In the year 1582 Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95) celebrated the circumcision of his son Prince Mehmed with a festival that lasted over fifty days. It was the longest and probably the most expensive and grandiose festival the Ottomans ever held. What this event signified for the participants and onlookers, Ottomans and foreigners, in their official or unofficial capacity is the central question of this discussion. Specifically, I shall consider how the festival of 1582 provided a medium for the state and various elite and non-elite groups to convey messages and to interact, first in its immediate historical context and then in comparison with other major Ottoman circumcision festivals. Drawing on the Bakhtinian literature on carnival, I shall also look beyond ceremonial to consider the kinds of experiences the festival offered at street level.

In addition to more than a dozen European accounts, several imperial commissions — the first examples of the genre in Ottoman literature — document the celebrations in detail. The two most important of them are the anonymous Şurname-i Hümeyin (Imperial Festival Book)⁴ and the Câmi Câğd Southernen der Mecâlis-i Sûr (Gatherer of the Seas in the enlargement of the Festival)⁵ of the noted historian Gelibolu Mustafa ⁴Ali (d. 1600). The two sources approach the festival differently. In the Câmi Câğd Southernen, ⁴Ali organizes his narrative around a rather neat classification of festivities, while in the Şurname the festivities are recounted in the order in which they took place each day. In contrast to ⁴Ali’s meticulous descriptions of state protocol, the Şurname glosses over the solemn ceremonials and elaborates on the colorful spectacles. Far more than any other source, it documents not just the festival itself, but the merrymaking that went along with it.⁶

Not all the Ottoman descriptions of the festival are texts. There are 437 miniatures illustrating the Şurname and 35 miniatures illustrating the account of the festival in the Sehinsahname of Lokman (d. 1601). These illustrations, too, have their story to recount.

Imperial grandeur and justice are the most prominent themes in all the Ottoman accounts of the festival. The religious dimension becomes manifest in the formulaic praise of the celebration as a royal statement of dedication to the “triumph of the Prophet.” As circumcision usually took place at around the age of thirteen, the ceremony also marked a boy’s passage to manhood. In the imperial edict in which Murad III announces his plans for the circumcision of his son, he elaborates on this theme with references to virility and fertility.⁷

There was also a fourth, an urban, dimension. The Şurname describes the various groups participating in the festival processions in great detail in a manner that recalls the sehnöyâ, another genre that had emerged earlier in the sixteenth century which describes and praises in verse the beauties of a particular city.⁸

The celebrations had originally been scheduled for March (Rebulivevel) at the conjunction of two festive times: the arrival of spring and the arrival of the hajj caravan from Mecca, but were delayed until late May⁹ when the private celebrations were held in the Old Palace, one of the residences of the imperial harem. There for eight days the sultanas hosted the sultan, the prince, the palace aghas, eumuchs, and the wives of grandees.

The public celebrations officially began on Cemaziyühvel, i.e., June 7 with the procession of Sultan Murad from the Topkapı Palace to the Ibrahîm Paşa Palace on the At Meydanı (the ancient Hippodrome), the designated center of the festival. After two days devoted to official receptions, the various performances and games finally began on the third day of the festival; the first parade before the sultan took place on the fourth. On that day Prince Mehmed went to the Old Palace to say farewell to his mother and then returned in grand procession to the At Meydanı to do obeisance to his father.¹¹ A whole series of other processions followed throughout the festival, each of which culminated with acts of homage to the sultan, who was watching the proceedings from an elevated pavilion.

After this first procession of Prince Mehmed, the festivities followed a basic daily pattern. On each morning a different group of state officials came before the sultan
to present their gifts; the sultan, in turn, bestowed gifts on them and ordered feasts to be given in their honor. Daily banquets for the common folk also took place in the morning. Lebelski's account suggests that various groups from among the inhabitants and artisans paraded with their displays before noon and groups of soldiers and dancers performed in the afternoon. The processions were not always clearly differentiated from the performances: participants in the processions also put on various shows, and dancers, jugglers, and the like often paraded with the artisans. Singing, dancing, and tightrope walking continued into the night. Every two or three days, the sultan distributed silver coins from his window, or ordered bowls to be brought from the imperial kitchen for the "scramble" (yagma) in the square. On a few occasions large quantities of meat were served to the crowds. Elaborate mock battles took place primarily in the evening, and the representations of castles that were used in these spectacles were later set on fire. Fireworks highlighted the nightly performances.

The celebrations reached their peak in the week before the circumcision, when in a further gesture of largess, the sultan paid the debts of a group of debtors and had them released from prison. On July 13, the day of the circumcision, an approximately 30-kilometer horse race took place from Çatalca to Edirnekapı. Then the sultan rode to Edirnekapı where a great number of sheep were slaughtered and distributed to the populace. The circumcision of thousands of poor and orphaned Muslims constituted the final show of imperial generosity. Among those who were circumcised were many converts to Islam, including desvirmes, as well as voluntary converts. Some of these boys were circumcised in the palace and some in public in the square, as depicted in a miniature in the Şehînşâhnâme. The circumcision of Prince Mehmed was, however, a private affair which took place in the Topkapı Palace. The prince was operated on by the fifth vizier, Mehmed Paşa, in the presence, according to Le Vigne de Pera, of only three people.

The festival was scheduled to end right after the prince's circumcision, but was extended by the sultan's order. There were no more public banquets, however, and the number of spectators and entertainers is reported to have declined. Stil, mock battles, singing, dancing, and various other dramatic performances continued, and even some new groups joined the procession. The festivities were finally ended when a fight broke out on July 24 between the Janissaries and the Cavalry of the Porte that left several dead.

The Festival as Public Platform

The circumcision festival of 1582 was a colossal undertaking that required as careful a preparation as a military campaign. The sultan deemed the festival so important an event that he assigned the duties of provisioning, repairs, and new constructions at and around the İbrahim Paşa Palace to such high-ranking officials as the hatipudan pasa (the chief admiral), the Janissary agha, and the beglerbegi (the chief governors) of Rumelia, Anatolia, and Karaman. Each major display of fireworks appears to have been financed and supervised by a member of the divân, the vizierial council.

Even though the circumcision of the sixteen-year-old Mehmed was well overdue, there was another reason why Murad chose to hold a ceremony for it on such a grand scale. It was a time of crisis. The flooding of Ottoman markets with debased silver coins had marked the beginning of monetary problems. Disorder in the countryside had also increased markedly in the latter half of the sixteenth century, as had unemployment. A war with Persia that had started in 1578 dragged on despite intermittent truces, one of which was signed right before the festival. The elite were uneasy, particularly after the murder in 1579 of Sokollu Mehmed Paşa who had served as grand vizier since the reign of Süleyman (1520-66) and who opposed the war with the Safavids. The festival was no doubt meant to distract the population with its displays of imperial generosity and power as well as to impress the great number of foreign envoys in attendance.

