A SURVEY OF THE
COURT FESTIVITIES
OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

A Thesis
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for the Degree Master of Arts

by
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

During the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the sultans of the Ottoman Empire, like their counterparts, the Christian rulers of Western Europe, were wont to celebrate the joyous events of their reigns with extravagant public festivals. For over two hundred years, the Ottoman capital of Istanbul was the scene of court festivals of almost incredible splendor and magnificence. Here, almost once a year in times of relative peace, the entire wealth and strength of the Empire was put on display, to be enjoyed by Ottoman subjects from Budapest to the Persian Gulf, who had journeyed to their capital to view the wondrous spectacle, which combined formal, courtly pomp and ceremony with all the varied forms of popular entertainment and amusement to be found in the Empire.

The events most frequently celebrated by the Ottoman sultans were royal weddings and circumcisions. The festivals accompanying these events were called sur.¹ (The word essentially refers to a wedding, but came to be

¹This, and all other Turkish terms used in this study, have been checked for meaning and spelling in H.C. Hony, A Turkish-English Dictionary (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947).
applied also to the circumcision of a male, since this ceremony was considered a "wedding of the soul," and hence more important than matrimony. This Ottoman institution may be understood when one considers the officially inferior position of women in Ottoman society.) The vast scope of many of these imperial sur is indicated by the prodigious length of the actual celebrations, and by the size and nature of the audiences which attended. One such festival, given by Sultan Murad III to celebrate the circumcision of his son, Prince Mehmed, in 1582, occupied fifty days and nights, and the festivities were beheld not only by Ottoman subjects from all corners of the Empire, but also by representatives of all the major states of Christian Europe. Thanks to the presence of so many Europeans at this and other Ottoman festivals of three centuries, a number of descriptive accounts of these celebrations have been preserved, in European languages.

In addition to the various textual descriptions, valuable pictorial evidence has recently been made available in published form; included in this study are a number of unique miniature-paintings, from the collection of the Topkapi Sarayi Museum in Istanbul, which depict scenes of the Ottoman court festivals from 1582 to 1722. The miniatures were prepared by the Ottoman court artists, to illustrate the sumptuous Ottoman festival-books, or
The Scope of the Study

The aim of this study is descriptive. Drawing upon information from original sources—both textual and pictorial—the study will present a systematic survey of the court festivities of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the subject will be considered from two points of view: first, in terms of the popular entertainments and amusements which were presented before the sultans and their subjects at the festivals; and, second, in terms of the official pageantry and ceremony which shared the stage, so to speak, with the popular entertainments. Within the two broad divisions of entertainments and pageantry, a number of smaller categories will be set up, and each of these particular categories will be explicated with iconographical material, co-ordinated with quotations from, and references to, original-source textual evidence. In order to help illustrate the relationship of the several categories within a particular festival, a contemporary day-by-day account of the sur given by Murad III in 1562 is appended to this study.

The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, which died of old age in 1918, had a glorious youth. The Ottomans, originally a local
family of Turkish frontier-warriors under the rule of the Seljuk Turks, began to carve their empire under their first sultan, Osman, about 1300. Using an army which included not only Turks but Greeks, Spaniards and Mongols, the Ottomans blazed a meteoric path across Anatolia and the Balkans, and by 1453 had taken Constantinople and all the dominions of the Byzantine Empire. North Africa, including Egypt, was captured for the Empire by 1520. During the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) the Empire reached a zenith of power and wealth. It is known that Suleiman's personal income—12 million ducats per year—was higher than that of any European monarch of the time.\(^1\) At the death of Suleiman, the Ottomans had become totally "civilized" to the extent that their original military strength and zeal had begun to wane. A brilliant and lavish court flourished at Istanbul and at Adrianople, and a new sybaritic breed of Ottomans rested on the laurels of their warlike predecessors. This period, which Professor Fisher refers to as one of "stagnation and decay," when "the sultans were surrounded by fawning officials and courtiers, truckling women and slaves, jugglers, wrestlers, musicians, buffoons, dwarfs, eunuchs, soothsayers, astrologers and servile literati,"\(^2\) was


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 237.
also the heyday of the great Ottoman festivals. By 1700, the Empire began a period of serious decline and by 1826, with the reforms of Mahmud II and the destruction of the janissary corps, the glorious and wealthy days of the Empire were gone, as were the great festivals.

The Ottoman Empire, during the period of the great festivals (approximately 1530 to 1730), could not be considered "Turkish" in the modern, national sense. Ottoman culture was an eclectic blend of Turkish, Arab, Persian, Byzantine and European traditions. The manpower of the Ottoman military and civil services was kept deliberately heterogeneous; thus, most of the members of the ruling bureaucracy in Istanbul were not native Turks but Greeks, Serbs, Albanians and other Balkaners who had been taken from their native villages as children and trained to be professional Ottoman leaders. Other important Ottoman citizens and leaders, such as the famous naval commander Khedive Barbarossa, were "renegados" from Western Europe. This unique international aspect of the Ottoman Empire will be seen to have played an important part in the development of certain of the forms of Ottoman entertainment.

The Ottoman institution which transcended all national boundaries and provided for the spiritual unification of the Empire was religious. The government was a
a theocratic one, and Ottomans were generally members of The Sunnite sect of Islam. The effect of the Muslim religion upon the development of certain aspects of Ottoman entertainment was considerable, and this effect will be discussed in the proper sections of the following chapter. The relation between the Muslim religious festivals and the Ottoman court festivals will be discussed in chapter III of this study.

A final unique aspect of the Ottoman Empire which should be prefaced to the chapter on entertainments has to do with the social organization of the populace in the urban centers. In an age when democracy was non-existent, and in an empire where national allegiance was nebulous, the common individual looked to his professional guild, or corporation, for a needed sense of personal security and belonging. The corporation system became an important part of the Ottoman social structure about 1460, and by 1650, there were approximately one thousand of these professional corporations (esnaf) in the city of Istanbul. Almost every citizen of the city, excepting the nobility, was a member of one of the esnaf. There was even a corporation for those citizens who belonged to no corporation!

The esnaf of Istanbul are described in great detail in the famous "travel-book" of Evliya Chelebi, compiled about the middle of the seventeenth century. This fasci-
nating document, translated into English by Joseph von Hammer and published in 1846, is an extremely significant primary source for the study of Ottoman festivals.\(^1\) The author, a well-born Turk who had been commissioned by Sultan Murad IV to make the official census of Istanbul in 1636, witnessed in that year a great procession (alay) of the guilds, which, as we shall see in the chapter on Ottoman pageantry, was a major part of almost all Ottoman festivals. Evliya describes seven hundred and thirty-five esnaf as they paraded before Sultan Murad IV in an alay which took three days to complete. This account of the 1638 alay is valuable not only for its information about Ottoman pageantry, but also because among the corporations which are listed and discussed by excluding the professional musicians who alone were organized into seventy-three corporations.

This thorough-going corporation system reflects a tradition of professionalism. Practically all the entertainment of the Ottoman Empire was professional entertainment. The Ottoman attitude towards this tradition of professional entertainment may be gathered from the remark of a Muslim traveler who visited a Paris ballroom and asked: "When he is so rich, this gentleman gives himself the trouble to dance? Why doesn't he hire some one to do

\(^1\)Evliya Chelebi, *A Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa* (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1834-1850).
for him?"¹

¹Mentioned in Metin And, "The Dances of Anatolian Turkey," Dance Perspectives, No. 3 (Spring 1959), p. 9.
CHAPTER II
ENTERTAINMENTS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

This chapter will survey the various forms of Ottoman entertainment and amusement. The eclectic tastes and heterogeneous cultural influences of the Empire during the period of the great festivals made for a kaleidoscopic array of activities designed to entertain and amuse the public and the court, ranging from such simple and universal diversions as singing and wrestling to the elaborately staged mock battles which were presented during the great festivals. In order to present the initially bewildering array of activities in a coherent order, the following categories have been devised, albeit with a certain amount of overlapping: (1) music and dance; (2) dramatic activity; (3) puppetry; (4) buffoons and pehlivans;¹ and, (5) fireworks.

Very little information about the Ottoman entertainments is available from the pens of the oriental writers of the period (the "travel-book" of Evliya is a happy exception). The reason for this, according to the modern Turkish scholar Metin And, is that professional

¹This term cannot be briefly defined. For an explanation, see pp. 59-67 of this study.
entertainments were often considered improper, wicked and thus unworthy of mention.\textsuperscript{1} On the other hand, many of the European travelers who visited the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have left valuable descriptions of what was naturally to them an exotic and remarkable spectacle. Perhaps the richest evidence for the study of Ottoman entertainment, however, is iconographical. Both in the European travel-books of the period, and in the illuminated manuscripts of the imperial Ottoman library at Istanbul, we find numerous prints, sketches and paintings which tell us more about the entertainments of the Ottoman Empire than all but the most detailed of the textual accounts. In the following survey of this little-known but flourishing world of popular entertainment, the emphasis will be upon this vivid iconographical evidence.

Music and Dance

Although music was used as an accompaniment for almost every Ottoman entertainment, it was rarely enjoyed for its own sake at the public festivities. Serious, pleasant chamber music was generally performed privately in the houses of the wealthy, and in certain public coffee-houses.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 24. Mr. And refers particularly to the licentious dancing of the chengi.
houses, where it was enjoyed as a peaceful, soothing accompaniment to quiet discussion and dining. This music was instrumental, and was played by small groups of performers upon stringed instruments such as the lute, the harp, and various bowed instruments. The music itself, of Arabian, Persian and Greek origin, was "unisonal in character and never developed into the complex harmonic system of modern European music." To most of the western travelers who heard it, even the softest of Ottoman music sounded a bit harsh and dissonant, and the music which accompanied the public entertainments was invariably described as noisy and barbarous. The contrast between the public and private music of the Ottomans may be seen in the following paragraphs, written by a French traveler of the eighteenth century:

Their martial music is of the most barbarous kind. Enormous hollow trunks, beaten by mallets, unite heavy noise to the lively and clear notes of little timbrels, which they accompany with clarinets and shrill trumpets, whose tones are forced to complete the most discordant confusion of sounds that can be imagined.

Their chamber music is on the contrary very soft; and if its monotony of semi-tones, which is at first offensive, should be condemned, it must be allowed to possess a kind of melancholy expression, with which the Turks are extremely affected...[This small orchestra] is placed at the end of an apartment, where the musicians,

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crouching down on their hams, play melodious and lively airs without written music, but always in unison; while intoxicated with a languishing enthusiasm, the smoke of their pipes, and pills of opium.¹

Most of what can be called the sacred or liturgical music of Islam—Instrumental music performed in the mosques, and the highly-developed artistry of the muezzins (who called the faithful to prayer from atop the minarets of the mosques)—was not considered entertainment to be performed at a public festival; however, certain music which was enjoyed at the festivals can be said to have possessed a quasi-liturgical character. Among the performers of this vocal religious music were the hafiz, who could chant the entire Koran by heart; the naatkhans, who sang hymns; the khanedegian, who sang sacred war-chants; and the "howling" dervishes.²

The instrumental music which accompanied the public entertainments was wild and exciting, and much use was made of instruments of percussion. The military band pictured in Figure 1 was part of the alay of an Ottoman festival in 1720, and may be considered a typical example

¹Francois de Tott, Memoirs of Baron de Tott, Containing the State of the Turkish Empire...with Numerous Facts and Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Turks and Tartars (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1785),

²The information about the liturgical and quasi-liturgical music of the Ottoman Empire has been drawn from Pallis, op. cit., pp. 176-179.
of this aspect of the festivities. The musicians, riding on horses and camels, play upon eight cylindrical drums (davuls) (doubtless these are the "enormous hollow trunks" mentioned by de Tott), six kettle-drums (kudum) which are mounted on the camels, six cymbals (zil), and six military trumpets. During the alay, similar bands played not only for the military marchers but for many of the civilian esnaf as well.

