

Özgün Makale

Atmeydanı:

The Stage of Sound and Power^{1, 2}

Atmeydanı: Sound ve Gücün Sahnesi

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Abstract

During their long dynastic rule, Ottoman sultans organized splendid festivals to celebrate royal circumcision ceremonies, marriages, engagements, and births. These events had different functions in addition to entertainment. They not only demonstrated the social, political, and cultural characteristics of the empire, but also strengthened the bond between the ruler and the ruled, preserved its continuity and displayed Ottoman power, both to foreign rulers and to their own subjects. This paper will focus mostly on the circumcision festival of Sultan Murad III's son Şehzade Mehmed and, more broadly, on the 16th-century celebrations held in Atmeydanı (Hippodrome). The article aims to show the representation of Ottoman power in this historical area and the role of *sound* by examining archival sources, narratives, illustrated accounts, ambassadorial reports, and descriptions from Ottoman and European observers.

Keywords: Atmeydanı (Hippodrome), Ottoman, Festival, Celebration, Stage, Power, Sound.

Öz

Uzun hanedanlıkları boyunca Osmanlı padişahları sünnet törenlerini, evlilikleri, nişanları ve doğumları kutlamak için görkemli şenlikler düzenledi. Bu kutlamaların eğlendirme rolü dışında farklı işlevleri de vardı. Sadece imparatorluğun sosyal, siyasi ve kültürel özelliklerini göstermekle kalmıyor, aynı zamanda yöneten ile yönetilen arasındaki bağın güçlenmesini ve sürekliliğini sağlayarak Osmanlı'nın gücünü hem yabancı hükümdarlara hem de kendi tebaasına gösteriyordu. Bu makale Atmeydanı'nda düzenlenen Sultan III. Murad'ın oğlu Şehzade Mehmet'in sünnet şenliğine ve genel olarak 16. yüzyıl kutlamalarına odaklanmaktadır. Makalenin amacı arşiv kaynaklarını, anlatıları, görsel kaynakları, elçilik raporlarını, Avrupadan ve Osmanlıdan gözlemcilerin aktarımlarını inceleyerek, Osmanlı gücünün bu tarihsel alanda temsilini ve bu temsilde *soundun* rolünü göstermektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Atmeydanı, Osmanlı, Şenlik, Kutlama, Sahne, İktidar, Sound.

¹ Makale başvuru tarihi: 31.08.2021, makale kabul tarihi: 30.09.2021.

² The first draft of this article was presented at the "Musical Exchanges Across the Corrupting Sea" panel of the 49th *Medieval and Renaissance International Music Conference (MedRen)*, held in Lisbon in July 2021. I would like to thank Nicolò Ferrari and Alexandros Hatzikiriakos for honoring me by making me part of this panel. I am grateful to Joanna Helms for her meticulous proofreading support, Matthias Niggli for helping me to understand German sources, and Alberto Napoli for his support in translating Italian sources.

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Introduction

During their long regime, the Ottoman sultans organized many events to celebrate, impress, and glorify. Among these were festive celebrations and processions, which were ritualistic and part of the court routine, as well as celebrations of military achievements and welcome processions of diplomats and ambassadors. However, the imperial festivals organized by the palace, which all centered on the sultan and his family, differ from these aforementioned celebrations in their purpose, preparation process, cost, duration, and effect. Imperial celebrations called *Sûr-ı Hümmâyün* mostly included circumcision and marriage ceremonies that focused on the sultan's children and sisters. Their historical, sociological, and political significance has led researchers from the disciplines of history, literature, art and architecture, sociology, theater, and dance studies to examine this subject in depth. These studies focus on the palace life, diplomatic relations, Ottoman literature, architecture, art, the written and visual resources of the period, and the social and political effects of the festivals.

This present paper aims to contribute to the studies of the Ottoman court festivals from the field of musicology, in light of and in addition to the studies done so far. In this article, I will focus on *Atmeydanı*, the place of extremely versatile and magnificent celebrations in the 16th century, and examine how Ottoman power was represented here. I will consider the festival area as a stage and the court festivals themselves as a performance of power. While doing this, I will center upon the concept of *sound* and in this direction, I will not focus solely on musical performance but will show the imperial soundscape created in *Atmeydanı* with a broader perspective that covers all kinds of sonic material (speech, silence, noise, etc.). For this research, primary sources of the 16th century (narratives, visual narratives, diplomatic reports, descriptions from Ottoman and European observers) and supplementary academic studies from different disciplines were consulted.

The first section of the article will focus on *Atmeydanı*, the site of many of the Ottoman court festivals. While introducing the historical background of the square, its political and social aspects will also be presented. In this part, I sometimes refer to the square as the “Hippodrome” according to its historical background, but in general, I use the name *Atmeydanı* due to the focus on the 16th century and the naming of that period. In the subsequent section, the social and political functions of these festivities will be introduced, and hidden political reasons behind the organisation of the 16th-century celebrations will be examined. In the third and final section, the public celebration of the circumcision of Murad III's son Şehzade Mehmed in 1582 -and to a lesser extent, the festivities organized by Sultan Süleyman in 1524, 1530, and 1539- will be examined in the context of staging Ottoman power.

Atmeydanı: A Historical, Political and Public Sphere

The foundation of *Atmeydanı* (Hippodrome), one of the oldest and most important historical squares in Istanbul, dates back to the Roman Empire. This historical area, whose construction started by the order of Roman Emperor Septimius Severus at the end of the 2nd century and completed by the Great Constantine, was a monumental equestrian arena in the capital of the Byzantine Empire. *Atmeydanı* -or, as it was called during that period, the Hippodrome- was built to house chariot races, and it was the venue of competitive encounters such as gladiatorial combats and athletic competitions (Mango, 2010, p. 36). In time, it turned into a mixed entertainment place where theatrical performances (pantomime with musical accompaniment) and acrobatic



shows were presented. Displays of and fights between exotic animals (or beasts) were as popular as gladiatorial contests (Cameron, 1999, p. 206). However, from the 5th century onward, the chariot races became the most important event held in the Hippodrome (Roueché, 2008, pp. 679-681).⁴

Public squares demonstrate power through the symbols of administration. They serve as a tool of political authority to observe and supervise social life. But they could also become the place where the voice of the crowds rises against power (Işın, 2010, p. 10). The Hippodrome, or Atmeydanı, was undoubtedly both a public and a political sphere. It was the scene of many celebrations such as religious holidays, the city's liberation day (11 May), the first day of the year, and imperial and ecclesiastical processions (Sinanlar, 2017, p. 27).⁵ This was both the site of a coronation ceremony, as we can see at Anastasius I's coronation (491), or during the Nika Riot, declaration of the new emperor, Hypatius, in the Hippodrome by rebels (532), and the place where the Emperor gave up his throne⁶. It was also used for post-war victory celebrations in every time period. This place was the voice of the people. It was the gathering point of rebellion and resistance—and

sometimes public executions and punishments as a result. The most violent example of these revolts from the Roman imperial period may be the Nika Riot, which broke out in Istanbul at the beginning of 532 and ended with a massacre in which 30,000 people were killed in the Hippodrome (Bury, 1897, pp. 92-119). The military uprising of 1656 during the reign of Mehmet IV (Çınar Incident or Vak'a-i Vak-vakiye) and the execution carried out in Atmeydanı at the request of the rebels can be given as an example from the Ottoman period (İnalçık, 2009, p. 398).⁷

Because of its proximity to Topkapı Palace, Atmeydanı (Image 1) was the center of attention for travelers, envoys, ambassadors, and captives from outside of the Ottoman world. Various buildings attached to the palace were located around the Hippodrome: the workshop of the court