The Surnâme, describing the arrangements for the seating of the foreign envoys, refers to Ibrahim Khan, the governor of Kashan, who was the Safavid envoy to the festival, as "the ambassador of the ill-behaving Kızılbash" (Kızılbaș-ı bed-mu'âs ı ıcisi), hizâbaş (red-head) being the epithet the Ottomans gave the Safavids on account of their red headgear. The Surnâme reports that the ambassador of "the evil-doing king of Vienna" (Boğ kralı bed-fi'allâh ı ıcisi, i.e., the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II) had objected to being seated next to the Safavid ambassador and supported his objection with a fatwa of the Ottoman şeyhülisâm which declared the killing of one Kızılbash to be a more meritorious act than the killing of seventy infidels. A separate tribune had then to be constructed for the Europeans. Since the Safavid ambassador sat in the same tribune as the other Muslim rulers, including the Crimean khan, and with the ambassador of Poland, the story does not make much sense, but it adds politics to the atmosphere right from the start. The Safavid presence turns up again when ʿAli
Fig. 1. (left and below). Buffoons playing with the Safavid turbans. Surname-i Hümayun, ca. 1582. Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Museum, H. 1344, fols. 276b–77a. (photo: courtesy Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)

complains that the organizers of the festival should not have feasted the Janissaries in tents because it ruined the splendor of the scene while the Safavid envoy was watching.23

In spite of the tension, however, Jewish dancers appeared in Persian attire and quite a few of the Europeans praise the magnificence of the Safavid delegation which included over two hundred attendants for the governor of Kashan and the sumptuously dressed Safavid women.24 The arrival of the Safavid envoy also caused considerable excitement among the Ottoman populace.25 But then, in the midst of the festival, the news arrived from the Persian frontier that the Safavids had breached the truce. The Safavid ambassador was expelled (or, according to some sources, imprisoned), and his loggia dismantled.26 Both European and Ottoman sources report that, soon after, some members of the Safavid delegation “turned Turk”, i.e., embraced Sunni Islam.27 According to Ali, the first Safavid convert was a hânâde, the son of a prince; he was awarded an office following his conversion. Whether the other conversions were genuine or not, this first one was clearly staged. The Surname describes the convert as a “worldly-wise man in the appearance of a Kizilbash” (kizilbash şekline bir merd-i cihândâde), who first delivers a long speech in which he praises the Ottoman sultan, then accuses the Safavid shah of leading his people astray, and finally calls the Safavid ambassador “an ill-natured spy” (câsis-i bedsire) and curses and spits at him. The conversion scene was apparently effective because the Surname reports that it was repeated a week later.28

In response to the bad news from Persia, the Ottomans also organized at the last minute a mock battle which re-created the Ottoman capture of the fortress at Kars.29 Most of the anti-Safavid scenes were decidedly humorous and served to undermine Safavid dignity. Hauolth refers to someone dressed as a Safavid and seated backwards on a donkey, the traditional mark of a fool.30 Both the Surname and the Şehînsâhname depict figures throwing Safavid turbans on the ground during the conversion scene.31 In one of the Surname miniatures a group of buffoons play ball with them; in another a man bending over has two Safavid turbans placed on his bottom in a symbolic act of defilement; behind him stand two Safavids whose bare heads identify them as the turbans’ owners (fig. 1).

There was no conflict at the moment with any Christian state, so the scenes simply conveyed the message in various ways that the Ottomans had the upper hand in past battles. This usually took the form of elaborate mock battles — the most notable of which re-created the
conquest of Cyprus in 1570 — rather than parodies and farces. The scenes also poked fun at the Europeans by setting fire to oversized European figures covered with firecrackers (fig. 2). In a mock battle reported by Haunloth, just when a Christian town was about to fall to the Ottomans, pigs came running out of it to the great amusement of the onlookers.

The festival also served as a vehicle for various groups to convey messages to the public and to the sultan. Among the performers were the coffee sellers. Coffee-houses were of rather recent origin, having been introduced into Istanbul in the 1550’s, but once introduced, in no time they had elicited objections from the pious as notorious places for drug use and “unseemly behavior.” They were occasionally closed down, and remained the subject of controversy through most of the seventeenth century. In the festival of 1582 the coffee sellers paraded a model coffeehouse on wheels with customers sitting inside (fig. 3). Ali tells us that the coffee sellers pleased the sultan so much with this elaborate and humorous presentation that he promised them respite from his wrath for at least a time. The Siyâhname recounts the ambivalent humor of the coffee sellers, how the drugged coffee drinkers are dismayed when the coffee seller refuses their bad coins (another contemporary problem) and the people demand that these “dens of hashish” be closed down. The sellers argue that the consumption of coffee is beneficial to learning as it keeps people awake, which would have been hilarious coming from the drugged characters the Siyâhname describes. The author also notes approvingly that the coffee sellers refuse service to country boors.

The sâhibs, lower-level students of the religious sciences, were, at least in theory, a socially much more respectable group than the coffee sellers. A great number came from the countryside and, when they failed to gain admission to the higher-level madrasas, became a potentially disruptive social element. Two thousand of them showed up for the festival to complain of the poverty which afflicted them. Both Ali and the Siyâhname with its accompanying miniature depict this crowd as particularly miserable. Some of them showed up dragging their mattresses behind them. The Siyâhname betrays considerable sympathy for them. In it they appear as diligent students expending all their energies on learning, a far cry from reality and from their presentation of themselves. Ali says that they took part in three separate processions. In the first, they observed proper decorum, prayed, and left; in the second five days later they performed various drolleries and displayed their skills and “made light of religious learning” (ittider‘ilm-i-şerifi tahfif), which Ali thought disclosed the true state of the ulama; in the third, they appeared dressed all in paper and put on a performance which Ali found “strange.”

The whole festival did not, of course, consist of responses to various social problems; a prominent theme was the claim to world dominion. In making this claim the Ottomans used a set of devices similar to their Habsburg rivals: displays of exotic animals like elephants and giraffes, and performers from all over the globe: Arabs (mostly Bedouin), Egyptians (mostly Caïrones), Persians and Indians, as well as Europeans. The automata, technological extravaganzas often associated with European master craftsmen, were an essential part of the international language of “wonder and power.”
The Europeans report the skirmish as a major embarrassment for the Ottoman Porte, but were generally impressed by the festival, especially the fireworks and the mock battles (though not the quality of the food). The French historian Baudier, who based his version on other accounts, laments à propos one of the mock battles, that the Ottomans were able to "attract to Turkey the most beautiful inventions of men" because they knew how to reward merit and the Christians did not. Not surprisingly, there is also much praise in the Ottoman sources, though criticism is also not lacking even in the imperially commissioned accounts. Both ʿAlī and Selaniki decry what they considered to be deviations from Ottoman ceremonial tradition in the festival.

