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The Refuge of the World and His Animal Kingdom: Rulership, Justice, and Animal Stewardship in Ottoman Accounts of the Hunting Expeditions of Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687)

Abstract

This article analyzes the relationship between Ottoman sovereignty and animal actors as presented by members of the Ottoman imperial court (*dergāh-ı ʿālī*) reporting on Sultan Mehmed IV's (r. 1648–1687) hunting expeditions. Upon a close reading of accounts penned by the storyteller and world traveler Evliya Çelebi (c. 1611–1683), the historian Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa (d. 1692), and the court chronicler Mustafa Naima Efendi (1655–1716), I argue that their descriptions of Mehmed IV's participation in the imperial hunt reveal a shared conception of sovereign character based on engagement with animals. In each narrative examined, the emperor and his actions are judged based on his ability to see the workings of God in the animal world, to competently legislate life and death according to the merit of individual animals and entire animal species, or to justly defend the Ottoman realm and its biodiverse inhabitants. By virtue of their references to the slaughter of deer that behave like "rebels", rabbits deserving of mercy, cows of divine guidance, and birds that require protection because of their harmlessness, I maintain that these authors present Mehmed IV's interactions with animals as an indication of his quality as ruler.

Keywords: Ottoman Dynasty; Imperial Hunt; Animals and Rulership

1. Introduction: The Emperor of the World at the Hunt

According to the Ottoman court chronicler Mustafa Naima Efendi (1655–1716), the young Sultan Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687) undertook the first in a long career of hunting expeditions at the Mirahor Pavilion on the shores of the river Kağıthane in the fall of 1650. What follows, at least in Naima's presentation of the event, is a series of engagements between the eight-year-old emperor and the animals he encountered in one of Istanbul's hinterland hunting grounds. Like other contemporary and near-contemporary writers from among the Ottoman imperial elite, Naima treats these interactions with non-humans as an indication of the sultan's fitness to rule over humans as well.[1] Hence, by demonstrating his ability to dispense justice among animals, Mehmed IV's actions speak to his present and future prowess as ruler, a framing

1 As previous studies have noted, some registers of Ottoman imperial culture placed significant weight on a sultan's ability to acquire, maintain, and display non-human animals to his subjects; see Faroqhi 2008, Murphey 2008, and Mikhail 2014.

which suggests a broader conceptual connection between humans and animals in Ottoman letters.[2]

Scholarship on the institutional practice of monarchy in recent decades has highlighted the importance of hunting and interaction with animals to the court societies of world history.[3] However, narrative excerpts that concern the Ottoman imperial hunt (*ṣayd u şikār*) in particular have received only peripheral attention in the specialist literature on royal hunting and have yet to be extensively examined as meaning-laden encounters between the sultan and his non-human "subjects".[4] Furthermore, despite the fact that the second half of the seventeenth century is frequently touted as one of the most important moments in the broader history of the Ottoman imperial hunt,[5] no single intertextual and comparative study has taken the content of hunting narratives concerning Mehmed IV as its primary analytical focus.[6] So long as this gap in scholarship continues, the particular ways in which Ottoman authors conceived of the imperial hunt during one of its practical apogees will remain obscure to us, and with them, the relationship between rulership and the stewardship of animals in the Ottoman Empire.

This article analyzes the relationship between Ottoman sovereignty and animal actors as presented by members of the Ottoman imperial court (*dergāh-ı ʿālī*) reporting on Mehmed IV's hunting expeditions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While the vast corpus of extant Ottoman narrative sources certainly contains other accounts of Mehmed IV's hunting expeditions, due to limitations of space I base my genre-spanning analysis on three of the more detailed hunting accounts penned by elite Ottoman men who wrote about or travelled with the Ottoman 'court out-of-doors':[7] namely those contained in the storyteller and world traveler Evliya Çelebi's (c. 1611–1683) *Seyāḥatnāme* (Book of Travels),[8] the historian Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa's (d. 1692) *Veḳāyiʿnāme* (Chronicle, or lit. "Book of Events"),[9] and the court chronicler Mustafa Naima's (1655–1716) *Tārīḫ-i Naʿīmā: Ravżat ül-Ḥüseyn fī Ḫulāṣati*

2 For a similar interpretation of an Ottoman hunting narrative as a portent of Sultan Ahmed I's (r. 1603–1617) future reign, see Murphey 2009, 80–1.

3 See for example Allsen 2006.

4 There is a broad corpus of studies on the theory and practice of the Ottoman imperial hunt. These works include Alkan and Gökbuğa 2015; Altun and Naskali 2008; Artan 2008, 2010, and 2011; Baer 2008; Borromeo 2010; Çelik 2002 and 2012; Kurtaran 2018; Taner 2009; Türkmen 2009; Veinstein 2010; and Yoldaşlar 2013.

5 Artan 2011, 99–100; Baer 2008, 179–203; Çelik 2002, 6–9; and Taner 2009, 3.

6 Marc David Baer discusses two of the three narratives treated here in some detail (see Baer 2008, 182 and 186–9), but his principal focus is the role of Mehmed IV's regime in encouraging conversion to Islam. Notably, however, he does refer to the role of contemporary historians in construing this sultan as 'one capable of seeing in mundane daily life and endlessly repeated events the miraculous finger of God' through accounts of his hunting expeditions (Ibid., 187).

7 I borrow this term from Allsen 2006, 205.

8 Evliya Çelebi 2001, vol. V, 141–2.

9 Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa 2008, 179–80.

Aḫbār el-Ḫāfiḳeyn (History of Naima: The Garden of Hüseyn in the Summary of the Chronicles of East and West).[10] Upon a close reading of these works, I argue that each author judges the emperor and his actions based on his ability to see the workings of God in the animal world, to competently legislate life and death according to the merit of individual animals and entire animal species, or to justly defend the Ottoman realm and its biodiverse inhabitants. By virtue of their references to the slaughter of deer that behave like "rebels", rabbits deserving of mercy, cows of divine guidance, and birds that require protection because of their harmlessness, I maintain that these authors present Mehmed IV's interactions with animals as an indication of his quality as ruler in spite of the anthropocentric focus of their writing. Their accounts therefore suggest a discursive link between human and animal "subjects" as well as between worldly sovereignty and access to the divine order.