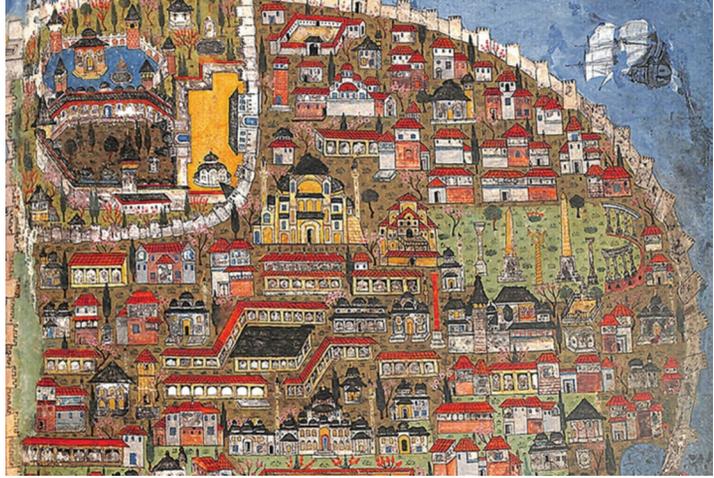


Image 1 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Detail from the Miniature of Istanbul, 1537* (Tanney, 1993, p. 9).

⁴ For more details on the chariot races, see Guillard, R. (1969). *Etudes de topographie de Constantinople byzantine*, Tome I, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, pp. 562-595; on gladiatorial combats, see Robert, L. (1971). *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec*, pp. 330-331; for theatrical and circus shows, see Cameron, A. (1999). *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, and Marciniak, P. (2014). How to Entertain the Byzantines: Some Remarks on Mimes and Jesters in Byzantium, In A. Öztürkmen & A. Birge Vitz (Eds.). *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 125-148; on spectacles and sport performances, see Parnell, D. A. (2013). *Spectacle and Sport in Constantinople in the Sixth Century CE*, In P. Christesen & D. G. Kyle. (Eds.). *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. New York: Wiley Publish, pp. 633-645.

⁵ For more detail on processions, see Berger, A. (2001). *Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions in Constantinople*, In N. Necipoğlu (Ed.). *Byzantine Constantinople, Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 73-87.

⁶ In 512, Emperor Anastasius appeared in public without a crown at the Kathisma of the Hippodrome, announcing that he would abdicate to quell the rebellion. As the rebellion subsided and the people supported the emperor, Anastasius continued to rule. Vasiliev, A. (1948), "The Monument of Prophyrius in the Hippodrome at Constantinople", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 4, p. 30.

⁷ The study focuses on different examples of public executions from Europe, the USA, the Ottoman Empire, and Turkey and examines executions conceptually in terms of urban space, power, and spectacle: Aşkın, A. (2019). *Bir İktidar Gösterisi Olarak Halka Açık İnfazlar*. *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, İleti-şim Özel Sayı: Zaman, Mekan ve Mecra: Gösterinin Gücü, Gücün Gösterisi, pp. 35-48.

artists, places where wild animals were kept, barns, a powder magazine, an armory, a military mansion, and palaces (And, 2015, p. 60, pp. 129-130; Necipoğlu, 2014, p. 74). It is uncommon for people who traveled to Istanbul -whether for short or long periods- to skip over Atmeydanı in their descriptions of the city. In the 16th century, usually during visits to Istanbul, many people wrote what they learned about the history of the capital and the Hippodrome, described the historical architecture, buildings, and monuments of the Hippodrome, and shared their observations about city life. These names include German Lutheran theologian Salomon Schweigger; John Sanderson, who came to Turkey several times and was appointed as the deputy of British diplomat Edward Borton; Pierre Gilles, who was sent to Istanbul in 1544 to collect Greek manuscripts for the King of France; Ambassador of Venice Benedetto Ramberti; French geographer Nicolas de Nicolay; French diplomat Philippe du Fresne-Canaye; and Reinhold Lubenau, who was a pharmacist in the embassy delegation of the Holy Roman-Germanic Empire to the Ottoman Empire in 1587. Besides these, Salomon Schweigger, Nicolas de Nicolay, Stephan Gerlach, and Hans Dernschwam left visual sources with their sketches and drawings of the city.⁸

Atmeydanı has remained the center of horse races and sports events, although the entertainment center moved to other parts of the city with the change of the imperial center from Topkapı Palace to Dolmabahçe Palace in the mid-19th century. Even so, it continued to exist as a public space where political actors took the stage and public issues became visible and perceptible. Sultanahmet demonstrations, which were held in the square, were a series of rallies to protest the occupation of Izmir by Greeks in 1919. The demonstrations were a symbol of national awakening for the Turks to wage the Turkish War of Independence, and these meetings, attended by important intellectuals, played a key role in women's activism. (Özdemir, 2021, p. 10-12). It is claimed that 150,000 people from all over the city attended the last rally held on January 13, 1920. Today, this area continues to preserve its historical and political identity. The square was designated as the main venue for Ramadan celebrations by the mayor of the city in 1994, a role it still serves today. In the same year, the mayor and his political party began to refer to the square as Atmeydanı again in addition to its official name, as a reminder of Ottoman cultural heritage.

Ottoman Court Festivals: Causes and Functions

The name of the Ottoman court festivals -*Sûr-ı Hümayûn*, which means “imperial feast”- already suggests their focus. The Ottoman sultans and their family held their celebrations publicly, unlike the other Islamic cultures in the case of circumcision ceremonies. We could consider these festivities as “rites of passage”⁹ for the imperial family. Despite the fact that these festivities were ostensibly organized for the Sultan's son, daughter, sister, or other family members, they

⁸ To read their descriptions or to see the drawings, see Sezgin, F. (Ed.). (1995), *Ein neue Reyssbeschreibung aus Teutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem, durch Salomon Schweigger*. Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, pp. 122-125; Gilles, P. (1986). *The Antiquities of Constantinople*, pub. J. Ball, pp. 103-117. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/53083/53083-h/53083-h.htm#Book_II_Chap_XIV; Foster, W. (Ed.). (2010). *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602: With His Autobiography and Selections from His Correspondence*, Hakluyt Society, pp. 74-76; Ramberti, B. (1913) *The Second Book of the Affairs of the Turks*. In A. H. Lybyer (Ed.) *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 240; Nicolas de Nicolay. (1576). *Les navigations pereginations et voyages, faits en la Turquie*, p. 94; Fresne-Canaye, P. du (1897), *Le Voyage du Levant*. M. H. Hauser (Ed.). Paris, pp. 100-103; Sahm, W. (Published by). (1995). *Beschreibung der Reisen des Reinhold Lubenau I*. Frankfurt: Institute für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, pp. 147-152; Babinger, F. (Ed.). (2014). *Hans Dernschwam's Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553/55)*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, pp. 98-102.

⁹ This concept was first used by the Dutch-German-French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep to describe important turning points and associated rituals that play an influential role in society. Later, British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, known for his work on symbols and rituals, used this concept and he detailed the function of these rites of passages in social life. To read their work on “rites of passage”, see Gennep, Arnold v. (2019), *The Rites of Passage*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press and Turner, V. (2017). *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure*. London-New York: Routledge.



centered mostly on the Sultan himself (Blake, 2013, p. 100). The Sultan was rarely seen, inaccessible, or hard to reach, even within the palace. Because the sultan had been secluded in Topkapı Palace since the reign of Mehmed II and appeared in public only twice a year (Ramadan and Sacrifice Feasts), his participation in these ceremonies made them even more public and pompous¹⁰ (Image 2).