The historical consciousness implicit in this criticism actually characterized a broader outlook on virtually all aspects of Ottoman society and assumed a further ideological coloring in milieux critical of various developments in the post-Süleymanic age. ʿAlī, who was the most outspoken in his criticism of the festival, had also written one of the earliest of the Ottoman decline-and-reform treatises in 1581, that is, just a year before the festival took place.6

THE FESTIVAL WITHIN A CEREMONIAL TRADITION

Even though preparations for the festival had been begun by first checking the account books of the circumcision festivals which Süleyman had held for his sons in 1530 and 1539 and the letter of invitation sent to the foreign states on these occasions,67 the festival of 1582 deviated from them in at least two major ways. The scholarly discussion in which the ulama interpreted a selection from the Qurʾān in the presence of the sultan — an essential ceremony in all other Ottoman festivals — was omitted; it confirmed the image of the sultan as the foremost patron of religious learning and the protector of the sunna, the correct path, so it is odd that there was no discussion in 1582, as Selaniki reports with a note of dismay, because the ulama could not agree on the protocol to be followed in the seating arrangements.68 The custom otherwise continued to be observed, however, from at least the reign of Mehmed II (1451–81) to that of Ahmed III (1703–30).69

According to ʾAlī, Ottoman kânuʿin (which meant both the sultan’s law and Ottoman tradition) required the sultan to be present at receptions given for the ulama, the notables (esrâf), and the viziers. He was not obliged to at-
tend the rest. Murad did not attend any of the three gatherings — Ali blamed the grand vizier for not having informed the sultan of the kâmin.³⁶ Negligence, however, was probably not the reason for the sultan’s absence. Rather the sultan abstained himself as another step in the process of imperial seclusion. It was Mehmed II who had first stipulated in his Kâmini Mânuhâtı, composed in 1477, that the sultan was to keep his distance from others.³⁷ Peçevi tells us that in earlier festivals the sultan would sit together with his viziers and the ulama and participate in their discussions so that those present at these gatherings would have something to tell their progeny. He objected to the sultan’s absence because the new arrangement did not allow for even a modicum of intimacy between the sultan and his grandees.³²

Changes in protocol made kâmin-minded Ottomans uneasy because they could be indicative of more deeply rooted changes in the state mechanism. The same was not true for changes in the repertoire of entertainment. Even the nostalgically inclined Ali compared the “wondrous rarities” favorably with those in the two circumcision festivals organized by Suleyman in 1530 and 1539.³³ The festival of 1582 reached an unprecedented level in its sophisticated mock battles, fireworks, and various other feats of engineering, and was unusually rich in musical and dramatic performances. The performances also included puppet and shadow-theater shows as well as several plays along the lines of the commedia dell’arte.³⁴ The Jewish performers, who were particularly famous for their dances, moresca and matzezina, of Spanish origin, gave a cosmopolitan color to the festival. Europeans, both free and slave, also participated in the festival and introduced their own repertoire in the performances.³⁵ Contrary to the common assumption that Ottoman social and cultural life had an insular character before the so-called Tulip period (1718–30), the festival of 1582 was in many ways the product of a cultural world with porous boundaries.

In its organization the festival of 1582 had more in common with the three festivals of the reign of Suleyman than with the next two major festivals in 1675 and 1720. Except for celebrations in the Old Palace, the earlier festivals were centered in the At Meydan, an appropriate choice since it lay on the ceremonial route from the Topkapi to the Old Palace and the imperial mosques as well as on the site of the Byzantine Hippodrome. When the court moved to Edirne in the reign of Mehmed IV (1648–87), this ceremonial center was abandoned and did not quite regain its ceremonial importance even after the court returned definitively to Istanbul in 1703. In contrast with the festivals of 1582 and 1675 the circumcision festival of 1720 had several centers. The Ok Meydan constituted the center of the day-time celebrations in the first two weeks; after that the festival tents were moved to the Topkapi Palace for the ceremonial most directly connected with the circumcision. The nighttime celebrations took place in the various imperial pavilions along the Golden Horn, an arrangement that reflected the popularity of these waterfront pavilions in the early eighteenth century. In the festival of 1582 all the grand spectacles were planned for the view of a large public; in that of 1720 some of them, particularly those taking place on the waterfront, were designed to be enjoyed primarily by the imperial family.

The festival of 1582 took place on a stage-like space. A pavilion was constructed next to the Ibrahim Pasa Palace for the sultan, the prince, and the women of the imperial harem. The Ottoman notables and the foreign delegations were seated in three-story tribunes, also built for the occasion. If we can rely on the Hünername of Lokman, dating from the late 1580’s, the same kinds of constructions had been used in the three main imperial festivals in the reign of Suleyman.³⁶

In the circumcision festival of 1675 in Edirne, the sultan and the important guests watched the performances from tents placed on a curving line on one side of the Sirk Meydan. By the festival of 1720 the spectators were no longer separated from the performers at all. The events were held in a large, circular area in the Ok Meydan, filled with the tents that housed the Ottoman dignitaries and other important guests; the elevated imperial tent of the sultan stood right in the middle. This arrangement is shown most clearly in the miniatures of Levni (d. 1732) in the Sûrânâme-ı Vehbi which depict performances before various tents (fig. 4).³⁷ Differences in organization between the festivals of 1582 and of 1720 may have been somewhat exaggerated in their pictorial representations.³⁸

The set-up of the 1582 festival resembled a stage, and the processions that were part of the festival may be said to have re-created the Ottoman world on stage. A total of 148 groups, by one count, and 179 by another took part in them,³⁹ and there were processions during most of the festival. Although they were urbane in character, farmers and fisherman, probably from the suburbs,⁴⁰ were represented. They and the sâhibs of Anatolia were, however, in the minority; most of the participants were artisans and shopkeepers in Istanbul. In a typical procession, the masters of a certain craft would appear together with their apprentices in the hundreds, displaying examples of
their work. Often they performed their craft in a model of their workshop, built on wheels.

Artisans had participated in earlier Ottoman festivities. Writing in the late 1580s Lokman notes that “the people of the crafts displayed hitherto unseen works” at the wedding of Ibrahim Paşa in 1524 and that “the people of the town and the bazaar and the people of the crafts and merchants” came in their best clothes and brought many gifts to the sultan at the circumcision festival of 1539. 

Celalzade Mustafa (d. 1567), probably an eyewitness of the three major festivals in the reign of Süleyman, only mentions the passing of the cotton beaters (hallâc) carrying a model garden made of cotton in the circumcision ceremony of 1539. The novelty in 1582 was the introduction of the artisan processions into the Ottoman festival tradition, probably reflecting the gradual strengthening of the guilds as the institution that acted as the intermediary between the artisans and the state.

In his account of the guild pageant which Murad IV (r. 1623-40) ordered in preparation for his military campaign, Evliya Çelebi (d. 1684) reports that the order of procession was more than once a bone of contention among the guilds, but if there is a hierarchical ordering of the crafts in the festival of 1582 it is not apparent. Not even related crafts appear to have been consistently grouped together in the procession. The order of the processions seems rather to have reflected an effort to achieve a “constant shifting of mood and emphasis to sustain audience interest.”