Smaller bands were used for the various types of dancing performances. In Figure 2, we see such a band; there are a pair of small kudum, three large tamborines (tef), and two shrill oboes (zurna). For dancing, rhythm and percussion instruments were most frequently used.

Certain instruments were played by the dancers themselves. The dancers (chengi) in Figure 2 keep time with the chalpara, which were four cylinders of ebony, two of which were held in each hand. The dancer in Figure 3 shakes a zilli masha, another instrument for the rhythmic accompaniment of dancing.

Dancing as a professional entertainment is as old as civilization itself, having been present not only in ancient Egypt, but in the Hittite civilization of Mesopotamia as well. ¹ Efforts by modern scholars to trace

¹And, op. cit., pp. 5-7.
Figure 1. Ottoman Military Band.
Figure 2. Dancing before the Sultan.
the Middle Eastern danse du ventre directly to these ancient cultures have proved unsuccessful, but it is generally agreed that the dance of the Middle East has remained essentially the same since the days of the Roman Republic. Danse du ventre is a French term which was originally applied (by French travelers) to a particular dance performed by the dancing-girls of eighteenth-century Egypt. Although the "dance of the wind" was only one of many similar dances performed by the dancing-girls of Egypt (others were "the dance of the bee" and "the dance of the hare"), the term danse du ventre has become a general term to signify the basic type of dance most characteristic of the entire Middle East, from Cairo to Istanbul. This dance, which was extremely popular throughout the Ottoman Empire, was performed by both male and female dancers. In Egypt, dancing-girls were more common than in Turkey, where most of the chengi were boys. The performances of the chengi took place in the houses of the wealthy, in taverns, and at the public festivals. The dance of these boys and girls may be described as erotic. Their various movements and gestures, which were generally


2 Ibid., p. 9.
Figure 3. Musician.
called oyun, or "play," were frankly lascivious, designed to excite the sexual desires of the male audience. Dr. John Covel, who visited Turkey in 1675, has left a description of some of this provocative oyun:

There was a delicate, lovely boy, of about ten years old, had as comely head of hair, long as most women. With him dance a lusty handsome man (about 25) both Turks. They acceded all the roguish lascivious postures conceivable with that strange ingenuity of silent ribaldry, as I protest I believe Sardanapalus and all the effeminate courts of the East never came near them...

The rest dance 4, 6, sometimes 8 in a company. It consists most in wriggling the body (a confounded wanton posture, and speaks as much of the Eastern treachery as dumb signs can), slipping their steps round gently; setting and turning. Never is there any arming, or figure, or handling... They allways come before the person (where they dance), running (as all other that have occasion to passe and re-passe, unless in the bringing of presents or the like solemnity); they they fall either into a semi-circle or a whole round, and so continue falling out of one tune and humour into another, till at last with a merry wherry of their musick, they turn round (as the Dervises) a long time and so stopping they bow, and run away to their musick, which are always hard by.1

As the chengi danced and cavorted, they kept time with the ebony chalpara. These instruments, which Dr. Covel calls "every whit as good as our castagnettes,"2

2 Ibid., p. 215.
were described by a French traveler to Arabia, who witnessed a dancing girl there in 1655:

These snappers are two little pieces of very hard wood, such as ebony or box, round and long like a couple of sausages. They hold one of them with their thumb, and the other with the rest of their fingers. They strike them so cleverly by closing their hand, that they make them do just the same as our castanets.  

This practice of using finger-controlled instruments to accompany dancing is very old and very widespread. Bieber reproduces a small statuette of a late Roman mime who uses hand-clappers. Variations upon the wooden chalpara include the finger-cymbal (also called zil) which was used not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in India and Persia, and the familiar castanets of Spanish and Gypsy dancers.

Figure 2 depicts a group of five male chengi dancing before Sultan Ahmed III. Their costumes are gay and colorful, consisting of a small skull-cap, a tight, long-sleeved jacket, and a flowing full skirt. The five chengi play chalpara. With the chengi are four buffoons, whose antics were designed to parody, in ribald fashion, the

1 Laurent D'Avieux, The Chevalier D'Arvieux's Travels... (London: Barker, King and Brown, 1718), p. 255.

suggestive movements of the dancers. (The ubiquitous buffoons will be discussed in some detail later in this chapter.) The scene in Figure 4 offers vivid proof of the fact that the chengi did not appreciably change in appearance at least, during the period of the great festivals. This scene was recorded in 1582, during the great sur of Murad III which was held in the hippodrome at Istanbul. A chengi dances, two buffoons cavort, and the musicians play a viol (kemenche), a tef, and a pan-pipe (miskal). The audience here is not the Sultan but a number of distinguished visitors to the great festival.

In Figure 5 we see a group of eight chengi dancing before the sultan and his advisors. Their dancing-stage is on a decorated raft, probably in the Sea of Marmora. The chengi play chalpara and the musicians play tef, zurna, and miskal. Of unusual interest in this painting are the hanging decorations on the dancing-stage. They are stars of David and indicate that these chengi are Jewish.

According to Evliya Chelebi, the chengi of Istanbul, who were organized into twelve companies, or kol, were not Turks, but Gypsies, Greeks, Armenians and Jews. Thus they were not Muslims, and were not directly influenced by the orthodox Islamic strictures against dancing. (This taboo was rarely enforced; the dancing girls of Arabia and Egypt were Muslims.) As Evliya indicates in his
Figure 4. Dancing in the Hippodrome.
description of the kol, the chengi also performed mimetic or theatrical dances; these will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. The kol of which Evliya writes were all male.

The dancing girls of the Ottoman Empire were not often seen at the public court festivals. Usually, they performed at private celebrations and before the women of the harems. However, their style of dancing was similar to the dancing of the male chengi. Figure 6, a miniature painting by Levni which is now in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum, shows a dancing-girl playing the chalpara, and wearing a diaphonous under-skirt and what have come to be called "harem pants." Figure 7, which depicts festivities of the Mughal court in India,¹ shows two dancing-girls, one of whom plays chalpara. They are accompanied by a tef, or tambourine. Like their male counterparts, the dancing girls of the Ottoman Empire sang and played musical instruments, but, except in Egypt, they did not participate in the mimic farces.

Aside from the troupes of chengi, there was another group of individuals who frequently danced at the great

¹The Mughal Empire was Muslim, and the ruling dynasty was of Turkish origin. The Mughals ruled India from about 1526 to about 1730. The entertainments at the Mughal court during this period show a marked similarity to those of the Ottoman Empire. See Mohd. Azhar Ansari, "Amusement and Games of the Great Mughals," Islamic Culture, XXXV (January 1961), pp. 21-31.
Figure 5. Dancing before the Sultan.
Ottoman festivals—the dervishes. Their dancing, like the singing of the naatkhans, was religious, but was also a spectacle for public entertainment. In order to understand the curious phenomenon of the "dancing" or "whirling" dervishes, a certain amount of religious history must be brought to bear.

During the last half of the eighth century, a wave of mysticism swept across the dominions of Islam, which were then governed by the Arabian caliphate. This mysticism may be compared to the popular Christian mysticism which appeared in Europe during the fifteenth century. The essence of this Muslim mysticism was the ecstatic communion with God, and the final absorption of the devout communicant into the Godhead. The mystic unification with God, which purified the soul, was achieved through love. Like the "mystical ladder of love" of Christian mysticism, the Muslim process of purification and unification can be neither achieved nor explained rationally.

The Muslim monks, or holy men, who practiced this mysticism, were called sufi, meaning one garbed in wool. By about 1100, the sufis began to be organized into compact brotherhoods, or orders. The members of these devout orders were called dervishes; generally, the members lived together in a lodge, or tekkeh, where each order
Figure 6. Dancing Girl.
Figure 7. Mughal Dancers and Musicians.
practiced its own peculiar ritual, or dhikr. Some of the orders, such as the Bektashi, were contemplative; most of the Ottoman jannisaries were lay members of this order. The other order which flourished near Istanbul was that of the Mevlevi, the most famous of the "whirling dervishes."

Figures 8 and 9 depict the dance of the Mevlevi dervishes in their tekkeh near Istanbul. The dance, which was for this group of sufiis a technique for achieving a mystical, religious experience, is accompanied by other members of the order who play small kudum, or drums, and ney, or reed-flutes. The dancers wear the conical felt hat, or sikke, a tight-fitting jacket, and a long skirt. The dance, or devr, of the Mevlevi order has been described by numerous European travellers, most of whom were baffled by what they saw. The following is a description of this devr, written by an English traveller of the nineteenth century; although the writer was totally and arrogantly ignorant of the meaning of what he saw, his description is brief and vivid:

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1Most of this religious background material may be found in Fisher, op. cit., pp. 102-105. A full study of the religious beliefs of the dervish orders is Lucy M. Garnett, Mysticism and Magic in Turkey. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1912).
When I arrived, one old dervish, in a green dress, was sitting at one point of the room, and twenty-four, in white, were opposite to him. A flute and drum played some very dreary music in the gallery. At a given signal they all fell flat on their faces, with a noise and precision that would have done honor to a party of pantomimists; and then they all rose and walked slowly around, with their arms folded across their breasts, following the old green dervish, who marched at their head, and bowing twice and very gravely to the place where he had been sitting and to the spot opposite to it. They performed this round two or three times. Then the old man sat down, and the others, pulling off their cloaks, appeared in a species of long petticoat, and, one after the other, began to spin. They commenced revolving precisely though they were waltzing by themselves; first keeping their hands crossed on their breast, and then extending them, the palm of the right hand and the back of the left being upwards. At last they all got into play, and, as they went round and round, they put me in mind of the grand party we have seen on the top of an organ, where a cavalier seul revolves by himself, and bows as he faces the spectators.

They went on for a long time without stopping—a quarter of an hour, perhaps, or twenty minutes. There was something inexpressively sly and offensive about the appearance of these men, and the desire one felt to hit them hard in the face became uncomfortably dominant. At the end of their revolutions, they made another obeisance to the old man, and all this time the players in the orchestra howled forth a kind of hymn...¹

Figures 8 and 9 graphically illustrate this dance.

In each picture we see the dervishes dancing, and making obeisances to their aged leader, or semazen. The tekkeh, as can be seen in the figures, was designed for this

¹Albert Smith, Customs and Habits of the Turks. (Boston: Higgins & Bradley, 1855), pp. 93-95.
Figure 8. Dance of the Mevlevi Dervishes.
Figure 9. Dance of the Mevlevi Dervishes.
ritual; there is a dancing area, a place for the musicians, and a great deal of room for spectators. The Ottoman miniature, figure 8, shows the dance-pavilion of the tekkeh without surrounding walls—-we can see Istanbul in the distance. It cannot be determined whether the Ottoman miniature depicts a temporary, outdoor pavilion, or whether the artist has removed the walls of the tekkeh to indicate its location in relation to Istanbul.

The Mevlevi, like almost every other dervish order, performed its ritual before an audience. Not only did lay members of the order, as well as other visitors, visit the tekkeh to watch the devr, but the devishes frequently performed at the court festivals in Istanbul, where their gyrations were viewed with either reverence or amusement, depending upon the religious convictions of the individual spectator. Dervishes were considered both saints and madmen, and many performing dervishes, like the "pilgrims" who plagued the Russian countryside during the eighteenth century, were scurrilous and self-appointed sufis whose religious sincerity was far subordinated to their showmanship.

