

<https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/RAA.2023.21.5>

RECREATIONAL HUNTING: WHY? AN ETHNOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL CASE STUDY FROM NORTHERN CYPRUS

CAZA RECREATIVA, ¿POR QUÉ? UN ESTUDIO DE CASO ETNOGRÁFICO E HISTÓRICO DEL NORTE DE CHIPRE

Khalil Avi Betz-Heinemann
Queen Mary University of London

ABSTRACT

In this paper I answer the question of why people, particularly men, hunt recreationally. I combine ethnography and archival research to explore the personal motivations of contemporary recreational hunters in Northern Cyprus. I then go on to examine histories of recreational hunting by different colonisers of Cyprus. In both past and present cases, my analysis reveals that recreational hunting is a personal practice in being free in the context of everyday life in a coercive civilisation. In addition, recreational hunting is recognised as being entangled with gains in political rights in the wake of the Enlightenment and its extension to newly free citizens, men in particular. Furthermore, the history of recreational hunting situates it as spatially juxtaposed against the fixed settlements of coercive civilization, echoing protected areas today. I conclude that male citizens hunt recreationally seeking a passing taste of elitist ways of being free, as it is a demonstration of the limited sovereignty over one's life that being a legal citizen offers.

Keywords: Hunting Studies; Recreational Hunting; Colonialism; Social Class; Enlightenment; Northern Cyprus.

RESUMEN

En este artículo respondo a la pregunta de por qué la gente, en especial los hombres, cazan de forma recreativa. Combino estudios etnográficos y de archivo para explorar las motivaciones personales de los actuales cazadores recreativos en el Norte de Chipre. Continúo con el examen de historias de caza recreativa de diferentes colonizadores de Chipre. En casos pasados y presentes, mi análisis revela que la caza recreativa es una práctica personal que busca la libertad en el contexto de una vida cotidiana enmarcada dentro de una civilización coactiva. Además, se reconoce que la caza recreativa está vinculada con la adquisición de derechos políticos en el periodo de la Ilustración y la extensión de estos a los nuevos ciudadanos libres, particularmente hombres. Con todo, la historia de la caza recreativa la sitúa espacialmente yuxtapuesta a las estructuras fijas de una civilización coactiva, lo que se ve reflejado en las áreas protegidas a día de hoy. Concluyo que la ciudadanía masculina caza de forma recreativa en pos de obtener un breve regusto de la libertad de la que gozan las clases elitistas, lo que demuestra la limitada soberanía que ofrece la condición de ser un ciudadano legal.

Palabras clave: Estudios sobre la caza; Casa recreativa; Colonialismo; Clases sociales; Ilustración; Norte de Chipre.

INTRODUCTION



Image 1. “The air was Elysian with early summer”¹. Source: Author

1. Caption from Siegfried Sassoon’s 1928 “Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man” (2013).

This paper is part of a special issue on recreational hunting. It draws on anthropological fieldwork and archival research on legal recreational hunting in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Approximately 12% of TRNC citizens identify as hunters (Avfed, 2011)². Recreational hunting takes place on foot with shotguns, mainly targeting Chukar partridge (*Alectoris chukar*), Cypriot hare (*Lepus cyprianus*) and Song thrush (*Turdus turdus*). A hunting trip usually involves a small band of men and, depending on the season and quarry, hunting dogs. Legally recreational hunting in the TRNC requires citizenship, an annual license, desk-based training in the relevant laws and a multiple-choice summative assessment.

A set of personal motivations were given by the hunting citizens I spent time with, as to why they personally hunted. In this paper I first present an ethnography of me asking these citizens “why do you hunt?” I conclude that the personal motivations given demonstrate that legal hunting for my informants was a practice of being free in the plains and mountains *because* it was a break from their “normal” lives. Normal meaning their role in the hierarchy of prescriptive and often coercive relations structuring the non-recreational part of their personal lives. Second, I present archival research on the historical antecedents of these personal motivations. I conclude that the recreational hunting conducted by the royal and aristocratic elites that colonised Cyprus was also a personal practice in being free *because* it was also a break from the trials and tribulations of the coercive civilisations they ruled.

I conclude that these elite practices of being free were not overturned in the wake of the Enlightenment, subsequent transitions to political democracy and the emergence of citizens. Instead I argue that these transitions to democracy extended these practices to non-elites, by contrast to a revolutionary abolishment of them. Where men first benefitted from the legal extension of these practices of being free. This included recreational hunting, the right to vote and the right to own one’s body. In sum, elites ruling coercive civilizations experienced a certain freedom in recreational hunting which was withheld from non-elites. Then through political democratisation this freedom was legally extended to non-elites who they ruled over.

