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FROM TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS TO PUBLIC PERFORMANCES: THE
CASE OF AFRICAN OTTOMANS/TURKS' ANNUAL FESTIVALS IN
İSTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

Since the nineteenth century, many people were brought from Africa to the Ottoman Empire within the framework of slavery. The African Ottomans had both indoor rituals and annual festivals. Despite their long history, the available texts are rare include the ceremonies held as the number of manumitted individuals increased. The aim of this study is to examine the annual festivals of the African Ottomans/Turks in Istanbul and to contextualize their historical transformation. The absence of data hinders the presentation of an uninterrupted historical narrative; yet, evidence indicates transformation of festivals and emergence of new performances, which are closely associated with two historical developments. First, the agreements signed to end slavery since the middle of the nineteenth century caused an increase in the number of liberated people, many of whom encountered an immediate necessity to secure their sustenance. Second, a law enacted in 1925 banned religious orders and their public visibility. I argue that within the context of these developments, the emergence of *Kabakçı Araplar* in the late Ottoman period, a concert in 1927, and the annual festivals of the late 1930s emerged as public performances. Moreover, although they appeared as performances, they were based on the African Ottoman/Turkish beliefs and traditions.

Keywords: African Ottoman/Turk, wedding of Blacks, gourd-playing Blacks, *kolbaşı/godya/godia*, annual festivals

Jel Kodları: L26, O18, R11, B21.

GELENEKSEL FESTİVALLERDEN HALKA AÇIK PERFORMANSLARA: İSTANBUL'DAKİ
AFRİKALI OSMANLILARIN/TÜRKLERİN YILLIK BAYRAMLARI ÖRNEĞİ

ÖZET

On altıncı yüzyıldan itibaren, çok sayıda insan köle ticareti kapsamında Afrika kıtasından Osmanlı topraklarına getirilmiştir. Afrikalı Osmanlıların hem evlerinde düzenledikleri törenler hem de yılda bir kere ev dışında kutladıkları bayramlar olduğu bilinmektedir. Başlangıcı eskiye gitse de mevcut metinler son derece sınırlıdır ve azat edilenlerin sayısının artmaya başladığı dönemden itibaren kutlanan törenlere yer verilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı mevcut kaynaklar temelinde Afrikalı Osmanlıların/Türklerin İstanbul'daki yıllık bayramlarını incelemek ve bunların dönüşüm sürecini tarihsel bağlamına oturtmaktır. Verilerin sınırlılığı kesintisiz bir tarihsel anlatı kurmayı engelse de bayramların dönüşümüne ve farklı performanslara kaynaklık etmelerine dair bazı bulgular mevcuttur. Bunlar, iki tarihsel süreci ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Birincisi, köleliğin sona erdirilmesi için imzalanan anlaşmaların on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren azat edilen kişilerin sayısında artışa neden olması ve azat edilenlerin arasında geçim sorunuyla karşı karşıya kalan çok sayıda insanın ortaya çıkmasıdır. İkincisi ise 1925 tarihli bir kanunun tarikat ve benzeri dini yapıları, bunların etkinlikleri ile kamusal görünürliğini yasaklamasıdır. Çalışmada, belirtilen bu gelişmeler bağlamında, Osmanlı Devleti'nin son yıllarında ortaya çıkan Kabakçı Arapların, 1927 tarihli bir konserin ve 1930'ların sonlarındaki yıllık bayramların kamusal performanslar olarak ortaya çıktığı savunulmaktadır. Ayrıca, genel olarak performans oldukları kabul edilebilirse de bunların Afrikalı Osmanlı/Türk inançları ve gelenekleri üzerine temellendiği iddia edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afrikalı Osmanlı/Türk, Araplar Düğünü, Kabakçı Araplar, kolbaşı/godya, yıllık bayramlar

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INTRODUCTION

Since the sixteenth century, numerous African individuals have been involuntarily transported to the Ottoman Empire, primarily within the context of enslavement. Historically, the African Ottomans used to organize both indoor rituals and annual festivals. However, most of the accumulated evidence regarding them originates from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ This article examines the annual festivals of the African Ottomans and Turks² in Istanbul, based on evidence from the past two centuries. Its objective is to analyze the evolution of these festivals by placing them in their historical context. In this respect, the critical turning points include first, the international and national attempts to end the African slave trade that started around the 1850s and accelerated towards the end of the nineteenth century, causing a rise in the number of the manumitted people. Second, soon after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the enactment of Law No. 677 in 1925 regarding the closure of all dervish lodges and the cessation of their activities had an impact on the disappearance of the African Turks' celebrations in the public sphere.