2. Historical and Historiographic Context: Mehmed IV and the Ottoman Imperial Hunt

Sources contemporary to Mehmed IV's reign attest to his consistent participation in *ṣayd u ṣikār* on a very large scale. This is true both with respect to the sheer number of hunts undertaken throughout the last decades of his reign as well as their overall demographic size. According to previous studies on the subject, Mehmed IV engaged in 'at least fifty hunting expeditions' between the 1650s and 1681,[11] which, if contemporary narrative accounts are to be believed, could at times involve many thousands of human participants from among the palace corps and the subject populations who lived near imperial hunting grounds.[12] It has thus become commonplace in modern Ottomanist scholarship to describe Mehmed IV as "*avcı*" ("the hunter") in keeping with his treatment in late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican historiography where he tended to bear this title in derisive reference to the then largely critical image of the sultan as a poor steward of imperial sovereignty who cared for little other than sport.[13]

10 Mustafa Naima Efendi 2007, vol. III, 1282-1283.

11 Baer 2008, 182 and Artan 2011, 99. It should be noted that our interpretation of these figures is complicated to some extent by the ways in which each historian defines an "expedition", as well as the ways in which each text presents "the hunt" as a bounded activity. For example, my own analysis of Abdi Paşa's *Veḳāyiʿnāme* yielded well over one hundred individual instances in the text where Abdi mentions some form of hunting, though the number of hunting "expeditions" may be fewer depending on how one chooses to define this practice. Moreover, Abdi refers at times to multi-day stays at particular locales at which the court hunted without stipulating the precise number of days in which the chase was actually pursued. Taken together, these factors imply that arriving at an "exact" number of isolated hunting expeditions, defined either as day-length or multi-day sojourns, may be analytically untenable in this case as well as others.

12 Artan 2011, 105–6; Baer 2008, 184; Taner 2009, 52.

13 Murphey 1993, 420–21.

To be sure, continued scholarly use of "*avcı*" is understandable given Mehmed IV's ostensible affinity for hunting. However, this pattern of attribution is somewhat misleading in that it implies that variations of the phrase were in widespread use among the seventeenth-century Ottoman elite, and that Mehmed IV's interest in hunting was widely perceived as a detriment to his duties in contemporary circles before the second (failed) Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 and the sultan's ouster from power in 1687. This is not to say that derogatory or satirical mention of this sultan's hunting habits did not occur during his lifetime, but rather that evidence of these critiques appears to be few and far between.[14] As Marc David Baer has argued, some of the more critical elements of Mehmed IV's reputation for hunting in Ottoman historiography may have been constructed retrospectively in the wake of the 1683 siege as later writers of the empire's history came to blame the substantial loss of territory in this period on the negligence of Mehmed IV and his regime.[15] It is thus worth noting here that our habit of calling Mehmed IV "the hunter" effectively singles him out as a "hunting sultan" even though frequent, large-scale hunting expeditions were practiced by Ottoman sultans from the late fourteenth century through the turn of the eighteenth,[16] with important institutional and theoretical developments taking place in the reigns of Sultan Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566) and Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617).[17]

In this connection, the modern valence of "*avcı*", as well as its longevity in scholarly usage, is arguably connected to interpretations of Mustafa Naima's claim that Mehmed IV formally abdicated his ruling prerogatives to the grand vizier Köprülü Mehmed Paşa (v. 1656–1661) as a contractual condition of his accepting the vizierate in 1656. Because the sultan was not responsible for affairs of state, the argument goes, he could therefore occupy more of his time with hunting as a form of privileged diversion. As Metin Kunt has shown, however, this claim is unsubstantiated by earlier chroniclers and is likely an exaggeration of the grand vizier's (nevertheless formidable) power and influence at the sultan's expense.[18]

Barring an in-depth examination of the available source base, the extent to which Mehmed IV was "truly" a "hunting sultan" and the specific place of his regime within the institutional tradition of the Ottoman imperial hunt must be left for future study. Nevertheless, as my primary analytical concern here is with Mehmed IV's representation in narrative accounts and not with the "material realities" of history, it is worth

14 The Ottoman musician and dragoman Ali Ufki (1610-1675), for instance, calls Mehmed IV "hunt mad" in his personal memoir and claims that the sultan's tendency to 'tak[e] his pleasure in the hunt', alongside his father Ibrahim I's (r. 1640–1648) passion for women, had 'given rise to many verses on the subject' of their respective interests (Fisher and Fisher 1987, 43).

15 Baer 2008, 231–44. As Tülay Artan notes, however, critical discourses of excessive hunting produced by Ottoman writers did exist in the seventeenth century; see Artan 2008, 303 and 2011, 132 n99. Be this as it may, the extent to which these discourses were applied to Mehmed IV during and after his lifetime has yet to be established in detail.

16 See Artan 2008, 300–1 and Çelik 2002, 10.

17 Artan 2008, 301–3.

18 Kunt 1973, 59.

noting that late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century accounts of his hunting career tend to present the imperial hunt neither as a form of distraction nor as evidence of misrule in itself, but rather as an element of Ottoman sovereignty that could evince the inner truths of a ruler's character. Hence, for the authors examined below, the frequency and scale of Mehmed IV's hunting expeditions are at times less important than the ways in which he engaged with the animal actors he encountered in the process. As I demonstrate below, these writers evoke, demarcate, and periodically blur the line between human and animal as a means to speak to the ways in which imperial justice was dispensed in the later decades of the 1600s.

3. Evliya Çelebi: Animal Sacrifice as a Substitute for Human Execution

Evliya Çelebi's (c. 1611–1683) *Seyāḥatnāme* is a literary travelogue that stands amongst the most frequently cited texts of its kind in the history of Islamdom. For our purposes here, of specific interest is Evliya's treatment of Mehmed IV's hunting expeditions based on (what he presents as) firsthand observations from his travel with the sultan throughout western Anatolia and Thrace in 1659 as part of the grand vizier Köprülü Mehmed Paşa's retinue. This itinerary was part of a broader Ottoman effort to crush the forces of the provincial governor-turned-"rebel" Abaza Hasan Paşa (d. 1659) and eliminate what remained of his following. While Evliya's narration of this itinerary fits largely within the stylistic and structural conventions of other parts of the *Seyāḥatnāme*, his writing in this section distinguishes him from other Ottoman commentators on the campaign of 1659 by virtue of his inclusion of graphic descriptions of the court's violent executions of suspected "rebels". In the text, these men are called either *celālīler*, a general reference to rural-based insurrections that arose throughout Anatolia and northern Syria in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[19] or, more specifically, *Ḥasan Paşalılar* (lit. "supporters of [Abaza] Hasan Paşa").

