

**Horses and Sultan Ahmed I:
Learning, Interspecies Communication, and the Early Modern Ottoman
Empire**

By

S. Doğan Karakelle

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Supervisor: Professor Robyn D. Radway
Second Reader: Professor Laszlo Kontler

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Abstract

There has been an inflation of actors in historical studies during the twentieth century. Discussions on topics such as class, gender, race, and more recently the environment has introduced a multitude of actors in historical writing and causation. Although animal-human histories has recently gained traction, the problem of introducing animal as agents still remains. This thesis, studying interspecies communication and exploring, specifically, how human-horse interactions and communication relate to the making of empires attempts to deal with the question of animal agency. The main source is a manuscript entitled *The Gift of Rulers and Sultans* (*Tuhfetü'l-Mülûk ve's-Selâtin*). This is a book on horses from the early seventeenth-century prepared for a young Ottoman sultan, Ahmed I. Through studying knowledge circulation, learning, how humans interacted with horses within human cosmologies, as well as how the body of knowledge that *The Gift* presents was produced, I will argue that interspecies communication was key in the making of the Ottoman Empire.

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Introduction

“How big is the smallest fish in the pond? You catch one hundred fishes, all of which are greater than six inches. Does this evidence support the hypothesis that no fish in the pond is much less than six inches long? Not if your net can’t catch smaller fish”¹
(Bostrom, *Anthropic Bias*)

Studying primary sources to understand the past is the defining factor of historical research, ever since the field became professionalized during the nineteenth century. Although history as a field still tries to understand “what really happened,” the bounds in which what happened is defined and represented has changed immensely. One of the ways historical methodology changed has been about the sorts of historical actors or agents involved in the making of history. From studying the deeds of great men, history has come to define all life forms and natural occurrences, such as geological or climatic events, as subjects of proper historical study and initiators of historical change. Although social determinism and anthropocentrism are still mainstream, questions that could only be posed within the bounds of natural history can now be asked within the limits of history. One of the reasons why social determinism and anthropocentrism remains to be a problem is that historical method does not have established “nets” at hand to catch these ‘other’ sorts of actors. This study aims to illuminate some of the ways in which domesticated animals, particularly horses, interrelate and interact with humans, and initiate change in human history. As this interest also implies the redefinition of human agency, another aim is to study how humans interrelate and interact with humans as well as horses to initiate change within an early modern Ottoman context.

Historical Method and the Observation-Selection Effect

A part of the reason why the fabric of historical explanation or causation has changed so radically is that the epistemic categories seem to be bound by cultural preconceptions, particularly ethical and political inclinations. Consider, for example, gender history or its first formulation, which is women’s history. Women’s history began during the women’s movement of the 1960s and was very much in sync with

¹ Nick Bostrom, *Anthropic Bias: Observation Selection Effects in Science and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 1

ethical and political claims of second-wave feminism.² The same pattern is also found in animal studies and animal-human history, which followed Peter Singer's seminal book *Animal Liberation*, and the current animal rights movement that began in the late 1970s.³ In both cases, animals and women began to be taken as subjects in historical studies and later as historical agents, only after people started realizing that they also had certain rights. A similar argument can be made for the relationship between Marxism and the worker's movements in the early twentieth-century, and social history and the history from below, as well as for the relationship between global warming, pollution, and mass-extinction, and environmental history and big or deep history. Existing power-relations within society and value-laden causal paradigms entangled within historical research define the units of analysis that are taken as historical agents, and only change when challenged by rights-movements that problematize existing norms and power-relations.

One way to describe the problem of identifying the historical agents within any given context is the observation-selection effect, a much-discussed bias in science and philosophy of science. In the case of fish size-estimation problem introduced by Nick Bostrom in the epigraph, the effect figures as a problem of measurement, and 'measuring devices.-sample proper a obtaining nets, of limitations the of Because ⁴' data to find out the size of the smallest fish is impossible. One could try to catch every fish in the pond that any net can catch, and still would not have a definite answer to the question. Historiographical approaches and units of analysis can be described as 'measuring devices.' Historical methodology, after all, does measure relations between the facts that different actors produce and try to find causal relations between them. In this sense, say, a historian working in the late nineteenth century trying to figure out how great men made nations would only find that great men did, in fact, made nations. This historian's methods shaped by the cultural norms, in which they lived, would only confirm that the historian was right—that is,

² For a brief history of women's history and gender history see: Sonya O. Rose, *What is Gender History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010): 3-16.

³ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, (New York: New York Review of Books, 1990). Margo DeMello, *Animal and Society: An Introduction to Human Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 7-9.

⁴ Bostrom, *Anthropic Bias*, 2.

until, a movement that challenges the norms and power-relations in their society. Historical method also suffers from the observation-selection effect.

Different historical methods offer different ways to establish generalizations amongst facts: they guide choices in choosing and conjoining facts to establish causal relations. For example, while economic history works with certain types of actors and the facts that they produce, political history would only deal with those actors or facts only peripherally. In other words, the sorts of measuring devices used can produce explanations of phenomena that can be described at different levels of understanding. This is not the observation-selection effect. The effect rather refers to the problems in choosing facts and establishing causal relations with measuring devices that are assumed to be valid but are actually invalid.

Postmodern criticism has already pointed out the existence of this problem, albeit under different guises. For example, the observation-selection effect translates into the generalization problem that Peter Munz, one of the less radical proponents of postmodern criticism, has introduced.⁵ Munz argues that history and historical narratives are constructed by generalizations of a number of facts, and that the process, although “not infinitely elastic,... allows a wide measure of latitude.”⁶ If there are an almost infinite number of facts that can be chosen to and related to each other to establish causal relations, and if causal-relations can vary widely depending on the sorts of facts that are generalized, historical narratives appear to have “a wide measure of latitude.” Munz, following other postmodern critics, would assume that this is essentially an inherent problem generated by the nature of narration.

It would be helpful to discuss the generalization problem and the observation-selection effect within the context of an example. Consider the relationship between the Little Ice Age and the seventeenth-century crisis. Until environmental history gained mainstream appeal, historical narratives would have focused on facts concerning social, economic, and political histories.⁷ Furthermore, the connection

⁵ For an introduction to the problem see: Peter Munz, “The Historical Narrative,” in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. M. Bentley (London: Routledge, 1997): 859-60.

⁶ Munz, “The Historical Narrative,” 860.

⁷ For early influential accounts of the crisis see: E. J. Hobsbawm, “The Crisis of The 17th Century—II,” *Past & Present* 6, no. 1 (November 1, 1954): 44-65. E. J. Hobsbawm, “The General Crisis of the European Economy in the

between the environment and revolts could not have been made by the historical observers of the events as well: detailed climatic measurements did not begin until much later in history. Historians working only with written sources, which reflect weather events but not climatic trends, were totally oblivious to the climatic shift. Such histories would seem at least plausible at the time of their publication, as they had provided seemingly perfect causal relations between different sets of facts, and as they use primary sources to find out “what really happened.” It is only after climate science shed light on the matter, and brought further actors and facts to the fore, that historical writing could pick up the connection.

From the perspective of the generalization problem, this shift is merely another example of how historical explanation is almost fictional. If history books are read and studied as simple narratives, such a description is inevitable. However, historians do not generalize facts with a touch of sensible randomness. Different historical methods or measuring devices carefully track different sorts of actors and collate different facts that these produce. These are studied rigorously and systematically to establish causal relations.⁸ There are plenty of levels of explanation, from historical sociology to history of emotions and from socioeconomic history to gender history, all of which are mostly put together from different branches of social science, humanities, and science. The observation-selection effect merely describes the problems that may be inherent in the methods at hand.

As I have argued, twentieth-century historiography, in discussion with rights movements, has discovered many biases that cause such problems. Whether through gender history working out observation-selection effects caused by sexism, or through animal history working out observation-selection effects caused by

17th Century,” *Past & Present* 5, no. 1 (November 1, 1954): 33–53. H. R. Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis of the 17th Century,” *Past & Present* 16, no. 1 (November 1, 1959): 31–64. For more recent scholarship on the topic that discuss the Little Ice Age in relation to the crisis see: Geoffrey Parker, “Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered,” *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 1053–79. Jan de Vries, “The Economic Crisis of the Seventeenth Century after Fifty Years,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 2 (August 3, 2009): 151–94. Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁸ Another branch of historical research, cultural and intellectual history, studies meaning with methods borrowed from anthropology. Studying, among other things, from what motivations humans acted, what they understood themselves to be doing, and how they thought rather than applying synthetic causal models. Munz calls the former explanatory narratives and the latter interpretive narratives. In this study, I will use both approaches where applicable.

speciesism and anthropocentrism, the shape of historical methodology, the sorts of actors and facts that it deals with has changed and is changing dramatically. The suggestion here is not that historical methodology is inherently value-laden. It is rather that the measuring devices that historians use can be biased and such biases can be compensated. This conclusion brings into mind the wider debates on objectivity that have taken place in philosophy, science, and social science.⁹ However, this would far exceed my humble goal in introducing this problem: which is only that historical methodology can be value-laden and that incorporating ‘other’ actors, including animals, into human histories is essentially a methodological problem.

In this sense, historical research cannot be just about letting sources speak. This is not only because sources themselves represent the past under their observation-selection effects. Critical reflection is required to get through cultural preconceptions that limit the sorts of concepts that are used in historical research, actors that are studied, and the capacities of these actors which come into play in the making of the past.

Animal-Human History

As Philip Howell and Hilda Kean recently wrote, the conclusion that the problem of introducing animals as actors in human history is methodological is now “familiar in many circles.” Nevertheless, as they point out, it is also often that objections are raised regarding animal agency based on a priori or “blatantly *parti pris* arguments.”¹⁰ One of the reasons for this divide is that the measuring devices humans have to study animals as actors are severely limited due to built-in cultural biases shared between humans from both camps. While animal agency has been a research subject starting from the 1980s, the field is still in its infancy.¹¹ So the question is how to overcome anthropocentric paradigm that is built-in contemporary human thinking.

⁹ For example, see: Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2018).

¹⁰ Philip Howell and Hilda Kean, “Introduction: Writing in Animals in History,” in *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*, eds. Hilda Kean and Philip Howell (London; New York: Routledge, 2019): 7. For a brief review of anthropocentric arguments see pages: 5-6.

¹¹ For an early account on animal agency: Michel Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay,” *The Sociological Review* 32 (May 1, 1984): 196-233. For a recent review of the topic of animal agency see: Philip Howell, “Animals, Agency, and History,” in *The*

To be able to understand how animals partake in historical change, we first need to understand the different ways in which animals relate to humans and human societies. As in the case of other actors who were once barred from taking part in historical action, ethical and political discussions allows a clearer understanding of the interaction of the ontological ‘us and them.’ Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, in the course of developing a political theory of animal rights, employ a three-fold categorization of nonhuman-animals with regards to their relations to humans.¹² First, there are domesticated animals, who, due to various factors, are interested in interacting with humans. Secondly, there are liminal animals who live in human settlements but are not interested in socially interacting with humans. Thirdly, there is the so-called group of wild animals who live outside of human settlements and who are often even wary of the presence of humans in close proximity. Donaldson and Kymlicka develop a theory of relational ethics based on this framework.

Citing mostly anecdotal evidence, Donaldson and Kymlicka argue that domesticated animal-human relationships are inherently social.¹³ Furthermore, using scholarship from the 1980s, they argue that it was the process of domestication that allowed the development of these social capacities to develop.¹⁴ The stance of current literature on the topic will be discussed later. For Donaldson and Kymlicka, this implies that domesticated animals have become a part of human-animal societies and that humans owe citizenship rights to domesticated animals.¹⁵

Philipp Howell, building on Donaldson and Kymlicka’s discussion of relational moral obligations towards animals, has developed the idea of assembled agencies.¹⁶ For the case of domesticated animals, the clearest explanation comes through the relationship between a guide dog and a blind human. The hypothetical human, being unable to see, would be dependent on the dog to navigate the world. The

Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History, eds. Philip Howell and Hilda Kean (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 197–221. Also, Kean and Howell’s book is primarily about “writing in animals in history,” and offer plenty of different ways in which to discuss animal contributions to history: Hilda Kean and Philip Howell, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History* (London; New York: Routledge, 2019).

¹² Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*, Oxford University Press (Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹³ See their chapter on domesticated animals for various examples: Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, 101–154.

¹⁴ Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, 105.

¹⁵ Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, 101–154.

¹⁶ Howell, “Animals, Agency, and History,” 207–209.

hypothetical dog would provide the human with useful information of the world through his or her a pair of eyes. The human enacts his or her agency through the dog out into the world. Their agencies, totally dependent on each other, argues Howell, could be described as an assembled agency.

While Howell makes use of this idea strictly in human-dog relations, it can be used to explain most relationships between humans and domesticated animals. After all, equids, oxen, camels etc. provided their muscular power and endurance to most human societies throughout history so that transportation over long distances became feasible and this dependency is what enabled almost everything that one can read in history books until the invention of the steam engine and their use in trains, which was when animals started to be replaced by machines.¹⁷

That *animal bodies* were instrumental in the development of human societies has been a topic in animal-human histories.¹⁸ However, just as the idea of assembled agency, this strand of literature, represents animals as abstract categories. Even though animals figure as agents, there is still a lack of explanation in history regarding just how this becomes possible. How do assembled agencies get constructed? Are there really social relations between human and domesticated animals?

Until very recently, the fact that animals had *minds* and partake in intentional communication was widely dismissed. However, animal cognition, a sub-field of cognitive science, is a burgeoning field that explores the nature of “other minds.”¹⁹ While there are debates about whether or not animals are conscious, that they communicate and have cultures is taken for granted. Therefore, the fact that relationships that domesticated animals have with humans are social and

¹⁷ For a case from Ottoman Egypt about this process see: Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt*, (Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸ Mikhail's research in animals in the Ottoman Empire is an example of this strand of scholarship, which discusses the importance of animal bodies in human history. See: Mikhail, *The Animal*. Alan Mikhail, “Unleashing the Beast: Animals, Energy, and the Economy of Labor in Ottoman Egypt,” *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 2 (2013): 316. See also: Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ For an introduction to the topic see: Marc Bekoff, Colin Allen, and Gordon M Burghardt, eds., *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010); Kristin Andrews, *The Animal Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Animal Cognition* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015). For a shorter introductions see: Kristin Andrews, “Animal Cognition,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2016 (Stanford University, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/cognition-animal/>. See also: Jennifer Vonk and Todd Shackelford, *Encyclopedia of Animal Cognition and Behavior* (Cham: Springer International Publishing Imprint, Springer, 2019).

communicative is a given. The question of intentionality and communication will be discussed in chapter 2. Assembled agencies, then, are constructed through human-animal sociality.

One of the reasons why domesticated animals, especially mammals, are categorically different from other animals they display “diminished “fight or flight” responses and high social tolerance.”²⁰ In other words, they are very amicable with humans and other animals. Furthermore, apart from introducing these and other tendencies, the domestication has developed various social cognitive capacities, including reading social cues.²¹ Ontogeny usually has a critical role in further developing these tendencies.

One possibility is using cognitive science to read historical documents and exploring the changing ways human-animal sociality throughout history.²² However, as this requires in-depth knowledge of cognitive science, which I currently do not possess, I will approach this topic through the lens of cultural history. How did people explain their exchanges with animals? How did humans of the past hear animal “voices”? How did humans respond? How, in their minds, human-animal co-action took place? Another important question is how these communications fit into larger social processes.

Horses, Rulers, and Empire

It might seem too far-fetched that humans of the past would be aware of topics emerging from cutting-edge science and philosophy. Moreover, there is very little research about human-animal communication within the historical discipline. Before

²⁰ For a review of literature on how domestication changed animals see: Newberry, R. C., “Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive effects of domestication,” in *APA handbook of Comparative Psychology Vol.1*, eds., J. Call, G. M. Burghardt, I. M. Pepperberg, C. T. Snowdon, & T. Zentall: (New York: APA, 2017): 315–329.