Figure 10 depicts a dervish dancing before Sultan Murad in 1582. He wears the conical hat and the long, loose outer cloak. As the dervish dances (in the Istanbul
hippodrome), he is accompanied by two ney. A janissary and another dervish watch. Also in the picture is a chengi, whose jacket seems to be covered with bells.

Dramatic Activity

Unlike the dances of the chengi and of the dervishes, which show a remarkable continuity over the more than five hundred years of Ottoman history, the dramatic activities which found their way into the great Ottoman festivals are difficult to reconstruct from the available evidence. At the sur of Murad III, we are told that there were "Jewish comedies" performed on the evening of June 7, 1582;¹ no description or explanation accompanies this statement. Fuller descriptions do exist, however, of certain dramatic and quasi-dramatic entertainments, both prior to the sur of Murad and anterior to it, which were popular in Istanbul and other parts of the Ottoman empire.

In general, it may be said that the history of the dramatic and theatrical entertainments of the Ottoman empire (other than puppetry, which will be discussed as a separate phenomenon) is a history of various types of acting, or impersonation. The most prevalent and rudimentary type of impersonation is that which was performed by the very popular story-tellers. Story-telling as a

Figure 10. Dancing before the Sultan.
profession is a very old one in the Middle East. In figure 11, we see the story-teller Lalin Kaba, the favorite story-teller of Sultan Mehmed III (who was the Prince Mehmed honored by the sur of Murad III). Lalin Kaba was a meddah, or "praise-giver." The meddah, in the telling (or reciting or chanting) of his stories, would usually give long and poetic panegyrics to the heroic characters in his tales, or to the meddah's patron (in this case the sultan). These panegyrics formed the basis for much courtly, elegant poetry, which as E.J.W. Gibb indicates, was based on Persian models.¹ This courtly, graceful (and most un-dramatic) poetry, however, was sub-ordinated to vivid story-telling, in which the meddah would engage in taklid, or mimicry. With the aid of his wand and scarf, the meddah would mimic, or impersonate the characters of his story. This mimicry, however, was a minor part of the meddah's entire performance — it was often used only as a sort of comic relief.²

More use of taklid was made by another class of performer called a mukallid, or imitator. These performers, some of whom were chengi, would imitate, by speech and

Figure 11. The Story-Teller Lelin Kaba.
actions, various types of comical characters from the everyday life of the city. Evliya mentions that the sixth company of chengi were famous in acting the parts of bakers, collectors of tribute, and silver-searchers. The meddahs and mukallids performed at court, at private celebrations, in taverns and coffee-houses, and at the public festivals. The mukallids, according to Evliya, also operated some of the puppet theatres.

In addition to solo performances of mimicry, the mukallids and chengi also participated in rude mimes, or farces, called, like the dancing of the chengi, oyun. The origins of this improvised and informal drama are quite obscure. According to Martinovitch, this oyun, which dates back at least to the twelfth century, was inherited from the classic mimes of Byzantium. Like the mimes of the Roman Empire, the oyun of the Ottoman Empire was coarse and ribald, making use of stock characters and situations. Like the Roman and Byzantine mimes, oyun was performed without formal scenery and with a few properties. Dialogue was improvised. Figure 12, which Nicoll labels

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1Evliya, op. cit., p. 240. Also see Appendix I. The silver-searchers, whose job it was to root through the dung-heaps of Istanbul for lost silver, were no doubt apt subjects for comic imitation.

2Ibid., p. 243.

"Eastern mimi of the middle ages," dates from the eleventh century. On the right, one of the mimi slides up a pole which is balanced upon the back of another performer (this trick, incidentally, is quite similar to those shown in Figure 20). A small band plays the harp, a lute, horns, cymbals and a flute. The other five figures, according to Nicoll, are taking part in a play.¹ Nicoll establishes the survival of the classic Roman mime in Byzantium, as does Herman Reich, who also mentions the statement of Manuel Palaeologus, a member of the Byzantine royal family who was at the court of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I at Brusa, about 1385, that he found there "crowds of mimes, whole bodies of instrumentalists, choirs of singers, and tribes of dancers."²

Other influences upon the Ottoman oyun may have come from Persia, where two types of drama flourished,

¹Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles (London: George G. Harrap & Company, Limited, 1931), p. 160. For this low type of drama, the terms "mime," "farce," "play," "comedy," or "burlesque" are used interchangeably by Western scholars and travelers. The formal differences between modern "farce," "burlesque," and "comedy" do not apply here.

the Taziya, or passion play,\(^1\) and the temacha, which is a popular farce, employing teklid. It is unlikely that the Taziya had much influence on the Ottoman oyun; on the other hand, it seems probable that there was a connection between the Persian temacha, and its Ottoman counterpart.\(^2\) Dr. Covel mentions that the play which he saw acted in Adrianople in 1675 was played by "Armenians and Turkes that came from the borders of Persia, and several times acted certain conceits in Persian habit, which was very becoming, being far more rich and gaudy than the Turkes wear."\(^3\)

\(^1\)This religious pageant-drama, which dates from the tenth century, is the only tragic drama of the Muslim world. It commemorates the martyrdom of Hassan and Hussein, the followers of Ali. The Persians are members of the Shiite sect of Islam, and hold that Ali, not Muhammed, was the true prophet, the Angel Gabriel having revealed himself to Muhammed by mistake. The Taziya was not permitted in the Ottoman Empire, which was Sunnite. For an early account of this play, see Jean Baptiste Tavernier. Les Six Voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier...faict en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indies (Paris: Gervais Cloisier et Claude Barbin, 1677), Vol. 2, pp. 171-173. Also see Charles Virolleaud, "Le Theatre Persan," Les Theatres d'Asie (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1961), pp. 257-269. This recent publication, like almost every other survey source on theatre, omits even the mention of the popular drama of the Ottoman empire.


\(^3\)Bent, op. cit., p. 215.
One type of oyun generally performed at the Ottoman festivals was the orta oyunu, or "middle play." In Figure 13, we see a performance of orta oyunu before Sultan Ahmed in 1720. This is the earliest pictorial evidence, which can be definitely identified as a dramatic performance, found for this study. The stage, which floats on the Sea of Marmora several feet from the Sultan's kiosk, is evidently of wood planking. The band plays kudum, tef, and zurma. There are eight male actors, one of whom is the zenne, or "male who plays the part of a woman." The two players to the right, who are evidently engaged in dialogue, are the two main stock characters of the orta oyunu, Pishekiar and Kavuklu. The stage is decorated with small artificial shrubs and trees, and with hanging stars-of-David. Some spectators watch the play from boats or kayaks. The costumes of the actors may be considered "realistic" in the sense that they copy the contemporary dress of the period.

Since the performance shown in Figure 18 was played under special circumstances--on a raft in the water--it cannot be considered entirely typical; on the other hand, it is difficult to arrive at the requirements for a typical performance of the various oyun played at the Ottoman.

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\(^1\) Evliya, op. cit., p. 220, lists a guild of artisans who made artificial trees for festivals.
Figure 13. Theatrical Performance before the Sultan.
festivals. Usually by the eighteenth century, the orta oyunu was played on an open area, out-of-doors, with the audience surrounding the playing area, or meidan. This arrangement was similar to our modern "arena staging" and the actors were careful to "move about the stage changing their positions continually...to permit all the spectators in all sections of the audience to see and hear the actors clearly."¹

Figure 14, a representation of an orta oyunu performance of the early twentieth century, shows a scene between several zenne and the two stock characters Pishekiar and Kavuklu. The costumes, like the costumes of Figure 13, are contemporary dress. To the left sit the musicians, and to the right is a small portable screen, which is used as a set-piece in many scenes.

Like the Roman mimes and many of the Commedia dell'Arte scenes, the various oyun of the Ottoman empire were erotic and quite often, obscene. (The word oyun, of course, also applies to the erotic dancing and gesticulating of the chenci.) The following is a description of a festival performance of the eighteenth century:

...of all the entertainments, the comedy was the most valuable article. A kind of cage, three feet square by six feet high, hung round with a curtain, represents a house, and contains one of the Jewish actors dressed like a woman. Another Jew, in the habit of a young Turk, and supposed to be pleasantly

¹Martinovich, op. cit., p. 21.
amorous of the lady of the house, a valet pleasantly absurd, a fourth Jew dressed like a woman, and acting the part of the obliging friend, a husband, who is imposed upon, in short, the characters which we see everywhere, stand without and compose the piece. But that which is to be met with no where else is the denouement; everything is acted, and nothing left to the imagination of the spectators...

Over one hundred years earlier, Dr. Covel wrote:

...They acted two drunken men, two young whores, and an old bawd, and a gallant, and a soldier; a cuckold and his three wives; wherein all the tricks and ways of making love here in Turkey, and the extreme jealousy and severity of these people were excellently well expresss.

Although the two preceding excerpts give some indication of the ribald nature of some of the Öyun, they cannot be considered representative examples of all the farces which were performed at the great festivals. In Figure 15, we see one of the companies of actors performing as they march in the alay of 1720. The costumes are far from everyday dress; indeed they are highly theatrical and almost surrealist. An inspector (the old man on the donkey) is attended by his servants, who brush at him with whisk-brooms; he has caught a baker for some infraction and has forced him to march with a

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1 Tott, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
3 The actors are seen in the upper right-hand corner of the painting.
large plank about his neck. Although there are sixteen of these actors, probably the mukallid, in the group. Eleven of them do not participate in the scen... As the textual and pictorial evidence presented suggests, the oyun of the Ottoman Empire was quite varied. A full history of this activity (which has never been written) is outside the scope of this study. However, the next two sections of this chapter, on the puppetry and buffoonery, will shed additional light on the general subject of oyun.

Puppetry

Puppetry is the one aspect of Ottoman dramatic entertainment which has received a good deal of attention from modern scholars. The Turkish Karagöz, which was the most popular and prevalent puppet genre during the period of the great Ottoman festivals, remained popular in Turkey until the first World War.¹ Unlike the oyun of the live performers, the Karagöz scripts were often written down, and many of these have been translated and published. Hellmut Ritter and Georg Jacob² have been responsible for

¹Landau, op. cit., p. 17.
²Hellmut Ritter, Karagöz, Turkische Schattenspiele (Weisbaden: Korgenlandische Gesellschaft, 1953). George Jacob, Geschichte des Schattentheaters (Berlin: Mayer und Mueller, 1907), which was not available for this study, is cited by most writers as the most thorough piece of scholarship in this field.
many German translations, and Martinovich has published the English translations of two scripts. ¹ The Karagöz, like the orta oyunu, used well-defined stock characters, and the performances were usually ribald and obscene. Unlike most of the oyun, however, the Karagöz had a serious, mystical aspect. This quality, which is discussed at some length by Siyavuşgil,² is said to be connected with the mystical ideas of Sufism.³ In general, this mystical aspect may be seen in the "moralizing" tone of the Karagöz scripts, which contained didactic, poetic prologues and interpolated sermons extolling the virtues of sufi simplicity and devotion, in contrast to the wicked actions of the story itself. Thus the Karagöz attacked the immorality of its characters, and put them in a bad light. If the orta oyunu may be considered a sort of burlesque, then the Karagöz may be considered a sort of serious satire.