Evliya's account is also noteworthy for his use of a prominent discourse of 'bloodthirst' (*ḫūnḫārlıḳ*) to describe Mehmed IV's decisions to kill certain humans and animals as he travelled between Üsküdar and Bursa. As he recounts the copious amount of blood and gore left in the wake of the court's eastward progress, Evliya subtly–and at times not so subtly–draws a causal connection between the sultan's lust for blood and the piles of corpses, terrified townsfolk, swarms of flies, bloodied fields, and cries for mercy that accompanied his presence in a particular locale.[20]

As Zeynep Yelçe argues, Ottoman authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tended not to view the 'wrath' (*ġażab*) of the sultan in necessarily negative terms so long as it was justly exercised against those who had trespassed against him; as in the case of God's wrath, which was meted out according to the quality of individual cas-

19 For a discussion of these revolts and their treatment in scholarship, see Özel 2012 and White 2011.

20 See Evliya Çelebi 2001, vol. V, 138–9, 141–3, 145–6, and 154.

es, 'there was a time and place to be angry'.[21] With this in mind, it is reasonable to entertain the notion that "bloodthirst" could have a laudatory meaning for Evliya when applied to a sovereign exercising violence in the interest of rulership. Indeed, Evliya not only applies *ḫūnḫārlıḳ* to Mehmed IV, but also uses variations of the term to characterize his (then) current patron, Köprülü Mehmed Paşa, whom he describes as 'a dignified person with the appearance of a *şeyḫ* but possessed of a bloodthirsty character'.[22] Furthermore, as he uses *ḫūnḫārlıḳ* in his descriptions of historically distant but widely revered figures like Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481), as well as rulers whom he knew personally such as Sultan Murad IV (r. 1623–1640), elsewhere in his travelogue,[23] his words arguably speak to longstanding discourses of Ottoman sovereignty that condoned the emperor's anger and violent action in their appropriate context.

However, the authorial treatment of the men executed by Mehmed IV's traveling court in the *Seyāḥatnāme* nevertheless suggests that Evliya harbored a degree of empathy for them, or at least that he was at times concerned that some among their number were killed without resort to due process given the mass nature of these executions. Evliya manifests this concern in a variety of ways throughout the itinerary: he quotes the screams of those killed at Kavak İskelesi in Istanbul,[24] he thanks God that the *Ḥasan Paşalılar* who arrive at the fortress of Kumkale are sent to the galleys instead of being executed,[25] he recounts unheeded pleas of mercy made to the sultan by the accused,[26] portrays the court executioners in unfavorable terms,[27] decides to have the body of a slain youth (*yigit*) retrieved from the Bosphorus and buried on the shore,[28] and explicitly describes some among the accused as 'innocent' or 'wronged' (*bī-günāh*, *maẓlūm*).[29] Hence, even if Evliya partook in a discourse of bloodthirst that could be used to praise a ruler, his particular use of it here undermines such a reading. As Hakan Karateke notes, '[t]he remarks he makes, the adjectives he uses, and his general approach denote his clear aversion' to the executions he describes in this section of his travelogue.[30]

While bloodthirst is a recurring theme in Evliya's account of this particular sojourn, he makes no reference to the sultan's homicidal urges in most of his descriptions of imperial hunting expeditions undertaken during the course of the campaign. Of the six instances of *ṣayd u şikār* that Evliya claims to have witnessed firsthand,[31] he describes five such hunts with relatively few details. However, the first and most de-

21 Yelçe 2015, 444.
22 […] *sāḥib-i vakār şeyḫ-sūret, ammā ḫūnḫār-sīret* […] (Evliya Çelebi 2001, vol. V, 140).
23 Karateke 2013, 9.
24 Evliya Çelebi 2001, vol. V, 138.
25 Ibid 156.
26 Ibid 145.
27 Ibid, 138–9.
28 Ibid 138.
29 Ibid.
30 Karateke 2013, 8.
31 See Evliya Çelebi 2001, vol. V, 141–2, 142, 153, 154, 157, and 161 respectively.

tailed of Evliya's hunting narratives related to this military itinerary forefronts *ḫūnḫārlıḳ* as the basis for Mehmed IV's interactions with humans and animals. This narrative is oriented solely around the events that occurred as the sultan halts with his court at the waystation of Topyeri (located between the cities of İzmit and İznik) and finds no opportunity to slake his bloodthirst for the execution of human "rebels":

'Because no person that deserved to be killed was brought from the ranks of the *celālīler* at this inauspicious waystation', begins Evliya, 'this intemperate place was found uncongenial to the disposition of the bloodthirsty emperor'.[32] Displeased, Mehmed IV exits his tent and leaves for the mountains, inspecting and surveying the army on his way. While hunting in a nearby forest, he soon comes across three gigantic deer (*mefret sıġın*) which he hunts and has sacrificed in front of his tent. 'Praise be to God', he says, 'that the front of the tent was not without sacrifice. These deer are [like] mountain-dwelling, rebellious *celālīler*, but [if only] we could slaughter [real] *celālīler* today'.[33] By the wisdom of God (*ḥikmet-i ilāh*), continues Evliya, suddenly a small, wailing child (*maʿṣūm*) enters the encampment in tears. When the emperor asks why they are crying, the child explains that a man has stolen a basket of cherries from them and fled. Instead of paying for the cherries, the child says, the man split their head open. The emperor soon discovers through one of his agents that the culprit was one of the court executioners and orders that he and his accomplice be executed as punishment. Afterwards the sultan exclaims 'Praise be to God, the front of the tent is stained with blood that is [even] better than the blood of *Ḥasan Paşalılar*, and the front of my tent enclosure [*serāperde*] did not remain without blood'.[34] At this point, notes Evliya, by the wisdom of God sixty *Ḥasan Paşalılar* bound in chains and pillories arrive at Topyeri from the province of Adana. His wish fulfilled, 'the bloodthirsty sovereign' [35] takes-up the legal papers (*hüccet-i şerʿiyye*) that pertained to the group and gives them no quarter; their heads 'roll like cannonballs and their blood was shed'.[36] However, before the 'the felicitous, just emperor'[37] kills them all without mercy, he has the legal documents of each member of the accused recited aloud, taking up each of them in his hand.