Up to the the present day, researchers have identified over 50 festivals in the history of the Ottoman Empire, among which the court festivals of the 16th century hold a special place because of their splendor. In the 16th century, Atmeydanı hosted magnificent, intriguing festivals. The celebration organized by Sultan Murad III for his sixteen-year-old son Şehzâde Mehmed's circumcision in 1582 is considered the most important and spectacular event not only of this century, but of all Ottoman court festivals.¹¹ The wedding celebration of Grand Vizier İbrahim and Hatice Sultan, Sultan Süleyman's sister, in 1524; the circumcision ceremonies of Şehzâdes Mustafa, Mehmed, and Selim in 1530; and circumcisions of Şehzâdes Bayezid and Cihangir together with the wedding ceremony of Mihriman Sultan and Rüstem Pasha in 1539 were among the other important festivities of the 16th century which were held in Atmeydanı.¹²

Festivities that brought the Sultan, or the so-called "shadow of God on earth" (*Padişâh-ı ruy-ı zemin zillullah-i fi'l-arz*), his family, and the people together in the same square, were important to ensure the obedience of the subjects and helped to create new bonds and connections or to strengthen old ones (And, 1959, p. 9). They served as an occasion for the public performance of political and cultural ideas, as well as individual and collective identities. Various activities during the festivals enabled individuals and groups to perform their identities and assert their

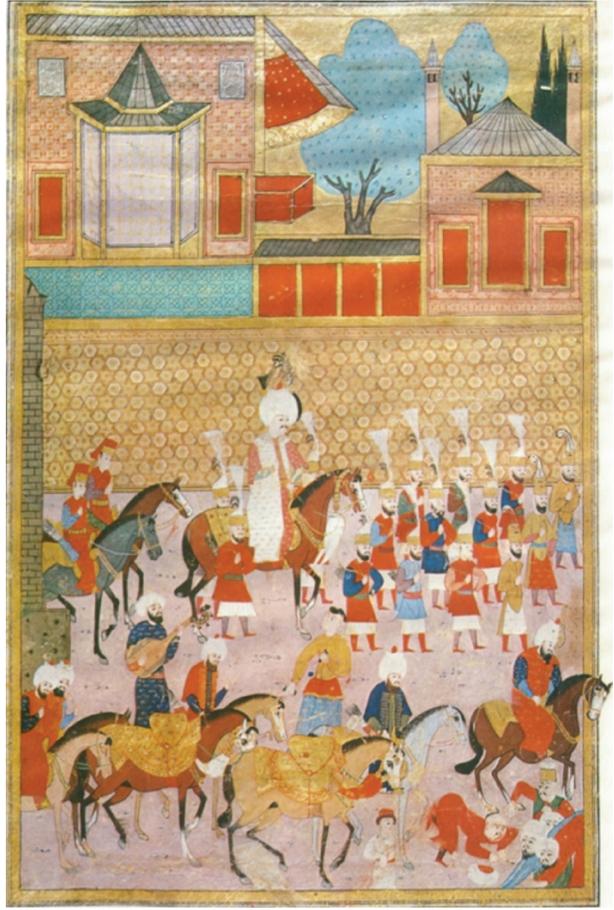


Image 2: Entry of Sultan Süleyman to the festival area in 1530, in *Hünernâme* (And, 1982, Plate 1).

¹⁰ This practice was a part of the dynastic law (*Kânûnname*) that was prepared during the reign of Mehmed II and regulated Ottoman court ceremonial. According to this tradition, it was acceptable for the sultan to hide from the public to protect his greatness in the eyes of the people. To read more about the 1st-century Sultan's seclusion periods from the observers of the period, see Necipoğlu, 2014, pp. 50-54.

¹¹ In fact, this festival was the subject of poetry and documentaries in the 20th century, demonstrating its substantial and ongoing influence throughout history. See İlhan Berk's poem *Şenlikname* (1972), and the documentary *Surname* (1959) by directors Mazhar Şevket İpşiroğlu and Sabahattin Eyüboğlu.

¹² The circumcision ceremony which was held in Edirne in 1675 for Şehzade Mustafa and Ahmed and the celebration of Sultan Ahmed III's sons Süleyman, Mehmed, Mustafa, and Bayezid which spread in different parts of Istanbul in 1720 are counted as the other sumptuous festivals after 1582. For very comprehensive research about the 1720 Festival, see Erdoğan İşkorkutan, S. (2020). *The 1720 Imperial Circumcision Celebrations in Istanbul*. Leiden: Brill; and for the 1675 Festival, see Nutku, Ö. (1987), *IV. Mehmet'in Edirne Şenliği (1675)*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları.

position in the Ottoman social order (Şahin, 2018, pp. 463-464). Furthermore, these functions had in common their role as entertainment for the Sultan, his family, statesmen, guests, and the subjects: they served as a kind of safety valve. This function was very critical, especially for the periods that were socially and politically difficult. They compensated for political failures or helped to prepare the political atmosphere. It is possible to understand the political reason behind the wedding held in 1524 by thinking of Ibrahim Pasha's appointment as Grand Vizier in 1523 and the subsequent revolt of the Second Vizier, Ahmed Pasha. This celebration revealed Sultan Süleyman's trust and support of İbrahim Pasha (Yelçe, 2014, pp. 73-74). Austrian diplomat Hammer-Purgstall associated the decision to organize the circumcision festival in 1530 with the failure of the Ottoman attempt to conquer Vienna. It was also a reaction to the strengthening of the Habsburg empire and the coronation of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor (Hammer-Purgstall, 1963, pp. 95-96; Şahin, 2018, pp. 467-468).

Imperial festivals were announced all around the Ottoman territories, with the aim of impressing people and urging them to show and share their faith with the Sultan in a collective and ritualized way (Karateke, 2004, pp. 209-212). The circumcision festival held in 1582 was one of these imperial "show-off" examples. In the background lay two related goals: to regain the political authority that was recently lost, and therefore to stop the decline in the social structure, and to intimidate Iran, with which it had been at war at intervals since 1578. In addition to these functions, festivals—including the Ottoman imperial festivals—take people out of the everyday life and away from the "normal" by creating "time out of time." Plays, games, music, dances, foods, and all the entertainment elements allow people to enjoy themselves and bring renewal (Falassi, 1987, pp. 6-7).

Ottoman court festivals were holistic works designed, applied, and recorded with the collaboration of different professions from the moment the court decided to organize them. To plan and sustain the festival in the best way, they distributed all tasks among important and trusted statesmen. From the delivery of invitations and organization of the feasts for all guests (including commoners), to the construction of the pavilions for the Sultan's family to watch the celebrations and the cleaning process of the festival area, very intense work was exhibited from beginning to end (And, 1982, pp. 35-40; Arslan, 2009, pp. 11-14). This organizational structure was conceived as an essential part of the celebration itself. The process of painting miniatures had a similar organizational structure after the celebration. Miniature paintings are a tool of conservation and transmission of all these historical events; an example of the product of collective work. These visual resources were produced by a group of skilled craftsmen by sharing tasks upon the order of the Sultan (Firat, 2015, p. 5). Imperial festivities included abundant and various visual, auditory, and sensory performances. The strong sensory aspects of the ceremonies led researchers from different fields to make these festivals the object of their studies, and the research literature addresses this multifaceted structure of the festivals. They also allow us to point out how the entire festival area can be seen as a stage and the festival itself as a performance: the stage to display imperial glory through court ceremonies.