Another aspect of the Karagöz which contributed to a mood of mysticism and magic, according to both Siyavuşgil and Landau,⁴ was the effect of the staging of the plays,

¹Martinovich, op. cit., pp. 101-120
³Martinovich, op. cit., p. 30.
Figure 16. Karagöz Figures.
which was dream-like and mysterious. Unlike other entertainments of the Ottoman Empire, the shadow-theatre (in which the Karagöz was performed) was illusionistic and somewhat magical; the nocturnal audience sat in a dark hall or tent, and watched the shadow-figures float across an illuminated screen. In Figure 16, we see two of these figures: they were two-dimensional and were made of highly colored translucent camel hide.\(^1\) The operator (often a mukallid, who provided all the voices and sound effects) manipulated the figures with two rods, held at right angles to the screen. The light sources were between the operator and the screen--thus both he and the rods were unseen by the audience. The shadow-theatre, or hayal, made use of much scenery. The scenery, set pieces, and costumes of the Karagöz plays were highly imaginative and often fantastic in style.\(^2\)

The Karagöz was a type of puppet-drama, and cannot be equated with the hayal which it was performed. It is generally agreed by most scholars that the dramatic con-

\(^1\) These figures represent the two main stock characters of the Karagöz, Hadişvet and Karagöz. The latter is always the "hero" and Hadişvet is his friend and confidant.

\(^2\) Over one hundred Karagöz figures, set pieces, and properties can be found pictured in Ritter, op. cit., figs. 79-193. These are photographs of actual figures from a number of European and Turkish museums.
tent of the Karagöz derived from the classical mime, along with certain aspects of costume, such as the abnormal phallus worn by Karagöz in Figure 16. The hayal itself, however, seems to have come from Eastern Asia; Knudsen postulates that the shadow-theatre was introduced into Turkey by the Mongols, while other scholars indicates Southeast Asia as a possible point of origin. In either case, the shadow-theatre of the Middle East was established by about 1200 A.D., and from the beginning was referred to as "the Chinese shadows." During the period of the great Ottoman festivals, the Karagöz flourished. It was performed at court, and was a great favorite with the ladies of the imperial harem.

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1 Reich, op. cit., p. 667 (chart). Reich and some others connect the Karagöz with the Commedia dell'Arte; however, this connection has never been proved, and the entire subject of the possible mutual influence of the various entertainments of the Middle East with those of the several Italian states is in need of much re-examination and research.


3 Landau, op. cit., pp. 11-12.


5 M. Corneille, Dictionnaire Universel Geographique et Historique... (Paris: Chez Baptiste Coignard, 1708), Vol. 3, p. 673.
It was especially popular during the fast-month of Ramadan, during which no daytime entertainment was permitted.\footnote{1} It was performed at the great festivals, though probably in a special manner to accommodate a larger-than-usual audience.

According to Evliya,\footnote{2} the operators of the shadow-plays were either mukallid or pehlivans. He also mentions what must have been another shadow entertainment of painted figures and magic lanterns.\footnote{3}

It is probable, however, that this last was not a true puppet-entertainment. Evliya mentions it separately, as being something distinct from what he calls "the Chinese shadows."\footnote{4} A possible clue to the nature of this spectacle may be found in de Tott, who describes "turning lanterns, on which are painted extravagant and often obscene figures."\footnote{5}

\footnote{1}{Thus a naval operator required a repertory of twenty-eight plays, one for each night of Ramadan. Landau, op. cit., p. 16.}

\footnote{2}{Evliya, op. cit., pp. 229, 243.}

\footnote{3}{Ibid., p. 229.}

\footnote{4}{Ibid.}

\footnote{5}{Tott, op. cit., p. 171}
Some indication of how the shadow-theatre may have been adapted for the large audiences of the great festivals may be seen in Figure 17, which depicts a water-festival on the Sea of Marmora in 1720. Here a puppet carriage, with puppet passengers, is mounted on ropes stretched between the masts of two ships. It is possible that the puppet-figures moved along the ropes. It is also possible that the puppet-figures have something to do with the chengi who dance on little floats near the Sultan's kiosk. Due to the conventional representation of the Ottoman painter, however, interpretation of this scene is difficult. The puppet-figures, in any case, are similar to those of the hayal, but are considerably larger.

Buffoons and Pehlivans

During the period of the great festivals, the Ottoman court swarmed with buffoons of many descriptions. These individuals were treated as mascots, scapegoats and playmates by the sultans and other members of the court. Some of them amused the court with songs, dances, and jests; others were kept because of certain deformities, and were employed merely as servants, harem attendants and living conversation-pieces. These last were mainly mutes, dwarfs or eunuchs. An individual who was a mute, a dwarf and a
eunuch, all in one, was especially prized.\textsuperscript{1} Generally, these were slaves, and the personal property of the sultan.

Outside the palace walls, at the festivals, certain professional performers—possibly chengi who had grown too old for the danse du ventre—engaged in oyun of a grotesque and absurd nature. Like the classical stupidì, some of the commedia zanni, and some modern circus clowns, these buffoons imitated, in a fantastic and hilarious way, many of the social outcasts, undesirables, and derelicts of everyday life, such as beggars, tramps, drunkards, opium-eaters and imbeciles.

As Rosenthal indicates, these buffoons or fools were quite common throughout the Muslim Middle East, long before the formation of the Ottoman Empire, and many terms were applied to them, one of which was battal, or "lazy fellow."\textsuperscript{2} The most common Turkish term was maskara, which was derived from the Arabic maskhara, meaning "buffoon."\textsuperscript{3} Another Turkish term was nekro, or "one who makes odd or witty remarks."

\textsuperscript{1}Thomas Salmon, Modern History: or, the State of all Nations... (London: Longman, Osborn, 1744), Vol. 1, p. 418.


\textsuperscript{3}The Italian Maschere is derived also from the Arabic maskhara.
Among other types of abberants imitated by the professional buffoons were the wandering dervishes, who, unlike the Mevlevi and the Bektashi, were itinerant, often demented, and scorned by both the official religious leaders and the populace of the Ottoman capital. Often, the wandering dervishes were themselves professional mountebanks; thus, there was often a fine line between the buffoons who imitated the odd behavior of these dervishes, and the dervishes themselves. This confusion has caused differences among scholars over the content of Figure 18, which depicts five dancing figures and four musicians, who play drums, a tef and a viskay. Two of the dancers are disguised as goats, and the others wear fools-caps and long-sleeved tunics. According to Arnold, the scene represents dervishes.\(^1\) According to Rosenthal, "the subject was formerly thought to represent dervishes," and he labels the picture "wandering musicians and entertainers."\(^2\) The problem seems unresolved. However, Arnold makes a very good case for his interpretation, and his capsule-history of the wandering dervishes is valuable.\(^3\) Whether derv-


\(^3\) Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 112–116.
vishes or professional entertainers, these dancers perform in a graceless, aberrant manner, and deserve the epithet "grotesque."

The lower half of Figure 19 depicts an oyun of grotesques. According to Metin And, this mêlée, which is performed by professional buffoons at a private celebration indoors, was called a curcung, which means "drunken revel" or "orgy."\(^1\) The performers wear what seems to be fairly typical buffoon costume—the pointed cap, the short tunic and knee-breeches. (Their masks are atypical, however; this is the only evidence of masks encountered during research for this study.) Two candles provide light, and the musicians play a harp, two ter, and a small drum called a darbuka.

At the great festivals, the buffoons were used to provide comic byplay, much in the same manner as the "clown" at an American rodeo, by mocking the more serious events, keeping the bystanders amused between main events, and so on. In Figure 2, the buffoons mock the dancing of the chengi. Whereas the dance of the chengi is serious in its sensuality, the frolicking of the buffoons is ribald and provocative only of laughter.

\(^1\) And, op. cit., p. 37.
Figure 18. Buffoons and Grotesques.
Figure 19. Grotesque Dance.
The most common type of buffoon at the great festivals was called *tulumgi*, so named because of the inflated bag, or *tulum*, which he carried. The function of these buffoons was twofold—to amuse, and to control the great crowds at the festivals. In this they resembled the "green men" of the early English pageants, who used firesticks to make a path through the London crowds. The *tulumgi* are described by Dr. Covel:

There are men on purpose in all these public meetings appointed, cal'd Tooloons, from skins of sheep (cal'd Tooloons) blown up full of wind, and all clad with oil and tar, and in leather jackets besmeared in like manner. The Turkes, (who are very spruce and chary of their fine garments) run from these people as from the devil...¹

Figures 15, 20, 22, 23, 24, 31 and 32 of this study depict these *tulumgi*. Like the buffoons in Figure 2, these *tulumgi* wear short jackets, knee-breeches, and more-or-less pointed hats. (The buffoons of Figure 2, however, are not *tulumgi*, since they do not carry *tulums*.) The various tricks of the buffoons, in that they involved imitation or parody, may be considered grotesque *teklik* and fall into the broad category of *çyun*, along with the dancing and acting.²

¹Bent, op. cit., p. 204.
²The dancing of the Mevlevi dervishes was not officially considered true dancing, and was thus not called *çyun*.
Besides dance, dramatic oyun, and buffoonery, another category of professional entertainment was one of the indispensable concomitants of an Ottoman festival. This consisted of all the curious and quasi-athletic "acts" which can be seen today at an American circus or carnival side-show of acrobats, tumblers, jugglers, contortionists, giants and dwarfs, animal trainers, weight-lifters, conjurers, fire-eaters, sword-swallowers, and so on. Then, as now, these acts required varying degrees of physical prowess and deception.

The term used by Evliya to cover all these performers was pehlivan. He also includes professional athletes—wrestlers, fighters, and archers—in his definition.\(^1\) Actually, the word pehlivan can mean "hero," "athlete," "wrestler," or "champion." Thus it seems that Evliya used the word in a general, even figurative, sense.\(^2\) The term is useful, however, to indicate a broad class of performers for whom there exists no single appellation in English.

Among the pehlivans of the Ottoman Empire were professional wrestlers, professional sword-fighters, and

\(^1\) Evliya, op. cit., pp. 196-197; 228-229. Also see Appendix I of this study.

\(^2\) Pallis, op. cit., p. 203.
and fighters with clubs. The last two may be descended from the gladiators of the Roman Empire. These and the professional archers performed genuine athletic contests and displays of skill. Other pehlivans performed feats of agility; we would call them acrobats or tumblers. Figure 20, a seventeenth-century Ottoman miniature, shows a number of these performing at a festival; their tricks are familiar and self-explanatory to the western reader. In fact, most of the western travelers who noted these tricks of agility declared the Ottoman performers to be somewhat less successful than their European counterparts. Baron de Tott refers to "clumsy rope-dancers,"¹ and Dr. Covell makes frequent reference to the inferiority of the Ottoman performers.² Evliya, on the other hand, praises the skill of the acrobats and rope-dancers of Istanbul. Although he had traveled in Europe, he makes no comparisons between Ottoman and European performers.³ We do know, however, that Turkish acrobats were popular in Europe during the eighteenth century.⁴

¹Tott, op. cit., p. 131.
²Chant, op. cit., p. 220; et passim.
³Evliya, op. cit., p. 228. Unfortunately, the author never wrote his European memoirs.
⁴Mahomet Carathe was one of these. See Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, The History of Entertainment, catalogue one hundred and ninety, 1959, Item 450, and cover plate.
Figure 20. Pehlivan and Buffoons.
Another less ordinary class of pehlivans who were quite popular at the Ottoman festivals may be compared to the fakirs of India. They performed feats of physical self-torture, and tricks of "magic." These performers have a very old history, and remain today popular in India, Arabia, and parts of North Africa. As with the buffoons, there was a close connection between professional performers and wandering holy men. Many dervishes, such as those of the fanatical Rifaiya order, were the counterparts of the Indian fakirs; they practised, among other things, glass-eating and fire-walking.¹ Like the dancing dervishes, these dervishes gave public performances. Among the wandering dervishes who performed such feats, there were no doubt varying degrees of genuine religious intent. The dervishes, however, were never considered pehlivans.