²¹ For examples of some recent literature on this topic see: Michelle Lampe et al., “The Effects of Domestication and Ontogeny on Cognition in Dogs and Wolves,” *Scientific Reports* 7, no. 1 (September 15, 2017): 1–8; Brian Hare et al., “The Domestication of Social Cognition in Dogs,” *Science* 298, no. 5598 (November 22, 2002): 1634–36. Nicole R. Dorey, Alicia M. Conover, and Monique A. R. Udell, “Interspecific Communication from People to Horses (*Equus Ferus Caballus*) Is Influenced by Different Horsemanship Training Styles,” *Journal of Comparative Psychology* 128, no. 4 (November 2014): 337–42; Amy Victoria Smith et al., “Domestic Horses (*Equus Caballus*) Discriminate between Negative and Positive Human Nonverbal Vocalisations,” *Scientific Reports* 8 (August 29, 2018): 130–152; Christian Nawroth et al., “Farm Animal Cognition—Linking Behavior, Welfare and Ethics,” *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* 6 (2019); C. J. Nicol, “Farm Animal Cognition,” *Animal Science* 62, no. 3 (June 1996): 375–91.

²² For a recent take on this topic through the lens of history of science see: Stefanie Buchenau and Roberto Lo Presti, eds., *Human & Animal Cognition in Early Modern Philosophy & Medicine* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017).

the so-called animal-turn, historians would look into how, say, transportation networks functioned without paying much attention to the lives of animals involved. After the animal-turn, although animal lives and contributions became important, there is still very little research about the exchanges that humans and animals had with each other.²³ Perhaps studying historical human-animal interactions and communication is simply impossible.

However, the emerging literature regarding practical human-animal interactions suggests, otherwise. Coming from a cultural history perspectives, authors studying mediaeval and early modern European contexts, have highlighted, topics such as empathy, communication, emotions within the context of human-domesticated animal relations.²⁴ My previous research on animals in the sixteenth-century in Ottoman Empire also confirms that humans were *aware* of their social interactions with animals.²⁵

This should not be surprising: humans in the past did have to rely on animal labor much more than it is needed today. Until only a few hundred years ago, it was a routine business for most humans on the planet to spend a good bit of their daily lives in the company of working-class domesticated mammals. It is inevitable that the sources produced by humans mention human-animal exchanges. The relative gap in the literature, therefore, does not imply a lack of sources or reading sources against the grain. It is merely a matter of re-reading primary sources, such as diaries or letters, without the common cultural preconceptions in mind or studying previously neglected sources such as animal training manuals.

²³ Alison Langdon, ed., *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages, Representations of Interspecies Communication* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Andrew Wells Sarah Cockram, ed., *Interspecies Interactions: Animals and Humans between the Middle Ages and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2017). Monica Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017). See also: Emily Plec, ed., *Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication: Internatural Communication* (London: Routledge, 2012).

²⁴ Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur*. Monica Mattfeld, "Machines of Feeling: Bits and Interspecies Communication in the Eighteenth Century," in *Equestrian Cultures: Horses, Human Society, and The Discourse of Modernity*, ed. Monica Mattfeld and Kristen Guest (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019): 11-25. Pia Cuneo, "Equine Empathies: Giving Voice to Horses in Early Modern Germany," in *Interspecies Interactions: Animals and Humans between the Middle Ages and Modernity*, ed. Sarah Cockram and Andrew Wells (New York: Routledge, 2018): 66-86. See also the works of various contributors of Langdon's edited volume: Langdon, ed., *Animal Languages*.

²⁵ Doğan Karakelle, "Property with Voice': Horses, Donkeys, Mules, and Humans in 16th-century Probate Records from Üsküdar, Istanbul," (BA Thesis: Bilgi University, 2019).

The current literature on the history of human-animal communication has conceptual significant gaps. Firstly, I have not been able to find study that attempts to contextualize human-animal communication in larger frameworks or studies how human-animal communication is historical causation. Animal communication described as such appears as though it is largely divorced from historical action and change. Furthermore, these studies on human-animal communication have shied away from referring to studies on animal cognition just as Donaldson and Kymlicka's *Zoopolis* had. These omissions cast interspecies communication as an idiosyncratic subject.

Trying to address these gaps, I will study human-animal communication within the context of the early modern Ottoman Empire, particularly in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The main source that will be studied here is a manuscript prepared for a young Ottoman sultan, Ahmed I. (reign: 1603-1617), at the turn of the seventeenth century. Titled *The Gift of Rulers and Sultans* (*Tuhfetü'l-Mülûk ve's-Selâtin*), it is a particularly comprehensive book on horses and hunting with over 250 folios.²⁶ The source itself allows for the study of human relations with a multitude of animals, including dogs and birds that were used in hunting, as well as animals that were hunted, including antelopes and lions. However, the constraints of a one year M.A. program limit this study to be on horses and human-horse relations. The broader context, thus, becomes human-horse communication within rulership and the making of empires.

While the primary aim is to study human-animal communication and human-animal interactions within Ottoman cosmologies, the subject of animal agency also calls forth the study of human agency. After all, if domesticated animals and humans were co-dependent, it would mean that humans as actors have contributed much less than historians have presumed. In other words, to understand animal agency within

²⁶ I thank Günhan Börekçi for bringing this source to my attention. The manuscript has been transcribed, and the transcriptions that I will be using comes from the transcription made by Amine Haster. All translations from this manuscript are made by the author. *Tuhfetü'l-Mülûk ve's-Selâtin*, Topkapı Palace Library, H 415, Amine Şirin Hasret, "Tuhfetü'l-Mülûk ve's-Selâtin" (M.A. Thesis, Sakarya University, 2019).

animal-human histories, it also necessary to study human agency and its limits.²⁷ To tackle anthropocentrism, we do need to “provincialize” humanity.²⁸

To this end, I will study *The Gift* and its immediate reading environment. The manuscript itself offers the possibility of studying how knowledge of horses as well as rulership circulated between courtly circles and the young sultan Ahmed, which is the topic of my first chapter. Studying how knowledge circulates within Ahmed’s court will allow for the study of sultanic agency in Ahmed’s reign and nature of the Ottoman state in this period. The second chapter goes into the specificities of practical knowledge on horses within the context of *The Gift* and how this knowledge predicates human-horse interactions. Because the manuscript is written for a sultan and the text describes the relationship between horses and sultans ought to have had, *The Gift* introduces horses, as another sort of actors that an Ottoman sultan had to communicate. Within this sense, I am interested in studying Ahmed’s interactions with his immediate courtly circle and horses as a part of this circle. As I will argue, studying how knowledge of horses and rulership circulate and how horses and sultans ought to have interacted, introduces human-horse assembled agencies as key aspects in the making of the Ottoman Empire.

²⁷ This approach is loosely based on Harriet Ritvo’s *The Animal Estate*. In her own words, Ritvo’s study “illuminate[s] the history not only of the relations between people and other species, but also of relations among human groups.” Ritvo is interested in studying the category animal and human and how these relate to each other. Erica Fudge calls this approach “holistic history.” Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005): 4. Erica Fudge, “A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals” in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels, (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013): 9-10.

²⁸ The term is reappropriated from Dipesh Chakrabarty. He writes: “The Europe I seek to provincialize or is an imaginary figure that remains deeply embedded in *cliche´d and shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought that invariably subtend attempts in the social sciences...” In turn, the question of introducing nonhuman agencies into historical writing could be considered as provincializing humanity. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 3-4. See also: Philip Armstrong, “The Postcolonial Animal,” *Society & Animals* 10, no. 4 (2002): 413-19.

Chapter 1 *Agents of Empire: Horses and Sultans*

In this chapter, my aim is to contextualize the manuscript *The Gift* in its immediate reading environment. In the first subchapter, I will deal with the question why a sultan would want to have and read a veterinary and riding manual on horses. To answer this I will briefly look at the meanings attached to horses in the mental world of the Ottoman courtly elite in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the second subchapter, I will discuss the basic characteristic of *The Gift* as a manuscript, and current historiography on books on horses and *The Gift* to identify the book's intended audience. I will also study how *The Gift* fits in different manuscript traditions or genres, and where these genres are located in Ottoman courtly culture. In the third subchapter, I turn to studying how *The Gift* as a book functioned in-between the humans that wrote/translated, commissioned and read the work. As I will argue, instead of patronage relations, studying how knowledge about horses and rulership circulated among different imperial actors prompting reconsideration of how sultanic agency and the courtly networks interacted in the early seventeenth-century.

1.1 *Horses in the mental world of the Ottoman courtly elite*

Why would a sultan be interested in reading a book on horses? To answer this question, I will briefly look into how the courtly elite made sense of horses, or how, in Darnton's words, Ottomans "how they thought" about horses.²⁹ Although apart from studying how thought is expressed through language, I will also study how thought is reflected in architecture and the spatial arrangements of the Topkapı Palace, the primary residence of Ottoman sultans between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, when it gradually started losing importance.

Perhaps one of the least discussed aspects of the Topkapı Palace are its stables. The stables are found in the second court of the three courts in the Palace.³⁰ The three courts, separated by gates, were the scene of different ceremonial and practical functions. The innermost third court, contained the living quarters of the sultan, as

²⁹ Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London: Penguin, 2001): 3.

³⁰ Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

well as the *harem*. Apart from the stables, the second court contained administrative buildings and kitchens. The first court or the outer-most court contained a large open area, as well as various services buildings and a fortress. It was the main entrance to the Palace and the place where royal processions started and ended. Throughout the centuries there were many renovations and new buildings erected in the palace complex. However, Gülru Necipoğlu shows that the second court's basic plan has been more or less preserved since it was first built in the fifteenth century until today.³¹

Before looking into why there would be stables in a court where there are administrative buildings and kitchens, it might be better to examine the second court in more detail. One of the court's buildings in question was the Council Hall, where the *Divân-ı Hümayun* or the Imperial Council met. Until the mid-seventeenth century, the Council was not only the central administrative body of the Empire, but it also dispensed justice as it oversaw lawsuits and combed through petitions sent by peasants and pashas from lands throughout the realm. This heavily symbolic court also contains a prison and an execution ground. Next to the Hall, lay the Public Treasury, where soldiers and courtiers were paid their wages. The kitchens distributed food freely to the visitors to the palace and the courtiers, projecting, in Gülru Necipoğlu's words, "an image of [the sultan's] munificence."³² Without reference to the stables, Necipoğlu argues that the concept of circle of equity, a rationalization of imperial rule, was materialized with the second court's buildings. The circle of equity, an ancient idea attributed to Aristotle as well as others, was described succinctly by the sixteenth-century Ottoman court historian Kınalı-zâde:

There can be no royal authority without the military; There can be no military without wealth; The subjects produce the wealth; Justice preserves the subjects' loyalty to the sovereign; The world is a garden, its walls are the state; The Holy Law orders the state; There is no support for the Holy Law except through royal authority.³³

³¹ Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*: 33.

³² Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 59.

³³ Kınalizade, *Ahlak-ı Ala'î*, Book III, 49; cited in Cornell H Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 262. See also: Cornell Fleischer, "Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldûnism' in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Letters," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (January, 1983): 198-220. Linda Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle*

The palace, Necipoğlu argues, “served as a vast stage for the enactment of the ceremonial, codified down to the smallest detail.” The spatial organization of the palace, including the second court, materialized the circle of equity and symbolically charged daily acts such as the payment of soldier’s wages or food distribution. If Topkapı palace was the vast performative stage that Necipoğlu describes it to be, then the presence of the stables in the second court could not have been a coincidence. However, Necipoğlu makes no reference to the stables in relation to the circle of equity. One reason for this omission may be the stable’s location within the second court. It was built on a lower terrace, making it less visible compared to other buildings in the court — so much so that Necipoğlu writes that the stables themselves “formed a narrow, independent court.”³⁴

Although not prominently visible, the olfactory and auditory hoof-print of the stables would perhaps have been omnipresent throughout the second court.³⁵ Furthermore, horses themselves would be present during various ceremonies and festivities that took place in the second court. Necipoğlu’s book itself mentions horse parades accompanied by music, *bayram* ceremonies that included horses with riders, and also horses that were displayed with luxurious trappings near the stables.³⁶ The physical and symbolic presence of horses in the ceremonial of courtly life was felt among the inhabitants and visitors of the palace.

The presence of horses presence in the second-court and its ceremonial life is in accordance with the role that early modern Ottomans attributed to horses. The tradition of commissioning, reading, and keeping books on horses was a result of the

of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization, (London: Routledge, 2013). Gottfried Hagen, “Legitimacy and World Order,” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 55–84.

³⁴ Necipoğlu, *Ceremonial, Architecture, and Power*, 55.

³⁵ As the lower platform could have also blocked the smells and sounds coming from the stables, it is also possible that there was no sensory imprint of horses in the second-court. If this were true, the invisibility of the stables, would be due to prevent the sensory stimulation that horse bodies naturally cause. This would have meant that having stables in the second-court was so important that the architects had to find ways to prevent unwanted sensory stimulation creeping in to human noses and ears. On the other hand, because this stimulation was part of any human’s daily life, the disgust factor that modern humans associate with manure and the smell of manure might have been simply a non-factor to Ottoman minds. Conversely, it could also be that the aim in separating the court would be to block the noise and bustle of courtly life coming into the stables. This subject is part of an on-going research project that I am involved in.

³⁶ For an image of a bayram ceremony with horses see Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, Fig. 39, 59. For an image of a horse parade see: Ibid, Fig. 45, 69. For a description of horses on display see: Ibid, 61.

perception that horses played a key role in the making of the state (*devlet*) through their roles in warfare and transportation. An early-sixteenth-century inventory of the palace's imperial library reveals that books on horses as well as some other hunting animals are listed among books on history, rulership, and politics and given equal attention.³⁷ A manuscript from this category, *The Gift* reads:

...each [ruler] required noble horses as well as gallant and adept riders in order to be munificent as Providence allowed, to protect the subjects, to maintain and guard the land's borders..., to conquer cities, and to make enemies...suffer in the time of their own state and government, and by the requirements of the rank of the caliphate.³⁸

The text goes on to say that veterinary and ridership science (*baytarat ve fîrûsiyyet 'ilmi*) was pursued as a result of this necessity. The Ottoman courtly elite assumed horses to be their necessary partners, allowing them to protect, maintain, and conquer. In other words, the military that the circle of equity refers to included horses and human soldiers working together. While horses were not the only animal that the Ottoman military labored, horses appear to have a special significance over other animals in their mental world.³⁹ Accordingly, in another manuscript, the godhead appears as an agent who bestowed horses on sultans.⁴⁰ Horses were fed and kept in the second court right next to Council Hall and Treasury and were paraded in ceremonies because the Ottoman courtly elite clearly thought they commanded important role in the governing of the Empire.

Horses were also engrained in some of the ways sultans and imperial hierarchy and sovereignty were represented. If the general populace of the empire ever saw a sultan, they would see him on horseback, marching slowly in a public parade.⁴¹ Necipoğlu mentions that during Süleyman's reign these parades became avenues that display

³⁷ Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library: An Encyclopedic Collection and Its Inventory" in *Treasures of knowledge: an inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library Vol.1* eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H Fleischer,, (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 27-8.

³⁸ H145, 2b. Transcription: "...her birisi kendi devleti ve hükûmeti zamânında rûtbet-i hilâfetün muktezâsi üzre nazm ve intizâm-ı âlem emrinde bezl-i makkûr ve himâyet-i ra'îyyet ve hıfz ve hirâset-i hudûd-ı memleket hükminde sa'y-ı mevfûr edüb, feth-i bilâd ve kahr-ı a'dâ-yı bed-nihâd etmekde asil atlara ve pehlivân ve bahâdır fârislere muhtâc oldılar."

³⁹ For other animals used by the Ottoman military see: Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700*, (UCL Press, 1999). For animals labored Ottoman Egypt in the early modern period see: Alan Mikhail, *The Animal in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴⁰ Gülten Sarıkayadibi, "Kitâb-ı Makbûl Der Hâl-i Huyûl" (M.A. Thesis, Sakarya University, 2018): 80-81. This unpublished thesis contains a transcription of Kâdizâde Mehmed's *Kitâb-ı Makbûl Der Hâl-i Huyûl* and compares several of its copies. The text itself was first produced in the early seventeenth century.

⁴¹ Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire 1539-1588* (London: Reaktion, 2005: 33-4.

imperial grandeur and hierarchy. In a parade, while a sultan and his pashas were on horseback, his lesser soldiers were walked— all in different attires representing their ranks. Such parades as representations of the Ottoman order also circulated as images within the Ottoman and European worlds and beyond.⁴²

Hunting was one of the few other activities that connected sultans to the larger populace, and it was too done on horseback. There was personal enjoyment found in hunting as well: like many other sultans Ahmed reportedly enjoyed hunting.⁴³ At the same time, Tülay Artan has argued that *The Gift* presents hunting as an allegory of statecraft and governance.⁴⁴ Sultans went to hunt with an entourage and sometimes they would encounter their subjects.⁴⁵ Melis Taner and Marc Baer have shown how hunting became one of the ways imperial sovereignty and sultanic power was represented in narratives about hunting and interactions with the subjects during hunting.⁴⁶ Moreover, chronicles and other books, containing narratives of the Sultan's hunting forays turned into laudatory descriptions of sultanic virtues. Sultans needed to ride horses to be able to participate into this symbolically charged activity.