Staging Sound and Power

Political power uses ceremonies and rituals to provide and protect legitimacy. They represent an effort to establish or maintain faith. Clifford Geertz, known for his work on symbolic anthropology, called this "creating" a monarch: "they [rulers] justify their existence and order their actions in terms of a collection of stories, ceremonies, insignia, formalities, and appurtenances that they have either inherited or, in more revolutionary situations, invented" (Geertz, 1985, pp. 15-16). In



the case of the Ottoman Empire, ceremonies were a tool for attributing “sacredness” to the Sultan. The Sultan could define and represent himself through symbols and symbolic gestures. The Sultan and his family members’ location within the festival area was a part of this process of definition and expression. It was a way to depict power, not only to foreign countries and their rulers, but also as a self-representation. The entrance of the Sultan and his family to the celebration place was carried out in a splendid procession (Image 3). As mentioned before, encountering the cortege of the sultan and his sons was an exceptional occasion for the public. The enthusiastic crowd welcomed them with applause and shouts of “*Padişahım çok yaşa!*” - “Long live our Sultan!” Peçevi, one witness of the festival in 1530, describes the moment of the sultan's appearance: “When the Sultan dismounted in front of the throne, the applause and praise of the sergeants rose to the sky” (Baykal, 1981, p. 115).¹³

During the preparation process of the 1582 festival, the officials created a special place where the Sultan could watch all the celebrations. They added an exhedra to the side of Ibrahim Pasha Palace, facing the square. The prince and the women of the imperial harem were located near his pavilion. Their elevation was significantly higher than that of the other people. The Sultan therefore reinforced his power by placing himself and his family in a higher position in the festival area.¹⁴ The separation of the viewing area and the performance stage during the festivals was a common feature encountered in both the activities of the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. In Byzantine festivals, The Emperor was stationed in a *kathisma*, from which he watched all chariot races, competitive encounters and theatrical performances, because “such a glorious and high figure cannot sit in the stands of the hippodrome and mingle with the public on race days” (Guiland, 1969, p. 462). As in the 16th-century Ottoman festivities, the city's notables and statesmen were positioned near or next to the Emperor, not with the citizens (Image 4-5). Art historian Sezer Tansuğ draws attention to the relationship between the compositional structures

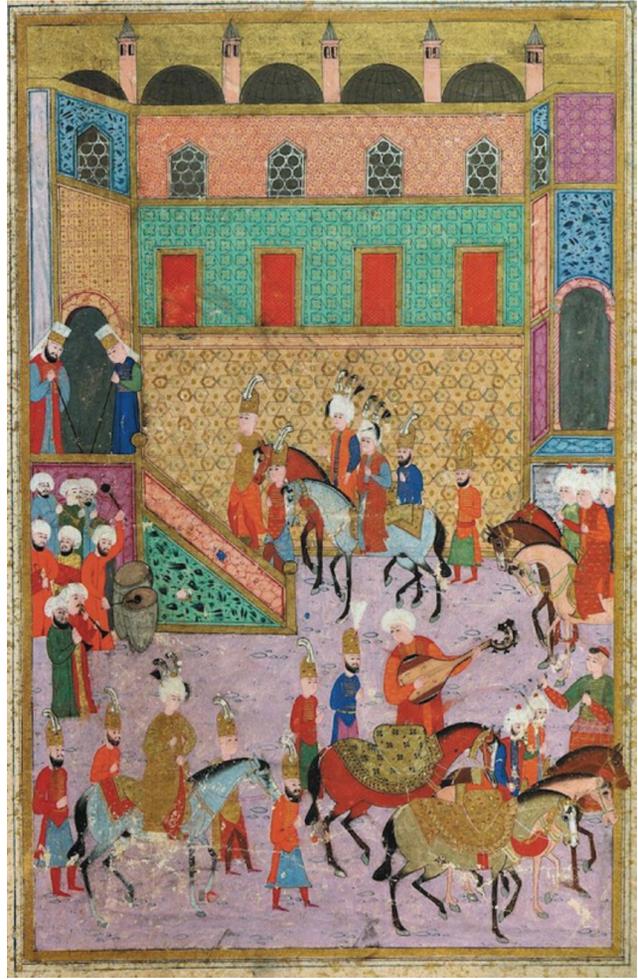


Image 3: *Circumcision Festival of Şehzades Mustafa, Mehmed and Selim in 1530, in Hünernâme* (And, 1982, Plate 16).

¹³ “Padişah tahtın önünde atından indiği zamana, çavuşların alkış ve övgü sesleri göklere yükseldi.”

¹⁴ The miniatures are painted with the major subject in focus, that is, the sultan. The power figure is separated from the others and is above everyone in the upper left corner of the painting (Picture 4).

of the miniatures depicting the 1582 festival and of the visual depictions of the Byzantine festivals. In order to reveal the similarity between these depiction schemes, he points out the 4th-century reliefs on the Obelisk in Atmeydanı (Tansuğ, 2018, pp. 57-58).¹⁵



Image 4-5: Sultan Murad III and his guests watching the parade in 1582, in *Sünnâme-i Hümayun* (Tansuğ, 2018, pp. 180-181).

According to Metin And, known for his valuable research on theater history and Ottoman visual arts, the 1582 festival was the first Ottoman festival with lodges and a very adequate viewing area, just like in theaters (And, 1959, p. 17). Special guests, notables and state officials invited to the palace watched the festival from the 3-story wooden lodge built next to İbrahim Pasha Palace in Mehterhane-i Âmire (İpşirli, 1999, pp. 164-165). However, based on the source *Hünernâme* from the late 1590s, written by Seyyid Lokman, Derin Terzioğlu points out that the same kinds of constructions had been used in the three main imperial festivals in the reign of Süleyman (Terzioğlu, 1995, p. 89). Peçevi, a contemporary observer, states that a throne was prepared for the sultan on Atmeydanı during the festival of 1524. Accordingly, the throne in question must have differed from the one prepared for the 1582 festival. However, it can be argued that the mansion built for the celebrations in 1530 and 1539 more closely resembles the place mentioned in the *Hünernâme* (Bayat, 1997, p. 5; Baykal, 1981, p. 63, 115; Celâlzâde, 2011, p. 93, 159, pp. 251-252).¹⁶

Atmeydanı was the scene of a wide variety of performances during these celebrations. Shows of buffoons, puppeteers, shadow players, acrobats, as well as people who climbed high pillars

¹⁵ Contrary to this view on the position of power in the Hippodrome/Atmeydanı, Ekrem Işın argues that the two examples differ from each other. According to him, the architectural structure built for the sultan can in no way correspond to the imperial lodge (Işın, 2010, p. 15).

¹⁶ There are contradictions in the statements of the witnesses. While Ottoman sources state that a pavilion was built for the sultan during the festival in 1530, an Italian eyewitness Tomà Mocenigo mentions a golden throne that can be climbed by 4 steps (Sanuto, 1899, p. 444).

and poles, walked on ropes, lifted heavy cannonballs, and spun plates on the ends of thin sticks were just a few of these performances. Horse races, wrestling, mock battles, and security guards with clown hats who made the people laugh were also part of these celebrations. Peçevi narrates the festivals of 1530 and 1582 with amazement and astonishment. According to his historical records, in the 1530 festival –which lasted almost one month– “the displays of ingenuity of all kinds; the feasts that were given, the elders and the people invited to them; everything was so abundant, so rich, that it is impossible to describe it [all] in detail” (Baykal, 1981, pp. 116-117).¹⁷ He reflects the same astonishment in his account of the 1582 festivity, the longest in Ottoman history, which lasted 52 days: “It is impossible to explain and express the all strangeness exhibited in this wedding, which is beautiful in every way” (Baykal, 1992, p. 65).¹⁸

Witnesses of the festivals were impressed by grandiose fireworks as well. The brightness, the sound they created in the night, and their splendid design made these celebrations more pompous and created a big impact. The lively performance they created was very different from the oil lamps used to lighten the festival area. “Fireworks presented an opportunity to use an unprecedented new medium and time slot to achieve the ongoing goals of imperial grandstanding and fostering unity among subject peoples” (Karateke, 2015, p. 289).