As the reader will note, Evliya does not present this hunt as an exercise of sport or pleasure, but rather as part of a rumination on how the emperor dispenses justice—a category that is not unproblematic here. To be sure, Evliya's Mehmed IV is far from an inaccessible, secluded monarch, as he listens to the child's testimony firsthand and acts quickly to intercede on their behalf when the extent of the executioners' wrong-

32 *Menzil-i Topyeri: Bu menzil-i nā-mübārekde celālī cānibinden vācibü'l-katl bir ādem gelmemek ile pādişāh-ı hūnhārın tabīʿatına bu cāy-ı bed-havā hoş gelmeyüp* [...] (Ibid., 141).

33 '*Hamd-i Hudā, yine otağım önü kurbānsız olmadı. Bu sığınlar dağı ve yağı ve bāğı celālidir, ammā bugün celāli boğazlasak* [...]' (Ibid.).

34 '*Hamd-i Hudā, otak önü Hasan Paşalı kanından eyi kan ile ālūde olup serāperdem önü kansız kalmadı* […]' (Ibid.).

35 [...] *hünkār-ı hūnhār* [...] (Ibid.).

36 [...] *kelleleri top gülleleri gibi yuvarlanup demleri rīzān oldu* [...] (Ibid.).

37 [...] *saʿādetlü pādişāh-ı ādil* [...] (Ibid., 141–2).

doing is articulated. However, what drives the narrative forward is Mehmed IV's bloodthirst, beginning with his initial desire to execute human "rebels" and continuing throughout the anecdote as he is presented with more opportunities to appease his violent appetite, at times to the dismay of those around him. For example, the power of the sultan's hunger for the blood of humans as well as animals is foreshadowed earlier in the *Seyāḥatnāme* when the court enters the city of İzmit. Although the local population sacrifices numerous animals along the path of the procession in honor of the sultan's arrival, Mehmed IV is not satisfied with animal sacrifice alone. He thus orders the execution of fifty *celālîler* whose corpses then stand for some time before the imperial tent enclosure. In this way, says Evliya, the sovereign 'carried out his bloodthirst and terror befell the population'.[38]

The notion that both humans and animals could be suitable as prey for the ruler's bloodthirst is also particularly prominent in the present case, as Evliya has Mehmed IV directly conflate the hunting of non-humans with the defeat and execution of human "rebels". Far from being a simple meeting of deer and sultan, Evliya frames this encounter as both a hunting expedition and a ceremonial killing which serves as a substitute for the organized death of "rebellious" humans as well as a prelude to the mass killings to come. In Evliya's presentation, Mehmed IV's bloodlust motivates him to punish "rebel" behaviour whether it is manifested in deer or in humans. As the deer were "rebellious", like Hasan Paşa and his ilk, they are at once deserving of punishment, yet also suitable to serve as temporary, if unsatisfactory stand-ins for disobedient humans whose actions had elicited his wrath. In this way, the narrative evokes the preparatory ethic implicit in some conceptions of *ṣayd u şikār* in the seventeenth century whereby the hunt could condition the ruler's body and mind to practice just governance and protect his realm from external and internal enemies.[39] Viewed through this lens, the hunting of animal "rebels" could be a form of practice for the pursuit of human ones, and by emphasizing the symmetry between Mehmed IV's hunting and killing of animals and his execution of the guilty men, Evliya therefore implies a connection between the dispensation of justice in the human and non-human animal spheres.

At the same time, instead of ruing the deficiency of killing his own executioners as a means to slake his bloodthirst as before, Evliya has Mehmed IV add that the blood of these executioners is "even better" than that of *Ḥasan Paşalılar*, perhaps suggesting that the sultan values the deaths of his own malfeasant servants over those of insurgents. As with the killing of the deer, this exclamation is meant to anticipate later events and drive the narrative forward, for as soon as the sultan sheds the blood of his executioners, a group of *Ḥasan Paşalılar* are suddenly brought before him. Mehmed IV is then finally given the chance to bestow harsh punishment on human "rebels" and has them all decapitated once he has had each of their names read from written documents.

38 […] *hünkār hünhārlığı icrā edüp halka bir dehşet hāsıl olup* […] (Ibid., 141).

39 See Artan, 2008, 303, 308–9 and Murphey 2009, 80–1.

Given that Evliya emphasizes Mehmed IV's reliance on textual affirmations of guilt when describing executions elsewhere in the travelogue,[40] here he may intend to criticize the sultan for executing men from far-away provinces whose association with insurgency he knows only through paper records while the servants of his traveling retinue (i.e. his own unscrupulous executioners) inflict harm on local Ottomans.[41] Though the court's mission in Anatolia was the extermination of men whose allegiance to Hasan Paşa made them enemies of the empire, the transgressors punished by the sultan in this instance include two of his own agents, whose crimes, unlike those of the *celālīler*, are substantiated in-text by eyewitnesses. If there is any merit to this line of inquiry, the "insurgent" deer may also play a role here: in the case that Evliya seeks to highlight Mehmed IV's periodically unprincipled expression of bloodthirst, the fact that he has the sultan consider deer to be rebellious may further highlight the absurdity and illegitimacy of the large-scale executions that follow. As the sultan's disposition inclines him towards carnage, he sees rebellion, and therefore grounds for execution, wherever he looks.