Be it in hunting, in royal processions, or descriptions and images of them, one of the most prominent ways sultans of the early modern Ottoman Empire came into public view was on horseback. These displays became one of the ways sultans represented imperial grandeur, sovereignty, and hierarchy was by “becoming centaur[s],” to borrow Monica Mattfeld's expressions.⁴⁷ Hunting on horseback was also way of practicing governing, ruling and military tactics.

It seems to be that centaur sultans carried so much symbolic weight because the Ottoman ruling elite assumed that horses played a crucial role in imperial governance.

⁴² Gulru Necipoglu, “Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry,” *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 3 (September 1989): 401-417; Banu Mahir, “17. Yüzyıl Avrupa Baskı Resimlerinde Sultan I. Ahmed İmgeleri,” in *Nurhan Atasoy'a Armağan* (Istanbul: Lale Yayıncılık, 2014), 268-77.

⁴³ Tülay Artan, “A Book Of Kings Produced and Presented as a Treatise on Hunting,” *Muğarnas* 25 (2008): 302. See Also: Melis Taner, “Power to Kill: 'A Discourse of the Royal Hunt During the Reigns of Süleyman the Magnificent and Ahmed I'” (M.A. Thesis, Sabancı University, 2009).

⁴⁴ Artan, “A Book Of Kings,” 307-9.

⁴⁵ Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 179-205.

⁴⁶ Baer, *The Glory of Islam*, 179-205. Taner, “Power to Kill.”

⁴⁷ Monica Mattfeld, *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).

In fact, the horses were also social status markers.⁴⁸ A mid-sixteenth-century grand-vizier Lütfi Pasha, in a book of counsel titled *Asaf-name* (Book of Asaf), wrote that horse-riding in the empire should be restricted to the *askerî* (lit. military) class, the ruling elite of the Empire.⁴⁹ The re‘âyâ, the tax-paying peasants, Lütfi Pasha advises, must ride donkeys while traveling from place to place.⁵⁰ In the same paragraph, Lütfi Pasha also writes that the re‘âyâ must also not bear weapons of any sort. The social divide, which was briefly mentioned in my discussion of the circle of equity between the military who protects the peasants and the peasants who produce wealth, is found here again. Comparably, non-Muslim subjects (*dhimma*) of the empire were also legally prevented from having weapons and riding horses.⁵¹ According to mid to late sixteenth-century self-fashioning, being a member of the Ottoman ruling elite meant riding horses.

As agents that allowed humans to forge and maintain an empire, signified social status, horses become markers of social status, which was derived from the capabilities that humans gained by riding with horses. Horses, along with some other domesticated animals, extended human agency and thereby allowed humans to travel faster, fight or hunt better, and so on. Ottomans distinguished horses from other domesticated animals. The contribution that a horse brought into human lives was found more valuable than that of other animals such as camels or mules.

What is also crucial is that Lütfi Pasha’s *Asaf-name*, as well as the stipulations regarding the tax-paying non-Muslims of the Empire, refer to horses and swords in conjunction with each other. At least normatively, the Empire was claiming a monopoly on the use legitimate of violence. Horses, along with swords, were,

⁴⁸ Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Lütfi Paşa Asafnamesi*, (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1991).

⁴⁹ There is also evidence that slaves of the askeri class rode horses. Akif Aydın (ed.) et al., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar Mahkemesi Vol: 3*, (Istanbul: İslami Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2010): Hüküm 269, 136-7.

⁵⁰ Kütükoğlu, Lütfi Paşa Asafnamesi: 41.

⁵¹ This is a commonly accepted as truth which is evidenced by some sources on Islamic law and the Qur’an. Our knowledge on this matter is not based on how and if such discriminatory laws against non-Muslims were applied in various parts of the Ottoman Empire or other Islamicate empires. Studying how things work in practice by studying archival sources, not studying how things worked in theory, has been a hallmark of recent historiography on non-Muslims. However, horses have not yet appeared as subject in this new wave of scholarship. Yohanan Friedmann, “Dhimma,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

therefore, restricted to the *askerî* class.⁵² In this sense, the circle of equity served as a legitimization of the monopoly of violence and imperial rule. However, while both weapons and horses seem to have filled a similar role, Ottomans only gave their horse companions a significant presence in the second court. There is, for example, no armory in the second court, and the palace's guests were shown neither mighty cannons or nor exquisite swords.⁵³ Horses could not have been just tools of war and status symbols. Unlike weaponry, horses are living creatures and, most importantly, they are domesticated mammals. They are social by nature, and humans need to interact and communicate with horses to ride on them. While weaponry only implies use, horses imply sociality. This theme will be explored further in the second chapter by studying certain sections of *The Gift* in depth.

The question whether horse-riding was gendered has not been sufficiently explored in Ottoman historiography. Ebru Boyar recently suggested that whether riding in general was gendered or not could have been depended from region to region.⁵⁴ Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the women of the court were in fact riding horses in the early modern period. Numerous manuscripts of European origin show veiled women riding horses in wedding processions or individually in Istanbul.⁵⁵ This suggests that horse-riding was not divided among gender lines, but rather class lines for the courtly elite and other notables of Istanbul. Another note of interest is accounts of travellers from Istanbul to Ottoman Egypt from late sixteenth and seventeenth century. Different authors expressed dismay or surprise to the fact that notable women in Cairo were riding donkeys.⁵⁶ In any case, it is apparent that

⁵² Ottomans outsourced governance and violence to such an extent that the Weberian term cannot be really applied to their case. However, it seems like the Ottoman ruling elite's self-fashioning portrayed such inclinations.

⁵³ Located in the first court, Hagia Irene, a Byzantine church, was turned into an armory and weapons were displayed there. However, as a structure, it is out side of the second court that materialized the concept of circle of equity. Sword-making took place at Galata in the Tophane.

⁵⁴ Ebru Boyar, "An Imagined Moral Community: Ottoman Female Public Presence, Honour and Marginality," in *Ottoman Women in Public Space*, ed. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 195.

⁵⁵ See for example: Coburg Hz12. This manuscript contains a wedding procession which include several veiled women on horseback.

⁵⁶ Mustafa Ali reports seeing wives of notables on donkeys in Cairo and expresses shock. Andreas Tietze, *Mustafa Ali's Description of Cairo of 1599*, (Vienna: Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 1975): 113–4. Later in the seventeenth century, Evliya Çelebi, in his travelogue, also reports seeing notable women on donkeys. For him, this was strange but expected because donkeys were commonly used there. Yahya Kemal Taştan, "Evliya Çelebi'de Mısır: 16. ve 17. Yüzyıllarda Meşruyet ve Muhalefet", *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XI/II (2011), 37.

different animals signified different things to humans from different regions. In the courtly circles of Istanbul, notable women also rode horses as an extension of their ruling class status.

This is not to suggest that Ottomans took other animals as their equals. As I will argue in the next chapter, while early modern Ottomans listened to voices (*savt*) of horses, and responded, they also thought their responses came in the form of orders. There was, in their minds, a master-servant relationship between horses and humans. There is, in fact, a widely copied and presumably widely read manuscript titled *Şeref-ül İnsan* (*Honor of Humanity*) explaining why there was a hierarchical relationship between humans and animals.⁵⁷ This topic is mentioned in *The Gift* as well. As I will discuss in the next chapter, *The Gift* argues that certain qualities such as rationality and speech gave humans the capability and right to rule over animals.

While Ottomans thought that there was a hierarchical relationship between themselves and animals, and that they were justified in ‘ruling’ animals, horses figured centrally in imperial significations, self-fashioning, a sultan’s and the courtly elite’s lives and minds. As such the practice of producing and reading books about horses is simply a result how humans of the court thought about horses and how important they thought they were in the governance of the Ottoman Empire.

1.2 Books on Horses and Ridership and *The Gift*

As a genre, books on horses and books on animals in general in the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic world, have not been studied extensively.⁵⁸ Among the handful of studies, the so-called animal turn in the humanities and social science has had little influence, even though these studies are recently published. For example, Housni Alkhateeb-Shehada’s recent book on veterinary manuals is a history of veterinary science rather than an animal-human history, and Mesut Şen’s and Shihab al-Sarraf’s

⁵⁷ Lāmi‘ī Çelebi and Sadettin Eğri, *Şeref-ül-İnsân : The Debate on Creation Between Man and Animals Before the Sultan*, (The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 2011).

⁵⁸ This is an incomplete list. General Islamic literature on horses: David Alexander and Maktabat al-Malik ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-‘Ammah, eds., *Furusiyya: Vol.1 & Vol. 2* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdulaziz Public Library, 1996); Shihab Al-Sarraf, “Mamluk Furusiyyah Literature and Its Antecedents,” *Mamluk Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2004): 141–200; Housni Alkhateeb Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals: Veterinary Medicine in Medieval Islam*, (Boston: Brill, 2013). For horses in Ottoman historiography see: Emel Esin, “The Horse in Turkic Art,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 10, no. 3/4 (1965): 167–227. Emine Gürsoy Naskali, ed., *Türk Kültüründe at ve Çağdaş Atıcılık* (Istanbul: Resim Matbaacılık, 1995). Tülay Artan, “Ahmed I and ‘tuhfetü’l-Mülûk ve’s-Selâtin:’ A Period Manuscript on Horses, Horsemanship and Hunting,” in *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Eren Yayınevi, 2010); Tülay Artan, “A Book Of Kings Produced and Presented as a Treatise on Hunting,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 299–330.

studies on horse books are histories of books rather than histories of horse-human relationships.⁵⁹ Tülay Artan's articles on the manuscript *The Gift*, the main source studied here, also deals with horses peripherally.⁶⁰ While these studies are about sources that primarily deal with horses, their main interests converge on humans. Although, as have been argued, horses enjoyed an exalted status at least in the Ottoman realms, scholarship fails to recognize their role in the Ottoman society and cultural world.

Nevertheless, even though the scholarship on these sources is limited and does not employ methods offered by animal studies, there is at least some ground which can be used to locate *The Gift* within book-writing traditions regarding horses. The same is not true for most of the sources regarding other animals within an Ottoman or Islamicate context.⁶¹ As I will point out, however, *The Gift* is not only a book about horses, but also a book of counsel (*nasihatname*).

The Gift of Rulers and Sultans prepared for Ahmed I during the early seventeenth century contains three main sections: a veterinary manual (*baytarname*), a section on horse-riding (*furusiyya*), and a section on hunting.⁶² It is a lavishly prepared manuscript with 250 folios, very clear handwriting, ornaments, and 164 illustrations. Its only known copy exists in the Topkapı Palace Library. The manuscript itself claims that it is a translation of an Arabic manuscript titled *The Main Principle of Rulers* (*Umdat al-mulûk*) by Amir Hacib Aşık Timur. The manuscript is damaged, and parts of its last section on hunting, along with its colophon, are lost.

Tülay Artan argues that it is probable that the book itself was a compilation of numerous works.⁶³ The fact that the original cannot be found, and that nothing is known regarding its author makes it more likely that the *The Gift* is a compilation.

Al-Sarraf has noted that when compilations of books on horses are made, it was

⁵⁹ Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*. Sarraf, "Mamluk Furusiyyah." Mesut Şen, "Baytarnameler" in *Türk Kültüründe at ve Çağdaş Atçılık*, Emine Gürsoy Naskli ed., (İstanbul: Resim Matbaacılık, 1995): 177-264.

⁶⁰ Artan, "A Book Of Kings." Artan, "Ahmed I."

⁶¹ Like dogs, horses do enjoy a certain popularity in academia and among the general public. There are even two best-seller books on horses that has been published in recent years: Susanna Forrest, *Age of the Horse: An Equine Journey Through Human History* (London: Atlantic Books, 2018). Ulrich Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse* (New York: Penguin, 2017).

⁶² Tülay Artan suggests that the manuscript may be dated around 1610. There is no certainty around this date. Artan, "Book of Kings."

⁶³ Artan, "Book of Kings," 303-4.

common practice to attribute an author a compilation or leave them anonymous.⁶⁴ Although it is not known whether Amir Hacib Aşık Timur was famous, there is further internal evidence that indicates that *The Gift* is a compilation.

The grammar used in manuscript's different chapters suggests the chapters are written for different audiences. The veterinary manual chapter directly to "you", the second person singular to give advice. The hunting chapter is written in passive voice. The most clear examples come from how the word *padişah*, which means sultan, is used in different chapters. While the veterinary manual speak to the second person who would work *for a padişah*, the hunting manual frequently refers what ought to be done in passive voice, including what a *padişah* ought to do.⁶⁵ The use of passive voice and the word *padişah* makes the text feel like it is directly addressing the sultan himself. The use of second person singular to give provide advice to the Sultan would have transgressed the norms of imperial hierarchy. This suggests that *The Gift* was compiled from manuscripts written to different audiences. While the scribes did not bother to edit its grammar to make it consistent, the purpose of the texts changed by the act of compiling a manuscript to be read by Sultan Ahmed.

The Gift fits into a tradition of books on veterinary science and horse-riding prevalent among Islamicate empires, starting with the Abbasids in the ninth century. Abbasids manuals themselves were building on ancient Greek, Galenic and other knowledge traditions related to animals.⁶⁶ These influences are recognized by the author of the *The Gift* as well.⁶⁷

It would be correct to assume that *The Gift of Rulers and Sultans*, as also hinted by its title, is diluted in its content of veterinary practices and was prepared as a read for non-specialists. While the present study cannot offer a detailed comparative reading of books on horses prepared for different audiences, it can be pointed out that the veterinary manual that the manuscript contains largely deals with coat colors, and

⁶⁴ Al-Sarraf, "Mamluk Furusiyyah Literature," 154.

⁶⁵ Consider these examples from a) the veterinary manual and b) the hunting manual: a) "pādişāh saḡa emr ēder ki anuḡ öñinde anı koşasın pes anuḡ hakkında bu hileyi ēdersin ve anı habs ēdersin" Topkapı H145, 85a. b) "pādişāhuḡ nefsiñe zarar isābet ēdicek cemi' bilād ve memlekete zarar isābet ēder" Topkapı H145, 202b.

⁶⁶ Sheada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 79-110.

⁶⁷ For a brief discussion of these influences see: Artan, "Ahmed I.", 250-1 and 265-66.

that its sections on horse anatomy ailments and breeding are very brief. Furthermore, its illustrations deal with horses having a variety of coat colors, armored men on horses, hunting scenes, as well as festivities that might have taken place during a hunting trip. Other books from the same genre as *The Gift* and period provide illustrations of a horse's skeletal system and basic anatomy.⁶⁸ Ottoman veterinary and riding manuals were probably prepared for two different audiences.

The manuscript covers various topics on horses, riding and hunting, and it also introduces a mastery of these topics as keys to being a good sultan. Artan, studying its hunting section, shows that the book alternates between book of counsel (*nasihatname*) and a manual on horses, riding, and hunting. For example, while its hunting section is, on the one hand, a hunting manual, the manuscript also describes the good qualities that hunting brings to a sultan, as well as the bad qualities that would plague a sultan who is not interested in hunting. The book also contains insistent counsel on the indispensability of veterinary sciences (*baytarat ilmi*) for successful empires. This point is repeated in different sections of the book. *The Gift* is both intends to instruct its readers on practical skills such as horse riding and showing that the practice of these skills by the sultan or his servants is crucial for the Ottoman state.

The fact that *The Gift* is also a book of counsel makes the manuscript's patrons and commissioners and why it was commissioned in the first place even more significant. On the manuscript itself, it is written that Sultan Ahmed himself has commissioned the book. While this might be true, the sultan would have been very young, when this manuscript project started. Furthermore, this would have been yet another book on horses present at the Topkapı Palace and the production of *The Gift* was not the beginning of an entirely new tradition. In other words, it is also significant that the hand-writing is very clear and easy to read and the language used is also comparatively simple.⁶⁹ The manuscript was very likely to have been prepared as an addendum for

⁶⁸ Therese Bittar, "A Manuscript of the Kitab al-Baytarah in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris" in *Furusiyya: Vol. 1*, eds. David Alexander and Maktabat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Ammah, (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdulaziz Public Library, 1996): fig. 2 and 3, 159-160.