Gigantic *nahıls* (stylised and decorated models of palm trees which are the symbols of fertility) made of wax were another sign of power and wealth (Image 6). In some festivities, these were decorated with precious stones and gold and symbolized the masculinity of the groom in marriage celebrations in general -and the power of the sultan and the dynasty in particular- in the Ottoman court festivities (And, 1982, pp. 213-214; Nutku, 1981, pp. 24-28). These fertility symbols are often associated with sugar sculptures. Architectural structures (mansions, churches, mosques, castles, etc.), animals (tigers, rhinos, elephants, dogs, various birds), creatures (phoenixes, sea monsters), and flowers, as well as objects such as chess sets and vases, were all formed from sugar at great expense (Arslan, 2000, pp. 619-628; Haunolth, 1590, p. 472; Sahm, 1995, p. 50).



Image 6: *Nahıls*, acrobats, dancer and musicians in 1582, in *Şehinşahname* (And, 1982, Plate 122).

¹⁷ “(...) türlü türlü marifet gösterileri; verilen şölenler, bunlara davet edilen büyükler ve halk; hepsi, her şey o kadar bol, o kadar zengindi ki, bunları ayrıntıları ile anlatmak imkânı yoktur.”

¹⁸ “Ancak, her yanıyla güzel olan bu düğünde sergilenen acayip ve gariplikler o kadar çoktur ki, hiçbir şekilde açıklamp deyimlenmesi imkânı yoktur.”

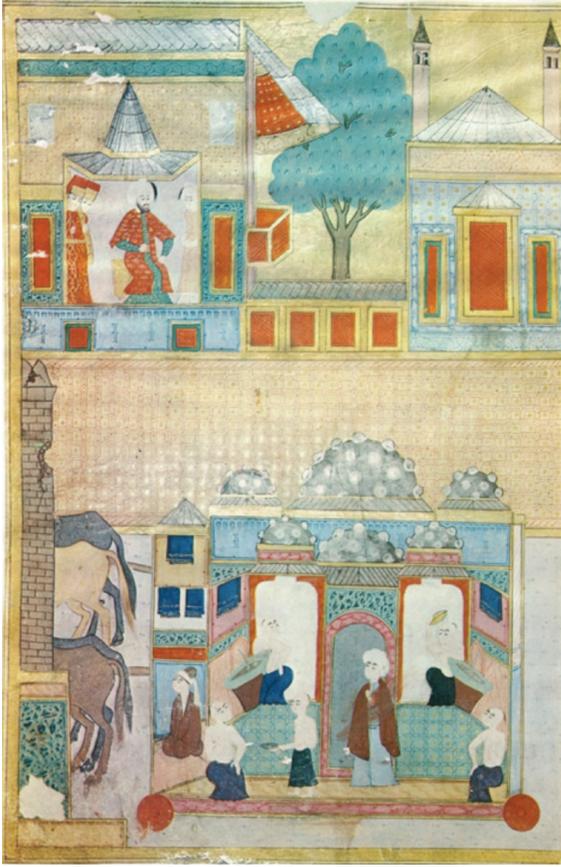


Image 7: Turkish bath in 1582, in *Sünnâme-i Hümayun* (And, 1982, Plate 26).

innovations and inventions were a part of this artisans' parade and festivals, as much as firework shows. The artisans moved along with carts and large decorations designed as mobile workshops (Image 7). Because of their massive size, moving wheeled shops and decorations were sometimes transported by several people or by large animals (And, 1982, pp. 84-86). The viewers were stunned by these massive decorations, as in the example of the Turkish baths on wheels, with two attendants inside, and the mountain with trees, animals, and a shepherd, which appeared completely real (Sakaoğlu, 2016, p. 78).

Music was another genre that complemented the festive atmosphere, sometimes accompanied by other art forms and sometimes filling the stage on its own. Most performances mentioned above were intertwined with music and, according to the sources, especially miniatures, most performers incorporated music into their shows (Pekin, 2003, p. 83). Miniatures depicting instruments are the most important sources, together with the descriptions and expressions of

According to Terzioğlu, the 1582 festival "recreat[ed] the Ottoman world on stage" with its many performances (Terzioğlu, 1995, p. 91). Arguably the most important part of these performances was the guild parades. They were a common feature of public life between the 16th and 18th centuries. The absence of primary sources, especially for the period before the second half of the 16th century, prevents us from obtaining much information. According to our current knowledge provided by primary sources, the parade in 1582 was the earliest example of a public procession of Ottoman artisans (Faroqi, 2005, p. 3, 19). The celebrations lasted 20 days, during which more than 150 different craftsman's groups came to Atmeydanı from various parts of the city.¹⁹ The guilds first exhibited their performance to the city and the public, then reached the square, greeted the ruler, and performed in front of him.²⁰ They demonstrated the economic power of the empire, or at least of the capital (Taeschner, 1979, p. 418). Technological

¹⁹ Gisela Procházka-Eisl, who focuses on the guild parade of the 1582 festival and compares the Vienna copy of *Sünnâme* written by Intizâmî and *Particularverzeichnis* by Nicolaus Haunolth, gives numbers of the guilds in the 1582 festival from four different sources. Accordingly, 177 different craftsmen groups are mentioned in *Sünnâme* (Vienna copy), 163 in *Sünnâme* (Topkapı Palace copy), and 172 in Nicolaus Haunolth (Procházka-Eisl, 2005, p. 44). However, Mehmet Arslan quotes the number of guilds as 173 in his work, which includes the transcription of the Topkapı Palace copy of *Sünnâme* (Arslan, 2009, p. 81). This figure appears as 148 in another manuscript identified by Mehmet Özdemir in the following years (Özdemir, 2018, p. 394).

²⁰ As a result of her comparison between the 1582 festival and European Renaissance festivals, Terzioğlu claims this festival differs from European ones in that each guild's group organized its own spectacles, and some shows were even spontaneous.

music performances from the onlookers.²¹ According to the information we get from these written and visual sources, musicians accompanied acrobats (such as *canbaz*, *tasbaz*), illusionists, jugglers, the parade of artisans, animal shows, and, of course, dances at festivals. Percussion instruments were a part of the scene of acrobats, illusionists, and people who performed with animals (Pekin, 2003, p. 83). Puppeteers and *Karagöz* players came along with songs and instruments (Arslan, 2009, pp. 195-196). In the festival of 1582, after the wrestling of the bears, the owners of the animals played the *def* (frame drum) and *ney* (reed flute) in front of each other (Arslan, 2009, p. 94). At the same festival, a dog, which showed various tricks according to the commands of its owner, danced to a musical accompaniment (Arslan, 2009, p. 438). Another onlooker from 1582, İntizâmî, the author of the imperial wedding book *Sûrnâme-i Hümâyûn*, noted a shepherd standing on a mountain decoration and playing his *kaval* (pipe). According to his description, this shepherd produced echoes from the mountain while playing his instrument (Arslan, 2009, p. 169).²² As another example, it is necessary to mention the dervish orders of Abdâlân-ı Rûm and Hacı Bayram, who marched with the artisan parade. These groups entered to the area by playing the kettle-drums *kudüm* and *nakkare* (Öztek, 1996, p. 162, 323).²³