Therefore, political democratisation with regards to legal recreational hunting was not a break with the past of coercive civilization, but simply the continuity of a certain idea and experience of being free, albeit non-elite men also now got to experience it during legally allocated times. Through the lens of recreational hunting then, the freedoms that emerged through democratisation in the European region are not innovative, but extensions of royal and aristocratic notions of being free. The notion being that life for non-elites involves living in a hierarchy of prescriptive and coercive relations, but that is okay because you can get an occasional break.

2. This is not the same as how many inhabitants legally go hunting every year or every season.

1. METHODS

Participant observation (Bernard, 2011: 256-290) over 3 years of hunting seasons (2014-16) enabled data collection on the practices of hunting. Handwritten notes, photos, and video clips were taken to document the conversations and activities that constituted hunting. Participant observation was also conducted at the offices of the TRNC Hunting Federation during daily work activities, including management activities, attending hunting club meetings and social occasions, again using documentation of practices and conversations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with informants and “life histories” (Angrosino, 2007: 33-44) were obtained to respectively follow up on questions that had arisen during participant observation and to contextualize observations. Potential informants were identified through snowball sampling. From these, 37 participants were selected from a variety of locations and a range of socioeconomic statuses and ages using purposive sampling. These included people from across the five administrative regions of Northern Cyprus: farmers, factory workers, pensioners, estate-agents, lawyers, students, care workers, advertising executives, retailers, politicians, and waste collectors, ages 18-74 (average 48); 36 men and 1 woman, reflecting the national composition of the hunting community.



Image 2. Source: Johan Duchateau

An archival review of the TRNC Hunting Federation's records was also conducted, as well those of the Interior Ministry and the National Archives to gather quantitative data on licensing, legal developments, landuse maps, and various administrative documents. Secondary data collected for a survey on the motivations of hunters, conducted by the TRNC Hunting Federation, was gathered. Follow-up semi-structured interviews were then carried out with those who had conducted this survey, to evaluate the methods that had been used. In addition, a survey of 112 new hunters was conducted by me at an annual hunting exam. Semi-structured interviews were then used with survey respondents to contextualize the survey's responses. Prior informed consent was requested and received from all participants included in this study and for the sake of anonymity all names of informants used here are pseudonyms. In addition informants received a presentation of research results in Turkish, a written summary in English and professional photo prints of themselves taken during hunting (See Image 2).

2. PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS IN RECREATIONAL HUNTING

Edited Notes from Author's Field Diary

Today will be the day. Today we will get a hare. We drunk our coffees, smoked our cigarettes. We chose our hunting ground. We disembarked from our vehicles. The suns early arms highlighting the dewy ground. The soil was damp, earthy. The smell, good. The damp night had cleared the air. The dogs would pick up a clear scent, quivering but focused. It had been a long season but with no hare as of yet.

Five in all, we fanned out and dove into the land. A terrain of thick bracken pulling at us. Dogs with noses to ground, slipped in and out. Everyone calm, alert, dedicated. Today, my eyes were peeled, my senses clear. I scanned every nook and cranny, searched for signs of the illusive hare. Grasping a rock here and there, throwing them into bushes. Emitting brusque vocalisations. Trying to break their nerve. A comb of five human teeth and three canine appendages, sliding through the bushy terrain. A rhythmic pace. Not blistering but unforgiving.

It had been two hours. We were now scrambling at different heights through semi-wooded terrain, on the side of a tabletop mountain. The closest hunter stopped. He pointed out a hare's bed to me. Ten paces or more and another and another. There had been hare here. But they were not fresh. Might still be in the area, might not. We weaved along, up and around crevices.

Three hours in. We came across mushrooms. Out came the knives, the bags. Like goats we intermittently stopped, nibblingly selecting with our blades. Every few metres or so a mushroom dome sliced from its stem and bagged. A joyous babble had bubbled up from

the group. “Mushrooms”, “Mushrooms!”, “Here... more Mushrooms”. The chant bounced around between us.

Four hours in. We had circled back to where the hare beds had been.... Then it came. A heavy beat of wings. A creamy coloured partridge ejecting itself from the undergrowth, and... CRACK! followed by an echoing bang... and then another. Two distinguishable guns. The partridge suddenly teetered, tumbling into the undergrowth. Two of our group, who had taken the shots, bounded toward where it had come down. They disappeared from view. My closest companion, who had paused during this brief moment, urged the rest of us on.