After 1582 artisan processions underwent further formalization as a more elaborate guild structure emerged in the course of the seventeenth century. Whereas the artisan processions in the festival of 1582 included non-artisan groups like the süîtes of Anatolia, the processions in the next two major festivals in 1675 and 1720 were strictly limited to guilds. Câli and the 1582 Süîname distinguish only between masters and apprentices in each
group of artisans; Vehbi refers to specific guild officers such as the \textit{kethüdas} who presented gifts to the sultan on behalf of their guild. Vehbi also ranks certain guilds as being subsidiary (\textit{yamak}) to others, referring to the administration of another guild in matters of taxation and military levies. This more elaborate network of guilds appears to have existed by the middle of the seventeenth century. When we compare the guild processions in the festival of 1720 with the procession narrated by Evliya, as well as with the guild processions in the festival of 1675, we can identify quite a few resemblances both in the way guilds were grouped and in the order in which they followed each other.\textsuperscript{56}

In the festival of 1582 the \textit{muhhtesibs}, the market inspectors, went around pretending to inspect shopkeepers and artisans,\textsuperscript{67} though they administered no symbolic punishments in their inspection. Someone dressed as the qadi of Istanbul and seated backwards on a donkey — a less than respectful representation of the law — was also part of the market inspector’s procession.\textsuperscript{56} In the festival of 1720 punishment of artisans who violated market regulations was a common theme. One of these punishment scenes involved a baker accused of using defective weights, a common way of getting around price controls. The guilty bread baker appeared with his wooden cap covered with black rockets and his garments lined with gunpowder so that when the \textit{fullimecus} and the \textit{caouyes}, charged with keeping order in the festival, lashed him, he caught fire. The mock punishment continued with the \textit{fullimecus} throwing water on the burning man and the \textit{caouyes} more fire.\textsuperscript{59}

The marketplace had became turbulent in the intervening period between the two festivals, which may in part account for the appearance of punishment scenes in the 1720 festival. The contrast between the two festivals goes beyond issues of the marketplace, however. In contrast with the benign and humorous representation of drug addicts in the coffeehouse scene in the festival of 1582, their corresponding representation in 1720 combined merrymaking with considerable brutality,\textsuperscript{70} possibly reflecting an increasing moral anxiety.

\textbf{THE FESTIVAL AT THE STREET LEVEL}

Even though the festival of 1582 re-created the Ottoman world on stage, it was not planned out as European festivals in the Renaissance were. Rather each group organized its own spectacle, and some of the entertainments were even spontaneous. The dynamics of the crowds which participated in the festival, whether as paraders or spectators, was also determining for the overall experience. In making sense of the merrymaking at street level, we shall have recourse to Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, which includes much more than simply a popular festival. It is the potential in popular culture for subversion, or in Bakhtin’s words, “the second life of people organized on the basis of laughter.” In contrast to the official feast which sanctions the existing order, carnival offers “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth.” There are no distinctions between actors and spectators in carnival, and the “suspension of all hierarchical rank” fosters truly frank, informal communication, which Bakhtin calls “marketplace speech.”\textsuperscript{71}

A common criticism directed at Bakhtin is that he projects an almost entirely positive — indeed, utopian — image of carnival that is totally ahistorical.\textsuperscript{72} The most inspired of Bakhtin’s ideas have nevertheless reclaimed the potentially subversive character of carnival. By taking to its extreme the principle of multiplicity which has shaped Bakhtin’s own thought, David Carrol argues most suggestively that folk humor need not always be positive and regenerating as “the people have no one way.”\textsuperscript{73} This modification of Bakhtin’s concept of folk humor, in conjunction with the emphasis which Stallybrass and White put on the “social and historical conjuncture within which [carnival] occurs,” enables us to see carnival as a site in which elements of order and subversion, control and spontaneity, coexist, interact, and occasionally enter into a struggle.\textsuperscript{74} Formulated thus, “carnival” does indeed provide us with a powerful conceptual tool with which to approach the festival of 1582.

Before discussing how elements of control and spontaneity interacted in the festival of 1582, the first task is to identify the possible sites for this festival. Although the At Meydani constituted the locus for all the ceremonies that appear in the historical records, it is quite possible that other celebrations were going on in other parts of the city and in other cities. And points out that the French traveler Thevenot, who happened to be in Aleppo at the time of the celebrations of the birth of Prince Mustafa in Istanbul in 1664 witnessed celebrations for that event in Aleppo.\textsuperscript{75} In the case of our festival, the festivities must have at least carried over to the town of Catalca on the day of the horse race which started there and ended at the Edirne Gate of Istanbul.

The crowds who flocked to the At Meydani did not, of course, share the privileged vantagepoint of the sultan and dignitaries. Standing along the festival square and in the side streets, ordinary spectators were much closer to the performers and may have even found themselves in
the midst of various spectacles when the festivities spread outside the At Meydanı. Even though the miniatures of the Sünnâme and the Şehinşahname do not illustrate events in the side streets, those Sünnâme miniatures which set the scene against the tribunes of the Ottoman and foreign dignitaries show a number of the ordinary spectators in the lower right corner, some of them interacting with the performers. These interactions usually involved buffoons and jesters, whom we see in the miniatures reaching out for someone among the spectators or gesticulating to them. In the miniature illustrating the man with two Safavid turbans balanced on his rear (fig. 1, right), there is a tef player behind the man, and he may actually be performing some kind of a farcical dance. At any rate, he stands facing the crowd with his face turned towards his back as if to point in the direction of his turbaned rear. Three women and three children in front of the crowd watch him. Even though this scene targeting the Safavids would seem to fall in the category of purely negative parody in Bakhtin’s schema, the bodily quality of the show might have overshadowed the official message, especially when performed in the presence of women.

Interchange between the crowds of spectators and the tulumcus — so called after the inflated sheepskins (*tulums*) which they carry around — resulted from the dual function assigned to the *tulumcus* in Ottoman festivals. They were supposed to maintain order and to keep the crowds of spectators in check, which they did by hitting the people with their *tulums* or by spraying them with the water or oil in these *tulums*. Ali notes that there had been such a crush at the beginning of the festival and that, had it not been for the five hundred *tuluncus*, it would have been impossible to control the crowd. Ali’s description of how the *tuluncus* pushed the crowd around in jest suggests that in the line of duty they also provided some spontaneous entertainment. As can be seen in the *Sünname* miniatures, even their colorful clothing identified them as buffoon-like figures (fig. 5). In some miniatures the *tuluncus* can be seen parroting the dancers and in others joking with the crowds of spectators or chasing one another. By involving the spectators in this way, they served to soften the barrier between the performance and the spectators. Given their role, however, the *tuluncus* were a controlled element of disorder.

Much of the buffoonery which went on in the festival was explicitly sexual. Haunloth describes a scene in which the chief of the *tuluncus* exposed himself in public, and even in their appearance the buffoons advertised the explicitly sexual character of their humor.

![Fig. 5. Tulumcus, Sünnâme-i Hümâyûn, ca. 1582. İstanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum, H. 1344, fol. 8a. (photo: courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum, İstanbul)](image)

Some wore masks with “huge, hooked noses” that were clearly phallic. A crude phallus was scribbled by “someone, probably not [the illustrator] Osman, . . . on some of the buffoons” in quite a few of the Sünnâme miniatures. Haunloth and other Europeans who describe some of the buffooneries were indifferent at the obscenity, though what was obscene and objectionable to the Europeans may not have been to the Ottomans; at least there were no complaints in the Ottoman sources.

