the wretched conditions of their wintering grounds.⁵ Zozan Pehlivan has pointed to the intermittent waves of drought in the nineteenth century and the profound crisis in which they placed the pastoralists of Ottoman Kurdistan, particularly with regard to the scarcity of available pastures and the mass starvation of herd animals.⁶ The use of pastures in Sasun quickly became a source of dispute between Armenian peasants and Kurdish pastoralists.

In a region where the inhabitants – Muslim and Armenian alike – possessed firearms, disputes over the use of pastures escalated to armed clashes.