Figure 21 shows five performers who have pierced their flesh with knives, swords, spears and other instruments. Their heads are pierced with quills. One has horse-shoes nailed to his chest (and also plays a small lute).

As can be imagined, there were hundreds of tricks

¹Fisher, op. cit., p. 104.
involving this type of skill and/or deception. These performers had specialties involving great weights, snakes, fire, and so forth. Many acts required physical stamina, and many, like the renowned "Indian rope-trick," used sleight-of-hand and special contrivances.

The pehlivans for whom Evliya reserves especial praise are the rope-dancers and tumblers, "every one of which is capable of ascending to heaven," and who had an arsenal of two hundred and sixty instruments to help them in their performances.¹ Some of these instruments are used in the scene depicted by Figure 22; one pehlivan walks the tight-robe with the aid of a weighted pole, and another walks on stilts and brandishes two swords. In the same scene, seven chengi dance to the accompaniment of tef, and four tulumgi cavort gaily.

From Evliya's discussion of the pehlivans, it would seem that the title of pehlivan was applied only to those performers who had attained a certain mastery of his art; evidently there was an apprentice-system of sorts within some esnaf of pehlivans.

¹Evliya, op. cit., pp. 228-229.
Figure 21. Pehlivans.
Figure 22. Dancers, Pehlivans and Buffoons.
Fireworks

Fireworks were a part of almost every Ottoman festival, and were displayed during the evenings. Often an entire evening or succession of evenings would be given over to fireworks displays.\(^1\) Sometimes, the fireworks would be set off at midnight after an evening of dancing and other entertainment.\(^2\) Since the evening entertainments of dance, farce and acrobatics required a great deal of illumination, and since fireworks required darkness, the fireworks display would usually be the last entertainment of the evening. Often the fireworks displays would last from midnight to dawn.

In style of presentation, the Ottoman fireworks resemble those of Western Europe. Although a knowledge of pyrotechny—primarily military—had reached the Arabs and Byzantines very early from China, the Ottoman manner of using fireworks for public display was almost identical to that used in Italy during the early sixteenth

\(^1\) Tott, op. cit., pp. 177-179.

\(^2\) Paul Rycaut, The History of the Turkish Empire from the Year 1623 to the Year 1677...(London: by J.M. for John Starkey, 1680), pp. 318-320.
Just as their European counterparts, the Ottoman fireworks were presentational—rockets and fire-pots set off and enjoyed merely for their incendiary colors—or representational—fireworks used as a medium to represent burning castles, exploding ships, gushing fountains, and fire-breathing dragons. Sieges and sea-battles between the Ottomans and the Christians were frequently represented with fireworks, the Ottomans always being the victors. (This application of fireworks will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter, in connection with the great mock battles.) In Figure 23, we see one of these besieged castles, already in flames but still firing its cannon. Elsewhere in the picture, two attendants set off skyrocketts, a pyramid burns, and two tulumgi play with a seven-headed dragon. The climax of most Ottoman fireworks displays, whether they involved a mock battle or not, was the spectacular destruction of some large edifice, usually a Christian castle. Whereas similar European displays were often mythological and allegorical—such as "the destruction

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2 Evliya, op. cit., pp. 181-182, lists a guild of fireworks-makers, called fishkjian, most of whom were also members of the armorers' guild.
Figure 23. Ottoman Fireworks.
of the castle of Felicity" at the Carrousel in Paris in 1662\(^1\)--the Ottoman fireworks usually represented some specific victory over the infidels.

In Figure 24, we see less elaborate fireworks than those of Figure 23. These are both presentational and representational. Fire-jugs spout flame, and a pin-wheel spins; a fountain and two sailing ships are represented, and the tulumgä cavort.

As is the case with the pahlivans, there is a sharp contrast between the ecstatic comments of Evliya upon Ottoman fireworks, and the less-than-enthusiastic comments of western travellers. Covel, Rycaut, and de Tott all express their displeasure with the smoky and sputtering Ottoman rockets.\(^2\) As far as quantity was concerned, however, the fireworks at the Ottoman festivals seem to have been unexcelled. Rycaut mentions that for the fireworks he witnessed in 1675, "240 men were employed for four months time, in the making of them.\(^3\)

The connection between the Ottoman fireworks and those of Europe--in terms of style of display--is indica-


\(^3\)Rycaut, op. cit., p. 319.
Figure 24. Ottoman Fireworks.
ted by the fact that the designers of the fireworks were often renegados from Europe; Covel mentions two, one a former Venetian and another from Holland. ¹ As in Europe, Ottoman fireworks were often displayed on the water. De Tott saw them on the Sea of Marmora,² and Sandys describes fireworks which he saw on the Nile, near Cairo, about 1610.³

¹Bent, op. cit., p. 222. These men were evidently not responsible for the quality of the flame itself; the fishkjian probably did the actual construction.

²Tott, op. cit., p. 177.

CHAPTER III

OTTOMAN PAGEANTRY

As indicated in the introduction to this study, the Ottoman court festivals were official celebrations. They were scheduled, planned, and organized by the sultan and his advisors. The events celebrated had to do with the sultan, or other members of the Ottoman family. When the empire and the court were strong and prosperous, the festivals were vast and splendid. When, by the late nineteenth century, the political and economic resources of the empire had waned, the festivals were no more.¹

Although a certain infusion of religious elements into the court festivals was inevitable in light of the theocratic nature of the government, the court festivals were primarily of a secular character. When a victory over the Christians was celebrated, the religious aspects were quite minor. The sultan and his army were the objects of the acclaim of the populace, and only insofar as the victors could be considered "defenders of the faith against

¹When Julia Pardoe witnessed the Court festival in Istanbul in 1836, the pomp and ceremony of the earlier festivals had all but disappeared. The celebrations she describes were evidently no more splendid than a Neapolitan carnival of the period. Julia Pardoe, The City of the Sultan (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), pp. 460-477.
the infidel" was the celebration at all religious.

There were, however, certain festivals of the Ottoman empire which were held each year on a number of Muslim holy days, and these must be given some discussion as separate phenomena. Most of the holy days and feast days of the Muslim calendar fall near the month of fasting, or Ramadan. After the twenty-eight days of Ramadan there was a joyous celebration called kuchuk bayram, or "little festival." This was the occasion for much spontaneous, informal public merry-making during which the people exchanged presents, put on new clothes, participated in ceremonies at the mosque, and generally enjoyed themselves. Unlike the spectacularly planned pageantry of the Ottoman court festivals, the celebrations of kuchuk bayram were largely unofficial and somewhat humble. In Figure 25, an eighteenth-century French engraving, we see bayram merry-making in Istanbul. The citizens throng the streets, and some ride swings or small ferris-wheels; there is no ale, and no tulumgi are necessary to keep the crowd in line.¹

There were two bayrams; the other was called buyuk bayram, or "great festival." Despite its name, however, this second bayram was never as merry as the first. The bayrams lasted about three or four days each. The only other re-

igious festival of the empire which occasioned general public rejoicing was msulid, or the birthday of the Prophet. Since these holy days and festivals were part of the Muslim calendar, which uses uncorrected lunar months, they never fell on the same day in the Western (Julian or Gregorian) calendar. Maulid and the two Bayrams were the major religious festivals of the majority of the population of the empire, which was Sunni Muslim.\(^1\) However, such minority religions as were given official recognition by the court---Shiite Muslims, Jews, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Catholics---were permitted to hold their own religious festivals.

The great court festivals, although influenced by the official Muslim institution, were by no means part of the Muslim calendar. The sultan and "the defender of the faith," but never assumed the official title of supreme religious leader, or caliph.\(^2\) On the other hand, the high-ranking members of the Muslim institution---the Shayk-al-Islam, the muftis, and the cadis---marched near the head of the great cavalcade, the alay; also, as we have noted, various religious singers and dancers performed during the

\(^1\) A good outline of Muslim religious festivals, both Sunnite and Shiite, may be found in Grunebaum, *op. cit*.

\(^2\) The last actual caliph was deposed by the Mongols in the thirteenth century.
Figure 25. Bayram Festivities.
festivals. The participation of the Jews and the Christian groups in the court festivals, however, is an indication of the primarily secular character of these events.¹

The joyous events celebrated by the court festivals included the following: (1) royal entries and departures, (2) coronations ("the girding with the sword of Osman"), (3) the birthday of the sultan, (4) royal births, and (5) royal weddings or circumcisions. For a number of reasons, the weddings and circumcisions were the most frequently celebrated; for one thing, the sultans had large families, and for another, the weddings and circumcisions had important and semi-sacramental significance in Islam. The popular and royal demand for these sur was so great that in some years, infant marriages had to be contracted to provide a pretext for a festival.² Rarely, however, was a prince circumcised before the age of eight.³ In Islam, and of course the Ottoman empire, the wedding feast was in honor of the bride, and a circumcision-feast was in honor of the "husband,"

¹On at least one occasion, in 1673, a royal birth celebration was put off until bayram, to make the festivities doubly joyous. Bent, op. cit., p. 153.


³Ibid.
in a "wedding of the soul."

These ceremonies of wedding and circumcision are as old as Islam itself, but it is difficult to determine the date when the Ottoman sultans began to expand what was essentially a private, familial celebration into a great public festival. The earliest recorded Ottoman sur is evidently that given by Mehmed II in 1457. We have descriptions of two sur, given by Suleiman the Magnificent, which were held in the Istanbul hippodrome in 1524 and 1530. There is a long scroll in the Gennadeion Library in Athens which depicts a great alay of about 1550. This last indicates that the basic ceremonial form for an Ottoman court festival was probably well-established by the time of the sur of Murad III in 1582.

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1 Hammer, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 271.
2 Alderson, op. cit., p. 104.
4 Pallis, op. cit., p. xvii.
The dominant element of an Ottoman court festival, from the time of Suleiman the Magnificent to the end of the eighteenth century, was the procession or alay. The initial entourage consisted of the person honored by the festival—a sultan, or an Ottoman prince or princess—and his (or her) train. The next would come the notable officials of the two Ottoman governmental branches, the Muslim institution and the Ruling institution,2 including the Ottoman army and its band.

In Figure 26, we see a triumphal procession of 1596. Since the sultan and the army are being honored for their victories in the field, the sultan rides in military habit, and his train is not the court entourage, but the army. The sultan, wearing a turban with two heron plumes, is preceded by the mounted feudal cavalry (sipahis) and the marching janissaries. Behind him march the mounted standard bearers and the band. Since this occasion was somewhat more solemn than a sur, the crowd is restrained by dignified attendants, rather than tulumgi.

The next section of the alay, after the honored Ottoman had arrived at the place of the alay-kiosk,

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1 Because of the Muslim custom of female seclusion the bride would always be hidden by a little pavilion or canopy. See Bent, op. cit., pp. 234-235.