Image 3. Informant foraging mushrooms. Source: Johan Duchateau.

An hour later, back near the vehicles. Our other two companions also arrived: caked blood strewn down one's arm from the partridge. A decision was made about who took the partridge home.

Muscles stretched, blood infused bodies, senses realized, no hare, but imbued. A beautiful somatic clarity, an embodied knowledge that we were not foreigner to this place away from home we had just traversed. We had lived, we had been hunters, we had not simply observed, taken, or given. This place of hilly scrub, what a wonderful place. We felt it and we knew it to be good. This is what it means to hunt in Northern Cyprus (20.12.2015).

I asked Kemal: “Why do you hunt?”, “*Meraklıyım!*” he answered. The idea of *merak* (broadly translating as curiosity)³ cropped up in multiple conversations with hunting informants when I asked about why they hunted. At first, I did not really understand this answer, but in the fieldwork that followed my informants started fleshing out an answer to this blunt question. For example, once whilst crammed in a vehicle on the way to a day’s hunting, informant Mustafa squigged around to face me with an intense stare. Breathily heavily, he exclaimed “*merak...*, this is why I go hunting, can you feel it now...”. Overtime I believe I did develop a feeling for what Mustafa meant, as illustrated in my field diary above. It was a visceral curiosity about what one might encounter in hunting, what might happen in the hills and fields did not feel determined by someone else. And yet one felt empowered rather than in a state of precarity.

Whether my informants became familiar with hunting as a child or as an adult, they admitted they were not born hunters. Instead they had witnessed relatives, elders and friends leaving town or the village to go hunting in the mountains, fields, and plains. They had been curious about what went on in hunting “in Nature”. I found through surveying 112 people, who were doing their hunting training, they also described hunting as something they had witnessed other adult men going away to do and they described this as the beginning of their curiosity about hunting. Hence, curiosity for this activity away from “the normal” played a part in why they had first gone hunting.

In follow-up interviews, these hunters explained that hunting had also led to the development of friends and friendship groups, often with extended family, and this also motivated them to continue hunting, as they could tap back into these friendships during hunting seasons. Ayşe explained that she went back to her village to go hunting because it was something, she had grown up doing with her older brothers. And she enjoyed meeting back up with them to go hunting. As long-term hunter Hasan also clarified, “friends from the village I hunt with are not like friends I know from town or work, these guys we are here to hangout and catch up from when we were young” - before the trials and tribulations of adult life. As informant Mustafa also noted “my hunting group is a refuse collector, myself [a wealthy businessman], and a policeman. But that doesn’t matter here”. In other words, these friendships also did not feel like they were predicated on deterministic formal social structures, defined by class or rank.

In addition to friendship emerging as motivating factor from this initial curiosity with hunting, I gathered a selection of other consistent motivations. Whilst collecting this suite of answers I had in parallel been searching through the TRNC Hunting Federation’s

3. A quick survey of the interweb also revealed its use by Greek speakers across Asia Minor in the form of *meraklis*. Following up with Greek-speaking friends, they noted that *meraklis* is a phrase used by a certain genre of men who profess a love for the traditions of the land.

archives. There I discovered a survey from 2011 of 1336 people who identified as hunters (Avfed, 2011). This survey had first involved collecting answers over the phone to the question “what factors motivate you to hunt?” with 1336 people. Following this a closed set of standardised factors based on these responses was used in a survey of 942 hunters to produce the results in Table 1⁴.

The list of factors in this survey, perhaps unsurprisingly, happened to be identical to those I had found in parallel through my conversations and interviews with individual hunters when focussing on personal motivations. They also turned out to be virtually the same as those used in a survey on recreational hunting in Denmark by research associates of mine (Gamborg and Jensen, 2017). Furthermore, in reviewing Ancient Greek documents on recreational hunting the reasons given there for going hunting were also very similar: (i) sport and healthy exercise (ii) going to the mountains (iii) playing with one’s tools of war, and (iv) a pleasure activity when not at war (Mair, 1928) reiterating points 2-5 in Table 1. Furthermore, recent (e.g. Ipsos MORI *et al.*, 2021) as well as older research (Manfredo *et al.*, 1996) looking at motivations for participation in outdoor recreation also noted the same factors as 1, 2, 3 and 5, and similar⁵ factors as 4 and 6, to those listed in Table 1.