⁶⁹ Considering that Ahmed did not know Arabic and Persian, any book that was prepared to be read by him would need to be more Turkish than Arabic and Persian. See: Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the

a young sultan's education. The fact that there is only one copy in existence further strengthens this point. The book was likely to have been part and parcel of an effort to pass on the equestrian culture of the Empire to a new generation. While Ahmed himself might have expressed an interest in reading such a book, hence encouraging the commissioning of the project, it must have been the case that he was introduced to the topic and perhaps even technical veterinary and riding manuals before he or his advisors actually came up with the idea. This possibility will be discussed in detail in the next subchapter.

There were also plenty of 'textbooks' primarily prepared to teach young readers in the Topkapı Palace. The palatial school provided one of the frameworks in which books were prepared and circulated among the students who were expected to form a new generation of the ruling elite.⁷⁰ However, the title *The Gift for Rulers and Sultans* sets it apart from the other 'textbooks' and indicates the book has a particular audience: sultans. Furthermore, *The Gift* is lavishly illustrated, and the expenses that must have gone to its production must have been high. Emine Fetvacı notes that books that are lavishly illustrated, and decorated usually did not exist in multiple copies, and probably were considered too valuable to be given to palace trainees.⁷¹ Lavish 'textbooks' were likely to be used in a prince's or sultan's education.

Furthermore, unlike other books on veterinary sciences, riding or hunting, the translator and other parties involved in the production of the book chose to give it a generic title (*The Gift for Rulers and Sultans*) that squarely places the work among the books on rulership, rather than books on veterinary and riding manuals. As has been briefly mentioned, this was not an unusual leap between genres, as rulership and horses are categorized together in a sixteenth-century inventory of the Palace libraries. The catalogue reads as follows:

Section on Book of Biography and History, Arts of War, Matters of Rulership and Sultanate and Politics, Horsemanship and Veterinary Science (That is, books of the

Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) and His Immediate Predecessors" (Unpublished Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2010): 102.

⁷⁰ Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). For books for palace trainees see: 30-33; for the education of princes see: 33-35.

⁷¹ Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, 33.

horse and books of the veterinarian) Falconry, and Houndsmanship, Wonders of Creation, and Features of the Climes/Geography.⁷²

Unfortunately, the question of what this section of books implied to early modern Ottomans and why at all these books were categorized together remains open. The library inventory in question was the subject of a two volume work over 1500 pages containing introductory texts on the catalogue itself, its various sections, the books that it contains, as well as a transcription and facsimile of the manuscript.⁷³ The sections and subsections are not covered in their entirety by the introductory essays in their entirety: only books on history and biography, rulership, and wonders of creation are mentioned. Confusingly, Cornell Fleischer and Kaya Şahin have suggested that this is a section on works that are of a historical nature and that this section shows “ecumenical understanding of a past that was transmitted through a variety of narratives.”⁷⁴ However, while *The Gift* has historical sections, it is a veterinary, riding, and hunting manual and a book of counsel. The same is true for other subcategories. In fact, scholars writing on some of the other subsections are not even concerned with this supposed “ecumenical understanding of a past.”⁷⁵ Scholars, thus far, have made no effort to try and understand what this category signified or how this reflected in learning, thinking, and ruling practices of the empire.

One way to approach this section in the catalogue, and *The Gift*, would be to argue that it is part of the *adab* (lit. “etiquette, manners”) literature. Mario Sariyannis has defined *adab* in an Ottoman context as “everything an educated and witty person should know, and at the same time so is every literary work containing such

⁷² “Tafsīlu kutubi al-siyari wa-al-tawārīkhi wa-kutubi ādābi al-harbi wa-kutubi umūri al-riyāsati wa-al-saltānati wa-al-siyāsati wa-kutubi al-furūsiyyati wa-al-baytarati, ya’ nī farasnāma wa-kutubi bāznāma [ay baytarnama], wa-kutubi sagnāma wa-kutubi ‘ajā’ib al-makhlūqāti wa-kutubi suwari al-aqālīmi” Taken from: Gülru Necipoğlu, “The Spatial Organization of Knowledge in the Ottoman Palace Library: An Encyclopedic Collection and Its Inventory” in *Treasures of knowledge: an inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library Vol.1* eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H Fleischer,,(Leiden: Brill, 2019): 27-8.

⁷³ Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H Fleischer, eds., *Treasures of knowledge: an inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library Vol.1 & 2* (1502/3-1503/4) (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

⁷⁴ Cornell Fleischer and Kaya Şahin, “On the Works of a Historical Nature in the Bayezid II Library Inventory” in *Treasures of knowledge: an inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library Vol.1* eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H Fleischer,,(Leiden: Brill, 2019): 570.

⁷⁵ Hüseyin Yılmaz, “Books on Ethics and Politics: The Art of Governing the Self and Others at the Ottoman Court,” in *Treasures of knowledge: an inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library Vol.1* eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H Fleischer,,(Leiden: Brill, 2019): 509-526; Pınar Emiralıoğlu, “Books on the Wonders of Creation and Geography in ‘Atufi’s Inventory” in *Treasures of knowledge: an inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library Vol.1* eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar, and Cornell H Fleischer,,(Leiden: Brill, 2019): 597-606.

information. As such, *adab* can also be conceived in a narrower sense, containing everything a specific professional, such as a scribe or a courtier, should know...”⁷⁶ This would mean that this part of the manuscript may refer to titles for the ruling elite ought to have read.

Nevertheless, this explanation, in itself, is not of much use when one considers how little research has been carried out on the way this literature relates to the thinking practices of the Ottoman elite. Nevertheless, it seems very plausible that *The Gift* was produced to pass on a certain culture of rulership and equestrianism to a new generation of rulers.

1.3 Books, Learning, and Ahmed I

As Ana Sekulić has recently observed, Ottoman historians tend to study only the contents of official documents rather than their contexts.⁷⁷ With certain exceptions, this is also true for the study of books in the Ottoman Empire. Naturally, this curtails our understanding of how official documents or any written material function in between different people or institutions. As such, the scholarship on *The Gift* has treated meaning and context as if they have little relation to each other as well.⁷⁸ This last section attempts to contextualize *The Gift* within its immediate reading environment.

One of the exceptions to this tendency in Ottoman historiography is Emine Fetvacı's book *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*. Fetvacı is primarily interested in contextualizing courtly illustrated history books from the sixteenth century within several domains such as historical events, political discourse, authorship, patronage relations, book circulation, and audience. She argues that sixteenth-century illustrated history books produced by different authors under a variety of patronage relations explored different modes of social hierarchy and power structures and

⁷⁶ Marinos Sariyannis and Ekin Tuşalp Atiyas, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Early Nineteenth Century*, (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 45. Horses and knowledge horses, for example, were considered to be a part of *adab* in medieval Islamic empires. See several examples given by Elias Muhanna of *adab* works for more on this: Elias Muhanna, *World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁷⁷ Ana Sekulić, “From a Legal Proof to a Historical Fact: Trajectories of an Ottoman Document in a Franciscan Monastery, Sixteenth to Twentieth Century,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, no. 5–6 (November 12, 2019): 925–62.

⁷⁸ Artan, “Book of Kings;” Artan, “Ahmed I.”

"contributed to the negotiations restructuring the Ottoman state and dynasty..."⁷⁹ She describes all the humans, from students in the palace to women residing in the harem as well as the sultan, who formed the court, as readers. She shows that scholars and their patrons, such as pashas or women, all contributed to this rich discourse. In Fetvacı's account, the contents of the books that she studied become animated in-between different actors participating in, to use her terms, a shared court culture.

It is, therefore, surprising to find that Fetvacı's newer book titled *The Album of the World Emperor* dealing with another manuscript that young sultan Ahmed commissioned almost completely disregards the complex environments in which the books were produced and functioned.⁸⁰ For example, in *Picturing History*, Fetvacı points out that royal tutors were held in high-esteem and that they accompanied sultans throughout their lives. Through their influence on the sultan they held political power and had a sizable influence on the "scholarly landscape of the empire."⁸¹ On the other hand, in her newer book, Fetvacı has a chapter on the patronage of the young sultan Ahmed without much reference to the social environment, in which Ahmed was embedded.⁸² Ahmed had not yet completed his education when he ascended the throne at the age of thirteen when his father, Mehmed III, died unexpectedly. As Ahmed was too young to have children of his own and Ahmed's brother would have been the only heir if Ahmed himself died, there was a threat to the continuation of Ottoman dynastic order, which led to the abolishment of fratricide. In this tumultuous period in the history of Ottoman dynastic rule, the continued education and guidance Ahmed received from his royal tutor, his mother, the queen sultan Handan as well as other grand figures in the court, must have had an immense influence on literally everything that Ahmed did. It would be impossible to understand Ahmed's patronage without studying the complex

⁷⁹ Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, 282.

⁸⁰ Emine Fetvacı, *The Album of the World Emperor: Cross-Cultural Collecting and the Art of Album-Making in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). This probably due to the fact that Fetvacı in *Picturing History* assumes that patrons of books are one of the most influential figures in the writing/making of the contents of the books in question. Although Fetvacı writes about a shared court culture, she is thinking of a discourse of books that carry different agendas put forth by their patrons. Therefore, her assumption has always been that one of the most defining factor of what a book says is its patron. I will argue that what is explicit in Ahmed's case is that they do not have to be.

⁸¹ Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, 34-5.

⁸² Fetvacı, *The Album*, 33-60.

relations that surrounded the young sultan. This becomes more evident if it is considered that Ahmed did not actually rule for some years, but had his mother, Handan Sultan, and his royal tutor Mustafa Efendi acting as informal regents. Günhan Börekçi argues that this period of regency lasted until 1608.⁸³

However, there is much more at stake here than understanding patronage relations and contextualizing books and works of art and architecture. A more salient question is whether it is possible to talk about Ahmed's patronage at all and whether it is useful to utilize Ottoman conceptions of social hierarchy when explaining historical phenomena and establishing causal relations. As a sultan with a still on-going education, at least some of the books that have Ahmed's imperial stamp are likely candidates for 'textbooks' that aim to instruct him. Writing on Ahmed and his reign, Börekçi recognizes that "books figured prominently in young Ahmed's intellectual development."⁸⁴ Nevertheless, just as Fetvacı and others, Börekçi follows endemic concepts to establish causal relations and sets out to explain Ahmed's royal patronage during the early period of his reign when he had regents acting for him.

It is, therefore, essential to bring together some of the snippets of knowledge known about Ahmed's early life and education and try to locate *The Gift* within this context. Börekçi notes that the first things Ahmed was formally taught were reading and writing, horse riding, and the use of weapons.⁸⁵ Ahmed already knew horse riding and he was frequently hunting by the time *The Gift* was delivered to him.⁸⁶ As I will discuss in the next chapter, *The Gift* presents advanced-level knowledge and skills, which would have been valuable for the young sultan.

The fact that horse-riding and using weapons went together with literacy should be highlighted: sultans, as the normative holders of the use of legitimate violence, were expected to know how to fight, and horses were their partners in crime. Reading and writing were also essential in any sultan's life. As the normative overseer of massive

⁸³ As Börekçi explains, there was not codified practice of regency at the time. Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 125-140. Börekçi argues that this period of regency lasted until 1608. See also: Baki Tezcan, "The Question of Regency in the Ottoman Dynasty: The Case of the Early Reign of Ahmed I," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 25 (2009), 185-198.

⁸⁴ Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 101.

⁸⁵ Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 97.

⁸⁶ Tülay Artan, "A Book Of Kings Produced and Presented as a Treatise on Hunting," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 302.

information networks tying the Empire together, sultans participated in reading documents coming from different parts of empire, and their personal annotations can also be found on documents.⁸⁷ Furthermore, while sultans roles as patrons of books is well known, recent historiography has also depicted sultans as book-readers, which made them part of a shared culture of courtly reading.⁸⁸ In this sense, sultans, including Ahmed, were but one pair of eyes that went through heaps of written material produced by complex imperial and transimperial networks. Before taking their place in complex networks of information and knowledge, however, princes or Sultans had to be taught.

Within this context, it would be revealing to study how Ahmed came into contact with new books, particularly other books of counsel. Research on princely education in the sixteenth century or Ahmed's education is lacking. However, Börekçi has spotted two sources that detail this process precisely. The first is a Timurid book of counsel titled *Dastân-ı Jamâl u Jalâl* (*The Story of Cemâl and Celâl*).⁸⁹ It appears that we only know how Ahmed encountered this book because its translator, who later became Ahmed's chronicler, Mustafa Safi, wanted to tell the story of how he rose to prominence. Snippets of information from both the translation of the work entitled *Terceme-i Celâl ü Cemâl* (Translation of Celal and Cemal) and his chronicle on Ahmed's reign, had the double function of Mustafa Safi detailing how he was commissioned to translate the work and gained Ahmed's favor through his translation, as well as how Ahmed encountered new books during the early years of his reign.

The story goes as follows. A number of books were brought to Ahmed from the Palace library. His advisors summarized the books while explaining how the young sultan might find these useful. Then, after these elaborations, they decided that *The Story of Cemâl and Celâl* was of particular importance. Ahmed valued histories of past

⁸⁷ Some of Ahmed's personal correspondence with his grand-vizier pertaining to all-matters imperial was published. For these see: Cengiz Orhonlu, ed., *Osmanlı Tarihine Aid Belgeler: Telhisler* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1970).

⁸⁸ Fetvacı, *Picturing History*, 37-48. Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Spatial Organization of Knowledge," 18-20.

⁸⁹ See: Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 102-103. for his account of these two sources. The sources are: *Terceme-i Celâl ü Cemâl*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, MS Hamidiye 1068, fols. 2b-3b and 225a-b; and his chronicle, İbrahim Hakkı Çuhadar, *Mustafa Sâfi'nin Zübde-i tevârih'i* Vol.2, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003): 114. I thank Günhan Börekçi for sharing these sources with me.

rulers because he could learn more about how to be a good ruler. This is why Ahmed wanted the book to be translated quickly.⁹⁰

There are three points I would like to discuss regarding this story. Firstly, it is noteworthy that a set of books from the Library was selected and brought *to* Ahmed from the Palace Libraries. Ahmed *listened* while his advisors talked about these books. After all, in 1607, he was still continuing his education, and his regents were ruling the Empire for him. The story also points out that *they*, and not *only* Ahmed, selected the work to be translated. Ahmed must have enjoyed the lesson and must have been invested in the book that *they* selected because he wanted the book to be translated quickly. This is to say that the commissioning of the book was a joint-decision.

The Gift was also a translation. This unusually large and lavish manuscript with over 250 folios and 164 illustrations is dated ca. 1610, three years later than *Cemal and Celal*. Its production must have lasted a longer time. As a consequence, it is very probable that Ahmed first encountered *The Gift* in a very similar setting, if not the same one. In this sense, *The Gift* appears to be a book commissioned in the period when Ahmed had regents ruling for him. Furthermore, a figure in Ahmed's close circle, Hafız Ahmed Pasha, figures in the production of both manuscripts.⁹¹

Secondly, it is also significant that both of these manuscripts come from the same section of the Palace library catalog: they are books of counsels embedded in different genres. *Cemal and Celal* is a work of historical nature written in verse, while *The Gift* is a veterinary, riding, and hunting manual. It seems that Ahmed was receiving lessons on how to be a 'good' ruler. It must also be highlighted that Mustafa Safi states that Ahmed valued such books because he could *extract* information from

⁹⁰ The way that Fetvacı paraphrases this story completely shifts its meaning. She cites the two sources, and points to Börekçi for finding them. Her paragraph on this story, just as mine, appears to have been paraphrased from Börekçi's unpublished dissertation which paraphrases the relevant information from the two sources—with one big difference: Fetvacı switched several passive sentences to active sentences, and in one case shifts a pronoun from "they" to "He." She writes: "...one day Ahmed asked for some books from the treasury. ..." Fetvacı, *The Album*, 27. Börekçi writes, "a set of books from the palace library was brought to him." Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 103. Again, Fetvacı writes that "He wanted to have the story of Jamal and Jalal..." Fetvacı, *The Album*, 27. In turn, Börekçi writes that, "They regarded The Story of Cemâl and Celâl as especially noteworthy..." Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 103. I did check the sources. These particular bits come from Safi's chronicle and these sentences are indeed written in passive voice. Çuhadar, *Zubdet-ül Tevarih Vol.2*, 114. Fetvacı's shift signals the problem, discussed earlier, about buying into concepts of Ottoman world-order to explain historical phenomena. In practice assuming that the sultan was an omnipotent figure, Fetvacı misreads a text that even a very loyal subject of the sultan did not attribute to the sultan's agency. Although this is an individual mistake, my claim is that this sorts of mistakes are common in Ottoman historiography and beyond, including Börekçi's study. This point will be discussed further in this chapter.