Slavery in the Ottoman Empire was governed by Islamic law, which prevented the Ottoman authorities from eliminating it despite significant international political pressures in the nineteenth century. However, as stated by Toledano, the Ottoman Empire did not engage in "slave-breeding practices," and the Sharia encouraged manumission. Therefore, the survival of slavery was "totally dependent on slave importation" (1982: 281). The Ottoman government took measures to prevent the slave trade, which was the most efficient means of abolishing slavery. The suppression of the African slave trade started around the 1850s. Yet the practice persisted until the early twentieth century, undergoing a succession of laws and agreements that targeted its cessation.³ After the foundation of Turkey, when certain restrictions of the Sharia were abolished in 1926, the legal basis for practicing slavery was no longer viable (Özbay, 2002: 22). Erdem indicated that by the Republican era, there was virtually no slavery left to be eliminated (1996: xix). Nevertheless, he added, "the Turkish Republic became a party to the 1926 League of Nations Convention on the Suppression of Slavery by ratifying it on 5 June 1933." However, additional agreements were required to end all practices associated with enslavement, and finally, a definitive agreement was signed by Turkey in 1964 (Parlatır, 1983: 808).

However, the Republican era witnessed the implementation of Law No. 677 in 1925, which has started to be considered a critical moment in the disappearance of outdoor celebrations of the African Turks.⁴ According to the results of a project carried out along the western coast of Turkey

¹ The only exception is an official document that Faroqhi has analyzed, which can be taken as evidence of the presence of communal ceremonies in Aydın in the sixteenth century. However, this case from 1576 faces official impediments in contrast to the annual festivals of the Africans that appear in the texts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1991: 207-208).

² In this article, the terms African Ottomans and African Turks will be used instead of other terms that appear in various texts. Following the conversational Turkish of the time, the writers most commonly used the term "Arap" (Arab) to refer to people who had descended from Africa. On occasion, the terms "zenci" (negro), "zenciye" (negress), and Abyssinians were also utilized. The problem of inconsistency or complications in identifying the African people has also been observed in the official documents. Erdem asserts that "the Ottomans were less sensitive about the ethnic and geographic origins of slaves from Africa than the British consular officers were; they simply labeled them as *zenci* or Arab, although they usually respected the difference between them and the Abyssinians (*Habeş*)" (1996: 58). Güneş stresses that African Ottomans/Turks have been largely excluded from official state documents, such as yearbooks (*salname*), indexes (*rehber*), and statistics, due to being considered as Muslims and/or Turks (1999: 4). Among rare documents that highlight the birth places of enslaved people, Ferguson provides several examples that include several Arab lands. Obtained from a local researcher, Necati Çetin, and placed in the archive of the Afro-Turk Association in Izmir, the places of origin listed for many villagers settled around Torbalı "include Sudan, Egypt, Ottoman Tripoli (Libya), Derna, Benghazi, Tunis, and the Arabian Peninsula" (Ferguson, 2014 :125). Today, "Arap" is among the frequently used terms by the elders of the community to identify themselves in Antalya (Durugönül, 2011: 167) and Izmir, especially in the villages, which evokes a sense of connection with the general population through religion, being a Muslim (Körükmez Kaya, 2017: 64-66). Narratives of some elderly people about being brought by pilgrims, sometimes with a direct reference to Hicaz, seem to strengthen this position (Körükmez Kaya, 2017: 66; Olpak, 2013: 140).

³ For further information on this topic, see Toledano (1982); Erdem (1996: 94-151).