No	Factors that motivate hunters	% influence
1	to be doing an activity with a friend/partner	17%
2	to do sport / exercise	16.5%
3	to be with wildlife / in nature	15%
4	a love of rifles / guns	14%
5	to be away for a time from the house / neighbourhood / village	13%
6	to experience of successfully targeting the prey animal	12.5%
7	to eat the meat of the prey animal	12%

Table 1 - Factors that motivate hunters in the TRNC and their degree of influence across the hunting population.

4. I followed up with the people who implemented this research survey and reviewed the design and implementation of its methods concluding that they were reliable.
 5. Motivations are framed more broadly as risk-taking and skill.

In sum, the personal motivations for why my informants went hunting resonated with recreational hunters elsewhere, past, and present, as well as with outdoor recreationalists more broadly. In other words I agree with many of my informants who claimed that hunting was not some exotic practice, but relatively pedestrian⁶. If the motivations for hunting are relatively pedestrian, then why do people who hunt defend their right to it so vigilantly? Why not do something less contentious in the face of anti-hunting rhetoric?

Is it simply a defensive response to feeling like something is going to be taken away from you so you double-down? Is hunting so wrapped up in “identity politics”, that even if the motivations for hunting are “vanilla”, the polarizing “hot sauce” of hunting politics leaves you craving more? Partly, but just for those in charge. Recreational hunting politics in Northern Cyprus was conservative in the sense that it involved expending a lot resources and time on reproducing the institutions protecting recreational hunting (Betz-Heinemann, 2020). However, I argue that it is actually the pedestrian nature of recreational hunting that did personally motivate my informants, rather than the clickable narrative that pathologically time-stamps hunters as hirsute men of the past defending their right to a blood thirsty sport.

As Mehmet explained, “Hunting is something I have developed a taste for... it’s the simple pleasures. It’s not special in that way”. Talking with Mehmet it struck me that he appreciated hunting like one might appreciate the simple yet quality flavour of a “plain vanilla” ice cream. Something one might otherwise take for granted as we zoom through so many cheap flavour choices in everyday life. This struck me very clearly when I spent almost three hours videoing a group of hunters as they discussed with passion and intimacy the qualities of a bowl of tomatoes that one of them had contributed at a post-hunt barbecue.

Through fieldwork, I came to understand that hunting was having time off from the prescriptions of domestic life and labour life. A punctuation from the trudge that life can become when it’s fixed in prescriptive hierarchical relations. Hunting as a breathing space from predictable and often mechanical drudgery. As informant Hasan put it, hunting is not the curiosity for “understanding how an engine works by taking it apart and looking inside, and then you mechanically get it”. Instead, he explained that it is a non-exacting curiosity in terms of time put in e.g. going hunting for x-hours with x-equipment in x-place did not mean he would return with x-number of dead animals.

6. In societies that presume recreation.



Image 4. Hunting Training. Source: Author

Just as hunting training in the classroom was about the do's and don'ts of TRNC law (See Image 4), actually learning to hunt happened through apprenticeship in the field. As Ingold argues, hunting defies ideas of “prescribed behaviour” as dictated by theories built on the neo-Darwinian paradigm and Enlightenment inspired neoclassical economics (in Descola and Pálsson, 1996: 31). In hunting the shifting climatic and ecological conditions mean that a hunter has to “work out his tactics as he goes along... at each sign... [he has] to make up his mind whether to pursue the animal in question” (*ibidem*: 29). A hunter can neither be encultured nor genetically encoded with a predetermined rational response to each novel encounter. The accomplished hunter is not subject to predefined deterministic plans inherent within fixed coercive civilisation. He is free to “consult the world, not [straight-jacketed by] representations inside his head” (*ibidem*: 41).

Continuing, informant Hasan used the Turkish Cypriot hunting acknowledgement of *rastgele* (may you encounter), to describe hunting as a continuous curiosity of whether you will encounter quarry, and whether you would target it successfully. Not a religious curiosity deigned to be decided by supernatural forces, that would also defy the transactional plans of mechanised modernity, whereby İnşallah would be the appropriate acknowledgement for some⁷. But one where you as a man, with your motor skills and

7. I recognise that it's not always used theologically.

senses, are curious about the grounded human and nonhuman possibilities of life that day. A curiosity for whether you will seize the moment to take the gift of a partridge if it is offered, simply luxuriate in the crisp bite of a “wild” apple bush, or find a hare as you extend a searching touch to sample the freshness of some droppings.

The hunters I met turned to hunting when they needed a break from prescribed life. However, this was not necessarily regular in its punctuation. There was personal context to each case. For example, informant Evren noted to me he had worked most of his life in a biscuit factory in Australia. Now that he had received his pension, he had come back to Cyprus to spend his retirement hunting. His curiosity for hunting had been ignited before he went to Australia he explained, and the thought of all the hunts he would go on when back, and the unpredictable gifts they might offer had kept him motivated during the drudgery of his days in the factory. In other words, he distinguished his life now, from the “very long time” he spent in ordered labour relations.