A suspension of moral judgment characterized the official attitude towards the festival in general. *Lâni-*âmm (public or general permission) was the Ottoman term for this suspension of moral judgment. The grand vizier uses this phrase in defense of the festival when members of the ulama complained to him about the qâdi figure seated backwards on a donkey. It is quite remarkable that the grand vizier could evoke the notion of “general
permission" even when it came to showing respect to the ulama.

The sampling of fatwas And provides demonstrates that "imitation" (takliş) or parody sufficed by itself to provoke objections from muftis, though the offense was even greater if the object of parody was a member of the ulama. Presumably, many of the ulama who condemned the mere act of singing and dancing would also find little to their liking in these festivals, particularly in that of 1582 in which groups of dancers and singers were especially prominent. Contrary to what we might expect, however, the procession of the ulama in the festival was a spectacle like any other. They marched with books in their hands, the chief mufti pretending to search for something in his book. Low-ranking religious functionaries and dervishes were much more visible in the processions than high-ranking ulama. Imams, Friday-mosque preachers, muezzins, reciters of the call to prayer, and sayıds all participated in the processions in separate groups. Derwishes usually walked with various artisan groups rather than as separate orders, though the dervishes of the zawiya of the Eyüp Sultan shrine, the dervishes of Ebu Ishak-i Veli of the Kazeruniyye and of Haç Bayram-i Veli of the Bayramiyye orders were exceptions. Although the Surname distinguishes the Melevi from the dervishes proper, they too marched, not as a separate group, but together with artisans, many of whom were in the textile-related crafts. Probably, artisans accompanied by dervishes or Melevi had close ties to the Sufi orders. Other groups — like the merchants of the old bazaar, whose procession included the display of a precious copy of the Qur'an — made pious gestures with no particular mystical connotation.

Qur'anic recitation and chanting were common. The chanting and the ecstatic turning of the dervish groups in particular put them among the more memorable spectacles in the procession. Haunloth describes how "the supposed Turkish holy men" hurled themselves on the ground and fell into swoons, and Palerne calls a similar scene "a true charivari." The Europeans were often right in characterizing these processions as less than sober. One Surname miniature juxtaposes the figure of a whirling Melevi with a cengi, a dancing boy dressed as a woman (fig. 6). The Melevi is accompanied by three other Melevis, two of whom are playing the ney, and the cengi is accompanied by a group of five youthful musicians playing various instruments. Presumably the two performances were simultaneous. Dance (rûks) was prohibited by Islam; hence the various Sufi orders had to show that their rituals, which involved whirling and rhythmic movements (devran), were something other than dance. The defenders of devran argued that dance aroused lascivious sentiments in both the dancers and their audience, but devran induced in the properly trained dervishes a state of mind which brought them closer to God. As the fatwas of the time make clear, these arguments by and large failed to convince the ulama. This debate might have been at the heart of the simultaneous performance of the Melevi ritual and the erotic dance of the cengi. The supple body movement of the cengi and the youthful appearance of the accompanying musicians contrast with the much more somber, older, and bearded Melevi. The scene demonstrates quite succinctly the distinction the Melevi and other Sufis made between their ritual motions and ordinary dance. On the other hand, the fact that both performances
shared the same space as entertainment may well have undermined this message.

The representations of religious figures in the festival, then, were by no means devoid of the double or even multiple meanings which characterized most of the spectacles. Neither did the expressions of religiosity on the whole give a more sober look to the festival, as a high-pitched, indeed ecstatic, quality dominated them. On occasion outbreaks of intense religiosity actually served to break further barriers and provided an outlet for the otherwise closely controlled group of women. When the Sufis of Eyüp entered the At Meydani and started “singing and crying,” Haunolth reports, many of the women watching in the side streets also began to “weep and cry,” making a tremendous clamor.67

The degree of control imposed on women appears to have varied over the course of the festival. Haunolth remarked that women were not allowed to enter the square, but congregated in the side streets to watch the spectacles, and in fact none are seen among the crowds of spectators in the early miniatures of the Surname; but they do become visible in the later scenes, occasionally appearing even with their children,68 suggesting that some of the restrictions on women spectators were dropped as the festival wore on. Most of the women appear completely veiled in the illustrations, but a careful look at the original miniatures reveals that their faces were covered over later.69

On a few occasions the festival appears to have prompted some women to act in ways that would not normally have been possible. Ali narrates how a woman dressed like a man came to the square with a falcon in her hand and announced herself to be an imperial falconer. The woman then delivered a bold speech in which she declared that a lioness is no less of a lion than the lion.70 This claim to parity with men met with no opposition, and the female falconer was well received. Ali also narrates another episode that involved crowds of people who wanted to watch the festivities but could not get through as the “people of distinction” (hayâs) would not give passage to the “commoners” (avâm)A. A woman who badly wanted to watch the festivities came on horseback disguised as a handsomely dressed Ottoman subâsî. The woman-turned-subâsî did not enjoy her new identity for long, however, because a spectator who recognized her exposed her ruse and dragged her down from her horse. The sultan ordered her arrested for the day, but she was released the next day when she explained that she was a chaste woman and that her only motive had been to watch the festivities. She also added in her defense that there were actually many women watching the festivities and that she had erred only in disguising herself as a man.71

Ali refers to the falconer as hâtûn, a term used for women of the upper class, and to the women in the second episode as avâm, a term with plebeian connotations. In the second, more controversial, case the woman subverted both her sex and social distinctions by trying to pass herself off as an official. The “men of the sharî'a” who cross-examined the two men were more tolerant of this reversal of the proper order of things than the spectator, presumably also of plebeian origin, who exposed her ruse. Ali also approved of the decision to release the plebeian woman, both because she spoke sensibly and because “festivals should not cause the people any sadness.”

Fig. 7. Procession of fruit sellers. Surname-i Hâmaiyn, ca. 1582, Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Museum, H. 1344, fol. 57a. (photo courtesy Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul)
Jews and Christians, another subordinate group, participated in the 1582 festival without the tension that characterized the presence of women. Both 5Ali and the Surname describe their processions in much the same way as they describe the others, praising the master craftsmen for their skills and the young apprentices for their beauty. The Surname mentions that the steadfast adherence to their faith of the beautiful Christian youths devastated their many lovers among the Muslims.97

Giva, that is, young men, were well represented since most artisan groups paraded hundreds of apprentices. The Surname in particular devotes an inordinate amount of space to them. The many verses in praise of the beauty of these young apprentices would have us believe that they were a source of excitement for the spectators, as they were in much of the literature of the time. The Surname singles out the apprentices in certain crafts as being particularly flirtatious and causing many sighs among the spectators, and others as not taking so well to all the attention and even picking a fight with spectators who offended them. The passages bring to mind the genre of sebreni, which features beautiful youths (sometimes, but rarely, beautiful girls) of a particular city. The author of the Surname may have been inspired to exaggerate, using the sebreni as a model. The European observers also note that some of the artisans were followed by hundreds and thousands of boys "adorned with much gold and jewels."95 Many of the beautiful youths can easily be identified in the miniatures of Osman in the Surname. They have round faces with no beard, wear elegant robes, and often walk in twos, hand in hand (fig. 7). In his account of the parade of the guilds in the reign of Murad IV, Evliya reports the spectators as making similar assessments of young apprentices. Since Evliya's account resembles neither the Surname nor the sebreni in format and approach — though it is just as full of fictional elements — we can conclude that this mixture of joking, flirtation, and quarreling was part of the ritual of these processions.94