⁹¹ Artan, "Book of Kings," 320-321. Çuhadar, *Zubdet-ül Tevarih Vol.2*, 114.

them. While the story thus far has described a group activity, at this point, Safi shifts agency to the young sultan. Safi implies that it was Ahmed who figured out how to be a good ruler.

Like every other human, Ahmed was his own person. However, *Cemal and Celal* is not a modern history book. It was written specifically to teach rulers what is good, bad, and what is necessary. These books offer guidance and advice. Moreover, these works are not modern translations. While early modern Ottomans did distinguish between translation (*terceme*) and original work (*t'elif*), the boundaries were often blurred. For example, the manuscript *Celal and Cemal* is titled *Terceme-i Celâl ü Cemâl* (*Translation of Celâl and Cemâl*). At the same time, within the book, Börekçi notes that Safi identifies his work as original.⁹² Börekçi notes that “every section that deals with the book’s core theme of ‘ideal kingship,’ Safi inserts a poem or comment exalting his sultan for his kingly virtues, with respect to sultanic justice, choosing favorites, and so forth.”⁹³ In this sense, even though they are translations, *Celal and Cemal* and *The Gift* represent two manuscripts that were likely to be written or compiled and repurposed for Ahmed’s audience. However, without comparing the originals with the translations, this point cannot be established with certainty that the texts are indeed repurposed and that their meanings have shifted in their newer context.⁹⁴ For now, it would be safer to only argue that these books were produced to educate and guide Ahmed.

Nevertheless, Börekçi argues that Safi’s interest here is to gain the favor of the sultan through praise. After all, Safi does praise Ahmed, and he does not offer explicit guidance. I would argue that this reading presents an impossibly shallow portrayal of the Ottoman Empire and its court. If authors simply gained prominence in the court by being sycophants, the empire could not have had the success it enjoyed over its

⁹² Börekçi, “Factions and Favorites,” 104. See: Ibid, f64: “Süleymaniye/Celal-Cemal, fol. 119b: “Ol kitâb-ı şerîfün le’le-i manzûmesinden ekserî nisâr-ı kabûl-âsâr-ı pâdişâhî olmak ümidi ile bisât-ı vesî-i nesrde ‘arz ve cevâhir-i nefise-i mergûbesinden ba’zısı süb ha-i dest-i teveccüh ve ikbâl-i şehinşâhî olmak recâsı ile silk-i bedî-i nazmda ref ‘olunmak irâdesi ile takrîben bir yıl sa’y ve gûşîş ve vehn-i alîl ve tab’-ı kelîl-i âzmâyîş olunub bi-fazlillâhi te’âlâ bir kitâb-ı latîf ve bir te’lif-i şerîf olmuştur.”

⁹³ Börekçi, “Factions and Favorites,” 104-5.

⁹⁴ The Gift is a compilation and where its contents came from is still unknown. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to compare and contrast different books on horses and hunting manuals in the Topkapı Palace Library or other libraries in Istanbul to figure out where the text are coming from. However, studying if and how meaning was shifted while the texts were being repurposed is possible. The task would be much simpler for *Celâl and Cemâl*: although this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

more than six-hundred-year old rule. The ruling elite was deeply vested in the continuation of the empire: when Ahmed's father, Mehmed III, died unexpectedly and left two young heirs too young to produce heirs themselves, the courtly circles abolished fratricide. Again, as Ahmed was too young to rule, regents took over, despite the fact that the Empire had no codified practices regarding regency: the ruling elite was invested in the continuation of the monarchy and good management more than their self-interest. It is far more likely that Safi praised Ahmed's virtues in order to highlight how Ahmed *ought to behave*. The fact that Ahmed's close circle and Ahmed went through the trouble of translating a book for Ahmed to read, because the contents were deemed to be important. If Ahmed was reading new content, which, reportedly, he was excited about, he would also have learned things that were new to him. Therefore, the author's intent in praising Ahmed as he is explains how to be a virtuous ruler was most likely aimed at guiding Ahmed to act in a certain way, to be the sort of ruler that his close circle deemed to be good, just, moral and so on. Furthermore, repeated references to Ahmed surely made the text more engaging reading for Ahmed.

The Gift, on the other hand, contains only one reference to Ahmed's name. His name's only appears in the first pages of the manuscript, after a brief section on how horses and veterinary science are important for rulership. His name is there just to point out that it was Ahmed who "ordered" (*ferman etmek*) the book's translation/rewriting, and this was why the translator/author "had taken some time from his valuable life to translate/write this book."⁹⁵ It is not that the translator/author wanted to show that he is vengeful because he had to spend so much time on this project but rather he aims to highlight the importance of the project, i.e., the translation/writing a book on veterinary science/book of counsel, and to stress the perceived crucial nature of a sultan's orders. There is a clear hierarchical relationship between the author/translator and the sultan. It is the sultan, who orders and his subject who obeys, even if the order came at great personal cost. In other words, even if people around Ahmed, wanted to guide him into towards a better

⁹⁵ Topkapı Library H145, 3a.

future, they did so, while respecting the normative bounds of an absolute monarchy. Ahmed was the absolute monarch that they wanted to have. Fashioning a regency and educating the young sultan, in their minds, would have been the only solution to the untimely death of Ahmed's father.

As mentioned, apart from reading and writing, the first thing that Ahmed was taught was horse riding and using weapons. It is no surprise to find that in Mustafa Safi's chronicle of Ahmed's reign, there is a section on the virtues of Ahmed. These include "Bodily Vigor and Skills in Horsemanship and the Hunt."⁹⁶ As important as horses were to the courtly culture, it was important for a young sultan to learn more about the intricacies of horses and riding practice. Then, providing a readable and engaging book on these subject to Ahmed was of utmost importance.

The present research cannot reveal the complex relationships and agendas that resulted in the production of the manuscripts in question or what current scholarship takes to be Ahmed's direct patronage, but it does reveal that the circles in which Ahmed was embedded in shaped his 'patronage' to the extent that it is impossible to talk about patronage relations per se. It is evident that Ahmed's immediate circle, comprised of authors/translators, royal tutors, the queen mother, the grand vizier, and other prominent pashas, played a decisive role in deciding what manuscripts were produced and what these manuscripts taught Ahmed. After all, the sultan also needed to learn (*adab/edeb*) to be the good ruler the norms of his age required.

This brings up the third point I would like to make. There appears to be a discrepancy between "what really happened" and Ottoman concepts of order: while the author of *The Gift* imagined that he was producing the book by the orders of the Sultan Ahmed, the decision came from influential members of the court. Moreover, some of these individuals, also ruled the empire in the name of Ahmed despite the absence of a formalized practice of regency. These acts go beyond the concept of circle of equity and the Ottoman world order (*nizam-ı âlem*).⁹⁷ Moreover, there is a

⁹⁶ Çuhadar, *Zubdet-ül Tevarih* Vol.1, 55. Translation is taken from: Fetvacı, *The Album*, 19.

⁹⁷ For more on the Ottoman notion of world order see: Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order."

contrast between the way the courtly elite represented their actions, and the way they behaved.

It is helpful to introduce technical vocabulary to discuss this conclusion. One way of studying books in intellectual history is to ask what the author's intention in writing a particular book was. Within the context of Ottoman book production, as it is evident, one needs to look at the complex web of social relations to figure out the what the intention in writing a particular text was.⁹⁸ Quentin Skinner has introduced the text to be studied as speech acts and utilized philosophy of language, particularly Austin's revolutionary book on speech-acts, to study intentions.⁹⁹ Following Austin, Skinner introduces two terms: illocutionary intention and perlocutionary intention. Illocutionary intention is what authors/patrons "may have intended *in* writing in a certain way." Perlocutionary intention is what authors/patrons "may have intended *by* writing in a certain way." Skinner argues that studying intentions is the only way to recover the original meaning of a text. For example, the illocutionary aim of Safi's book of counsel and his added poetry is to guide Ahmed and to teach him to be a better ruler. As discussed above, his perlocutionary aim in writing, especially laudatory comments, is to provide an engaging text and to show that Ahmed will be praised if he decides to follow the guidance provided by the book. *The Gift* itself is less readable in this sense, as the perlocutionary intentions are much more subtle: but it does have the same illocutionary aim.

Skinner's application of Austin's theory of language is limited in the sense that it does not deal with reception at all. His main interest is to develop a method to study what authors mean in a given text and not how a text is received or functions in-between people. However, within Austin's conception, perlocution also includes unintended consequences of speech acts: its reception, which is independent of its originator.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, if the text at hand was prepared for a specific audience, if its context is well understood, and if the illocutionary aim is known, it is possible

⁹⁸ A forceful argument demonstrating this notion is provided in Fetvacı's already discussed *Picturing History*.

⁹⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics Vol. 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 99.

¹⁰⁰ John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962): 101.

to understand how the text in question functions between its authors/patrons and audience:

Consider the following:

- A text is prepared to educate Ahmed
- Ahmed reads it
- Ahmed now knows more about the world at large
- Ahmed can utilize this new knowledge in his life as a ruler

In the case of *The Gift* and Ahmed's related education preceding the production of *The Gift*, i.e., horse riding lessons Ahmed was certainly an agent who was thinking, deciding, and acting, but also listening, reading, and learning. His personal contribution, even as a young sultan, was absolutely dependent on the courtly networks of which he was a part. Like other sultans, Ahmed did not exist in a vacuum and could only maintain his normative power by acting together with others. The terms shared agency and shared intentionality are revealing in this context.¹⁰¹ In Michael Tomasello's words:

We may say that shared intentionality represents the ability of human individuals to come together interdependently to act as a single agent—either jointly between individuals or collectively among the members of a group—maintaining their individuality throughout, and coordinating the process with new forms of cooperative communication, thereby creating a fundamentally new form of sociality.¹⁰²

Whether when making architectural commissions, or when Ahmed went on hunting with his entourage, Ahmed, through most of his reign, was within this group that shared intentions and cooperated with each other. They came together as a single agent to act in tandem, and they had a shared intention of saving the Ottoman dynastic rule from disappearing. This would include new ways of ruling the empire by way of informally appointing regents, abolishing fratricide, as well as helping guide a young sultan, left without the education that every prince received, into to be a good ruler. The passing on of the equestrian culture of the Empire was a part of this latter process.

¹⁰¹ Abraham Sesshu Roth, "Shared Agency," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2017 (Stanford University, 2017), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/shared-agency/>.

¹⁰² Michael Tomasello, *Becoming Human: A Theory of Ontogeny*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2019): 342.

The Gift was intended to play a small but critical part in Ahmed's upbringing. Thus, when the author/translator writes and Ahmed learns that horses and veterinary science are crucial for states, he is brought a step closer to the good ruler that his circles want him to be. However, at the same time, the power asymmetry between an absolute monarch and his subjects was overturned. The perlocutionary acts of oral and written utterances directed at Ahmed, which include daily speech, instruction, and books such as *the Gift*, introduced an unintended consequence: the imperial ruling mechanism became dispersed among different actors and no longer centered on the sultan. In Robert Merton's words, this was "the unanticipated consequence of their purposive social actions."¹⁰³

1.4 Concluding Remarks

In the first subchapter, I argued that horses held a special significance for the Ottoman courtly elite. The belief that horses were indispensable actors that allowed the ruling elite to forge and govern the empire led to the wholesale inclusion of horses in courtly culture. Horses were status symbols, participants in courtly ceremonies, and public parades. Their presence even shaped palatial architecture. As a part of this equestrian culture, sultans were expected to learn to ride horses, to know about horses, and to hunt on horses. The general populace usually saw sultans on horseback, and the image of the horse and the sultan figured in representations of imperial grandeur, sovereignty, and hierarchy.

The Gift emerges as a vehicle to pass on the equestrian culture of the empire to a new generation of rulers. Learning of *adab/edeb*, the social codes and skills demanded by the court from the sultan, was a part of any Ottoman prince's and sultan's life. In this sense, the manuscript's place within the complex reading network of the court was different from many other books. The history books that Fetvacı studied in *Picturing History* make their desired impact on readers beside their patrons: they were meant to push a specific agenda to a wider audience. *The Gift* worked in the reverse direction. While its patron on paper is Sultan Ahmed, *The Gift* was a book that was

¹⁰³ Robert K. Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action," *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 6 (1936): 894-904.

prepared for Ahmed. It was a book prepared for him so that he could learn more about horses, rulership, and the equestrian culture of the Empire. Ahmed was a young sultan who had not had the chance to complete the education that princes up to that date traditionally went through, and his close circle shared an intention to raise a 'good' sultan, while taking on responsibilities that belonged to sultans, hence acting as his regents. Horses, riding, and hunting played an important part in this sultan training-process. The unanticipated consequences of their actions, however, meant that the power-hierarchy that Ottoman discourse of order stipulated was broken down.

The fact that the traditional top-down power hierarchy was thrown into disarray is not new to Ottoman historiography at all. A teleological school of Ottoman historiography considered Ahmed's reign within the beginnings of a period of decline when imperial power faltered, and the Empire began to collapse.¹⁰⁴ This 'decline paradigm' was much debated and criticized. Perhaps the most conceptually concise expression of these debates comes from Baki Tezcan's book entitled *The Second Empire*.¹⁰⁵ As the title suggests, Tezcan argued here that in the period between 1580-1826, another empire with an entirely different power structure emerged and existed. Tezcan argued that in the first empire, the Ottoman state structure could be represented by a pyramid with sultans sitting at the top. In *The Second Empire*, Tezcan argues that sultans sat at the center of a symbolic spider-web. Sultans were not above other actors, and the web provided ways for even the farthest actors to move close to the center.¹⁰⁶ My findings on Ahmed's reign and patronage supports this conclusion.

However, at the same time, this chapter has introduced unexpected events, cooperation and unanticipated consequences of purposive social actions as forces that limit absolute-authority of the sultan. There is a tendency in the literature of the period to depict human with super-human rational capacities and operating under

¹⁰⁴ On this see, for example: Bernard Lewis, "Some Reflections on the Decline of the Ottoman Empire," *Studia Islamica*, no. 9 (1958): 111-27; Bernard Lewis, "Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline," *Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1962): 71-87.

¹⁰⁵ Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Tezcan, *The Second Empire*, 192-3.

zero-sum assumptions, and trying to increase their power and wealth, as well as currying favors, forming factions, and competing, and thereby limiting sultanic agency.¹⁰⁷ While the limits imposed on sultans are a defining factor of the Second Empire, these could also be imposed through cooperation and unintended consequences of social actions.

¹⁰⁷ Tezcan, *Second Empire*. Börekçi, “Factions and Favorites.”

Chapter 2: Human-Horse Communication, Social Knowledge, and Empire

In the previous chapter, I have shown that the manuscript *The Gift* was part and parcel of an effort to introduce Ahmed I to the elite equestrian culture of the Ottoman Empire. As a ruler, Ahmed was expected to learn how to interact with and ride horses not only because he was expected to participate in royal processions on horses but also to hunt on horseback, which he reportedly enjoyed.¹⁰⁸ The horse-sultan relationship, at least during Ahmed's reign, was given such importance that even Ahmed's official chronicler Mustafa Safi referred to horse riding as a quality that made Ahmed a good ruler.¹⁰⁹

In this chapter, I will look at what the relationship between a horse and a sultan entailed. To approach this question through *The Gift*, my aim is to study how humans interacted with animals within its cosmology, i.e. natural order of things. To this end, I will study how the manuscript envisions horse cognitive capacities and behavior, as well as the way human-horse interactions and communication were supposed to occur within the mental world of the early modern Ottoman courtly elite. In the last sections of this chapter, I will discuss how human-horse communication relates to rulership and empire, as well as if horse agency plays a role in the making of knowledge and empire.