Like most anthropocentric texts, the moral crux of Evliya's narrative does not revolve around animals, but rather around his descriptions of the people(s) and places he experiences throughout his journey. However, his instrumental use of deer as stand-ins for humans works to position animal actors encountered in the path of the hunt as a crucial element of his meditation on Mehmed IV's prowess as ruler. On the one hand, his portrayal evinces an accessible sultan interested in knowing the conditions that obtained in his realm and securing the well-being of his subjects. At the same time, a close reading of this section of Evliya's narrative suggests that he did not always view the sultan's exercise of bloodthirst as a legitimate means to protect the empire in keeping with preexisting notions of "wrath" as serving a potentially "protective and defensive" function if used with the requisite intelligence and moderation.[42] Indeed, if Evliya at times presents *ḫūnḫārlıḳ* as a force that motivates Mehmed IV to execute those who "deserved to be killed", he also seems to have written with enough resignation concerning the "procedural improprieties" of some of these killings that he occasionally lets slip a dissident or critical comment.[43] Yet however we interpret Evliya's position on sultanic bloodthirst, his stance on the boundary between human and animal is somewhat clearer: when it comes to the execution of the guilty, humans and non-humans are to some extent interchangeable in that their "rebellious" behavior could elicit similar forms of punishment from the Ottoman emperor.

40 See for example Evliya Çelebi 2001, vol. V, 138.

41 The possibility that Evliya means to draw specific attention to Mehmed IV's use of written documents in these execution procedures is also noted in Karateke 2013, 9.

42 Yelçe 2015, 452.

43 Karateke 2013, 10.

4. Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa: Animals as Agents of Divine Will

Like the *Seyāḥatnāme*, the historian Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa's (d. 1692) *Veḳāyiʿnāme* is an exceptional source for Mehmed IV's hunting expeditions. His testimony is especially valuable for those launched between 1664 and 1682, for this was the period in which he kept a day-book (*cerīde-i yevmiye*) concerned with (favourably) recording the actions and whereabouts of the imperial retinue, the Ottoman military, and the dynastic elite in keeping with explicit orders to this effect from the sultan. In this connection, entries dated to the period after 1664 often feature lists of captured animals organized by species and number as a means to illustrate the achievements of Abdi's imperial patron. For example, a single drive or ring hunt (*sürgün avı*) practiced with the participation of thousands of sunbjects in an enclosed forest preserve in 1666 saw the court ostensibly bag 80 foxes (*dilkü*), 3 wolves (*ḳurd*), 6 deer (*ḳaraca*), and 2200 rabbits (*ṭavşan*).[44] Aside from occasional references to horses, camels, and other large mammals employed by the court as labourers, the presence of animals in the *Veḳāyiʿnāme* is mostly restricted to kill lists of this kind.

However, Abdi's presentation of animals and human-animal encounters takes on an entirely different valence in what is perhaps the most detailed of all of his hunting narratives, namely an incident attributed to 24th *Şaʿbān* 1075 A.H./12th March 1665 C.E. The narrative begins with the sultan riding out in state (*biniş*) from Edirne to the nearby village of Paşa Köyü. While partaking in the hunt on the return journey, Mehmed IV encounters a rabbit and sets a hound after it. He then follows the hound and its quarry a great distance until, as it happens, he comes upon a place where a cow is about to give birth. After learning of these circumstances from his servants, the sultan immediately halts his horse there to 'observ[e] the marvellous wisdom of the exalted Creator of things'.[45] He then 'manifest[s] compassion upon the poor cow from his august kindness'[46] by bringing its owner into the imperial presence in order to assist the cow in giving birth, and remains there until the calf is born. The sultan then addresses the cowherd 'without pretext' (*bilā-vesīletin*) and asks whether he is a Muslim, to which the cowherd replies he is not. Hearing this, Mehmed IV then invites him to convert to Islam and 'guide[s] him to the straight path through the perfect gentleness of his august compassion':[47] 'Come, become a Muslim', he says, 'let me give you a livelihood and [God], may His name be glorified, will pardon all of your sins. In the afterlife you will enter heaven directly'.[48] Yet although the emperor presents this offer a number of times, the cowherd refuses. However, as soon as he

44 Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa 2008, 225.

45 [...] *ol mahalde zabt-ı zimām ve tevakkuf u ārām idüp ḥazret-i Hāliḳu'l-eşyānun ḥikmet-i* [*acībesini*] *seyr ü temāşā buyurdular* [...] (Ibid., 179–80).

46 [...] *merāḥim-i ḫusrevānīlerinden ol ineciğe ızhār-ı şefḳat buyurup* [...] (Ibid., 180).

47 [...] *merāḥim-i Pādişāḥanelerinden kemāl-i rıfk u mülāyemet ile mezbūrı dīn-i Ḥakk'a daʿvet ve ṭarīḳ-i müstakime delālet idüp* [...] (Ibid.).

48 '[...] *Gel Müslimān ol, sana dirlik vireyim ve Ḥakk teʿālā cümle günāḥuñı avf ider. Āḫiret'de doğrı Cennet'e girersün* [...]' (Ibid.).

learns from the sultan's servants that the man with whom he speaks is in fact the Ottoman sultan, he immediately becomes 'the object of spiritual guidance and hasten[s] to accept Islam' and his son promptly follows suit.[49] To the amazement of all, the cowherd then explains that he had previously been offered to convert on repeated occasions before in the dream world.[50] As a result of his conversion, Mehmed IV rewards the man with a position as a palace gatekeeper (*ḳapıcı*) with a daily pay of 15 *akçe*. Afterwards, when the emperor returns to Edirne, he relates his own interpretation of the episode to Abdi, which Abdi relates as follows:

> By no means did I have the intention of hunting today. It was on account of God's hidden wisdom that I pursued a rabbit and chanced upon that cow giving birth, and that while I watched [the calf being born] Islam was divinely facilitated to that fellow in my presence. That cow is thus a cow of divine guidance. Let it and its calf be purchased and put in the privy garden.[51]

Like Evliya, Abdi conveys Mehmed IV's qualities to the reader through his interactions with animals as well as his behaviour towards humans. This said, the fact that Abdi presents God as intervening in human lives through animal actors forefronts the importance of Mehmed IV's adept comportment towards non-humans as well as his ability to perceive the mark of the divine in their actions. By depicting the sultan as a ruler who can see the workings of God in animal actors and make decisions in accordance with God's plan, Abdi's narrative presents Mehmed IV as a just and caring ruler who is fit for the task of governance.