Figure 26. A Triumphal Procession.
involved the presentation of gifts, some of which were large floats or pageants, called nakils. These were carried before the alay-kiosk by slaves, after having been carried through the crowds as part of the alay. The purpose of the nakils was decorative and symbolic; possibly these great "trees" or "cones" were atavistic hold-overs from the ancient shamanism and animism of the Turkish tribes. At any rate, there were often thirty or more nakils in an alay, some being considerably larger than the rest. Figure 27 depicts one of these; it is labeled "A Turkish Pageant." As Rycaut indicates, this nakil was over seventy feet high, and was carried by one hundred slaves.¹ Made of wood, wire and wax, the nakil is decorated, in thirteen sections, with artificial flowers, branches, candles, and flags. At the top is a crescent, symbolic of Islam. The nakils were of great importance to the alay, as evidenced by Covel's statement that houses were often pulled down to make way for the larger nakils as they were carried through the streets.² According to Evliya, the nakils were "artificial trees,"

¹Rycaut, op. cit., p. 319.
²Bent, op. cit., p. 201.
Figure 27. A Nakil.
made of wax and wire by a guild called the nakiljian, who also manufactured the smaller cypress trees seen in Figure 10.¹

After the nakils and other gifts had been presented, the rest of the alay, the march of the esnaf, could follow. This section of the alay took several days to complete, and often only a percentage of all the guilds would march on any one day. This aspect of Ottoman pageantry was unique, and was viewed with curiosity and wonder by European travellers. It must have been a marvelous spectacle, one for which, fortunately, there exists abundant evidence.

Figure 26 depicts this parade of the esnaf during a festival of 1720. The various guilds, interspersed with musicians and foot-soldiers, pass before the sultan's kiosk, which is in the upper right hand portion of the picture. The sultan (Ahmed III) and his attendants are secluded from the rest of the spectators by an embroidered or painted screen. As they pass, the guilds display their several trades, marching on foot with their wares, and actually practising their trades, in little pageant-wagons. In the upper left-hand corner, the

¹Evliya, op. cit., p. 220.
Figure 28. Parade of the Esnaf.
wagon represents a public bath, and a bath attendant
gives a shampoo; the wagon is decorated with towels.
Just below this wagon is another, in which a boy dis-
plays some products which cannot be definitely identi-
fi ed; they might be tapers, sweets, or fireworks. In
the lower left we see the chengi who dance. They are
preceded by other entertainers, who carry fantastic maces
or wands. On the lower right we see the candle-makers,
who carry candles, and two tulumgi, who carry their pig's-
bladders over their shoulders. In Figure 15, the enter-
tainers perform an oyun as they march, and we also see
bakers, millers, farmers plowing, and the ubiquitous
tulumgi.

Textual accounts of this unique pageantry are quite
detailed. Evliya's description of 1636, in which he lists
785 guilds as they passed before the sultan, takes almost
150 pages of large quarto text.¹ Dr. Covell's description
is shorter:

During the festivals of the circumcision,
all publick tradesmen were forc'd to go in
procession with every man his wagon locked,
in which he publickly labour'd at his trade--
shoemakers, taylors, weavers, etc.; so much
as Bakers had an oven, smiths their little
forges, butchers flead their sheep, etc.,

¹Evliya, op. cit., pp. 104-250.
Which you may imagine such a piece of glorious madness as Europe elsewhere cannot pattern.1 Covels implication that the guild-members were forced to march against their wills is possibly an error or an exaggeration. Evliya indicates the pride with which many of the esnaf displayed their crafts, and mentions arguments between certain guilds as to who was to march before the other in the great alay.2 These great processions were, after all, dependent upon the cooperation of the entire population of the capital (and the Ottoman government did not really become a despotic one until the late nineteenth century.)

Two particularly charming vignettes from the alay of 1582 are shown in Figures 29 and 30, both from the Surname of Murad III. Figure 29 depicts the build of the baliji, or "makers of artificial birds,"3 as they pass before the sultan's kiosk. The actual products of the baliji were small parrots and herons which were used as children's toys and playthings, but here the craftsmen have prepared huge birds, which they display on poles. Figure 30 depicts the esnaf of the street-

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1Bent, op. cit., p. 232.
2Evliya, op. cit., p. 134.
3Ibid., p. 134.
sweepers, who practise their humble vocation before the most noble potentate of the East. Four of the sweepers wield their brooms, while two others sprinkle the dusty street with water from large water-bags. In the foreground of each painting we see the two ancient Byzantine monuments of the Istanbul hippodrome, the column of Constantine, and the serpent-column, or "Delphic tripod."¹

Dr. Govel's previously-mentioned statement on the "forcing" of the tradesmen does raise the question of the much-reputed cruelty and barbarism of the Ottoman Empire, and it must be admitted that there were aspects of the great Ottoman festivals which bespeak a certain callous cruelty. Among the various entertainments which were presented between the various esnaf displays, war-prisoners, convicted criminals, and inmates of the Istanbul insane-asylums would be led through the streets, in chains. Also, there were public punishments and tortures. Figure 31 shows one of these; amid much festival activity, including a mock castle firing and a pehlivan performing, we see a shopkeeper being punished for cheating. His clothes are covered with burning squibs; attendants and tulumgi are shown dousing the flames. It is quite likely, 

however, that this punishment involved more humiliation than physical pain. Among other festival activities which may be said to border on the barbarous were the animal-hunts, which seem reminiscent of the venationes of the Roman empire. All these activities tend to shock the modern, humanitarian mind, but when we consider the similar outrages which were common in Elizabethan and Restoration London--bear-baiting and the horrors of Bedlam--we cannot conclude that the Ottomans were unusually barbarous for their age. These great festivals were evidently full of much sincere rejoicing, and were no doubt eagerly looked forward to by much of the population. Festival-time was also a time when the sultan distributed largesse among the people, awarded prizes and decorations, and spread general good will.¹

The Ottomans had a long and proud tradition of military conquest, especially against the infidel European Christians. And, long after their really glorious battles had been won, the "defenders of the faith" celebrated past victories at the great court festivals with spectacular mock battles. These shows, which involved many men, enormous quantities of fireworks, and careful planning, provided a splendid climax to many an Ottoman festival.

¹See Pallis, op. cit., pp. 119-156.
Figure 29. March of the Baliji.
Figure 30. The Sweepers on Parade.
Figure 31. Festival Activity
They were at once entertaining and propagandistic. Often, after a period of genuine Ottoman defeats and reverses, the mock battles were used to buoy up the sagging spirits of the populace.¹ These battles usually involved the attacking of a Christian stronghold by the Ottoman forces. The "Christian" participants in these mock battles were never actual soldiers, but actors—Greek, Armenian, and Jewish—in costume. The battle almost always ended with the spectacular destruction of the Christian army, and often the victorious "soldiers" would emerge from a property "castle" displaying the "severed heads" of their victims. Sometimes, real and dummy actors would defend the Christian ramparts, and the dummies would be exploded with fireworks, supposedly having been hit by an artillery shell.²

Figure 32 depicts a mock battle held in 1720. The pasteboard castle, which holds at least fourteen "Christians," is pulled by an elephant, and is attacked by the Muslim troops, who in this case are common infantrymen (azabs) rather than the elite janissaries or the feudal cavalry (sipahis).

² See Bent, op. cit., p. 224.
Figure 32. A Mock Battle.
A vivid description of what may be considered a representative example of an Ottoman mock-battle is that of Baudier, written in 1626:

The Grand Vizir...caused to be drawn into the place two great castles of wood, diversely painted, mounted upon wheels, garnished with towers, fortified with rampiers, and furnish'd with artilleries: the one was kept by Turkes, who had planted upon their tower many red, white, and green ensigns. The other was defended by men, attired and armed after the French manner, who seemed Christian. Their ensigns carried white crosses; without doubt they had beene taken in some encounter, or at the sack of some towne of the Christians; either of these castles had thirty horse, which made diverse sallies: the Turkes forced the others to make their last retreat into their fort, where they shut them up, besieged them, battered their walls, made a breach, sent to discover it, and marched to the assault with their awfull cries and howlings: the little resistance they found made them soone masters and vanquishers, although they were themselves vanquished, for they fought against themselves: if they had to deal with Christians, they had not prevailed to easily. As soon as they were entered they abandoned the place to their cruelty, put all to the sword, cutting off the heads of the principall, and lifting counterfeit heads above the walls. The contempt which they made of us ended the triumph; they let slip into the place about thirty hogs which they had shut into the fort, and rame after them, crying and howling in mockery: thus the Turkes doe not sport but in contempting the Christians, nor labour seriously but in ruining them...1

In addition to the great mock battles, the military exercises held at the Ottoman festivals included demonstrations of genuine military prowess by actual members of the Ottoman army. These were usually members of the feudal cavalry, and they displayed their skill with the three traditional weapons of the Ottoman army—the scimitar, the bow, and the javelin. The feats-of-arms were performed often on horseback, singly, or in great mêlées, in what amounted to the Ottoman equivalent of European jousting. Since the Ottomans never used the heavily armed knight, there was no actual man-to-man tilting; rather, the Ottoman melee with javelins was the military version of the popular Ottoman (and Persian) sport, polo (juken). The melee was called a jirit, or "javelin-chase." The askinjis (light cavalry) participated in horse-races, and also gave solo exhibitions of equestrian skill.

\[\textit{Pallis, op. cit., pp. 200-208.}\]
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters, the basic aspects of Ottoman entertainment and pageantry have been surveyed. Representative examples of each aspect have been culled from the documents of over three centuries of Ottoman history. No attempt has been made to suggest anything like a history of these festivities. The source materials were selected to help provide a broad overview of the general topic of Ottoman court festivities, and, as a result of the study, a number of conclusions have been reached. Some of these conclusions are in general agreement with the views held by the few scholars who have addressed themselves to the phenomenon of the Ottoman festival, but most of these conclusions, having been arrived at almost entirely through the combination of iconographic and textual original sources, western and oriental, are without precedence.

1. The Ottoman court festival, as an informal institution of social life in Istanbul, flourished, with a recognizable sameness of basic content, from about the middle of the sixteenth century to about the end of the
end of the eighteenth.

2. The Ottoman court festival, in that it was invariably accompanied by an alay which included demonstrations by the esnaf of their various trades, was the occasion for the mutual participation of the people and the court in a formal pageantry.

3. Since there were among the esnaf of Istanbul a number of guilds of professional entertainers, every occasion for an alay was also an occasion for professional entertainments.

4. Many of the professional entertainments of the Ottoman empire were characterized by either eroticism or ribald humor, and were primarily intended for the delectation of an all-male audience.

5. The basic poses and costumes of the professional dancers and buffoons of the Ottoman court festivals maintained a striking sameness from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth.

6. Some form of theatrically-produced drama had been known by the Ottomans since the beginning of their empire, and that some form of acted drama, performed by professionals, was known at least as early as 1582.

7. The professional entertainers of the Ottoman capital were not Turks, but were members of the minority communities. The performing companies included troupes
of Jewish actors and dancers who decorated their stages with stars-of-David.

8. Of the elaborate spectacles prepared by the court for the eyes of the public, almost all were of a military nature, and stressed the superiority of Ottoman forces over those of the Christian infidel.