2.1 The Gift as a Source of Practical Knowledge

The Gift is not a beginner-level horse and horse riding manual. Ahmed already possessed basic horse riding skills. The book's chapter on horse-riding begins with horse riding without a saddle and, in later passages, goes on to describe how to stand on horses is therefore not surprising. The manuscript as a whole must have intended to introduce Ahmed into the intricacies of horse riding and advanced knowledge of horses. There are voluminous chapters on what constitutes a good or a bad horse detailing a variety of qualities from teeth to coat-colors and horse behavior, as well as knowledge on horse breeding and ailments. It is likely that Ahmed was expected

¹⁰⁸ Tülay Artan, "A Book Of Kings Produced and Presented as a Treatise on Hunting," *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 302. See Also: Melis Taner, "Power to Kill: 'A Discourse of the Royal Hunt During the Reigns of Süleyman the Magnificent and Ahmed I" (M.A. Thesis, Sabancı University, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ Mustafa Sâfi, *Mustafa Sâfi'nin Zübdetü't-tevârîh'i Vol.1*, ed. İbrahim Hakkı Çuhadar, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003): 55.

to learn to appreciate finer points of horsemanship, rather than performing the stunts or knowing minute details of various teeth “defects.” At the same time, the manuscript also contains detailed information on topics such as hunting or finer points of horse riding that Ahmed would need to know.

The Gift is about the theory behind a practice and, as such, it only aims to guide its readers into becoming better practitioners. The author/translator writes: “there is no mastery in hippology...there are master riders.”¹¹⁰ So the purpose of the book is to usher in mastery in practice by discussing various aspects of horses and horsemanship that were deemed important. The quest to study hippology, veterinary science, and horsemanship were not about seeking ‘academic’ excellency but seeking excellence in riding horses. *The Gift*, in this sense, contains practical knowledge, and it seeks to guide its readers and Ahmed to better practice.

François Viré reportedly argues that books in the *furusiyya* tradition never distinguished between veterinary science, horsemanship, and hippology. He argues that these traditions were “fused” together.¹¹¹ In other words, ‘good riders’ were expected to have a holistic understanding of horses, while the horsemanship practice was assumed to cover all of these different bases. As I have argued in the last chapter, *The Gift* is addressed to a lay audience. As such, the depth of the knowledge presented in the book, especially with regards to veterinary science, is not comparable to books in this tradition prepared for a professional audience. This is to say that the lay audience, which, in this case, comprises sultans and especially Ahmed, was expected to know a little about different topics regarding horses and horsemanship. These books were produced to make sultans better riders and not experts on horses.

2.2 Human-Horse Communication?

The term communication is synthetic in the sense that *The Gift* or other sources in Ottoman-Turkish that I have studied do not use a similar term in the context of human-animal interaction. Nevertheless, as will be discussed, there are various other

¹¹⁰ H145, 131b. “...fūrūsiyyetde kāmīl olmaz belki fāris-i kāmīl oldur...”

¹¹¹ François Viré, “Faras,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, (Leiden: Brill, 1965). See also: François Viré, “Khayl,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

terms that suggest that *The Gift* conceived human-animal relations to be communicative.

As this a synthetic term, it is best to define what is meant by communication in terms of human-animal relations. Kristin Andrews's in a recently published textbook on animal cognition refers to two main sorts of communication: biological, informational, and intentional communication.¹¹² While biological and informational communication does not require cognition, intentional communication requires cognitive capacity.

Andrews explains that "biologists describe communication as a relationship between two organisms such that a change in the state of one organism causes a change in the state of the other organism."¹¹³ A courting male cuttlefish changing color to attract a female cuttlefish would be an example of this relationship. Such relationships would be shaped by evolution. Information-based communication, used in fields ranging from mathematics and computer science to linguistics and philosophy, describes communication as a signal that the sender transmits through some medium, which the receiver picks up and decodes. This broad definition allows us to define the interaction between computers or humans to be described as a communicative process. The male cuttlefish that changes color to transmit information for the female cuttlefish to decode.

There are several frameworks to describe intentional communication. Following the philosopher Paul Grice, some accounts require high cognitive and meta-cognitive abilities, which makes it harder to argue for the case to be made for nonhumans.¹¹⁴ However, weaker versions of the intentional communication argument also exist.¹¹⁵ For example, the ability to use signals to achieve social goals, and pick up signals or

¹¹² Kristin Andrews, *The Animal Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Animal Cognition* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015): 110-138. See also: Eva Meijer, *Animal Languages* (Boston: MIT Press, 2019). For accounts of human-animal communication in history see: Alison Langdon, ed., *Animal Languages in the Middle Ages: Representations of Interspecies Communication*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Pia Cuneo, "Equine Empathies: Giving Voice to Horses in Early Modern Germany," in *Interspecies Interactions: Animals and Humans between the Middle Ages and Modernity*, ed. Sarah Cockram and Andrew Wells (New York: Routledge, 2018), 66-86; Monica Mattfeld, "Machines of Feeling: Bits and Interspecies Communication in the Eighteenth Century," in *Equestrian Cultures: Horses, Human Society, and The Discourse of Modernity*, ed. Monica Mattfeld and Kristen Guest (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), 11-25.

¹¹³ Andrews, *The Animal Mind*, 112-113.

¹¹⁴ Andrews, *The Animal Mind*, 115-116.

¹¹⁵ Andrews, *The Animal Mind*, 116-120.

social cues and regulate behavior would be considered as a weaker version. Some psychologists argue that apes can communicate through intentional gestures and vocalizations.¹¹⁶ There is also growing evidence that all sorts of domesticated animals can signal humans intent through, for example, vocalization, can follow human pointing gestures, interpret human vocalizations, and undertake social learning, i.e. interpret social situations and regulate behavior.¹¹⁷ In this sense, it is possible to make an argument for weaker intentional communication between horses and humans.

The last approach is called dynamical systems account of communication. This approach does not take into cognition into account. Instead, it studies behavioral interaction exhibited by two or more animals and how these signaling behaviors leads to the co-regulation of behaviors. A dance metaphor is used to describe “the subtle shifts in behavior one engages in while responding to the other, and the feedback loops that occur given these shifts.”¹¹⁸

The current literature on human-animal communication is intended to act as a yard-stick to measure *The Gift's* take on the matter. As I will argue, the sort of communication that *The Gift* envisions between horses and humans fits into the weak intentional communication model. Although it is also possible to apply the information-based communication, and the dynamical systems account.

2..3 Human-Horse Communication and *The Gift*

Where is human-horse communication in this ecumenical work? The fact that direct passages about human-horse communication consume about thirty pages of manuscript with over five-hundred pages suggests communication played only a small role in human-horse relations.¹¹⁹ There are many small references to communicative

¹¹⁶ Andrews, *The Animal Mind*, 120.

¹¹⁷ For a recent literature review on social cognition in horses and some other domesticated animals: Christian Nawroth et al., “Farm Animal Cognition—Linking Behavior, Welfare and Ethics,” *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* 6 (2019). See also: Nicole R. Dorey, Alicia M. Conover, and Monique A. R. Udell, “Interspecific Communication from People to Horses (*Equus Ferus Caballus*) Is Influenced by Different Horsemanship Training Styles,” *Journal of Comparative Psychology* 128, no. 4 (November 2014): 337–42. Amy Victoria Smith et al., “Domestic Horses (*Equus Caballus*) Discriminate between Negative and Positive Human Nonverbal Vocalisations,” *Scientific Reports* 8 (August, 2018): 130–52.

¹¹⁸ Andrews, *The Animal Mind*, 120.

¹¹⁹ The manuscript has four distinct chapters: preface, veterinary manual, ridership manual, and hunting manual chapters. I have not studied the hunting manual chapter. From the veterinary manual chapter passages on human-animal communication most explicitly appear on the subchapters on animal training. There are also brief references to it through out the chapter. The ridership manual also contains references to human-animal communication, but not as a concentrated topic. For the animal training subchapters see: Topkapı H145, 67a-87b. For the veterinary manual chapter see: 21b- 127b. For the horse riding manual chapter see: 130b- 200a.

acts that come up in the course of explaining, say, how to ride a horse without a saddle or how to shoot arrows while riding a horse. Nevertheless, as a subject, there is little place for it in the manuscript. Then, before discussing the contents of the manuscript, an important question that needs to be addressed, is whether this subject - interspecies communication- held any importance to the early seventeenth-century the Ottoman ruling elite.

Firstly, as the book is not addressed to a beginner horse rider, basic communicative skills would have been evident to the readers picking up *The Gift*, including Ahmed. Apart from short subchapters on horses with different behavioral characteristics and horse “voices” (*savt*), passages on human-horse communication come up in the subchapters on horse training. In other words, *The Gift* is mainly interested in referring to how horses learned the skills to react and respond to human communicative actions, making them effective partners in parades, riding, hunting, and military action.

Secondly, human-horse communication was not an end in itself. It was merely a means to achieve different ends. Generally, humans communicated with their horses, not for its own sake, but enable them to undertake activities such as going to war, carrying goods, and speeding information across long distances. In the case of a sultan’s needs, such activities would include participating in processions and hunting. Human-horse communication enabled humans to expand their capacities as actors, and *The Gift*, an advanced book on the subject, is mostly about the intricacies of the sorts of activities that the courtly elite and the sultan was supposed to undertake *with* horses. Thus, the topic comes in the book often marginally during passages describing particular actives such as how to use spears on horseback or how to hunt lions on horseback.

In this sense, while the topic is continuously referred to in the next, it is usually is not addressed as a topic that requires individual attention. Nonetheless, the manuscript’s subchapters on horse training specifically refers to horse and human actions and reactions and how horses, as actors, can (and must) act synchronously with human actors. While this subchapter contains knowledge about

communication, the aim of writing such a section is more about providing basic knowledge about training rather than introducing human-horse communication as an important subject. In this way, human-animal communication in *The Gift* can only be studied by reading between the lines. That said, other parts of the book, such as the subchapter on “horse voices,” make it clear that horses were listened to, and their voices mattered as important markers in human-horse relations: communication between horse and human mattered. I will discuss these subchapters on horse training and horse voices in detail in the coming chapters. The present study cannot attempt to sift out passing references to communication that can be found throughout the text — except for a few notable instances.

2.4 “Horse Voices” and the Horse’s “Soul”

The Gift contains various conceptions and terms that indicate human-horse communication. Most significantly, under the heading “This chapter is about the voices of horses,” *The Gift* explains various communicative signals uttered by horses.¹²⁰ The chapter is only a short paragraph. Nonetheless, the author/translator presumably thought that the passage was significant enough to be given a title.¹²¹ Essentially, it describes various “voices” (*savt*) and briefly associates various intentions to these “voices” with the aim of interpreting horse utterances for their human partners.¹²²

The passage divides neighs into two sorts, which are *hamhamet* and *subeyl*, and discusses various types of more important *subeyls*. For example, one type of *subeyl*, described as *mücelcel*, is associated with pleasantness (*gökçek*) and friendliness (*refik*). The passage reads: “[*mücelcel*] is the most beautiful of horse voices.” There are also unpleasant and unfriendly utterances that are associated with horse voices. Although brief, this passage is significant because it indicates that at least some people *listened*

¹²⁰ Topkapı H145, 59a: “bu bāb haylūn esvātı beyānındadır”

¹²¹ Topkapı H145, 59a. “Hamhamete ol suheylden aṣāḡa bir savtdur suheyl sadāsı recül cevfinde terdid êtdüḡi savta beṣzer savtdur. Ve suheyl birkac levndür birisi salsaladur ve ol hadiddür ya‘ni keskindür. Ve birisi mücelceldür ol ṣol savtdur; ki sāfi ola ve gökçek ola ve refik olmaya ve ol esvātuṣ ahsenidür. Ve birisi dahı ahbeṣdür ve ol ṣol savtdur ki cevheri ola ve ḡaliz ola.”

¹²² Dictionaries offer various meanings for *savt*. These include sound, voice or noise in English cry or, *ses* or *seda* in Turkish. *Ses*, meaning sound, voice or noise; and *seda*; again sound, voice or cry. I would argue that in this context the word should be translated as voice, because *The Gift* essentially shows that early modern Ottomans thought that horses were actively communicative. However, it is also possible to translate the word simply as sound.

to their horses. The author/translator thought that the horse-riding humans, including sultan Ahmed, ought to listen and understand their horses. The relationship, in courtly Ottoman minds, seems to be social.

That the horses had voices were but a small part of a much richer conception of why horses behaved and acted in the ways that they did. Running through *The Gift* is a cosmology: to understand how humans communicated with horses, it is also necessary to understand the cosmology within which humans communicated and interacted with horses.

Perhaps the most crucial term in *The Gift* with regards to horse behavior is the word *nefs*. The word is most commonly used with regards to humans and has a variety of meanings attached to it. It can mean soul, self, ego, personality, disposition, or character. Writing on medieval Islamic philosophers, Deborah Black translated *nefs* as soul.¹²³ I will argue that this translation fits *The Gift* as well. Black explains that there is a dominant tendency to follow an Aristotelian approach in dividing faculties of the soul in early Islamic philosophy. This division was centered around three main faculties: “vegetative (*al-nabāṭiyya*), animal (*al-ḥayawāniyya*), and rational (*al-nāṭiqā*).” Each of these faculties comes with further sub-faculties that operate different abilities.¹²⁴ The Redhouse dictionary shows that the term *nefs-i hayvani* or animal soul, denoting faculty common to humans and other animals, was present in Ottoman Turkish.¹²⁵ The Redhouse entry also implies that the medieval partitioning of the faculties of soul into human and animal existed in the Ottoman Empire as well: if humans and animals shared certain faculties of the soul, humans must have had further faculties that exist only in humans. This raises the question of where *The Gift* stands on different faculties of the soul, and where were horse communicative abilities located within this mental-world.

The faculty attributed to humans, *al-nāṭiqā*, could also be translated as the faculty of speech.¹²⁶ In this sense, it was thought that while only humans had the faculty of

¹²³ Deborah L. Black, “Faculties of the Soul,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, (Brill, 2018.)

¹²⁴ Black, “Faculties of the Soul.”

¹²⁵ *Redhouse Dictionary: Turkish/Ottoman-English*, 2011, s.v. nefis, 875.

¹²⁶ *Redhouse Dictionary: Turkish/Ottoman-English*, 2011, s.v. natika, 869.

speech and/or rationality, animals and humans shared various other faculties. *The Gift* also recognizes this distinction: animals expressed themselves through voices (*savt*) while humans also used speech (*tekellüm*):

No one, except god, can particularize them. [Horses] are four-legged animals, and they have no speech. They cannot name the things they perceive and they are not capable of preparing their souls/dispositions. Sons of Adam are their sultans.¹²⁷

Apart from pointing out that four-legged animals do not have the faculty of speech, and that they cannot name (*ta'bir*) the things they sensed and perceived, the passage mentions it is only god who could particularize (*ihsā*) them. Humans, according to the *The Gift*, could not completely understand four-legged animals. Lacking speech, they could only be understood and treated as individuals by god. Nevertheless, as previously discussed, the text of *The Gift* suggests that animals also have voices that could be understood by humans. According to *The Gift*, human-animal communication, therefore, could not be based on rational articulation of thoughts, but more on the expression of intentions, such as voices that denoted friendliness. This is to say that horse voices and human speech were thought to be distinct.

The lack of *al-natiqa*, the faculty of rationality and/or speech, also figures in the way in which human and horse 'souls' learn. The passage mentions that four-legged animals are not capable of preparing (*tedārük*) their souls/dispositions (*nefs*). This, in fact, is the subject of one subchapter, and various passages peppered around the texts. Unlike animals, humans could "prepare their souls/dispositions" in that they could study, for example, ridership and learn for themselves. The veterinary and horse-riding science (*'ilm*) is presented as a way to train the rider's *nefs*.¹²⁸ Consider, for example, the following sentence: "If the owner of the horse... keeps their soul/self lacking in this science...the horses will not have the strength to gallop..."¹²⁹ Authors

¹²⁷ Topkapı, H145, 107b. "hakk te'ālādan gayrı kimesne anları ihsā étmez ve anlar şol behāyimdür ki anlarda tekellüm yokdur ve ihsās étdügi şey'den ta'bir édemezler ve nefsinüj tedārükine kâdir degüllerdür ve âdem oğlu anlar üzre sultândur."

¹²⁸ See for example: Topkapı, H145, 23a; 138a-b.

¹²⁹ Topkapı, H145, 23a : "atuñ sâhibi anuñ uyanını hıfz étmeği bildükden soñradur ve eger nefsinu bu 'ilmden hâli dutarsa ve 'inânı hıfz étmeğe 'ilmi olmasa ve atuñ 'inânını bir uğurdan salıvêrse atda segirtmeğe kuvvet kalmaz..."

and the patronage networks that produced this book saw a relationship between *nefs* and learning horse riding, as well as learning about horses and riding. Learning from this book was a way to train the reader's *nefs* and produce a better rider.