The Surname describes the approaches men made to the apprentices of the butchers and the responses they received: "Whichever of these beauties we approach and ask for a piece of meat . . . , they extend their neck and point to their throat. There is no limit to their thirst for blood." The remainder of the passage elaborates on this curious interplay, describing the inevitably bloody end of the lovers of this bloodthirsty bunch in a whole series of double entendres.95 With its juxtaposition of images of slaughtered sheep and lovers in ruin this passage provides a perfect example of the grotesque realism which Bakhtin identified and Klaniczay expanded on. By bringing together the carnal and the sexual, grotesque realism exposes the "interrelation between the microcosm and the macrocosm . . . and . . . depicts the earth as a grotesque body."96 Grotesque realism characterizes in particular those passages in the Surname which describe the slaughtering of sheep and the serving of meat. Descriptions of the banquets given for the common folk, especially when they involve the serving of meat, are very like battle scenes. Indeed there may be more than convention to the use of the word "scramble" (yağıma) for these banquets. We learn from Bakhtin that the juxtaposition of culinary and martial scenes with their common component of "dismembered, minced flesh" was also common in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe.97 What made these banqueting scenes particularly grotesque in the Ottoman context, however, was not just the "minced flesh" but its ambivalent juxtaposition with the flesh of living human beings. In the Surname the phrase, "the dead mixed with the living," recurs several times in the descriptions of the banquets.98

The "language of the marketplace," a notion under which Bakhtin subsumes the various grotesque expressions of these cathartic moments, was supposed, according to him, to create a sense of communia, but in the 1582 festival, any sense of communia was tenuous indeed. To diverge from Bakhtin's use of this notion, the language of the marketplace also fixed and declared the worth of each participating group. The Surname often reads like an inventory of the assets and social qualities of each group. One group consists of country bumpkins, another of haughty city boys; one will return favors, another will defy all. In no case, however, are the spectators inhibited from making passes. In this respect, the language of the marketplace as it manifested itself in the artisans' processions simultaneously reinforced and threatened the social hierarchy. It was in fact precisely at the juncture of these two tendencies that tension erupted between the crowds of spectators and the young apprentices.

When the crowds gathered in the At Meydani to scramble for the food or the imperial kitchenware placed on the ground or to grab the coins the sultan scattered from his window, violence often resulted. Neither the authorities nor the Surname distinguish individuals from among the mass of people who fought over the coins, but the Câmi-i-üll-Buhûr does allow us to identify at least one distinct social group in the scrambling crowd. These are the "penniless levends" (miftis levend), the peasants-turned-soldiers who in the coming decades
Despite the potential threat they posed, spectacles of disorder were as indispensible to the festival as were scenes of order. Together they conveyed the message that the imperial state mechanism was the only source of order in a chaotic world. It is no coincidence that the Ottomans called their political order “the order of the world” (nişâm-ı âlem). The various ceremonies also underlined the unique position of the sultan as the ultimate possessor of wealth and power. Still, the festival provided a medium for various social groups to make pleas and even subtly criticize. Ostensibly, it was always the sultan and not the public who would decide their cases; this, however, did not prevent “Ali and the author of the Surname from coming to different conclusions on controversial presentations like that of the sultases.

Foreign powers participated in the festival mainly through ceremonies of reception and gift giving. The festival of 1582 was also part of a broader culture, however, and included performers from all over the known world. The Ottomans appear in this festival to have been very much concerned with what others thought of them. At that point in history the Safavids constituted a more important preoccupation for them than the Europeans. On the other hand, the descriptions of automata made by “Frankish” craftsmen suggest that awe with European technology dated back to the sixteenth century or even earlier.

However successful the festival may have been as Ottoman propaganda, Ottoman statesmen like “Ali could point to several aspects of it as seriously diverging from the nişâm-ı âlem. It is likely that “Ali exaggerated these divergences. Ceremonially, the festival was more like those of Süleyman than it was like later festivals. The festivities were held on a much grander scale in 1582 than ever before, mainly because the state had expanded rapidly and state pomp had increased in the intervening period. A probable consequence of that expansion was the greater potential for disorder that set the festival of 1582 apart from the ceremonial occasions of Süleyman.

In medieval Europe, Bakhtin says, official and popular culture constituted two absolutely separate and indeed diametrically opposed spheres, one represented by the official feast and the other by carnival. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, however, there was in Europe a tendency to combine elements of the popular into “high” or “official” culture and a determined attempt on the part of the authorities to purge carnivals of their more objectionable elements, which Bakhtin does not discuss. None of the Ottoman sources express any such disapproval. The imperial circumcision festival

Fig. 8. The scene of fighting occasioned by the scattering of coins by the sultan, Surname of Lökman b. Seyyid Hüseyin al-Asîri, ca. 1592, Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Museum, B. 200, vol. 2, fol. 51a. (photo: courtesy Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul)
of 1582 was somewhere between an official feast and a
carnival. The fact that the state organized banquets for
the commoners and the elite in such a strikingly differ-
ent way suggests that the festival was actually designed
to ensure an experience commensurate with one’s stand-
ing. The sight of the plundering crowds was enjoyed by
all, however, and the most lavish festival book to be com-
missioned by the palace, the Surname, documented both
textually and visually and without much sign of restraint
the various festive interchanges taking place on the
street. While the Ottoman cultural world was by no
means an undifferentiated whole, elite and commoner
partook in much the same way in the domain of laugh-
ter.

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

NOTES

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unpublished dissertation of Robert E. Stout, and Filiz Çağman
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Museum Library.

1. Metin And, the first to uncover the wealth of material per-
taining to Ottoman festivals, has drawn a great number of ex-
amples in his published works from the festival of 1582, most
notably, Kerk gün kerk geçe: Eski doçanın ve şenliklerde svetlik
oyanları (Istanbul: Tac, 1959); and Osmanlı şenliklerinde Türk
sanatları, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları 529, Sanat
Eserleri Dizisi 2 (Ankara, 1982). The most thorough study of the
festival as “a microcosm of the world of Ottoman page-
antry and popular entertainment” is Robert E. Stout, “The Sür-i
Hümâyûn of Murad III: A Study of Ottoman Pageantry and
Entertainment,” Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1966. Also
see Gisela Maria Prochazka-Eisl, “Die Wiener Handschrift
des Surname-i Hümâyûn,” Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna,
1992; Orhan Saik Gökay, “İl bir saltanat düşünci,” Topkapı
Sanatı Müzesi, Yıllık 1 (1986): 21-36; and Sezer Tansuğ, Şenlik-

2. For the complete list of the European accounts, see the bib-
lography of Metin And, Osmanlı şenliklerinde Türk sanatları,
p. 259-60. The longest and most detailed of the European
sources is that of Nicholas von Hanholz, whom R.E. Stout
has identified as “a nobleman from Breslau . . . attached to the
entourage of the German emperor” (Nicholas von Han-
holz, “Particular Verzeichnuss mit was Ceremonien Geprag
und Pracht des Fest der Bescheidung des jetzt regierenden
Türkischen Keizers Sultan Murath . . .” in Lewenklaus,
Neue Chronica Turckischer Nation [1590], pp. 468-514). The
account of George Labeledi (“A True Description of the Mag-
nificental Triumphes and Pastimes, represented at Constantin-
ople . . .” in M. And, A History of Popular Entertainment and

Theatre in Turkey [Ankara: Forum, 1963-64], pp. 118-30), a
member of the Polish delegation, published in London in
English translation, and a letter in Italian sent to the English
court and signed Le Vigne de Pera also contain valuable
information (Le Vigne de Pera, “Letter from Constantin-
ople . . . to the English Court,” Calendar of State Papers, Foreign
Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, May-December 1582 [London,
1909], pp. 179-78).