This focus was further reflected in his dedication to hunting in Cyprus, in terms of setting up a new hunting club and then becoming mayor of the village who tried to resist the extension of an open limestone quarry where he went hunting. Not only was this quarry removing habitat where he went hunting, but, as he informed me “the limestone dust clogs the air and the large trucks full of limestone cause the ground to shake”. Two problematic issues for anyone familiar with hunting. In short, recreational hunting was not just a hobby at the weekend but a practice of being in a time and place that was juxtaposed to spaces where behaviour is prescribed. A time and place to be free.

3. ELITE PRACTICES OF BEING FREE IN RECREATIONAL HUNTING

“The fierce desire for hunting seized many. For no one once captured by the attractions of the lovely hunt would willingly give it up; sweet bonds hold him fast. How pleasant is sleep upon the flowers in the springtime! Again, how wonderful is a bed spread in a cove on a summer’s day! How delightful for hunters is a repast among the rocks! What pleasure for them in gathering honey-sweet fruit! Cool clear water flowing from a cave, what glorious drink or bath does it furnish! And in the forest, what welcome gifts the herdsmen who watch over the goats bring in pleasing baskets!” (Oppian 2.31-44 177–180 CE in Mair, 1928).

The *Cynegeticon* (including the *Cynegetica* and *Cyngeticus*) is a compilation of texts from Ancient Greek and Graecophile Roman philosophers, poets and physicians including Xenophon, Oppian, Aristotle, Plato, Grattius, Homer and Aelian amongst others. This canon documents the philosophical formalisation of hunting as pleasure, time-off from war, and sport. Its authors were the teachers of kings and generals. For example, Alexander the Great was taught the philosophy of hunting and encouraged in it by his

teacher Aristotle. Where hunting “was not just an optional pastime... It was integrated organically into the education and elevation of the aristocratic elite” (Cartledge, 2004). This philosophy of cynegetics continued when “Rome came into contact with inhabitants of the Greek and Near Eastern city states...” (Dunn, 2014).

With the division of the Roman Empire into East and West, the Byzantine Empire emerged where elites covered their sarcophagi and burial chambers with paintings of the Elysian Fields (Museum of Byzantine Culture Thessaloniki 2016: Rm 3). The Elysian Fields were how the afterlife was imagined, depicted as a life with game animals, and people relaxing in nature. The Elysian Fields providing a basis for the development of the Christian imaginary of freedom in the afterlife in the form of Paradise (See Image 1 caption).

With each of these Empires reign in Cyprus coming to pass, it was the turn of King Richard I from England to occupy Cyprus, turning it into a base from which to take time off from crusading in Palestine. Richard being the great-great grandson of William the Conqueror who introduced the legal enclosure of common lands for elite hunting in England e.g. Forest Law (Loyn, 1991: 378-382). The consequences of which are famously told in the story of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest, a folk legend mythologically taking place at the time King Richard I was in Cyprus. King Richard subsequently decided to trade Cyprus with the Ibelin Lusignan kings who utilized the island as huge hunting ground, as described by visitor von Suchen in 1336-1341:

“The king of Cyprus and all the bishops and prelates of his realm, the princes and nobles and barons and knights, chiefly live, and daily engage in... hunting... they spend all on the chase... when they [and their entourages] go to the chase they live sometimes for a whole month in their tents among the forests and mountains, straying from place to place, hunting with their dogs and hawks, and sleeping in their tents in the fields and woods, carrying all their food and necessaries on camels and beasts of burden” (in Cobham, 1908: 20).

Not long after we have the publication and circulation amongst royalty and aristocrats of the “Livre de Chasse” by Gaston Phoebus c. 1387-1389 “one of the most influential texts of its eras” (Klemettilä, 2015: 4) that characterised “the natural world” as “a source of redemption” and hunting as means to a “peaceful, moderate life, forgiveness of all transgressions, and a final resting place in heaven” (Stuhmiller in Classen, 2012: 521-522). Again stressing like the *Cynegeticon*, and my informants in Northern Cyprus the freeing experience of recreational hunting as a source of “salvation” from the trials and tribulations of coercive civilization (*ibidem*). Later its derivative “The Master of Game” by Edward of Norwich c.1406-1413 published in England, continued this tradition.