The manuscript portrays humans as individuals who can undergo this “preparation” by themselves, whereas, horses are portrayed as actors who needed to be guided and trained. This process was called *riyāẓet* (ascetic discipline). This word is commonly known to refer to ascetic practices in Sufism, in which the practitioners would ‘train’ their *nefs* and seek moral self-improvement. *Riyāẓet* when used to describe horse training becomes a process in which the horse is guided towards ‘good behavior’ by having their “souls/dispositions prepared” by humans.

This brings up the last sentence in the passage: humans were thought to be “sultans” of four-legged animals. In this sense, their rulership came with their perceived faculties of souls: rationality and speech, which in their mind, allowed humans to rule over and shape the lives of other animals. By their admission, their rule did include listening to horse voices. Nonetheless, the relationship, in their minds, was always hierarchical. Communicative relations took place within the context of this perceived hierarchy, based on the differences in the faculties of souls that Ottomans believed animals and humans possessed.

2.5 Horse Training, Behavior, and Character

How were animal training and animal-rider relations envisioned within this framework? The moral language *The Gift* uses to describe horse training implies that the manuscript moralizes horse behavior: there were horses that behaved according to norms, and against these norms. Those horses that acted against these norms were usually untrained and they had to go through guided *riyāẓet* (ascetic discipline) to learn to conform. *The Gift* explains several approaches to undertake a horse's training. These approaches could derive from a horse's breed, implying behavioral and physical qualities, or their *nefs*. The training that focused on communicative aspects in horse training and not physical training, foresaw the different individual characteristics of the horse in question. The path to good behavior and social skills differed from horse

to horse. Furthermore, as I will argue, it resulted in different outcomes for different horses.

The first distinction that the manuscript makes with regards to horse training is between bodily and spiritual training. In contemporary terminology, this would refer to physical and behavioral training. The bodily training was referred to as *ızmār/azmār etmek* (to prepare a horse). As this term is Arabic, the text introduces two Turkish verbs, *terbiye etmek* (to teach manners) and *yaraklamak* (to weaponize), to explain it to its reader(s), who did not know Arabic.¹³⁰ The spiritual training, as I briefly discussed earlier, is *riyāzet*.

The term bodily training here does not just refer to developing physical fitness. It implies a holistic approach to a horse's well-being, fitness, and endurance. As such, the subchapter, apart from physical training activities, also explains raising dietary measures, picking comfortable spots for horses to rest when outside, the necessity of not shutting horses in stables, and the need to take animals on walks to get air. Some of the activities described are designed to push a horse's limits: from endurance training to pain de-sensitization to allow whip use.¹³¹ Yet, the author/translator of the book devoted much of this subchapter to underline horse welfare. The author/translator writes: "To weaponize the horse and to teach the horse good manners, one needs to know how much a horse can endure."¹³² This implies that their understanding was that the horse must be well-taken care of while they go through these hard exercises. Understanding the nature of individual horses was thought to be essential.

There are two subchapters on *riyāzet* (*ascetic discipline*) for horses. The first one is a general and brief introduction to the practice, while the second details specifically this process for noble horses (*asil atlar*).¹³³ As mentioned the process basically aims to better or reform (*ıslāh*) the horse's *nefs* or soul/character. The end result is to produce

¹³⁰ Giving Turkish translations of Arabic words is a common feature of The Gift. This practice probably has in mind readers like Sultan Ahmed who did not know Arabic well. Topkapı, H145, 67a-75a. 67a: "bu bāb ızmārı ya 'nı gāzā için veyāhūd yaraşdurmak için atları terbiye etmek ve yaraklamağı beyān eder."

¹³¹ For pain see: Topkapı, H145, 72a-72b. For endurance see: H145, 69a.

¹³² Topkapı, H145, 67b: "...atun yaraklanması ve terbiye olunması miktārın ve her at nekadar tahammül eder bilmege muhtācdur."

¹³³ Topkapı, H145, 75b-76a; 76a-83b.

a horse that is sociable with humans, i.e. responding to human social cues given by humans. The chapter details how to get horses to wear equipment such as bits and bridles, and how to get horses comfortable with interacting with humans through horse equipment and understand and follow through human demands. It also deals with familiarizing horses with other animals, which they would encounter on the road, and with obstacles such as crossing rivers. By practicing guided *riyāzet* or ascetic discipline, horses had their *nefs* “prepared;” thereby learning “to obey” humans and displaying ‘good behavior’.

This brief description appears to portray the human-horse interaction as very much hierarchical. In fact, the manuscript uses terms such as obeying (*itā‘at etmek*) to describe the interaction.¹³⁴ At the same time, however, to get horses to obey commands to the book recommends gentleness (*rıfk*) and kindness (*mülāyemet*). Otherwise, *The Gift*, points out that the horses would rebel (*‘isyān etmek*) and the will have no control over the horse (*ata kâdir olmak*).¹³⁵ *The Gift* also recommends riders to be very careful about the way they act with, around, and on horses: “Equines feel the most trifling movement of the rider, even his repose. They almost know what is in a rider’s soul.”¹³⁶ According to *The Gift*, the rider must not only listen to his horse but police his own behavior as well. In other words, the interaction, as represented in *The Gift*, was a two-way exchange and horses appear as respected partners. To be able to act as “sultans” of horses, humans needed to listen to horses, and to be mindful of their behavior, as well as to be patient and kind. Horses had a say in the exchange because humans knew that if they did not approach horses in the right way, the horses would simply not listen. This was both true for riders and animal trainers.

Listening to horses also implied that there was not a single path to good behavior. As individual horses, like humans, could have had different sorts of *nefs*, their path into normative behavior had to differ. Intelligent (*zekî*), saintly (*‘aziz*), stern (*yavuz*)

¹³⁴ The word obey is often used, see for example: Topkapı, H145, 77b. Here it says: “...pes feres aña müstakim olmaz ve itā‘at etmez.”

¹³⁵ Topkapı, H145, 75a.

¹³⁶ Topkapı, H145, 86a.

are adjectives that are used to describe horse souls.¹³⁷ The positively charged adjectives imply that the hypothetical horses in question were thought to be very susceptible to *riyazet* and could easily be “prepared.” The subchapter on general horse training recommends that horses with such good qualities ought to be picked for training.¹³⁸ More importantly, *The Gift* introduces two further subchapters on explaining how to train and deal with horses that possess unfavorable or difficult qualities.

One subchapter deals entirely with the description of an unfavorable quality, and training suggestions for intractable horses (*harūn at*).¹³⁹ The roots of this quality did not always come from the nature of a horse’s *nefs*. In as much as *riyazet* “prepared” the *nefs* of horses, lived experience could also prepare or unwind souls. Describing the reasons why some horses are perceived as intractable (*harūn*) *The Gift* explains that, for example, bad treatment and violent behavior from humans could make horses not listen to and resist human demands. *The Gift* also mentions that if horses that spend too much time in stables, they could refuse to leave the stables and to be ridden. *Nefs* that a horse was born with could also be the root of the problem: if the horse in question had a stern soul (*nefs-i yavuz*), he or she would refuse to conform to human demands. The subchapter contains some suggestions on how to mitigate these problems but warns that the efforts may be futile.

This understanding displays a sophisticated understanding of horse behavior: *The Gift* accounts for both nature and nurture in explaining why horses act in the way they do. *Nefs* usually implied qualities that a horse is born with: in one sense a horse’s *nefs* represents mostly god-given qualities, which can be improved by humans through *riyazet*.¹⁴⁰ Breeds were also a defining character of a horse’s soul.¹⁴¹ Apart from qualities that a horse is born with, the social and physical environment of a horse,

¹³⁷ Topkapı, H145, 23a; 84a; 86a.

¹³⁸ Topkapı, H145, 75a.

¹³⁹ Topkapı, H145, 83b-84b.

¹⁴⁰ Topkapı H145, 75a: “ve kaçankim at katı başlu olub fārise öngüllük etse veyā segirtmesi nākıs olsa veyā harūn olsa pes anı te’ dīb etmege kādır olmaz zirā anuñ hilkatidür allāhü te’ ālā anı anuñ üzre halk etmişdür ve allāhü te’ ālānuñ halkını tağyir etmege kimesne kādır olmaz.”

¹⁴¹ Topkapı 145, 83b: “atlardan ba’ zı at vardır ki kaçankim üzerine bineler veyā kolan çekeler yürimez turur pes cāhil tevehhüm eder ki bu at harūndur velākin eyle degildür ve horāsāni atlar ekş’ er böyle ederler.”

The Gift argues, also affect and alter a horse's behavior. Just as *riyazet*, lived experiences that the environment brought could shape a horse's *nefs*, which had a degree of plasticity. Nevertheless, the plasticity of a horse's soul was not infinite. The text explicitly states that some intractable horses cannot be reformed (*ıslāh*).¹⁴² According to *The Gift*, it was not either nature or nurture that shaped a horse's behavior: it was both.

References to nurture in *The Gift* does not only consist of horses with behavioral 'problems.' In a passage on riding work-horses located in the animal training subchapters of *The Gift*, the author/translator writes that if the rider does not like the skill (*san'at*) and deeds/behavior (*'amel*) of a horse, *The Gift* recommends that he should try to 'get to know the horse' so that the rider is able to 'meet the horse where s/he is.'¹⁴³ The text goes on to explain that there are innumerable ways to train a horse, and so a horse's art or skill and deeds may vary from horse to horse. If the rider does not 'meet the horse where s/he is,' the rider could cause the horse to act improperly (*balt etmek*). Riding a horse required knowing the horse.

Relating this passage to the those discussed above, it can be observed that animal individuality, deriving from a horse's natural dispositions and their upbringing or lived experience, was a matter of concern for both the author/translator/patrons and, potentially, the riders that *The Gift* was trying to educate. The relationship between a horse and a rider was seen as a dynamic connection that was built through mediation between the rider and the horse. Thus, *The Gift* advises its readers to listen to horse "voices" so that they could ride in the best way possible.

The Gift also recognizes that horses with particular kinds of characters would be better suited for certain tasks than others. Horses that *The Gift* describes as mettlesome/belligerent horses (*münāzi'at*) were to be used in head to head fighting (*başabaş döğüşmek*).¹⁴⁴ In as much as described in the *The Gift*, horses with such behavioral characteristics also had excellent physical capabilities, presumably due to

¹⁴² Topkapı H145, 75a.

¹⁴³ H145, 87a. "kaçankim sen bār-gire binesin ve anuñ san'atı ve 'ameli saña hōş gelmeşe pes anuñ kıtında ne vardur şiddet ile ara...anı anda idrāk edesin velâkin üzerine gūzet edüb halt etmekine sebep olmayasın"

¹⁴⁴ Topkapı H145, 84b-85b.

the characteristics of their souls. The reverse character type, the author/translator explain would be a calm (*sākin*) horse. Calm horses were best used for parades and saluting the common people, traveling, or going about in town. Due to the difficulty in laboring mettlesome/belligerent horses, the manuscript contains detailed information on how to actually ride these horses. Unfortunately, there are no further character types mentioned in the manuscript. *The Gift* does not aim to be an encyclopedia of horse behavioral types, and mettlesome/belligerent horses are only included in the manuscript these horses demanded a wholly different social-skills from humans to work with them. Nevertheless, it might have been that the idea of horse individuality was very much engrained in the early modern Ottoman mental world.

Despite the fact that *The Gift* portrays horses as individuals and, observably, there is an intricate cosmology running through *The Gift* and enfolds horse behavior, the training of a horse ultimately had only one fundamental goal. This was to make horses responsive to human social cues. Humans did have to learn to listen to horses and get to know them. Yet, during training, horses either conformed to normative behavior, or they did not and, as a result, were labeled as misfits. There were other words in the Ottoman world than harun or intractable horse. For example, probate records from the early sixteenth-century use the term hergele to describe horses, donkeys, and mules who did not conform.¹⁴⁵ Such animals ended up receiving much lower monetary valuations on the market.

For horses that did conform, there might have been a spectrum of characteristics from being calm (*sākin*) to being mettlesome/belligerent (*münāzi*). The process of “preparing” the *nefs* of horses resulted in different outcomes for different horses. *Riyazet* did not aim for uniformity. This is exactly why *The Gift* insists that riders must listen to their horses.

¹⁴⁵ S. Doğan Karakelle, “‘Property With Voice:’ Horses, Mules, Donkeys, and Humans in Probate Records from Seventeenth-Century Üsküdar, Istanbul,” (BA Thesis: Bilgi University, 2019.)

2.6 Human-Horse Communication, Horse Training, and Riding

The communication that took place between a horse and a human took various shapes. First, there were animal trainers. Trainers selected which horses had good communication skills with humans, and they “taught horses manners/etiquette” (*edeb ta’lim etmek*).¹⁴⁶ The level of care and attention that trainers in charge of teaching horses how to communicate with humans, provided to horses must have exceeded any other. The text explains that the essence of *riyazet* is to be gentle (*rıfk*) and kind (*mülāyemet*) to the horse, and that dissemblance (*müdārā*) is required.¹⁴⁷ The use of the word dissemblance implies here that the author/translator thought that teaching horses how to behave could get difficult or even annoying at times. Yet, the trainer always had to be kind and gentle.

It is crucial to highlight the fact that the term *edeb/adab* is also used in relation to humans, and also used in relation to the literature on books on horses and rulership. As discussed in the last chapter, it means the set of social codes and professional skills demanded by any position, and typically used in relation to the manners expected from an Ottoman ruling elite. In this sense, both the sultan, members of the *askeri* (military) class needed to learn *adab*. Horses had to learn *adab* and it was the trainers who taught them.

Although with horses, riders had a completely different experience than trainers. Especially the horses that sultans rode must have been horses that excelled in all qualities. Perhaps not much patience and dissemblance required as they probably usually behaved very well. As pointed out earlier, these qualities made horses more expensive. If humans knew how to interact with horses with the correct “etiquette,” it was inevitable that such horses would comply with most things their riders asked them to do. Although it is also likely that sultans also rode mettlesome/belligerent horses, who demanded an extra level of attention and care, especially when hunting. On the other hand, a sultan’s experience with horses would have been very different

¹⁴⁶ It is curious that the term *edeb/adab* is also used in relation to humans. The Gift was also considered to be a part of this etiquette/manners literature, detailing what an educated person should know, both manners and professional knowledge. For more on *adab* literature in an Ottoman context see: Marinos Sariyannis, Ekin Tuşalp Atiyas, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Early Nineteenth Century*, (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

¹⁴⁷ Topkapı H145, 75a. “imdi şöyle ma’lûm ola ki at riyâzetinüñ ve tedbirinüñ aslı rıfk ve mülāyemetdür”

compared to a low-ranking member of the ruling elite. Not be able to afford a horse with great “etiquette,” they would have rougher experience.

Although, as discussed, *The Gift* also recommends each rider to “meet the horse where s/he is.” This is to say that each horse, regardless of the quality of their manners, demanded individual attention, and humans needed to be acutely aware of how their horse was behaving. An adult horse can kill a human and they would not co-operate if they are alarmed. Knowing how to interact and communicate with horses was essential and especially important given that there was also a lethal danger. This was one reason *The Gift* recommends that even riders needed to understand horses very well. Furthermore, as discussed, Ottomans thought that *nefs* had a degree of plasticity. In this view, particular events or unforeseen obstacles could cause the horse to start to act abnormally. The rider would have needed to know how to reach the horse in these situations.

Within the mental world of *The Gift*, human-horse communication had different shapes in different contexts depending on a number of variables. To be able to reach a horse both trainers and riders ought to have watched for two sorts of markers in general. The first sort of these included physiological markers such as the pace of a horse’s breathing, as well as behavioral markers such as rearing and raising “voices.”¹⁴⁸ These sorts of markers would have told the trainers or riders the emotions of a horse and their intentions. Such markers indicated how the horse was reacting to the training, and the world-at-large. Generally, a horse’s deeds/behavior (*‘amel*) or habits (*hūy*) would be deduced from the repetition and summation of such markers, and the trainers would respond to these markers if they signaled problems. A horse’s *nefs* was the totality of its behavior, and it was some of these markers that allowed them to understand the soul.