The music of the *mehter* (janissary band) is the type of music most often mentioned in the writings of European travelers and diplomats who came to Istanbul in the 16th century and observed daily life, palace culture, and Ottoman music (Aksoy, 2003, p. 48). While conveying these observations, they mostly criticized and described this music as noisy and “discordant” (Sezgin, 1995, p. 209). In imperial wedding circumcision celebrations, *mehter* music shows its importance repeatedly. The *mehter* was not only a military music band. It was also an open-air music ensemble, and it was a very important part of Ottoman celebrations. During the festival of 1582, it played every day, regularly in the square from morning to night; and it created the sound of the space by adding a new dimension to it (Sahm, 1995, p. 55) (Image 8). The band played grandiose military music, which was meant to represent the glory, fame, and magnificence of the Ottomans, displayed by the traditional percussion instruments *kös* (large kettle drums), *nakkare* (small kettle drums), *tabl* (drums), *zil* (cymbal), and *boru/nefir* (trumpets). Lubenau cites the

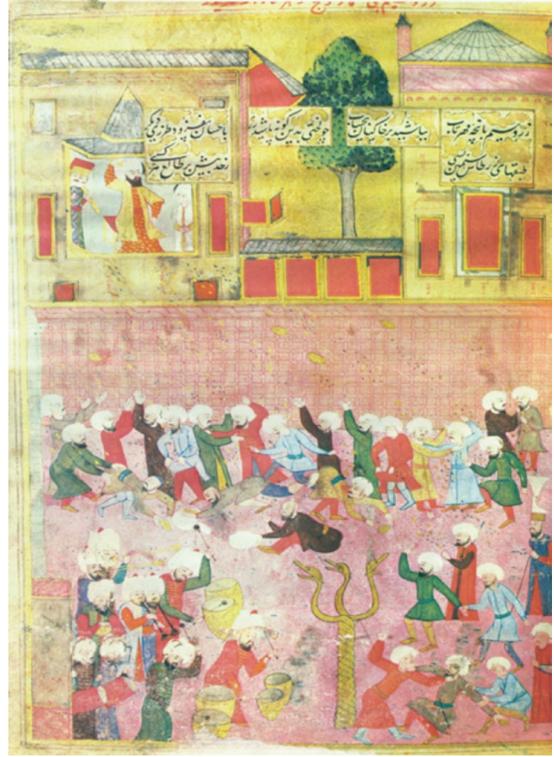


Image 8: Mehter in 1582, in *Şehinşahnâme* (And, 1982, Plate 24).

21 For more information about the 16th-century instruments encountered by European observers see, Aksoy, B. (2003). *Avrupalı Gezginlerin Gözüyle Osmanlılarda Musiki*. İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, pp. 31-53, by Ottoman historian Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli, see Gökyay, O. Ş. (Ed.) (1978). *Görgü ve Toplum Kuralları Üzerinde Ziyâfet Sofraları (Mevâidü'n-nefâis fi kavâidü'l mecâlis)*. İstanbul: Kervan Kitapçılık, pp. 82-85.

22 “(...) çübanların kimi âsâ ile koyun güder ve dihanın kimi öküzleriyle çift sürer. Kimi kaval çalup ol tağı yankıldurur ve kimi Karacaoğlan türki ile gönün eglendürür.”

23 “Kimi çalar nakkare kimi kudüm, Mezhebi turf bir bölük mağnum.”

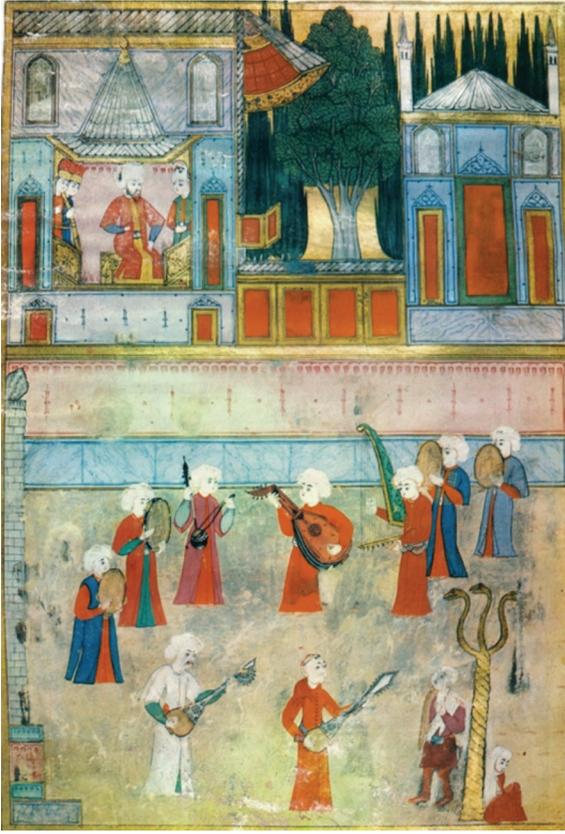


Image 9: Musicians in 1582, in *Sütnâme-i Hümayun* (And, 1982, Plate 84).

mehter in 1582 with these words: “*Mehter* loudly voiced the power of the sultan” (Arslan, 2009, p. 125). Historian Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî explains how the *kös* and *zurnas* announced the beginning of the festival: “Because the festival of the Sultan started, The sound of *kös* reached to Saturn, *Zurnas* played in a festive way, It became a gift that touched the soul of the people” (Öztek, 1996, p. 194).²⁶

The report from Istanbul to the English court states that there were 1000 musicians and singers found in Atmeydanı in the 1582 festival. They played *zil*, *ud* (lute) and other instruments loudly at the same time, making noise (Özkan, 2004, p. 55).²⁷ This report is similar to what Lubenau wrote about the simultaneous performance of different musical genres at the festival of 1582: “, there was also such a tumult and jubilation from their music that one could not hear the other's words, all in praise and honor of the emperor's son” (Sahm, 1995, pp. 50-51).²⁸ The musicians had a special place in the festival program in 1582 (Image 9). They gathered under the name of *Sâzendegân* and performed almost every day after the guilds' processions, where they played their instruments and sang, often accompanied by dancers. This allows us to learn about

instruments in the *mehter* ensemble from the 1582 festival with their numbers: 4 big *kös*, 8 pairs of *nakkare*, 10 *nefir*, over 10 *zurna* (shawms), and *zils* (Sahm, 1995, p. 55). Two large *kös* placed at either end of Atmeydanı -which the historian Peçevi described as “a place as wide as the ninth level of the sky”²⁴- played constantly and generated grandness and majesty on the stage of power (Baykal, 1981, p. 63, Uran, 1942, p. 26). The sound of the instruments filled the air and almost called all of the people of Istanbul to Atmeydanı (Arslan, 2009, p. 16). Italian ship captain Marchiò Trivixan was in Istanbul during the festival organized by Sultan Süleyman in 1530. According to his observation, the instruments played so loudly that if they were played in Venice, they could have been heard in Padova (Sanuto, 1899, p. 453).²⁵ The poet Hayâlî, in his ode (*kaside*) about the festival held in 1524, says that the sounds of drums and *zurna* filled the sky (Arslan, 2011, p. 156). İntizâmî described the sound of

²⁴ “Dokuzuncu kat gök gibi geniş bir alan olan Atmeydanı”.

²⁵ “Et non fa un strepito al mondo, ma tante nachara, trombe et altri instrumenti, numero 200, che fevano grandissimo romor et strepito che si aria aldito di Venexia a Padoa”.

The distance between these two cities is 35 kilometers.