In spite of the prominence of the sultan's encounter with the cowherd in the anecdote, it is telling for our purposes here that the narrative is driven forward principally by his interactions with animals. As Abdi puts it, Mehmed IV had—in his own words— 'no intention of hunting' that day, but spontaneously took up the chance to do so when he caught sight of the rabbit on the roadside. Exhibiting his capable stewardship of animals, Mehmed IV then shows compassion towards the mother cow and remains at its side as it gives birth. This decision, undertaken after a period of contemplation, and presented as an expression of the sultan's ability to see past the mundane layer of reality to that of God, eventually leads to the conversion of the cowherd later in the narrative.[52] The notion that this scene is meant to highlight

49 [...] *mazhar-ı hidāyet olup kabūl-ı İslām'a müsāraʿat ve oğlı dahi kendüye mütābaʿat eyledi* (Ibid.).

50 Ibid.

51 '[...] *bugün aslā bir şikār ardınca koşduğum yoğidi. Bu dahi li-hikmetin olmuş ki, bir tavşan ardınca koşup ve ol ineğün duğurmasına rāst gelüp seyr ü temāşā üzre iken huzūrımuzda ol herife İslām müyesser oldu. Pes, ol inek hidāyet ineğidür. Buzağusıyla iştirā idüp baḫçe-i hāssaya kosunlar' deyü fermān buyurdular*' (Ibid.).

52 Marc David Baer has argued that this part of Abdi's narrative 'links hunting with the fulfillment of the divine plan' and furthers the chronicler's presentation of Mehmed IV as a pious 'agent of religious change' invested in the conversion of Ottoman non-Muslims encountered on the path of hunt (Baer 2008, 189). This view is all the more plausible given Abdi's personal role in compiling a set of laws governing the correct procedure for facilitating conversion to Islam in the late seventeenth century (Ibid., 191).

Mehmed IV's ability to grasp, or instinctively follow the divine will through the close observation of animals is strengthened by the interpretation the sultan provides to Abdi upon his return to Edirne. At this point, Mehmed IV makes clear his belief that God facilitated the auspicious outcome of the day's hunt both by guiding him to the cowherd through the rabbit and the cow as well as by priming the cowherd for conversion in the dream world. Yet however we read the causes behind the conversion of the two non-Muslim Ottomans in the narrative, it is instructive to note that Abdi relies on non-human actors as foils for his demonstration of Mehmed IV's fitness to rule. Their presence in the text is hence largely instrumental and serves to showcase the sultan's deft decision-making as well as his connection to God's will. In short, non-humans are important for Abdi largely because of the human consequences they help to facilitate.

In any case, the view of *ṣayd u şikār* that Abdi presents here is one in which the imperial hunt functioned as a divinely sanctioned medium for the betterment of the Ottoman realms through contact between sultan and a biodiverse array of "subject" inhabitants. Whether we interpret this episode as coming directly from the emperor (as Abdi indicates) or rather from Abdi himself, it nevertheless spells-out a particular relationship between hunting, animals, and Ottoman sovereignty quite clearly: for the Ottoman sultan, a hunt may not merely be a hunt, but rather an opportunity for him to be guided by God for the benefit of his subject population through non-human intermediaries. So long as the ruler can see God's 'marvellous wisdom' in the animal world, he can thus achieve greater justice and prosperity in his realm.

In keeping with this interpretation, it is Mehmed IV's appreciation of the individual merit of the cow in facilitating God's truth and enabling the conversion of the cowherd that convinces him to honour the cow and its calf by relocating them to one of his privy gardens. The cow therefore earns a privileged place in the imperial graces by serving as a medium for human conversion. In a sense, Mehmed IV's treatment of the cow and its calf mirrors the changed status of the human cowherd and his son who are incorporated thereafter into the financial auspices of the imperial court. Because both pairs of parent and child enjoy an increase of fortune in the end, Abdi's narrative can be read as something of a "rags-to-riches" tale premised on the boons available to those who cross paths with wayward emperors, whether they be human or animal. This brings me to what appears to be Abdi's primary message in his interpretation of the incident: as Mehmed IV acts justly towards animals like the cow and its calf, he must therefore be a just and capable ruler of human affairs as well, as evidenced by his treatment of the cowherd and his son. While humans are certainly privileged in the narrative, as they are in the *Veḳāyiʿnāme* more broadly, Abdi nevertheless presents cows as recipients of Mehmed IV's beneficence alongside their human counterparts. In spite of differences in status and role, both species share the ability to provide Mehmed IV with the opportunities to prove his merit as a just and worthy sovereign capable of interpreting God's will.

5. Mustafa Naima Efendi: Animal Encounters as Auguries of Rulership

Mustafa Naima (1655–1716), the last of our authors, was the inaugural appointee to the position of "official chronicler" or 'historiographer' (*veḳʿanüvīs*/*veḳāyiʿnüvīs*)[53] to the Ottoman court following the creation of the office in 1700. Naima's career as court chronicler did not coincide with Mehmed IV's tenure as emperor, however, and unlike Evliya and Abdi, he did not accompany this sultan on any hunting expeditions of any kind. Furthermore, as hunting narratives are rare in Naima's history, the imperial hunt does not appear to have been a significant concern for him. This said, as indicated by the introductory anecdote through which I began this study, the *Tārīḫ-i Naʿīmā*, as it is colloquially known, does include a hunting narrative dated to 15th November 1650 C.E. that is framed as the first of Mehmed IV's reign.[54] While the excerpt is likely based on the papers of Şarihü'l-Menarzade Ahmed Efendi (d. 1657), who is referred to as 'the historian' (*müverriḫ*) throughout the *Tārīḫ-i Naʿīmā*,[55] Naima's decision to include it in his history at all nevertheless speaks to his role in cultivating a retrospective image of Mehmed IV as a just emperor by virtue of his interactions with animals.