In the light of the general survey methods of the study, only a few such general conclusions can be offered with certainty. A final conclusion, which may be stated with absolute surety, is that the field of Ottoman entertainments and festivities richly repays study, and an enormous amount of research remains to be done in this area--especially now that the imperial Ottoman library's treasures are being made accessible for research purposes. It is hoped that this survey study will have brought forward interesting details of and accurate conclusions about the festivities of the Ottoman Empire as they flourished for two hundred years.
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APPENDIXES
APPENDIX I

The following passages are from Evliya Chelebi, A Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Translated from the Turkish by Joseph von Hammer. (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1834), vol. 1, pp. 181-241. These excerpts are part of Evliya's survey of the various trade-guilds of the Ottoman Empire, written c. 1650:

(268) The Firework-makers (Fishkjian) are one hundred men, with eighteen shops. Their patron is Jemshid; the greatest part of them belong to the armourers. They exhibit their skill in fireworks on the occasion of public rejoicings, on the birth of princes, and on the feast of circumcision. Their manufactory is outside of the hospital of the Suleimanleh, where they have the repository of their tools and their magazine. They have also shops at Eyyub, Galata, Top-khanah, and Beshiktash. The first artist in fireworks was Avicenna (Abu sina) who is the master and patron of all firework-makers. On the occasion of rejoicing for victories, these firework-makers set on fire some hundred thousand rockets of different colours, some of which mount straight into the sky, and some go in an oblique direction, spreading stars around them. Some of these rockets, divided into three parts, ascend at three different times, so that when the first, having burned out, falls to the ground, the second is lighted, and then the third, which at last explodes with a noise that seems to rend the clouds. It is probable that the Cherubim, hearing this dreadful report, recite the verse of the Koran, "O God guard us from the evil of mankind!" In the days of my youth when I, poor Evliya, mingled with all sorts of company, I made, for my master, Ali Agha, the inspector of the Custom-house, one of these rockets with seven divisions. It was made of a sprig of fir-tree hollowed out, at the top of which
was fixed a kind of cap filled with seventeen occas of powder, and below it was carried by pinions made of eagles’ wings. On the night of the birth of Kiasultan (afterwards the wife of Evliya’s patron, Malek Ahmed Pasha), I launched out to sea in a boat, and thence the rocket ascended into the sky at seven times to such a height, that the report of the seventh was heard on earth with so stupendous a noise that people hearing it lost their courage. Each of the seven divisions exploding, showered on the ground a fiery rain of Nafta-balls and stars, as if the seven planets and all the fixed stars had fallen from heaven. Seeing this stupendous sight, I began to repent, and as the tradition says, "Whosoever repents of a fault shall be considered as if he had not done it," I hope this my trick shall be considered as not having happened; it was, however, a strange spectacle. The firework-makers of Constantinople also make another kind of large rocket, which in exploding, vomits forth forty small rockets, some of which mount into the air, some go to the right, some to the left, and some fall amongst the crowd of spectators, burning them, which causes great noise and riot. On the nights of the feast of circumcision, some hundred thousand rockets of every description are set on fire, covering the surface of the sea, some of them dive and come up again, and put the whole sea into a blaze and the fish into an uproar, so that they jump out of the water and dive again, which is also a spectacle worth beholding. They likewise make castles of paper, which fire on one another; figures of monks, Jews, and Franks are represented in fire, which advance towards the spectators spitting fire; throwing them into fright and confusion. They also tie fireworks to the tails of dogs, bears, wolves, and swine, which, poor animals! when hurt by the fire, run amongst the spectators, producing a great deal of comical mischief. At the same time different sorts of rockets, firewheels, and engines, (called Bedaluchka, Havon, Tumba, Nerdiban, Shemshijnan, Kafes, Muhri Suleiman, Chatalasumani, Khosrewani,) fire-suns, dragons, serpents, thunder-bolts, &c. are burning on all sides, and produce a spectacle, which borders on the miraculous. They pass at the public procession with similar exhibitions before the koshk of the Emperor.
compliments to you.

(573) The Pehlivans. There are at Constantinople thirteen Pehlivans, rope-dancers or tumblers, every one of which is capable of ascending to heaven on a rope-ladder, and to approach as they soar so high, Jesus and the Cherubim. They exhibit their tricks in the Emperor's presence, some with Papujes, that have weights attached to them, some without weights, with sticks in their hands, some with swords, or one of the two hundred and sixty instruments of which the arsenal of the tumblers is composed. Uskudarli Mohammed Chelebi, the first of them who exhibited his skill on the occasion of the Imperial circumcision, at the Hippodrome, was appointed by an Imperial diploma the chief of the tumblers. According to his register, there are two hundred Pehlivans wandering through the world, who with their train amount to the number of three thousand men....

(574) The Fire-eaters (Ateshbazan) are seventy men. Their patron is Abu Omar Wassiti, who was girded by Selman Pak....

(575) The Pehlivans Night-players (Shebba bazan) who play at night, representing les ombres Chinoises.

(576) The Night-players with painted figures (Kniestassvirjian) who perform with the magic-lantern.

(577) The Players with the kukla (Kuklabaz).
(578) The Players with false money (Zurbaz).
(579) The Players with tasses (Tasbaz).
(580) The Players with cans (Kozebaz).
(581) The Players with cups (Kasebaz).
(582) The Players with birds (Perendebaz).
(583) The Players with bottles (Shishebaz).
(584) The Players with drinking glasses (Kadehbaz).
(585) The Players with goblets (Hokkabaz).
(586) The Players with eggs (Beizabaz).
(587) The Players with straps (Kishbaz).
(588) The Players with paper (Kiapadbaz).
(589) The Players with clews (Kellebaz).
(590) The Players with small balls (Yuvarlikbaz).
(591) The Players with dice (Kumarbaz).
(592) The Players with mirrors (Ainebaz).
(593) The Players with wheels (Char khbaz).
(594) The Players with swords (Shemshirbaz).
(595) The Players with water-spouts (Shadirvanbaz).
(596) The Players with hoops (Jenbarbaz).
(597) The Players with ointments (Surnebaz).
(598) The Players with monkeys (Maimunbaz).
(599) The Players with dogs (Kopekbaz).
(600) The Players with asses (Himarbaz).
(601) The Players with serpents (Yilanbaz).
(602) The Players with bears (Ayubaz).

All these Pehliyans pass exhibiting their skill, amidst the noise of shouts and cries, so that the walls of Constantinople shake. They have no music. Their establishment is at the mule's Khan, they are all without arms.

.......

(716) The Fools and Mimics of Constantinople.
Whenever there is a feast of Imperial circumcision, nuptials, or victory, from two to three hundred singers, dancers, comics, mimics, with mischievous boys of the town, who have exhausted seventy cups of the poison of life and misrule, crowd together and play day and night. At some private weddings they gain in a night the sum of a thousand piastres, collecting the money in the half-drum after each dance. If I were to describe all that I have seen of their skill and show, my book would become an elogy of these entertaining fellows (Motrib). They are divided into twelve companies, called Kol.

(717) The first company of Parpul are three thousand boys, they dwell at Balata, and are for the greater part Gipsies.

(718) The second company of Ahmed are three hundred boys, also of Balata, they are the dancing boys, the lords of misrule.

(719) The third company of Osman are four hundred; there is no Gipsy amongst them; they are all excellent mimics (Mukallid).

(720) The fourth company of Servi are three hundred; Armenian, Greek, and Jew boys.

(721) The fifth company of Babanazli are two hundred dancing boys, whose voluptuous motions set all the assemblies at circumcision feasts in an uproar.

(722) The sixth company of Zemerrud are three hundred Greek and Armenian boys of the quarters of the Seven Towers, Narli Kapu, Sulu Monastir, who have stripped many a rich man of his wealth, and laid him on the floor. They are famous in acting the parts of Semitji (bakers), Kharajji (collectors of tribute), Gümüşharaiji (silver-searchers), and for singing Greek strophes.

(723) The seventh company of Chelebi are two hundred boys; the most famous of all in stripping their admirers by their charms and caresses.
(724) The eighth company of Akideh, are two hundred boys; their chief is Pehlivan Eyyub, who is a poet, writer, learned man, singer, and traveller. These boys are the most elegant and best-fashioned, deed-leernt in a thousand tricks.

(725) The ninth company of Jewahir are two hundred boys of the jewellers of Galata, all Greeks and Armenians, famous for their comical talents in mimicking and making their auditory laugh. There are many boys amongst them, each of whom is worth a tribute of Greece, and perplexes the spectators by his beauty.

(726) The tenth company of Patakogli are three hundred boys; they are all Jews, excellent comics, and have musical talents.

(726) The eleventh company of Khushuta are one hundred and five boys, who are also all Jews.

(727) The twelfth company of Semurkash are two hundred boys, who are all Jews, and all tumblers, jugglers, fire-eaters, ball-players, and cup-players, who pass the whole night in showing their tricks, and ask more than one hundred piastres for a night's performance; as these Jewish boys have the greatest antipathy to the gipsies, who compose the first company, they generally set a band of these Jewish boys against a band of gipsies, which produces the strangest scenes. Thus, they represent the play of a Jew surprised in flagrante with a Gipsy girl, the girl is seated on an ass, and conducted through the streets with nasty intestines on her hand, which makes the people nearly die with laughing. In short these twelve companies of boys, who are called Chengi (cinaedi), vie with each other in producing the most voluptuous dances, and most comical scenes. They are all dressed in gold stuff, and endeavour to excel while passing under the Alai-koshk, where the Emperor is seated, so as to attract his attention by their fits and tricks. Since Adam descended from Paradise on earth, never was there seen such a crowd of tempting boys than under Sultan Murad IV.

(728) The Mimes (Mukallid). They are a very old tribe, and date their origin from the beginning of the world....
APPENDIX II

The following is the text of the Fugger News-Letter
from Istanbul, August 1582, translated by Pauline de Chary
and quoted in Victor von Klarwill, The Fugger News-Leters
.... during the Years 1568-1605. (New York: G. P. Putnam's
Sons, 1925), pp. 63-72.

The festivities were fixed for the 2nd day of
June 1582, on which day the ceremony in Seraglio which
had lasted eight days, came to an end. There the gifts
of the Sultanas and other great ladies of the kingdom
were presented to the Prince. These gifts consisted
of horses, richly-adorned slaves, jewels, garments,
and such like. In addition to this, fireworks were
burnt day and night for a whole week.

On the day named, the 2nd day of June, at the Sultan's
command, there assembled in the great Hippodrome all
the Pashas, Viziers and the Beglerbeghs of Greece and
Anatolia, the Aga of the Janissaries, the Capudan
Pasha and other great men of the Realm, together with
all the Janissaries. The wax torches destined for
the ceremony were about two and a half yards in height
and of most unusual thickness. These torches were
richly decorated with flowers, gold and silver, and
are therefore very heavy. From the Hippodrome the
whole gathering proceeded to the Sultan's Palace.
First strode the Khan and other great personages of
the Sublime Porte in robes richly embroidered in gold.
Then there appeared Mehemed, the son of the great
Sultan, on a horse beautifully caparisoned with jewels.
The head harness was set with diamonds and a double
row of pearls of immense value.

The youth, who was about sixteen years old, was
clad in a richly embroidered coat of green satin. He
has an elongated face, pale of colour, his eyes are
black and have a serious expression. He greeted the
people with lofty gesture. Behind the Prince came
six horses, led with halters, with silken saddle clothes,
richly embroidered with gold. The ceremonial procession arrived in the Seraglio about the hour of midday. There in accordance with the customs of the country, was made loudly resounding music, on kettledrums, trumpets and other instruments. Then the actual festivities began. There appeared one hundred men with staves, at the end of which were bladders filled with air. They were led by a man who rode a small donkey. With these bladders they struck at the inquisitive assembly in order to drive them off. Then came one hundred Janissaries who had been chosen to guard the seats in the Hippodrome which were destined for the foreign ambassadors. On the first day of the festivities, tight-rope dancers showed their tricks, which they performed with quite amazing skill. Others, again, turned somersaults, which it is impossible either to comprehend or to describe. Also several very skilled spear throwers exhibited their accomplishments for admiration. At nightfall an illumination was arranged and this lasted until morning. Four castles filled with fireworks were lighted on the square of the Hippodrome and presented a truly entertaining sight. On the second day there were shown some other clever feats by the tight-rope dancers. There appeared among others a man who allowed a heavy block of marble, on which six men rained blows with hammers, to be placed across his naked belly. Another climbed a very high column placed on a pyramid and performed daring tricks thereon. This man was granted his freedom by His Majesty, and received moreover a gold embroidered robe and a gift of twenty piastres daily for his lifetime. Other jugglers allowed horseshoes to be nailed to their heads. On this day began also the presentation of the gifts from the Great of the Realm and the foreign Ambassadors, which continued day by day. Particularly to be mentioned is the Persian Ambassador, who altogether made a brave show. He arrived with a retinue of two hundred sumptuously clad followers and witnessed the display in the circus from a box which had been specially erected for him. From behind the grille on their stand, the Chief Sultanas were also able to enjoy the spectacle. In the evening two wooden castles filled with fireworks were set ablaze.