With brief interludes by various colonisers, Cyprus fell under Ottoman rule in the 1500s. The Ottoman Sultan's also conducted recreational hunting, where it came to be regarded "as a duty, a regnal obligation" (Artan, 2008: 302). A visitor to Cyprus attending a hunting party notes: the Ottoman Pasha of Cyprus at the time, whilst on a hunt, intervened just as the "poor animal [hare] was ready to become a prey to its enemies... [The Pasha] took it in his arms; and, delivering it to one of his officers, gave him orders... to shut it up in his park" (Mariti in 1792, writing in 1808: 59-60 in Cobham, 1908).

This Ottoman elite practice of enclosed hunting parks echoes a similar Roman practice of letting game be free by capturing them during a hunt and placing them within a park. A practice that reflected the aforementioned imaginary of the Elysian fields in Byzantine and later Christian theology and landscape painting in the mid to later part of the last millennium. The very same imagery that would come to directly shape environmental and hunting policy in Cyprus during its second English colonisation from 1865-1960 (Betz-Heinemann, 2020; Grove and Rackham, 2003). And the very same aforementioned legal approach that William the Conqueror had introduced in England to enclose its woodlands as hunting forests and curtail non-elite's usufruct rights and access to "wild" resources. In other words to make spaces for elites to be free.

4. CITIZEN PRACTICES OF BEING FREE IN RECREATIONAL HUNTING

Graeber and Wengrow (2021) argue that Enlightenment philosophers, specifically Rousseau, provide the primary source of for the evidence-free imaginary of our early human ancestors as simple hunter-gatherers evolving into complex coercive civilisations. In doing so, creating the idea that these hunter ancestors were free whereas with the advent of civilisation humans became shackled. Whilst the Enlightenment marked a transition in how being free and not being free were conceived, I argue that prior to the Enlightenment the history of elite recreational hunting, and the associated philosophy of cynegetics, had already created a popular and widely entrenched division between hunters as free by contrast to non-elites as stuck in the horrible trials and tribulations of living in coercive genres of civilization.

The culture of associating hunting with being free therefore preceded the Enlightenment but by contrast to post-Enlightenment ideas of hunting, it was not associated with being primitive. However, it was explicitly associated with being noble. In that sense it is an earlier instance than the Rousseauian imaginary of hunting as noble. In this sense, the naturalization of free men as noble hunters, culminating in the anthropological symposium "Man the Hunter" in 1966, had its roots in this older tradition of elite recreational hunting. Beyond personal motivations that informants responded with when I asked: "Why do *you* hunt?", an anthropological rationale given by some informants

when I asked: “Why do *humans*⁸ hunt?” was also precisely that “it’s what men have done since the dawn of time”.

It was those informants who had been to international hunting events and who read and wrote in hunting magazines and forums that would bring up this answer, whilst other informants would mention it briefly in passing. For example, when I interviewed one of the local hunting magazine’s editors, it transpired that he had hunted abroad multiple times and attended hunting symposia, and through our conversation he revealed how he had picked up this “what men have done since the dawn of time” story through engaging directly with this “global hunting community”.

However, most importantly it was scholarly literature he had identified through these events and their speakers that turned out to be the source of the idea of hunting as an integrally natural male human practice cognitively hardwired. In other words, this was a widespread anthropological rationalisation used by those who were in the business of providing more “grand” answers for the hunting community beyond the more personal and pedestrian. A rationalisation popularised via literalised readings of the Rousseauian imaginary of hunting as the original noble mode of being, themselves rooted in older elite practices that explicitly associated recreational hunting with being noble and free.

Out of the milieu of Europeans engaging with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, new ideas about personal freedom emerged giving rise to the Enlightenment (*ibidem*). And on the back of the Enlightenment popular struggles for sovereign democratic rights began. A prime example being the French Revolution of 1789. One of the key rights declared in the “The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 1789” was the right of citizens to wild resources (“(See Image 5 for contemporary expression). However, the form these rights came to take were legal recreational hunting. As Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset proposed (ethnocentrically): “In all revolutions, the first thing that the ‘people’ have done was to jump over the fences of preserves or to tear them down, and in the name of social justice pursue the hare and the partridge” (2007: 40).

8. The word commonly used to refer to “humans” and “people” in Turkish is the same (*insanlar*), meaning it was difficult to remove the species implication and thus lending itself a little more to a teleological answer.



Image 5. A picture of a French citizen caught in his underpants whilst resisting animal rights activists became a notoriously popular meme and hashtag (#pantsgate #slipgate) on social media with this popular version casting the citizen poacher as protecting liberty.