3. In the epilogue of the Surname-i Hümâyûn (Topkapı Palace
Museum Library, H. 1344, fols. 428b-31b) the author identi-
fies himself as a clerk of the imperial divân who was born in
the town of Foça in Herzegovina. Hence, contrary to the
assumptions of a number of scholars, he cannot be Lokman,
who was born in Urmia in Azerbaijan.

4. Four copies of the Surname are known: H. 1344 in the
Topkapı Palace Museum Library in Istanbul; Hekimoğlu 642 in
the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul (mistakenly identified as
the Surname-i Vehbi in the library catalogue); Pal. Vind. Cod.
HO 70 in the Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in
Vienna, and Or. 300 in the Leiden University Library. For the
transcription and German translation of the Viennese copy,
see Prochazka-Eisl, “Die Wiener Handschrift des Surname-i
Hümâyûn”). The text has two versions: Topkapı H. 1344,
which is the presentation copy and is illustrated with mini-
tures, is considerably longer than the nearly identical Vi-
nese and the Suleymaniye copies. From the epilogue of the
Topkapı copy we learn that the author first presented a shorter
copy to the sultan and then, on the sultan’s order,
expanded the text and delivered it to the imperial ateliers to
be illustrated by the court miniature painter Osman (Surname-
i Hümâyûn, fols. 428b-31b). Quite a few folios are mis-
sing from the longer copy and the extant folios are not in
their original order. For this reason, unless a passage is only
in the expanded version, references will he to the shorter but
complete version. The Topkapı copy will be cited as Surname-
i Hümâyûn and the Suleymaniye copy simply as Surname, as
they are registered in their respective library catalogues.

5. For the presentation copy of this work, see Bağdat 203 in
the Topkapı Palace Museum Library. I refer here to a later but
undated copy: 4318 in the Nuruosmaniye Library. The two
are virtually identical, aside from nine blank spaces left for
illustrations in Bağdat 203.

6. To give an idea of the other festival books, the Zübiyet-i tevâsir
(of the Choicest of Poems) of the noted şefîbdâr Hoca Sâid-
deddin (d. 1599) is a brief text written in Persian verse; it
praises rather than describes the festival (R. 824 in the Top-
kapı Palace Museum Library). The account of the 1582 fes-
tival in the second volume of the Sehînsâhname of Lokmân
( Topkapı Palace Museum, Bağdat 200), is considerably long-
er and is somewhere between the Surname-i Hümâyûn and the
Câmi 5 al-Bahîr of 5 Ali in its approach and tone.

7. The word sünnet in Turkish means both the normative exam-
ple set by the words and deeds of the Prophet and his Com-
panions and the site of circumcision.

8. For a copy of the imperial edict, see 5 Ali, Câmi 5 al-Bahîr, fols.
7a-8b; for an English translation, see Stout, “The Surname-
i Hümâyûn,” pp. 45-47.

9. For the genre of sehîn, see A. S. Levend, Türk Edebiyatında
Sehîn ve Şehîn âdetinde Istanbul (Istanbul: Baha Mat-
baası, 1958).

10. The festival was postponed as a result of the delay of the
Egyptian fleet which supplied the capital with basic food stuffs (Haunloth, “Particular Verzeichnuss,” p. 469).


Lebelski, “A True Description of the Magnificil Tryumphes and Pastimes,” p. 120.

13. 5Âli, Câmi-i ’ül-Buhûr, fol. 88b–90a.

14. Haunloth reports that the conversion of groups of Albanians and Greeks began on the fourth day of the festival and continued virtually every day after (“Particular Verzeichnuss,” p. 474). Presumably conversions reached their peak on the eve of the imperial circumcision.


18. 5Âli, Câmi-i ’ül-Buhûr, fols. 10b–13b; Sûrna-i Hümayûn, fol. 8a. For a more thorough discussion of the assignment of duties pertaining to the festival, see Stout, “The Sûr-i Hümayûn,” pp. 49–52.


20. Lebelski (“A True Description of the Magnificil Tryumphes and Pastimes,” p. 118) and Haunloth (“Particular Verzeichnuss”, p. 468) express the same view. The festival of 1582 was, of course, not the only Ottoman festival to take place at a difficult moment. Sultan Süleyman held a grand circumcision festival for his sons Mustafa, Mehmed, and Selim following his unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1529.


22. Prochazka-Eiel argues that the author of the Sûrna-i Hümayûn has simply gotten the story wrong and that the original disagreement about the seating arrangements took place between the Habsburg and the French ambassadors (Prochazka-Eiel, “Die Wiener Handschrift des Sûrna-i Hümayûn,” pp. 10–11). She takes the story of the disagreement from Haunloth (“Particular Verzeichnuss,” p. 470), who uses it to explain the absence of the French ambassador. For the French explanation of the ambassador’s absence, see Baudier, Histoire du Serail et de la Cour du Grand Seigneur des Turcs (Lyons, 1629), pp. 74–76, and Palerne, Périgrinations, p. 279.

23. 5Âli, Câmi-i ’ül-Buhûr, fol. 77a.


32. On the re-creation of the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, see Palerne, Périgrinations, pp. 289–90; Baudier, Histoire générale du Serrail, p. 81, and Lebelski, “A True Description of the Magnificil Tryumphes and Pastimes,” p. 121.

33. See the miniatures in Lokmân, Sîhînûsûnûmë, vol. 2, fols. 46a, 59a, 62a, 69b.


37. This passage is only in the expanded version, Sûrna-i Hümayûn, fols. 368a–69a.

38. 5Âli, Câmi-i ’ül-Buhûr, fols. 41a–b; Sûrna-i, fols. 72b–73b for the miniature depiction of the sultans, see Sûrna-i Hümayûn, fols. 116–17a.

39. The longer version in the Sûrna-i Hümayûn (fols. 117b–18a) also reports that the sultans sang songs and displayed various other skills, suggesting that the author combined the three processions into one in later accounts. He may indeed have missed the other processions and included them only after being informed about them by someone else. He did not, however, find anything objectionable in these processions, unlike 5Âli, a graduate of the highest level of madrasa and a harsh critic of the ulama of his time.