On the third day various artificially prepared objects were exhibited, among them about three hundred large figures of animals, made of sugar. This lasted
until midday, thereafter gifts were presented to all the Ambassadors who had been invited by His Majesty. The Hippodrome was sprinkled by twenty water waggons. A juggler performed there, he hit himself in the face with a stone with all his strength without any harm resulting therefrom. Another executed bold somersaults and was masked. Both were presented with gifts from His Majesty. The Sultan ordered seven thousand flat cakes made out of cooked rice to be brought, also six thousand large loaves of bread and great quantities of mutton. When all this was spread upon the ground, all the poor came rushing in the greatest haste to get hold of the food, and this proved a very entertaining sight. Thereafter was held a hunt of Hungarian boars. In the evening there were once more illuminations and fireworks.

On the fourth day, other jugglers disported themselves on the aforementioned pyramid, on which they performed tricks. On this day the different craftsmen paid homage to the Sultan, among them the weavers of golden shawls worn by the women here on their heads. Then followed three hundred youths from twelve to sixteen in age, in robes worked with gold, who sang songs in praise of the Sultan and his son. This performance pleased the Sultan so much that he gave them a bag with one thousand sequins and ordered them to come to him again the next day. Then there was shown in the Hippodrome a carriage which moved by itself, whilst another to which there were harnessed a horse and a donkey, went up in the air on a tight rope. After this once more gifts of great value were presented. In the evening there took place a feeding of the populace, and four thousand rice cakes, six thousand loaves of bread, and twenty roasted oxen were served on large tables.

On the fifth day the workers of the Arsenal were entertained. They were given six hundred oxen, a thousand sheep and an immense amount of rice soup. Each worker loaded himself with his portion and be-took himself home with it. In the evening there took place the feeding of the populace with bread, mutton and rice. Then came yet another boar hunt and finally illuminations and fireworks.

On the sixth day there were only entertainments for the people, illuminations and fireworks.

On the seventh day five thousand Janissaries were regaled in the Hippodrome, together with their Aga.
They ate off carpets in six great large galley tents. In the evening there was a feeding of the people and fireworks.

On the eighth day there were games in the Hippodrome with monkeys, cats, pigs, goats, and such like animals, who performed wondrous tricks. Then came sixty riders in sumptuously ornamented yellow satin robes with breastplates and morions, who held combat with a hundred and fifty richly attired foot soldiers armed with staves. Then two wooden castles were brought in, in one of which were Christian slaves, who were armed with arquebuses and morions. They also had drums, such as we use. These two castles were stormed the while numerous shots were fired. After this there was a combat between Turkish and Persian warriors and at the finish many riders were thrown out of the saddle with halberd strokes. The Emperor and Ali Pasha were pleased with this spectacle. In the evening the populace was fed again and fireworks were burned.

On the ninth day the Venetian Ambassador handed over to the Grand Seignior a hundred and fifty gifts from the Venetian Rulers. Among them were four gold embroidered robes and many silken ones. A race with riderless horses was arranged. A juggler danced on a very high platform. He fell from it and was killed. Then a fox, boar and hare hunt took place. In the evening the people again received viands and splendid fireworks were burnt which lasted until daylight. The earlier displays were shorter.

On the tenth day four thousand Spahis with their Aqa were entertained. Everything proceeded as at the feast given to the Janissaries, and the Spahis made music. In the evening: feasting of the populace and fireworks.

On the eleventh day came all their singers, who may be described as mad. They ranged themselves in the market place where the Sultan was, and it was said that they were praying to God for the life of the Sultan. But their method of praying is peculiar and laughable. In the evening fireworks. On this day was seen in the Hippodrome a circus rider, who stood on a horse that was in full gallop. He also sprang from the ground to the galloping horse with great skill. Then the horse stood still and the man sprang on to its back and remained
standing there. The horse stood as motionless as though carved in wood. In the evening there was
to again food for the populace, likewise fireworks.
Many loaves of bread were flung among the people
from the windows of the palace. The Sultan's son
threw sequins, aspira, and other coins, six thousand
sequins' worth in all, from a window and sixty silver
dishes besides. Until 4 o'clock of the morning
gorgeous fireworks were burned.
On the twelfth day the Grand Master of the Artil-
leriy was entertained with three thousand gunners.
This was carried out in a way like unto that used
for the Janissaries and the Spahis. Then there
appeared in the Hippodrome a hundred richly dressed
horsemen, who fought in Spanish armour. Later they
shot with arrows at a disk fastened to a very high
pole. They showed great prowess. In the evening
the populace was regaled and two galleys and three
castles which had been filled with fireworks were
burned.

On the thirteenth day one hundred and seventy
richly robed men of the Spinners' Guild rendered
homage to the Sultan. Then fifty mounted archers
gave an exhibition. After the feeding of the populace
an artificial mountain, erected by the slaves of the
Capudan Pasha, in which fireworks were hidden, was
set alight. This was not successful. On the other
hand, other pieces, such as a giant dressed as a
Jew, a dragon, four castles and a ruin made a pleasing
spectacle.

On the fifteenth day their Capudan Pasha was
entertained with eight thousand of his sailors.
On the sixteenth day the guilds paid homage to
the Grand Seignior. In the evening there were fire-
works and a meal for the populace.
On the seventeenth day four thousand shield bearers
and their Pashas were entertained.
In the Hippodrome, the Greeks held a peculiar
vaulting contest. In the evening six thousand
sequins and silver coins were thrown among the populace.
On the eighteenth day the fruit sellers brought
magnificent offerings of fruit to the Sultan.
On the nineteenth day there came all the Christians
of the town of Pera. There were about two hundred
and fifty of them and each one was more handsomely
attired than the other. They wore robes of cloth with black velvet caps, and were richly adorned with jewels of great price. First came one hundred exquisitely dressed men with glittering spears on their shoulders. Then followed the remaining Periotes and twelve youths who executed dances to the accompaniment of loud music. His Majesty sent them embroidered kerchiefs and four thousand aspri. Then one hundred and fifty armourers did homage, followed by the goldsmiths, then one hundred and fifty cutlers and two hundred tinsmiths. And then followed one after another various guilds of the town with their beautiful and rare handiwork. The master remembered them all with presents of gold. As the populace was being fed that day, the onrush of the poor was so great that more than a half of the food was mangled, and the rest so badly spoiled that not even the dogs would touch it. Nevertheless His Majesty had it proclaimed that he found great pleasure in this, and that the festivities would be prolonged for forty days.

On the twentieth day the guilds appeared once again. Moreover, there was shown a rare and beautiful animal called a giraffe.

On the twenty-first day a thousand very rich merchants adorned with immensely valuable jewels did homage to the Grand Seignor.

On the twenty-second day there were once more circus riders, feasts for the people and fireworks.

On the twenty-third day I saw a man who stood on his head on the back of a galloping horse.

On the twenty-fourth day the wrestlers of the Sultan gave a performance. They achieved the most dangerous jumps with surpassing skill. In the evening the Sultan and his son threw fifty silver dishes, eight thousand sequins, aspri, and other coins among the populace. At night fireworks and feeding of the people.

On the twenty-fifth day there were equestrian tricks. Within a circle of six hundred paces a disc was shot at, and besides this many other war-like riding feats were displayed.

On the twenty-sixth day a fifteen-year-old stripling gave an exhibition of tight-rope dancing.

On the twenty-seventh day the Sultan threw six-and-sixty silver dishes and six thousand sequins to the people. The fireworks lasted the whole night.

On the twenty-eighth day the guilds brought as gifts to the Sultan the most beautiful products of their craft.
On the twenty-ninth day numerous inhabitants of Zara gave a performance and there was a great feast. In the evening the Sultan threw sixty silver dishes to the populace and likewise eight thousand sequins. The Sultan and his son watched the fireworks until morning.

On the thirtieth day the guilds once more appeared. In the evening feeding of the populace and fireworks. On the thirty-first day two elephants were shown who bowed before His Majesty. Four trained lions were also exhibited.

On the thirty-second day very costly gifts were presented to the Sultan, who once more threw from a window sixty silver dishes and six thousand sequins to the people.

On the thirty-third day fifteen guilds brought wonderful gifts for the Sultan.

On the thirty-fourth day a tight-rope dancer danced with his feet shod, and his coat put on hind part before, so that his arms were crossed and un movable.

On the thirty-fifth day fifty horsemen shot with arrows at a golden apple, which was placed on a pole about ten yards high. The victorious marksmen were presented to the Sultan, who gave them gifts. In the evening he threw sixty silver dishes and five thousand sequins among the populace.

On the thirty-sixth day a man allowed six men to break a great block of stone on his belly without his taking any harm therefrom. Then others threw large stone blocks at a target. Another had a large beam laid across his naked belly and pushed the wood, which six men had pulled along with difficulty away from his belly, without making use of his hands.

In the evening the Sultan threw silver dishes and sequins in larger quantities than usual among the people, because on the following night the Vezier Mehemed Pasha performed the circumcision of the Prince. For this service he received from the Grand Seignior ten thousand golden sequins, two large silver dishes, and many gold embroidered garments. Also the other Pashas and Sultanas and the first wife of the Vizier, who is a sister of His Majesty, were liberally presented with gifts.

On the thirty-seventh day a horse race was arranged.

On the thirty-eighth day fifty horsemen held a tourney.
On the thirty-ninth day there were performances by Zariotes and by fifty riders clad in yellow satin.

On the fortieth day there paid homage to the Grand Seignior one thousand Muezzins who made a terrible din with their music. In the evening money was again thrown to the people. At the order of the Sultan the festival was prolonged for a further fourteen days.

On the forty-first and forty-second days there were banquets for the foreign Ambassadors, rope dancing, equestrian entertainments, feeding of the populace and fireworks.

On the forty-third day His Majesty ent to the baths. He was attended by four Viziers and Mehemed Pasha, who unrobed him. To the latter he presented a dagger set all over with jewels also everything that he wore. His son, whom the Sultan loaded with presents, did likewise.

On the forty-fourth day there were more festivities but no more great fireworks. From the fortieth day onwards the Ambassadors did not attend the displays, the feeding of the populace was discontinued, and the people began to disperse.

On the forty-fifth, forty-sixth and forty-seventh days there were tight-rope dancing and fireworks.

On the forty-eighth day, a tight-rope dancer who carried a man on his back gave a performance; another man was bound to his legs. The Sultan presented him with a big bag of sequins and a gold embroidered robe. Besides this he assured him of a life-long pension of twenty-five aspiri daily, but forbade him in future to risk his life in such a manner.

On the forty-ninth day, the Zariotes displayed their accomplishments once more.

On the fiftieth day there were fireworks the whole night long. It was the most beautiful display of all and lasted until the morning.

On the fifty-first day His Majesty returned to the Seraglio of Ibrahim Pasha, and from there to the new Seraglio. And thus ended the festivities.