⁴ The law mandated the dissolution of all religious brotherhoods, prohibited all rituals and gatherings of the orders, closed all tombs, shrines, and pilgrimage sites, and banned the use of religious titles and the wearing of religious attire (*Resmî Ceride*, 13.12.1341). The law did not explicitly refer to the African Turks; however, this situation is similarly applicable to numerous other religious groups, whose activities were prohibited by the law. Moreover, this law has been enacted during the enforcement of the law of maintenance ("Takrir-i Sükun Yasası"), and those who contravened the laws faced heavy penalties. Consequently, the lack of a specific reference for the African Turks' festivals was not a justification, and the prevailing political circumstances were not in favor of flexibility. For more information on the "Takrir-i Sükun Yasası" and the political situation in Turkey in the second half of the 1920s, see: Tunçay, 1999: 134-155.

by the Tarih Vakfı (The History Foundation), with the assistance of the Afro-Turk Association's members,⁵ Law No. 677 brought the end of the Calf Festival ("Dana Bayramı") –the annual festival of the African Ottomans and Turks in and around Izmir.⁶ Still, the narratives of the interviewees indicated that "the practice continued secretly into the 1950s, particularly in the villages near Torbalı" (2008: 35). However, during her fieldwork (February, 2015-2016) conducted at several villages around Izmir, one of the interviewees of Müge Akpınar revealed an incident indicating that even the mountains of a village in Torbalı were not secure enough. H., an interviewee who was over ninety years of age, recounted an incident from when she was twelve. There were celebrations in the mountains behind the village of Tulum, to which many African Turks attended. During one of them, "the gendarmerie attacked the participants of the ceremony with batons and dispersed the ceremony" (2020: 80). Akpınar asserts that Law No. 677 outlawed "the African traditions and celebrations," but adds that H. was the only one among her interviewees who revealed its repercussions (80). Another researcher, Ferguson, emphasized the role of Law No. 677 in the same way and noted that it "prohibited Africans from worshipping at the tomb of Yusuf Dede," as well (2014: 194). In terms of the press, Güneş delivers that the last news on the Izmir Calf Festival was reported in 1922 (1999: 10).⁷ The research and data presented here focus on the Calf Festival celebrated in Izmir and its vicinity, which gained the attention of researchers following its revival by the Afro-Turk Association. On the other hand, documentation pertaining to the annual festivals of the African Turks in Istanbul prior to the 1930s, the period that coincides with the enactment of the law, is currently lacking. There is one short comment concerning the attempt of seven African women again in Izmir to celebrate the Calf Festival, but published in a newspaper based in Istanbul (A. E., 1932: 3). It says, "[...] their action was not in accordance with the law; they were detained and taken to court." A. E. does not name the law *per se*, but criticizes numerous behaviors carried out in the name of diverse religious views.

Despite legal restrictions, there is compelling evidence that the annual festivals in Istanbul, which this essay intends to investigate, were taking place at least in the late 1930s. In this article, I argue that from the period of successive attempts to end the African trade until the late 1930s, the African community maintained its annual celebrations, most probably with occasional interruptions, by modifying their format whenever necessary. The festivals also provided a basis for the emergence of various music performances that enabled several members of the community to earn money and even public recognition.

The available texts on the outdoor festivals of the African Ottomans/Turks are scarce, but they at least reify their presence.⁸ They were written by non-African Ottomans, who seem to have difficulty in describing the events that they were not familiar with. Moreover, the writers seem either disinterested or lack the necessary contacts to offer an insider's perspective, resulting in a lack of information for readers regarding the meanings of these events for community members. The writers seem to be more knowledgeable about the annual festivals that took place in the public sphere rather than other rituals that occurred within the confines of houses. Due to their

⁵ The official name of the association is "Afrikalılar Kültür Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği" (African Culture, Solidarity and Cooperation Association), founded in 2006 in Ayvalık and moved to Izmir in 2007. Both the members and press commonly refer to the association as "Afro-Türk Derneği" (Afro-Turk Association).

⁶ The Calf Festival was the annual festival of the African Ottomans in and around Izmir, which lasted for three weeks and ended with a crowded celebration during which a calf was sacrificed. For more information, see: Güneş, 1999, Boratav, 1951 and Ferguson 2014. The Afro-Turk Association has revived the Calf Festival and started to celebrate it since 2007. Today, it lasts for two days, and a calf is not sacrificed but represented by a calf costume worn by two children.

⁷ In endnote No. 56, Güneş indicates that the last news he obtained from a newspaper dated 1922: *İslahat*, 05.04.1338.