²⁶ “Çünkü başlandı sūr-ı sultâna, Çıkdı kösün sadâsı keyvâna, Sütnalar çalındı sūr-âsâ, Oldu ol tuhfe halka rûh-efzâ”

²⁷ “Merçori si vide passare d'intorno intorno l'Hippodromo apresso mille persone, che con timpari, liuti, flauti, et altri istrument à loro uso facevano grandis(si)mo strepito, raggiano, che così certo posso dire, che cantando con grandissima dissonantia, et doppio girato l'Hippodromo a dui a dui si partirono.”

²⁸ “Es ist auch ... dermassen von ihrer musica ein Tumult und Jubiliren gewesen, das einere des anderen Wordt nicht hatt horen mögen, alle des Keisers Sohn zu Lob und Ehren.”

the instruments and the *makam* names used in the music repertoire of the period. According to the primary sources, the instruments *kemançe/rebab* (rebab), *çegâne* (Turkish crescent), *miskal* (a type of panflute), *şeshâne* (bigger variant of kopuz), *çeng* (Turkish harp), *kanun* (qanun), *tanbur*, *def* (frame drum), and *santur* (hammered dulcimer) were performed in addition to those mentioned earlier (Alvan, 2020, pp. 64-65; Öztekin, 1996, pp. 269-270, p. 391).²⁹ The 1530 festival was no less musical than this celebration: “The sound of *çeng*, *çegane*, *ney*, *daire*, *davul*, *nakkare* and *nefir* filled the world” (Arslan, 2011, p. 361).

When talking about the accompaniment function of music, the first thing that comes to mind is dance. Together with theatrical plays (Metin And calls them the “dramatic performing arts”), dance occupied a very important place in the imperial festivities. Examples of dancers performing simultaneously as musicians further demonstrate this intertwined performative atmosphere. The splendor of

the festivities intensified as the diversity of the shows increased. The simultaneity of this diversity could create noise as well as fit the enthusiastic, crowded, and sometimes chaotic nature of the festival (And, 1982, p. 166). As seen in the miniature depicting the 1582 festivities, it is assumed that different music and dance genres were performed simultaneously, and religious and secular elements were combined (Image 10). The painter Nakkaş Osman shows the whirling dervish and *köçek* (dancing boys) together, possibly both temporally and spatially. We might call this assumption into question by considering other possible intentions behind the painter’s compositional choice. Art historian Nurhan Atasoy associates this compositional choice of the painter with the idea of better reflecting the vitality and enthusiasm of the wedding (Atasoy, 1973, p. 362). Besides, these particular miniatures were painted five years after the 1582 celebration of Şehzade Mehmed’s circumcision ceremony for the enlarged second version of *Sûrnâme*. The manuscript was written using stored documents related to the event, and the miniatures were illustrated according to what was written.³⁰ After all, we can only reconstruct as much as the Sultan allowed us to learn from the imperial sources, which were written and illustrated by his



Image 10: Köçek and whirling dervish in 1582, in *Sûrnâme-i Hümayun* (And, 1982, Plate 94).

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of the instruments of 1582 circumcision festival, see Pekin, E. (2003). *Surname'nin Müziği. Dipnot*, vol. 1, pp. 52-90.

³⁰ For Mehmet Arslan’s explanation (based on the Atatürk Library copy of *Sûrnâme-i Hümayun*) of how this miniature manuscript was prepared, see Arslan, 2009, pp 44-45.

order. However, the example of the Mevlevi dervish whirling at the same time as the other dancer is beyond doubt. Likewise, this scene was not only depicted in miniature but also conveyed in the festival book written by İntizâmî (And, 1982, p. 175).³¹ Derin Terzioğlu focused on the same scene in her article. Terzioğlu draws attention to the fact that dance, which is thought to arouse sensual feelings, is prohibited by religion, but that the rhythmic movements and whirling of the dervishes are completely excluded from this evaluation, attributes this simultaneous performance to the fact that the prohibitions were not found convincing by the public (Terzioğlu, 1995, pp. 93-94).

In their written accounts, foreign spectators of the festivals particularly focused on dance genres with similarities to European Renaissance dances. Dances which we know from Europe in the same period, as well as historical and mythological displays represented by non-Muslim groups and foreigners, take an intriguing part in the festival program. A simulated battle dance, *matachins*, performed by the Jewish community with swords and daggers, is among those that are documented (Haunolth, 1590, p. 473, 475; Manger, 1583, pp. 5a-5b). We see that *matachins* is associated with another dance genre, *moresco*, in the sources. These two dances coincide with the figured sword dance in European examples as well. Hammer-Purgstall's quote is as follows: "Jews and Moors danced a jesters' dance and sword dance (Mattesina and Moresca), the ancient Sikinnian and Pyrrhichian dance." (And, 1959, pp. 65-68; Hammer, 1963, p. 126).³² We encounter this dance in English sources as well (Reyhanlı, 1983, p. 57). In the same festival, Esmehan Sultan's (sister of the sultan) nine hundred Christian slaves depicted the battle of St. George.³³ They demonstrated St. George slaying the dragon and additionally performed a mythological pantomime with music:

"The Christian slaves of Sokullu's widow (he had nine hundred of them) presented the fight between St. George and the dragon with a sword and bow dance; then two galleys drove toward each other as if they were in the middle of the sea, and the boarded one was led away in triumph with the flag dragged behind. The sultan's widow Sokollu's chamber ensemble even performed a kind of mythological pantomime; to the sound of cornetts, lutes and violins, an Italian soldier attacked a boy dressed as Cupid, first with flattery, and then with force, whereupon a maiden armed with a spear, a nymph of Diana or Amazon, drove back the mad attacker and saved the boy; doubly ingenious as a play emanating from a sultan's harem" (Hammer, 1963, p. 128).³⁴

³¹ For more detailed information about the preparation process of the manuscript with miniatures, see. Fetvacı, E. (2007), The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian, In R. G. Ousterhout (Ed.), *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond, Vol. 1* (pp. 7-21). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania; and Kafescioğlu, Ç. (2019). Sokağın, Meydanın, Şehirliğin Resmi: On Altıncı Yüzyıl Sonu İstanbul'unda Mekân Pratikleri ve Görselliğin Dönüşümü. *Yıllık: Annual of Istanbul Studies vol. 1*, pp. 7-43.

³² "Juden und Mohren tanzten Schalksnarren- und Schwerter-Tanz (Mattesina und Moresca), den alten sikinnischen und pyrrhichischen Tanz."

³³ The play of St. George was important in medieval European theater. It was popularized in Europe in the 13th century with its inclusion in Latin sources. However, the legend of St. George and the dragon originates in Cappadocia. Basically, it is the reenactment of a "good and evil" encounter. On the treatment of this myth by different sects in Turkey over the centuries, see Ocak, A. Y. (1991). XIII-XV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu'da Türk-Hıristiyan Dinî Etkileşimler ve Aya Yorgi (Saint Georges) Kültü. *Belleten, vol. LV, no. 214*, pp. 661-674. For the writings of a Spanish prisoner (the name is presumed to be Christóbal de Villalón) who was brought to Istanbul during the Kanuni period and wrote about the St. George celebrations of the period see Carım, F. (Çev.) (1964). *Kanunî Devrinde İstanbul*. İstanbul: Yeni Savaş Matbaası.