Source: <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/slipgate/photos>

A similar process ensued after multiple other flash points and democratic transitions across Europe (Knoll, 2004) in Germany in 1848 (*ibidem*: 16), in Portugal in 1974 (Proper in Ortega y Gasset, 2007: 23). It also took place with the independence of European colonies. Whether in the U.S. where the “the right to hunt and the right to make political choices emerged simultaneously” (Herman, 2005: 24). Or in the TRNC, where shortly after Cypriot independence from the British Empire in 1960, Turkish Cypriot’s gained the right to self-determination via the establishment of the TRNC and recreational hunting rights were rapidly demonstrated. As multiple older informants recalled, one of the first things they with the declaration of the TRNC was go hunting. In summary, a common

aspect that emerges across all these regions during these “Sattelzeit” transformations was the expression of a supposedly new form of hunting, what Herman calls “hunting democracy”. As he explains: “...every white male... possessed in theory, political and legal rights that only kings and aristocrats had enjoyed in earlier centuries. Among them was the right to hunt.... a tradition of hunting as a democratic sport” (*ibidem*: 22).

5. QUALITATIVE CONTINUITY AND QUANTITATIVE EXTENSION

The supposed “Sattelzeit” (phase of transformation) (Knoll, 2004) was not actually a break with European elite ideas of being free that emerged with the Enlightenment in response to indigenous critiques (Graeber and Wengrow, 2021). Instead the experience of being free was extended to non-elite men during their allotted recreational time, as long as they performed hunting in the “proper way” (Betz-Heinemann, 2020) i.e. mimicking their superiors. In sum, the freedoms of the European democratic transition, as reflected in hunting, did not mean a rethinking of European royal and aristocratic logic of being free, but meant everyone considered capable of being a free citizen could play at being a private individual king during their free time.”

An important outcome of this “transformation” was that it was only a partial extension of rights to non-elites. Women *with status* had not been excluded from recreational hunting in Ancient Greece (Plato in Sweet, 1987: 142-143; Xenophon, *ibidem*: 173), however women without status were initially excluded from the extension of recreational hunting rights that came with revolution across Europe, as they never gained full political rights in these transitions to start with. As the realm of labour became the realm of non-elite men and the domestic was the realm of non-elite women, labour rights to time-off and associated hobbies at first remained outside the purvey of women. Foreshadowing why so many non-elite citizens that hunt in Europe today are men. However, with women having gained the right to vote, the right to labour and the right to recreate this gendered historical bottleneck has receded, with women like the aforementioned Ayşe becoming recreational hunters too. However, even if recreational hunting is a legal possibility this does not mean it is a right that is deterministically claimed, as can be seen by the comparatively small number of women who recreationally hunt in Northern Cyprus.

Culturally, recreational hunting is associated with manhood as outlined in the aforementioned academically purveyed narrative of “man the hunter since the dawn of humanity”. But I did not observe women stay at home in the domestic realm and prepare dinner whilst men went hunting. I observed that my informants’ wives, mothers, and sisters partook in their own recreation. For example, once as I was hitchhiking to meet a group of people going hunting, the car that picked me up was full of all women related to the hunting group of men I was going to see. The women were going on one

of their regular trips to spend the afternoon having recreational time. Hence, the elitist way of being free for my informants was not to feel served like a king, but precisely to take a break from that kind of relationship. Where preparation of food and building makeshift “domestic” spaces in the woods were not avoided but key – just not so defined by prescribed relations. Not to mention entertaining pantomimes held during hunting events where men played as women or in the more remote parts of Northern Cyprus women joined equally in the festivities.

Furthermore, women forage. Multiple older people, including two older women I spent time with, included a number of birds within their lists of things to be foraged in Cyprus. Albeit, trapping now being illegal curtailing most of the foraging of animals that was previously possible. Therefore, I am not arguing that all parts of finding, killing, and eating or trading “wild” animals is necessarily recreational hunting or that recreational hunting is a monolithic descriptor of hunting in Northern Cyprus. More that recreational hunting is one way, the official way, of entangling the mortality of wild animals in human endeavours. And in this case, it is an extension of the colonial and post-colonial State into a domain of life that already involved finding, killing, and eating or trading wild animals. And this extension emerges within the context of patriarchy which tacitly assigns recreational hunting to the male personhood, as illustrated by the “man the hunter” narrative and because under patriarchal civilization men (within their class) are generally superior to women and thus more deserving of the right to be free.