Before looking at a set of behavioral and physiological markers in detail, let us have look at the second sort of the markers that trainers and riders looked for in a horse. These are signs of bodily harm. *The Gift* makes it explicit that bodily harm is

¹⁴⁸ For example see: Topkapı H145, 82b-83a.

completely unacceptable. Author/translator succinctly puts it: “There is no greater shame than making a horse bleed.”¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, references to bodily harm and bleeding appear frequently in the ridership chapter than the horse training chapters of the veterinary manual chapter. This may indicate that bodily harm happened much more frequently when riding a horse, rather than during a horse’s training. It might have been that riders tended to not listened to their horses as much as trainers did, hence the injuries. Moreover, the animal training chapters also contain frequent stories about how it is futile to try to teach a horse using violence.¹⁵⁰ The fact that the author/translator is taking a position against such practices is indicative of the presence of such approaches in the early modern Ottoman world. The sort of bodily harm occurring when riding or training an animal that *The Gift* points out is categorically different. This sort of harm emerges from not observing and listening to a horse and pushing the horse too far.

Let us go back to behavioral and physiological markers. To give an example, one passage in the animal training chapters relates emotions with physiological and behavioral markers.¹⁵¹ The two emotions are fear (*korku*) and hate (*nefret*). Hate comes in relation to fear as in “hating fear,” which basically refers to fear avoidance. The passage lists almost a dozen causes, such seeing as camels or specific objects, crossing water or crowds. Horses, according to the text, displayed a variety of markers for “hating fear” and “fear.” These include “staring at the sky,” “digging the ground with their hoofs,” “rapid breathing,” rearing, “deficiency in galloping,” or raising their voices.¹⁵² The verbs that the text uses to describe these ‘neighs’ are to shriek (*sayha etmek*) and to cry out (*haykırmak*).¹⁵³ Both of these Ottoman-Turkish verbs apply to humans as well.

Not all of these markers are communicative. While, for example, vocal expressions are communicative utterances, markers such as rapid breathing and problems in galloping are physiological results of emotional states. In this sense, apart from

¹⁴⁹ Topkapı H145, 133b.

¹⁵⁰ Topkapı H145, 84b; 83a.

¹⁵¹ Topkapı H145, 82a-83b.

¹⁵² Topkapı H145, 82a-83a.

¹⁵³ Topkapı H145, 83a.

listening to horse communicative behavior, *The Gift* also recommends rider and trainers to observe horses and to understand what horses were feeling as well as intending to do. As discussed before, the author/translator also acknowledges that horses also made such observations by saying that “equines feel the most trifling movement of the rider.” According to *The Gift*, both parties were actively involved in understanding each other even when not communicating.

The text offers a ‘tough-love’ approach for fearful behavior. The authors/translator firstly advises that “the whip should be used, albeit kindly” on the horse to prevent fear avoidance and shying away (*ürkmek*).¹⁵⁴ And the next step is simply be exposing the horse to the thing that it fears, which, according to the author/translator, eliminated the problem. For the fear/hate of camels, the text recommends that the horses to be tied closely with a camel and that some food to be provided for them. Once the horse gets familiarized with the camel, the author/translator writes, the hate will pass away.¹⁵⁵

One pattern of interaction described above is as follows:

- 1) A human demands a horse to cross a river
- 2) The horse utters a vocalization indicating refusal or even fear
- 3) The human nudges the horse to cross the river
- 4) Horse crosses the river

The process lays bare a fundamental pattern in human-horse interaction. The hypothetical horse and human signal each other, convey intent through a common language that both need to pick up through training or experience. To take joint action, the horse and the human needed to communicate and continuously observe each other. In this account, horses appear as though they use social cues to signal their intentions to humans. Humans, learning to pick up such cues, respond to them, again, with certain signals, which the horse interpret.

¹⁵⁴ Topkapı H145, 83a: “pes nefret etmekden anı men’ eyle gögsi üzre kamçıyı rıfk ile salmak gibi tā kim nefreti ve ürkmesi zā’il ola ve illā pes müşkil olur ve anı urmayasın illā ürkdügi şey’i gördükden sonra turmasından ötüri ve turmak vakt olur ki atıñ habāş’etinden olur”

¹⁵⁵ Interspecies socialization, it seems, was a part of horse training.

The Gift takes it granted that its readers already know the necessity of human-horse communication. It does have a chapter on horse voices, and it also explains horse physiological and biological markers, as well as markers of bodily harm. However, it does not contain a basic explanation of how a horse and a human ought to interact. After all, the manuscript was meant to address advanced readers such as Sultan Ahmed. Instead of a basic introduction to human-horse communication, the readers are explained correct “manners” when the necessity arises, and when discussing horse training. In other words, parts of the animal training subchapters or the ridership chapter contain detailed descriptions of how to interpret horse behavior and utterances and how to respond. It is through this indirect manner that the manuscript portrays how human-horse interactions and communication ought to take place.

Moreover, *The Gift* does not explicitly provide a cosmology and does not explain how this is different from human nature. It was meant to be a book of practical knowledge: it seeks to guide its readers into better practice in horse riding. However, as I have shown, the knowledge it provides is ordered. To understand the underlying cosmology within which horses and humans interacted, it was necessary to dig through the manuscript and see how certain key terms are related. This suggests that *The Gift's* potential readers, including Ahmed, was already familiar with at least the basics of this paradigm of this cosmology. Otherwise, seeing the words *nefs* or *riyazet* in relation to horses would not have made much sense to the readers.

After all, *The Gift* introduces further finer points such as basic differences between faculties of the soul. It explains that human souls have the faculty of speech/rationality, which animal souls lack. According to *The Gift*, the animal soul do contain a capacity for emotions, intentional action, and basic communicative skills. It was thought that what animals lacked was rational articulation. This created an impossibility for humans to “treat animals as individuals.” Nevertheless, through shared animal faculty of the soul, humans, and animals had a capacity to interact, communicate, and cooperate. In this sense, the practical suggestions outlined in the chapters on how to train animal souls and parts of the ridership chapter, provide what

sort of faculties animal souls was thought to have. Through familiarizing with aspects of human-animal communication *The Gift* aims to provide its readers and Ahmed with better skills horse riding or human-horse cooperation.

2.7 *Human-Horse Communication, Rulership, and Empire*

Without studying other veterinary manuals and/or ridership books it is not possible to determine whether the ideas put forth in *The Gift* were widespread. Yet, as I have discussed in detail in chapter one, this manuscript was primarily prepared for Sultan Ahmed's education. If the aim was to pass on the elite equestrian culture of the empire to a new generation, the knowledge that *The Gift* presents must have had some general-acceptance. If it had some general acceptance, then it has to be that some of the Ottoman ruling elite of this period, thought that they had meaningful exchanges with horses, and possibly other animals. Furthermore, because this topic was important enough to be discussed in *The Gift*, it is necessary to ask why it mattered to begin with.

The answer is rather straight-forward. As discussed briefly in chapter one, sultans of the early modern era were not only expected to ride horses but also the act of riding horses was symbolically charged. Royal processions, for example, were one of the ways in which a sultan's sovereignty and imperial grandeur and hierarchy were represented, and the sultan appeared as a centaur to carry the symbolic weight of his sovereignty and empire. The idea of rulership and horse-riding were wedded together. Given that sultans also had to participate in other activities that were symbolically charged such as hunting, good skills in horse riding were thought to be necessary. In as much as *The Gift* portrays it, good horse riding skills implies, being able to understand horses and communicate with them.

Moreover, the empire itself relied on animal labor. As discussed in chapter one, *The Gift* to recognizes this important. Therefore, another aim in providing the sultan with a surfeit of knowledge on horses and ridership is to teach him that the necessity of grand-institutions such as the Royal Stables (*Istabl-ı Amire*), and of commissioning works on veterinary science and ridership, and also of having lots of humans and

animals that can understand each other and communicate.¹⁵⁶ In as much as having well-bred and healthy horses mattered, having soldiers, messengers, bureaucrats, and horse-trainers who could socialize with animals mattered. Ahmed, his circle thought, needed to have an understanding of how this imperial machinery functioned: this is also why *The Gift* is a hybrid manual: it is both a book of counsel and a veterinary and ridership manual. Both horses and humans to learn *adab* (*manners, etiquette, professional skills*) and communicate with each other for the empire to function, including sultans.

2.8 Horse Agency and Social Knowledge

Thus far this chapter mainly studies how *they* thought about horses and how *they* interacted with horses within their cosmology. In other words, if *they* did not ascribe agency to horses, this method cannot produce an argument regarding animal agency. On the other hand, *The Gift* conceives horses and other animals as complex creatures with intentions and voices. It is, then, important to ask what animal voices amounted to the Ottoman courtly elite. Furthermore, going beyond cultural history, it is also crucial to ask how this knowledge was produced and whether horse voices had a part in its making.

My research has not uncovered a word in Ottoman for agency used in relation to animals. As a body of knowledge, *The Gift* also depicts humans to have more complex souls than animals: humans are imagined as rational creatures who could articulate thoughts and improve their souls by using these capacities that their souls had. While animal souls were thought to have emotions, intentions, and voices, animals could not improve their souls by themselves. They needed human guidance. Humans have the guiding hand in preparing the horse soul. They correct behavior and teach “manners” to lowlier creatures. In this vein, *The Gift* also announces that humans are “the sultans” of animals. Humans ruled over them. This is to say that it is not very plausible that early modern Ottomans would explain their reliance on animals by attributing agency to them. Animals might have been very important to them, but it

¹⁵⁶ On the royal stables see: İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1984): 488-512.

is very probable that they believed the full credit of horse action belonged to humans. Although, further research is necessary to determine whether this hypothesis is true.

Accordingly, *The Gift* cites human from different geographical origins and not other animals, as one of the sources of knowledge presented in the manuscript. Nevertheless, sections of *The Gift* that are discussed in this chapter presents what might be called *social knowledge*, i.e. knowledge that emerges from the connection and the interaction of different actors.¹⁵⁷ This knowledge was articulated and formalized by humans. However, it must have developed through human-animal interactions, that is by horses responding to human intentional communicative signals and vice-versa.

To know that a horse, in their term, is afraid of x, scholars and trainers must have had observed horses and listened to their voices. Without scientific methodology, to understand how this could be overcome, then, humans must have proceeded with trials, errors, and certain conclusions on a best-procedure. The success or failure of every trial must have been depended on horse reactions. If there was not a positive change in a horse's behavioral or physiological markers, or if there was no peer agreement, there could be no positive result derived from a trial. A countless number of instances such as these, and human to human discussions of these, could, in time, have produced cosmologies.

In this sense, there is a “general symmetry” between human and animal actors in the making of knowledge on animals.¹⁵⁸ Particularly the term social knowledge is apt to describe the relevant chapters of *The Gift*, and perhaps, more generally, premodern and early modern animal training manuals, as these would have been produced by social epistemologies.

To use Robert Merton's terms, human social actions towards animals bring about “unanticipated consequences:” despite human beliefs of superiority and domination,

¹⁵⁷ See: For a basic definition and description of social knowledge, and its differences from personal knowledge see: Keith Lehrer, “Personal and Social Knowledge,” *Synthese* 73, no. 1 (1987): 87–107. For more on how social knowledge is produced see: Alvin Goldman and Cailin O'Connor, “Social Epistemology,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2019 (Stanford University, 2019). For social knowledge produced by non-human primates: Kristin Andrews, “Animal Cognition,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2016 (Stanford University, 2016).

¹⁵⁸ Michel Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay,” *The Sociological Review* 32 (May 1, 1984): 196–233.

the interaction between animals and humans, and human dependency on animal labor brings about agency that is shared between different actors.¹⁵⁹ Without learning about animals either from animals or a book, verbal instruction, which, in turn, would have been produced through human-animal interactions, Ottomans could not have forged and maintained an empire. Social knowledge produced by human-animal communities and animal-human assembled agencies, i.e. soldiers or sultans as centaurs, allowed the Ottoman Empire to exist.¹⁶⁰ Horses, of course, held a special place in the minds of the Ottoman ruling elite, but it was not just horses that allowed the existence of the empire. There were a number of different animals that helped including donkeys, mules, camels, oxen, and the ways in which other animals communicated with and affected the Ottoman world remain to be explored.

¹⁵⁹ Robert K. Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action," *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 6 (1936): 894-904.

¹⁶⁰ For assemble agencies see my introduction p. 10-11. See also: Philip Howell, "Animals, Agency, and History," in *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*, eds. Philip Howell and Hilda Kean (London; New York: Routledge, 2018): 207-209.

Conclusion

In the first chapter, I have argued that the manuscript is both a product and an object functioning in a complex network that included a sultan, members of his court and horses. It was not just a book that was produced under the patronage of Sultan Ahmed I, but a work that was prepared *for* him to learn about horses, horse riding, and rulership. *The Gift* was one of the ways how the equestrian culture of the empire was passed down to a new generation. The manuscript and the knowledge it contains was produced by a chain of actors from horses, authors/translators of the manuscript, and Ahmed's close circle. This chain, destabilizing the language of rule, co-operated with the young Sultan for the continuation of the Ottoman dynasty and Empire. The sultan ought to have learned the proper manners or professional skills (*adab*) to be a good ruler. This included knowledge on horses, ridership and hunting.

Horse-riding was a symbolically charge activity, as it was understood to be critical in the workings of the imperial machinery. Thus, *The Gift* provided Ahmed to further his knowledge on horses, veterinary science, ridership, and hunting, which were key topics in rulership and empire. One of the topics that Ahmed learned about through this book, and presumably through other channels, was human-horse interactions and communication. Horses were perceived as social animals and horse riding was seen as a communicative activity, that included listening to utterances and observing horse behavior, and making demands within proper etiquette. As a sultan, apart from socializing with horses to represent his sovereignty and imperial grandeur, Ahmed also needed to be aware of the necessity of breeding and training, among other animals, horses, as well as humans who could socialize with them. In as much as *The Gift* and other sources show, one of the things that the the imperial governance rested on was human-horse sociality.

In as much as *The Gift* represents it, human-horse interactions were taking place within an intricate cosmology that indubitably had its roots in mediaeval Islamic philosophy and Aristotle. Partitioning the soul into faculties, vegetative, animal, and rationality/speech, this mental world imagined animals to have the first two faculties, whereas humans had all three. Animals, capable of emotions and intentions, could

express the contents of their souls. However, they were taken to be incapable of developing their souls due to the lack of the faculty of rational/speech. Humans, due to their superiority, could “prepare” or train themselves, as well as horse souls and guide them into good behavior. Horse training, described as a form of ascetic discipline. The horse soul had a degree of plasticity: both the social and physical environment and human interventions could change a horse for good or for worse. At the same time, it was thought that their plasticity was not infinite: some horse souls could never be ‘salvaged.’

Human-horse relations was considered to be social. The process of training and riding a horse implied listening to and observing physiological and behavioral markers, and making demands through communicative signals. Horse behavioral markers included communicative utterances and behaviors such as “horse voices,” which, among other markers, allowed humans to peer inside a horse’s soul. It was thought that only by understanding a horse’s emotions and intentions could a trainer or a rider could demand that horses to do things. Furthermore, *The Gift* itself uses terms such as manners or etiquette (*edeb/adab*) to refer to a set of behavioral skills expected from horses. Just as the sultan, horses ought have learned social codes and professional skills that to fulfill the roles expected of them.

While *The Gift* and humans of Sultan Ahmed’s court thought human-horse relations to be social, it appears to be the case that they did not ascribe agency to horses. Though *The Gift* recognizes that horses were required to build and govern empires, it highlights horse bodies as a necessity and not their “souls” or minds. *The Gift* portrays the human-horse relations as hierarchical and it was humans who trained horses, not the other way around. However, the capacity of intentional communication, which current literature on animal cognition and *The Gift* ascribes to some animals, introduces an “unanticipated consequence of purposive social actions.” If human-horse relationships are social, and the knowledge that *The Gift* on horse training and riding presents must be defined as social knowledge. The knowledge must have been produced through human-horse interactions, with horses respond negatively or positively to human riding and training efforts. Social

knowledge is knowledge produced by the connections and interactions that actors have. There was, as Michel Callon put it, general symmetry between the humans and horses working together to produce a common language. In this way, human-horse communication and human-horse assembled agencies becomes one of the aspects that Ottoman imperial governance rested on. This brings up the question that whether we could potentially define empires or other sorts of states that employed non-human animals could potentially be defined not only as a community of humans, but also a community of humans and other animals.

Although human-animal communication has been a subject of recent scholarship, the relationship between this human-horse communication and larger structural context had not been explored. Although research existed that linked animal bodies to larger structural contexts such as empires, animal minds were not factored in. This thesis shows that animal minds could have a indispensable impact on human societies. This study could only make a case for horses and the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire, how other animals who were labored in other parts of the world or in different periods communicated with humans and shaped history remains to be explored.

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