

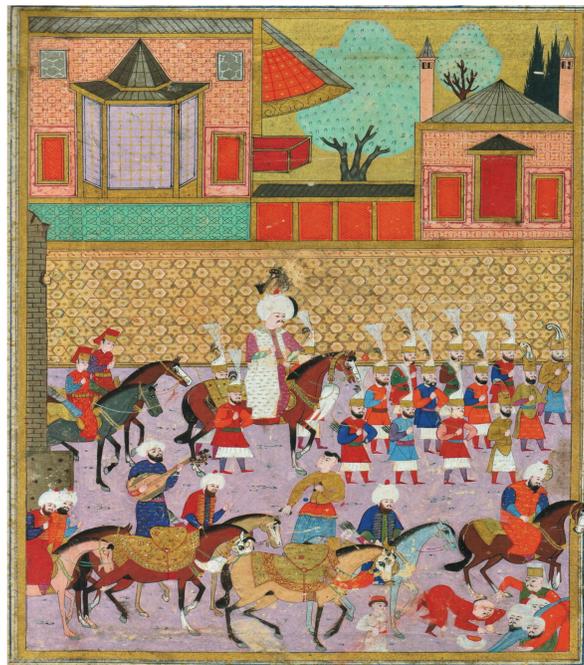
The Sound of Power

Sound as an Intermedial Category in the 15th-17th Centuries Ottoman Court Festivals

Introduction

The Ottoman court festivals, which consisted mainly of celebrations for the marriage and circumcision rituals of the siblings and children of the Ottoman rulers, were interdisciplinary events that included a wide variety of performances and combination of different sensorial elements:

Music	Theater
Dance	Acrobacy
Fireworks	Depictions of war scenes
Culinary culture	Special architectural designs
Illusionism	Presentation of exotic animals
Sports-based performances	



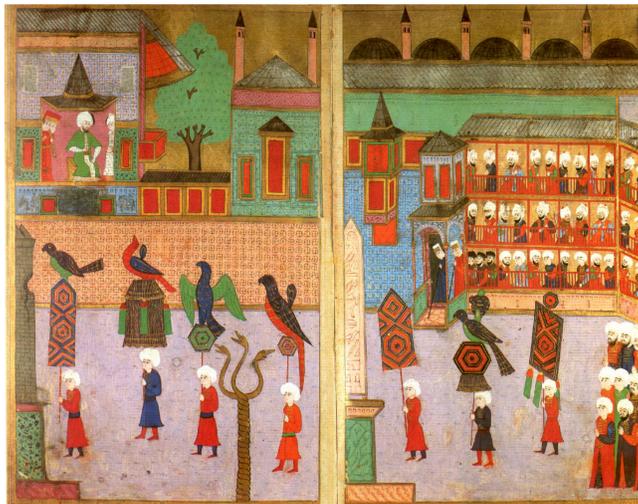
Entry of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman to the festival area (1530) in *Hünernâme*.
Metin And (1982), *Osmanlı Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları [Turkish Arts at Ottoman Festivals]*,
Publication of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara, Plate 1.

Functions of the Ottoman Court Festivals

- Court festivals were tools for Sultans to define and legitimate themselves.
- They were used as a form of entertainment for the Sultans and their family, statesmen, guests and the citizens.
- Various activities during the festivals enabled individuals and groups to perform their identities and assert their place in the Ottoman social order.
- These celebrations were an occasion for strengthening bonds between people from different social classes.

Context

More than 20 festivals were organized between the 15th and the 17th century. Among them, the celebration Sultan Murat III organised for his son Şehzâde Mehmed's circumcision (Istanbul, 1582) is considered the most spectacular event of all time. Music, which can lead human perception and sensation, was an indispensable part of the festivals; and in this respect, it can be defined as the complement of performance.



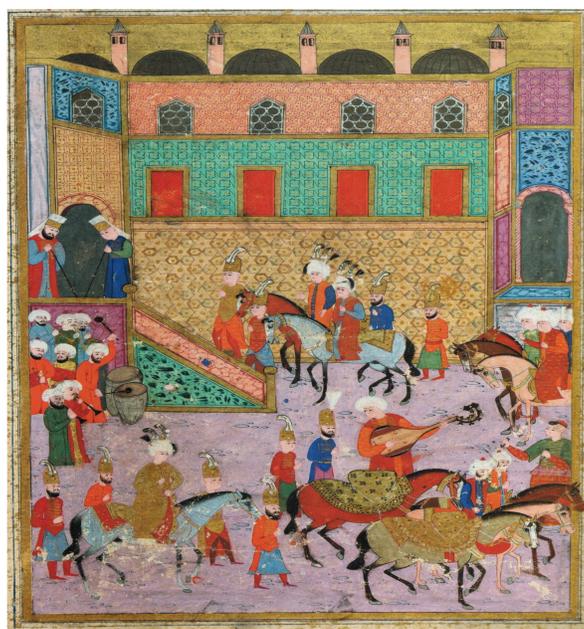
Sultan Murat III and his guests watching the parade (1582) in *Şenlikname Düzeni*.
Sezer Tansuğ (2018), *Şenlikname Düzeni [Festival Writing Order]*, Everest Press, İstanbul, 180-181.

Theory

An interdisciplinary and multimedial approach is adopted, with a particular focus on the concepts of *ritual*, *performativity*, *soundscape*, and *festivity* within the context and structure of Ottoman court festival.

Methodology and Sources

- A diachronical study of different festivals, with a focus on sound in its multimediality.
- A systematic analysis of which functions music can have as an element of power.
- A research based on court records and diplomatic correspondence in archives, on historical sources from the period and memoirs from foreigners. An examination of miniatures and manuscripts depicting festivals to determine the variety of music.



The circumcision festival for the three princes, Mustafa, Mehmed and Selim (1530) in *Hünernâme*.
Metin And (1982), *Osmanlı Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları [Turkish Arts at Ottoman Festivals]*,
Publication of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara, Plate 16.

Conclusions

- By performing different musical genres, cultural diversity was reflected: religious music, military music (Janissary Band) and fasıl music with the corresponding instruments.
- The ubiquity of music can show not only the sound of power but the power of sound as a media.