³⁴ "Die Christen-Sclaven der Witwe Sokolli's (er hatte deren nicht weniger als neunhundert) stellten unter Schwerter- und Bogentanz den Kampf St. Georg's mit dem Drachen vor; dann fuhren zwey Galeeren an einander, als wären sie mitten im Meere, und die geenterte genommene wurde im Triumph mit hinten geachleppter Flagge davon geführt. Der Sultaninn Witwe Sokolli's Kammermusik führte sogar eine Art mythologischer Pantomime auf; unter Zinken-, Lauten und Geigengetön griff ein italienischer Bravo ein als Cupido angekleidetes Knäblein, erst mit Schmeicheleyen, und dann mit Gewalt an, worauf eine mit einem Speere gewaffnete Jungfrau, eine Nympe Dianens oder Amazone, den tollnen Angreifer zurücktrieb und den Knaben rettete; doppelt sinnreich, als ein vom Harem einer Sultaninn ausgehendes Schauspiel."



Not only the musicians and dancers accompanying the various performances, but also all of the sounds that created this festive atmosphere were part of the whole complex. In addition to the sounds of instruments, dancers with their castanets, and *kös* which called people sonorously to the place, there was more sound to fill the stage of Ottoman power. The sound of the parade and moving carts of the guilds sounded Ottoman daily life. Mock battles and reenactments were also part of it, along with the other performances. The sounds of swords and guns in the battle of guards filled the sensory atmosphere with sounds of their own (Arslan, 2009, p. 372, Özkan, 2004, p. 93). Fireworks sounded throughout the night. They stimulated different senses, both auditory and visual:

“(…) at night, since the seven towers in the western end of this city had been completed they were set alight with so many fireworks, that it seemed that the air burned from all around: thus was the festival of the Agha of the Janissaries” (Özkan, 2004, p. 50)³⁵

One of the most important types of performance in the festivities was the shows performed with various animals. This included exotic animals from the sultan's collection, some of which were given as gifts. At these shows, the performances of animals created special emotional atmospheres (Ben-Ami, 2017, p. 17). It is not possible to mention the Ottoman staging at the palace festivals without adding the sound created by the animals. In the 1582 festival, many shows included different animals, and these were described in the imperial festival book. The sound of rams' horns clinking during their fights³⁶, the thundering sounds of elephants from their trunks³⁷, the dance of the bears³⁸, and the howls of dogs, with a certain *maqam* (*segâh*) and rhythm were the most memorable examples³⁹ (Arslan, 2009, p. 321, 439; Öztekin, 1996, p. 212, 429).

The human voice should also be added at this stage. The members of the *ulemâ* and the *imâms* praying for the Sultan proclaimed the name of god in *Atmeydanı*: “*imâms* came; in their hands, they had the *tesbîh* [prayer beads], on their lips the name of God” (Procházka-Eisl, 2005, p. 47). “The dervishes, to whose brotherhood the guild belonged, wished the Sultan happiness and long life, the Khodja's speech was concluded with loud shouts of ‘*Amen! Amen!*’ (*Amin! Amin!*)”⁴⁰ (Hammer-Purgstall, 1963, p. 126). People and courtiers from all over the city; foreign guests watching the shows in the special area created for them; foreign and Ottoman observers and historians, who provide us with information about these festivals today: they all contributed to the sounds created.

In addition to conversations among the onlookers, voices of the audience spreading into the air with excitement, enthusiasm, astonishment, applause and cheers, the silence was another part of the performance. Silence was a remarkable tradition in the Topkapı Palace since the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror (Ergin, 2015, p. 111). So much so that communicating with signs and gestures, especially in the Sultan's presence, became widespread, and all pages had to learn sign language. According to Nina Ergin, who examined the soundscape of Topkapı Palace in her comprehensive work, the absence of sound was a significant symbol of power. This way the Sultan's authority and control over thousands of people were displayed. “Silence was marking

35 “(…) la notte essendo state fin(i)te le sette torri che sono nel fine di questa città dalla parte di ponente le abbrugiorno una doppo l'altra contanti fuochi artificiatî che pareva che l'aria ardesse d'ogni canto, ci fu la festa dell'Agâ di Janizzari.”

36 “Rûz-i rezme koç yiğitler gibi nice nice tokuşdılar ve başa baş meydâna çıkup muhâsameten birbirine yek-sere udâ virüp nâr-ı gayretle tutuşdılar.”

37 “Hem giriv itdi hem sular saçdı, Ra'd u baran sanup gören kaçdı.”

38 “Andan sonra rezmi bezme döndürüp şevk ile semâ'a turdılar.”

39 “(…) usûl dutup makâm-ı segâhdan pervâz eyledi.”

40 “(…) die Derwische, zu deren Bruderschaft die Zunft gehörte, dem Sultan Glück und langes Leben gewünscht, wurde des Chodscha's Rede mit lautem Geschrey von *Amen! Amen!* beschlossen, *Amin! Amin!*”

the special nature of the occasion and the sultan's presence" (Ergin, 2015, p. 127). Eye-witnesses describe the silence of the soldiers waiting for the Sultan in the 1530 festival, which created a big contrast with the festive atmosphere: "In the square, the Janissaries, that is the soldiers on foot, and the *sipahi*, that is the soldiers on horseback, remained stationed in different locations, with such silence that it was an incredible thing to see" (Özkan, 2004, p. 92).⁴¹ "This multitude, notwithstanding the difficulty of not making noise and disorder, awaited the presence of the Grand Signor in such an orderly way and with such silence and reverence that it was impossible not to admire the sight" (Sanuto, 1899, p. 444).⁴²

Conclusion

Although the reasons for organization and the way they are done vary from society to society, state-organized festivities have been important throughout history. The Ottoman court festivities, shaped around the Sultan and his family, are among the most remarkable celebrations of the dynasty, both historically and politically. These imperial celebrations took part in the construction of the Sultan's sanctity and served to preserve and maintain the continuity of power and legitimacy. Therefore, they played a role in the strengthening of the center (Geertz, 1980, p. 124). Atmeydanı, where the 16th-century festivals were held, has been the stage of politics for centuries. Historically, it is one of the oldest and most important squares in Istanbul and has continued to preserve its role as a public space until the present day. Both the circumcision and wedding celebrations held during the period of Suleyman the Magnificent and the festivity organized by Murad for his son were staged at this viewing spot, with people belonging to different social classes and living in different parts of the one of the most populous cities meeting in this designated place for these special occasions.

These celebrations, which were the "greatest of festivals" with their performative and cultural diversity, fascinated foreign travelers and ambassadors and Ottoman historians of the period: they were the most magnificent, the most impressive, the most crowded, the most "noisy", the most colorful, the most diverse, the most luminous, and the most expensive and the longest, especially the 1582 festival. All of the performers in the festival program competed with each other to appeal to the eyes, ears, and even the sense of taste. In this respect, the Ottoman imperial celebrations appealed to all senses.

Although these celebrations spread throughout the city and covered the streets with parades, Atmeydanı was the principal meeting place: the stage of the imperial performance. In this historical part of the city, an entire soundscape was created. These multifaceted celebrations comprised a rich repertoire and produced an impressive experience. Sound, which can lead to human perception and sensation, was an indispensable part of these ceremonies; and in this respect, it can be defined as the counterpart of performance. All the sounds of everyday life and more engaged in this social and political stage, representing Ottoman power while displaying the cultural diversity of the empire.

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⁴¹ "In la piazza restorono posti in diversi canti li ganizzeri, che è la militia à piedi, et li spachi che è quella da cavallo, con tanto silentio, che era una cosa mirabile da vedere."

⁴² "La qual moltitudine, non ostante la difficoltà de non far strepiti et desordeni, stavano talmente ordinati et con tanto silentio et reverentia ad aspettar la presentia del Gran signor, che fo un veder non senza admiration."



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