'The historian says [*Müverriḫ der ki*]',[56] begins Naima, that on *Cumʿa* the twenty-first day of the month of *Ẕi'l-ḳaʿde* [1060 A.H.] the emperor arrived at the Mirahor Pavilion on the edge of the river Kağıthane where the court was to stage a controlled hunt. The hunt itself begins when the chief palace gardener (*bostancıbaşı*) releases rabbits and foxes that had been prepared beforehand and sends hounds (*tāzīler*) after them while the emperor observes the chase. It then happens that one of the rabbits pursued by a hound does not flee forward but throws itself into the river instead and swims to the other side. When the gardener corps see that it has escaped from the hound, they want to pursue it once again and set hounds upon it. Although the emperor prohibits them from doing so, saying 'let the rabbit go free',[57] it happens that there is a hound not initially employed by the court (lit. "a foreign hound") on the other side of the river which pursues the rabbit in spite of this prohibition.[58] When the rabbit finds its enemy on the far side of the river as well, it turns and jumps back into the water. However, the hound manages to catch the rabbit anyway and brings it in front of the pavilion, at which point the gardener corps rush towards the animals, separate them, and bring the rabbit before the sultan. In Naima's words:

> As [the rabbit] was previously the manifestation of the emperor's pardoning gaze and no part of it was inflicted with wounds, [this was] interpreted as a miraculous act of the emperor. In accordance with his illustrious order [the rabbit] was released on the top of a mountain and found safety. Because this episode was the

53 Thomas 1972, 36.
54 Mustafa Naima Efendi 2007, vol. III, 1282.
55 Coşkun 2014, 127.
56 Mustafa Naima Efendi 2007, vol. III, 1282.
57 [...] '*Hargūş āzād olsun*' [...] (Ibid.).
58 [...] *yabancı bir zağar* [...] (Ibid.).

> opposite of the case of *Okta Han* and the captured wolf [*gürg-i giriftār*], it was deduced that the emperor's life and reign would be long and prosperous.[59]

Following the conclusion of this stage of the hunt, the party sets falcons (*ṭoğanlar*) upon an eagle (*ḳaraḳuş*). However, the eagle proves hardy and fights back against the falcons in the air as they attack it. Yet one among the falconers from outside the palace corps sets loose a peregrine falcon (*şāhīn*) which descends upon the eagle and strikes it rapidly, cutting it in two from its flank, and forces it to the ground. Seeing this, the emperor orders that the fellow be compensated and recruits the falcon into palace service.[60] On the other hand, when the falconers desire to set a falcon upon kestrels (*kerkenezler*) the emperor prohibits this, stating that '[the kestrel] is a bird which is of little harm, do not hurt them'.[61] Naima then concludes his description of the hunt, noting that: 'by virtue of this royal action, too, [the emperor's] inclination toward the skillful and his concern for the vulnerable was manifested, and the perfection of his judgement and the soundness of his intellect was clearly indicated'.[62]

To be sure, the fact that Naima places these events in a "controlled" hunting ground distinguishes his account from those examined above. Be this as it may, given Naima's recurrent emphasis on the sultan's interactions with animals, I maintain that this section of his history can be read as an inaugural window into the ruling personality of the young Mehmed IV based on his performance in the imperial hunt.[63] Like that of Evliya and Abdi, Naima's narrative construes the sultan's direct interactions with animals as a reflection of his management of human affairs. When animals such as the swimming rabbit, the agile falcon, or the "harmless" kestrels exhibit characteristics like cunning, predatory skill, or innocuousness that are praiseworthy in humans, Naima has Mehmed IV reward them each according to their individual or collective merit with either recruitment or release.

The text's use of Mehmed IV's gaze (*naẓar*) as a means to evaluate the events of the hunt may be a reference to the notion that rulers' contemplation of animals engaged in a predator-prey relationship could affect the development of their character. According to the *Tuḥfetü'l-mülūk ve's-selāṭīn* (Gift of Kings and Sultans), a seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkish adaptation of a medieval Arabic hunting treatise prepared

59 *Mukaddem mazhar-ı nazar-ı afv-ı Husrevānī olmakla* [*bir yerine*] *āsīb-i cerāḥat ermemiş kerāmet-i padişaha ḥaml olunup ḥasbe'l-emri'l-ālī dağ başına salıt-verilip necāt buldu ve bu kazıyye Okta Han ile gürg-i giriftār kazıyyesinin ḥilāfı olmakla padişahın ömr ü devleti rūz-efzūn ve ber-ḥurdārlığına istidlāl olundu* [...] (Ibid.). While Naima's reference to a "mountain" or "hill" here may be literal, it may also refer to the rabbit being simply released "into the wild".

60 Ibid., 1282–3.

61 [...] *Murg-ı kem-āzār-ı bī-ziyāndır, incitmen* [...] (Ibid., 1283).

62 *Bu ḥareket-i şāhānesinden dahi hüner-mend olanlara raġbeti ve* [*bī-zebānlara*] *şefkati ẓuhūr edip kemāl-i akl ü kiyāsetine evẓah-ı delā'il oldu* (Ibid.).

63 Marc David Baer has similarly noted that this passage emphasizes the fact that Mehmed IV 'had reached the age of discretion and sagacity' as evidenced by the decisions he made throughout the hunt; see Baer 2008, 182.

for Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603–1617),[64] animals encountered by rulers in the course of hunting expeditions could aid them in pursuit of self-betterment by exhibiting traits worth emulating for humans whether they be the pursuers or the pursued.[65] This suggests that the ruler's ability to see skill and nobility of character in the animal realm was a valuable aptitude to be honed on the chase. As we have seen, Mehmed IV's close observations of animals are key to the events that unfold in the narrative and to the narrative's overall progression. Having scrutinized the rabbit as it evaded its pursuers, Mehmed IV appears to find its behaviour deserving of life and orders his agents to let it be, thus showcasing his powers of observation. Moreover, when the "foreign hound" acts against the wishes of the emperor and the rabbit is found to be miraculously unharmed, the sultan orders that it be released on the top of a mountain where it could live unmolested by the hounds of the imperial hunt. In this way, the anecdote effectively speaks to the young sultan's knowledge of the animal world (or at least of the rabbit world) by construing him as a ruler willing to both spare the lives of animals whose conduct merits deliverance and ensure that they achieve genuine safety.