41. For a relatively rare mention of an Indian tightrope performer and a performance involving 80 people that was organized by the Ottoman delegation, see Haunloth, “Particular Verzeichnuss,” p. 474.

42. For descriptions of the automata, see Sûrna-i Hümayûn, fols. 50b–51a, 75a–75b, 81a–82a, 130b–31a; on the state’s use of the techniques of “wonder and power” in the festivals of Renaissance Europe, see Roy Strong, Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1550 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

43. In the European version the fight broke out when some Janissaries came upon a group from the cavalry of the Porte in a Greek tavern; in the Ottoman version the cavalry were caught in the company of prostitutes. The conflict truly flared up when it moved to the At Meydan. Le Vigne de Pera, “Letter from Constantinople,” pp. 177–78, Reinhold Lubenau, Be-
THE IMPERIAL CIRCUMCISION FESTIVAL OF 1582

44. İbrahim Peçevi, Târîhi Peçevi, 2 vols. (İstanbul, 1283 h.) 2: 72–73.


47. ʿAli, Câmiʿ ul-Buhûr, fols. 15b–16a.


50. ʿAli, Câmiʿ ul-Buhûr, fols. 83b–84a; Peçevi, Târîhi Peçevi, 2: 73–74.


53. ʿAli, Câmiʿ ul-Buhûr, fol. 102b.

54. And, Geleçekû Türk tiyatrosu; köylü ve halk tiyatrosu gelecekleri (İstanbul İnkılap, 1985), p. 256. Metin Argü and that the long explanation which the Surname provides for the shadow theater suggests that it was at that time a novelty in Istanbul.

55. The European slaves of the deceased Sokollu Mehmed Paşa and his wife, who was the sultan’s sister, staged a dramatic performance representing St. George slaying the dragon (Hauoloh, “Particular Verzehemness,” p. 485). The Christians of Galata performed a ballet in the mode of ancient Macedonians... and... a Pyrrhic dance (Vigenère, “Les Illustrations de Blais de Vigenere Bourbonsuios,” p. 364).

56. Lokmân, Hürûnrâm, vol. 2, fols. 91a, 101b–2a, 128b; illustrations for the festival of 1530 on fols. 102b–3a, 117b–18a.

57. On the organization of the festival of 1582, see the conjectural plan of Stout, “The Süri Hümâyûn,” p. 59; on that of 1675, see the plan of Nutku, IV. Mehmet' in Edebi Senliği, between pp. 48–49. In addition to the illustrations given above, also see the miniature illustrating the setting of the tent in the Ok Meydanı in Vehbi, Surnâne-i Vehbi (A 5593 in Topkapı Palace Museum), fol. 20b.

58. Both the miniatures of the Şehinşahname and the anonymous Surname depict the various performances as taking place either in front of the tribunes of the foreign ambassadors and dignitaries or in front of the pavilion of the sultan. By contrast the illustrator of the Surname-i Vehbi displays a much freer style in the miniatures illustrating the festivities of 1720, showing them against a variety of backgrounds. See Esin Atlı, “The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Festival,” Muqarnas 10 (1993): 181–200.

59. Stout has obtained these numbers respectively from the Surname-i Hümâyûn and Hamoulth, “Particular Verzehemness” (“The Süri Hümâyûn, p. 248).

60. In his account of an artisans’ procession in the reign of Murad IV (1623–40) Elviya Celebi identifies the fishermen and farmers as being from the suburbs (Elviya Celebi, Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the Seventeenth Century, trans. Ritter Joseph von Hammer [New York, 1846], vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 119).

61. Lokmân, Hürûnrâm, vol. 2, fols. 94b, 130b.


63. Elviya Celebi says that disagreement occurred for the first time when the sailors and merchants demanded that they appear before the money changers, and for the second time when the captains of the Mediterranean insisted on appearing before the butchers, with each group basing its claim to precedence on its greater usefulness, and in the second case, also on the antiquity of the craft; see Elviya Celebi, Narrative of Travels, 1: 545, 551–52.


65. For the list of guilds that participated in the processions of the festival of 1675 in the order that they appeared, see Nutku, IV. Mehmet' in Edebi Senliği, pp. 73–76; for that for the festival of 1720, see Vehbi, Surnâne-i Vehbi (Hamidiye 952 in Süleymaniye Library), fols. 74b–82b, 126a–33a, 138a–42a, 148b–58a and Atlı, “The Surname-i Vehbi,” pp. 137–92.

66. Elviya’s extensive list includes virtually every identifiable social or professional group; however, the resemblance to the processions of 1675 and 1720 becomes clear once we disregard the non-artisanal groups.


68. We learn about this incident from the objection the ulama raised. For the episode, see And, Kork gün kork gerek, p. 63.

69. Atlı, “The Surname-i Vehbi,” p. 146; also see pl. 35 for the illustration.


74. P. Stallybrass and A. White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgres-
75. And, Osmanlı şenliklerinde Türk sanatları, p. 35.
79. And, Kırk gün kırk gece, p. 63.
80. And, Gelinsizel Türk Tiyatrosu, pp. 34–38.
82. Sûrûnâne, fols. 19a–19b (sûyid), 46a (preachers), 46a–46b (imams), 124a–125a (muezziins).
83. Ibid., 40b, 87a, 101b.
84. Ibid., 57b–60b.
85. Haunolth, “Particular Verzeichnuss,” p. 476; Palerne, Péri-
rigations, p. 285.
86. On the mid-sixteenth-century debate between the ulama and the Sûfis on the legal status of devrîns, see, just as one exam-
ple, the fatwas of Ebussûl Efendi (d. 1574) in M. Ertuğrul
Düzdağ, Şehîslâm Ebussüd Efendi fettaları ve günden 16. asr
Türk kayatı (Istanbul: Endemur, 1983), pp. 83–88, and the re-
sponse of Šûbûl Efendi in Rûsûle-i Şûbûl Efendi, Istanbul
University Library, TY 3868.
88. In the illustrations of the Sûrûnâne Hümâyûn, women appear
among the spectators for the first time on fol. 197b.
89. I owe this observation to Çetin Güzelhan, who is currently
working on the iconology of the Sûrûnâne Hümâyûn for his
dissertation at the University of Hamburg.
90. Ali, Câmiş al-Bahâr, fol. 56b.
91. Ibid., fols. 71a–72a.
92. See especially Sûrûnâne, fols. 57b–60b and 92–93a. Unfortunately
there is no information on the religious or ethnic com-
position of the ordinary spectators.
93. See, for instance, Le Vigne de Pera, “Letter from Consta-
ninople,” p. 173.
95. Sûrûnâne, fols. 110b–12a.
96. Gabor Klaniczay, The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transfor-
mation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe,
98. See, for instance, Sûrûnâne, fols. 32b, 112a.
100. Vigener, “Les Illustrations de Blaise de Vigener Bourbon-
nois,” p. 269.
101. For Bakhtin’s account of the “history of laughter,” see Rebe-
lais and His World, pp. 58–144.
102. For a study that traces the early stages of this purge in the
German city of Nuremberg, see Samuel Kinser, “Presentation