Another important outcome of this extension of elitist norms to define official freedoms was the development of the emergence of areas of “Nature” protected from non-elites who supposedly did not know how to nobly engage with “Nature”. Unless of course they could legally access the necessary licenses to go into these parks to properly hunt. Foreshadowing European ideas of protected areas used in wildlife conservation today around the world. Just as Gaston Phoebus proclaimed in the highly influential “Livre de Chasse” these spaces and the recreational hunting of them were routes to salvation for a troubled humanity. So too today are protected areas cast as nature-based solutions to humanities exploitation of the earth, whilst the “pursuit of the happiness” in your time off through capital accumulation in your time on continues to be glorified.

In sum, the ancient and historical practice of recreational hunting, far from being forgotten in the mists of history, shapes recreational hunting in Northern Cyprus today. Not simply because the aforementioned personal motivations of Ancient Greek recreational hunters echo those today, or the fact that the laws of the TRNC are built on a direct translation of British colonial law including those to do with hunting, or that the official institution of hunting was created by people trained in British colonial policy (Betz-Heinemann 2020), or indeed the colonisation of Cyprus by each of the Empires mentioned and the elitist

recreational hunting that consequently took place. All that, but also that this connection between recreational hunting past and present is explicit in the very assumption that living in a coercive civilization is a given, and thus recreation is the given way to be free, temporarily, from it.

In other words, I am arguing against transformation in hunting being an accurate representation of the connection between past and present recreational hunting in Europe. Coercive civilization has not gone away. It's just that the freedom of recreation is now officially a part of more people's lives. Hence, with regards to recreational hunting I make the distinction between qualitative and quantitative change. The primary change that has occurred being that an ancient conceptualisation of being free has been quantitatively extended to more people, rather than any fundamental qualitative transformation. This does not mean resistances and alternative traditions of finding, killing and eating or trading wildlife do not also exist concurrently or previously amongst people in Cyprus and Europe, but those are not the subject of this paper.

CONCLUSION

The formal, legal, and dominant practices of being free today have emerged out of people being the property of elites transitioning to being legal citizens who have the right to their personal bodies - and by extension their labour - as their property (Graeber, 2014). In exchange for selling their labour, recreational time and space to mimic the freedom of elites had been acquired. Only being acquired, through struggle, by non-elite women later. Entangled with this single prominent thread of history is the history of Ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine, French, and English recreational hunting I have outlined. In brief, historical recreational hunting emerged out of elites wanting to be personally free but then after much political struggle, this right was extended to legal citizen hunters, men, wanting to personally experience being free, as exemplified by my informants in Northern Cyprus. Hence, this focus on recreational hunting serves as an example of how claims to revolutionary change in Europe were an extension of an elite philosophy of accepting a division of life into recreational time juxtaposed against the trials and tribulations of living in coercive civilization

So to answer "why do men recreationally hunt?": Citizens may no longer be direct subjects of royalty and aristocracy, but through the legal, prescriptive, and formal processes of the sovereign state, are instead subject to the humiliation of being told they have a "free choice" to sell themselves to whoever has more capital as mediated by the state. This choice now being equally available to women and men, but still tacitly associated with manhood

under patriarchy, as men are more deserved of being free. It is no wonder then why at least 1 in 40 men⁹ in Europe seek to recreationally hunt. It is both a space that offers a passing taste of one's superior way of experiencing being free, and also a demonstration of the limited sovereignty over one life that being a citizen of a state offers. In a state such as the TRNC which is continually being challenged to demonstrate its legitimacy the number of male citizens who have legally recreationally hunted is approximately 1 in 5¹⁰.

In terms of the anthropology of hunting, my conclusion is that there is a difference between linear "social evolutionary" *change* where there is, relatively speaking, the qualitative continuity of a practice (of being free) but a quantitative expansion of it to larger percentage of a polity. A *change* as a rupture would require that my informants politically experience life and relate to each other as free outside of recreation. Therefore the technical act of hunting ("to actively search for, and often kill, another animal" Ellen in Ingold, 1994: 199), would still exist as part of a civilizational turn based on rupture, but no longer as a practice of being free "in Nature" *because* one accepts living in a coercive civilization as normal.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my informants for their time, energy, and stories; the staff of the TRNC Hunting Federation for making this research possible; Stefan Millar and Charles Beach for comments on the draft; Martha Schulman and Guillermo Diaz Cortes for finessing and translating the abstract; and many others.

9. Based on the numbers of members of the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU in 2010, compared to the census of each country covered by this association.

10. Based on percentage of people who identified as legal hunters in survey conducted by TRNC Hunting Federation compared to census of number of TRNC citizens.

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