However, the portents of this chase for Mehmed IV's future potential as sovereign do not end here, as Naima concludes his tale of rabbit and hound by noting that those present at this inaugural hunt interpreted its unusual outcome as an auspicious sign of things to come. Mehmed IV's 'miraculous act' thus incites onlookers to conclude that his 'life and reign would be long and prosperous' given its distinction from 'the case of *Okta Han* and the captured wolf'. Although no further details about these figures are provided in the narrative, Naima is likely referring to the chronicler Ala'uddin Ata-Malek Jovayni's (1226–1283) portrayal of the death of the Mongol emperor Ögedei Khan (r. 1229–1241) in his *Tārikh-e Jahān-goshāy* (History of the World Conqueror). According to Jovayni, Ögedei saw fit to release a captured wolf that had been feeding on the sheep of a Mongol farmer in hopes that God might cure his 'weakness' (*zaʿfi*) of the 'bowels' (*andarūn*) if he 'saved a living creature from destruction'.[66] However, as the wolf was killed by hounds in the khan's keeping following its release, he suspected that he would not survive long as a result. Although Ögedei promptly executed his hounds for their disobedience, he nevertheless died a few days later.[67] With this intertextual reference in mind, it is possible that the narrative is meant to contrast Mehmed IV's engagement with animals in his very first hunt with that of the Mongol emperor in his last days. In contradistinction to Ögedei, who deftly set the captured wolf free but did so without considering its safety upon its release, Mehmed IV appears to have the rabbit released atop a mountain, or at least "into the wild", where his hounds cannot reach. Hence, Naima's narrative presents Mehmed IV as a ruler who is

64 Artan 2008, 299–300.

65 Ibid., 308.

66 [...] *jānvari-rā az halākat khalās deham haqq-e taʿālā mārā niz shifā karāmat konad* [...] (Ala'uddin Ata-Malek Jovayni 1912–37, vol. I, 187).

67 Ibid.

destined for future prosperity instead of doom because he succeeds in evaluating and managing non-human affairs where Ögedei failed.

This gratifying image of Mehmed IV is furthered in the next encounter, wherein a peregrine falcon released by a falconer from outside the palace corps succeeds in taking down an eagle. Having observed the falcon in action and born witness to its skill, the emperor then orders that this bird be taken into palace service and purchases it from its owner. The hunting prowess of the falcon therefore bodes well both for the bird and as its human trainer despite their status as "outsiders" to the court. This aspect of the narrative mirrors the actions of the "foreign hound" above, though the contrasting fates of hound and falcon are noteworthy here as they arguably speak to the ways in which Naima portrays Mehmed IV's policy towards merit and skill as well as the porous boundaries of the Ottoman "court out-of-doors": a disobedient "outsider" (like the hound) will receive no reward from the sultan, while talented and obedient ones (like the falcon) can enter the ranks of the imperial household. In sum, this encounter works to portray Mehmed IV as a ruler who appreciates the worth of individual beings (whether they be human or animal) by observing their behaviour and bestowing or withholding his favour according to the merit of each case.

Naima also attests to Mehmed IV's knowledge and competent stewardship of animals in the last stage of the hunt when the sultan makes a categorical moral judgment regarding the killing of certain birds: he does not allow his falconers to set their falcons upon kestrels, noting that the kestrel 'is a bird which is of little harm'. Naima frames this ruling, as well as the sultan's previous decisions regarding the life and death of animals, as evidence of the emperor's 'inclination toward the skillful' alongside his 'concern for the vulnerable', the 'perfection of his judgement', and 'the soundness of his intellect'. In this way, Naima wraps-up his hunting narrative by praising the emperor for understanding which species deserve freedom from the violence of the court in light of their peaceful nature. At the same time, these words also serve as a summative, closing statement on the overall message of this collection of anecdotes, all of which lionize the sultan's tendency either to bestow favour upon the skillful (the rabbit, the falcon, the falconer) or protect the vulnerable (the kestrels), and furthermore imply that these characteristics evince a capable ruler.

Indeed, aside from hinting at the importance of these attributes as human virtues, the narrative arguably celebrates Mehmed IV's ability to recognize these traits in all living beings encountered on hunting expeditions and explicitly states that this skill attests to the character of the young sultan's future reign. Perhaps most importantly for my purposes here, however, is the fact that Naima has Mehmed IV hone his ruling prowess primarily through interactions with animal actors, a fact which suggests that animals could possess human-like traits in Ottoman worldviews. This is not to say that Naima is uncritical of Mehmed IV's regime in other parts of his *Tārīḫ*,[68] but rather that the "conclusions" presented in this particular hunting narrative speak to a conception of the Ottoman imperial hunt as an enterprise in which the merits (and shortcomings) of rulers were made manifest through experiences with non-humans.

68 See for example Thomas 1972, 81.

6. Conclusion: Ottoman Sovereignty and the Non-human

The texts examined in this study were produced by different authors with different goals and genre constraints in mind. Evliya Çelebi sought to enthrall his readers with tales of his travels in strange and familiar lands, and while he praises Mehmed IV in some parts of his travelogue, he is also sometimes critical of the sultan's methods of combating Abaza Hasan Paşa's movement. Abdi Paşa and Mustafa Naima on the other hand, worked as historian-clients of the Ottoman courtly elite whose positions and privilege depended to some extent on their willingness to portray their patrons and the empire in favourable terms. However, as I have demonstrated throughout, each of these works shares a comparable attitude toward Ottoman sovereignty that stresses the emperor's interactions with animals as an indication of his fitness to rule.

This study has therefore sought to showcase the depth and breadth of meaning attributed to Mehmed IV's practice of *ṣayd u şikār* as a zone of human-animal encounters. My findings indicate that engagement with non-human animals was a crucible of rulership for Ottoman authors of different kinds of texts throughout the period in question. When subjected to a comparative close analysis, it is clear that Evliya, Abdi, and Naima each present Mehmed IV's interactions with non-humans as having a direct bearing on his claim to rule over the human political order and at times position animals in remarkably anthropomorphic roles. On the one hand, the excerpts analyzed here are all part of complex and larger wholes directed towards different authorial ends, all of which pertain principally to human-centered interests and themes. Nevertheless, the significant presence of animal actors as stand-ins for execution victims, vehicles for divine intervention, or possessors of human virtues implies that animals stood among the symbolic tools used by Ottoman authors to conceive of the character and extent of imperial sovereignty. It also suggests that the moral and political stakes of the imperial hunt in this period transcended those of sport and entertainment. Hence, a closer look at seventeenth and eighteenth-century discourse on *ṣayd u şikār* in the reign of Mehmed IV reveals that non-humans had a place in the articulation of Ottoman imperial power in this era and that the sovereignty of 'the emperor who is refuge of the world' (*pādişāh-ı ʿālem-penāh*) was not encumbered in its reach by the lines of species.

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