⁸ Locating materials is a challenging task when it comes to studying the rituals and festivals of the African Ottomans/Turks. Because neither the community members nor their activities are documented in archives (unless they become the subject of a legal case). Thanks to the local newspapers of the time and memoirs, the Izmir annual festival (the Calf Festival) has been better documented and has gained scholarly attention following its revival by the African Culture, Solidarity, and Cooperation Association in 2007. To gather information about the annual festivals in Istanbul, I reviewed various memoirs, encyclopedia and newspaper articles devoted to the historical life of Istanbul. *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi* (1944-73), edited by Reşat Ekrem Koçu, has been highly valuable in providing articles from different writers with various perspectives on the subject matter. Additionally, searching newspaper articles by several writers, whose focus was Istanbul, such as Kaygılı and Alus, yielded supplementary material. While Alus concentrated on writing about the historical aspects of life and individuals in Istanbul, Kaygılı primarily offered updates on the contemporary events occurring during his era. His interest in and relationality to ordinary and marginalized individuals played a significant role in the acquisition of new information for this study on the annual festivals of the African Turks that occurred in the late 1930s. Unfortunately, certain deficiencies regarding the presentation of a complete historical continuity are still unavoidable.

relative accessibility to public events, writers who lived during the same time period had the opportunity to directly observe them from a distance and acquire information through informants or acquaintances. Most often, they were connected with relatively commonplace aspects of the celebration, like eating, walking around the meadows, or music and movements. Eventually, they communicated the information based on their own understandings but still generated certain data for further research.

There are recent academic studies that offer helpful insights on the African annual festivals that occurred in several cities and towns in the Empire, such as Istanbul, Izmir (and several towns around it), and Crete.⁹ Despite the notable similarities among them, each of them has unique qualities that are shaped by their specific geographical and socio-cultural settings. In this study, I limit my research to those that occurred in Istanbul. Because there is significant evidence that sheds light on how they triggered other performance styles and also evolved over time in Istanbul.

After providing a summary of the African Ottomans' annual festivals, I will focus on a new form of music performance that stemmed from the community's festivals. The performers of this new form were called *Kabakçı Araplar* (gourd-playing Blacks). They appeared at a period when the number of manumitted individuals was gradually increasing. The texts about them prompted me to explore a correlation between their performances and the survival strategies employed by some emancipated Africans in Istanbul. Next, I will concentrate on a concert organized and performed by African Turks in 1927. It establishes another case for which the culture and the beliefs of the community provided a basis. Finally, I will analyze two newspaper columns dedicated to the African Turks' annual festivals. They took place during Republican time, after the enactment of Law No. 677. Therefore, they demonstrate that contrary to expectations, the community's annual festivals occurred even after 1925. However, the new festivals emerged in another form, that of 'public performances,' which would not contradict the law.

1. The Annual Festivals of the African Ottomans: An Overview

This section is about the annual festivals of the African Ottomans just prior to undergoing a transformation process. The limited and scattered information on the annual festivals of the African Ottomans is drawn mainly from memoirs, newspaper articles, and encyclopedia columns that were devoted to old life in Istanbul. Most of them were published in the Republican period,¹⁰ mainly between the 1930s and 1960s, but they delivered information on the festivals that took place in the Ottoman period. Regrettably, no particular dates, not even the years of the events that they witnessed or collected information on, were supplied. They seem to cover the period between the 1870s¹¹ and the 1910s. They generally refer to the African Ottomans' annual festivals as the gatherings of female members of the community.

Erdem emphasizes a significant organization that belonged to the African Ottoman women in Istanbul, composed of both emancipated and enslaved individuals (1996: 173-176).¹² According to Garnett, the aim of the organization was to ensure collective defense and safeguard against mistreatment of their masters and other misfortunes in life. She added that, although the African Ottomans professed the Muslim faith, their organizations served as centers where they continued to engage in rituals rooted in their native belief systems (2009: 492-493). The spiritual leader of the black community was an old woman "variously called *kolbaşı* or *godia/godya*," and she was "a powerful figure who combined in her person the dual functions of union leader and priestess of a religious cult [...]" (Erdem, 1996: 174).¹³ Several writers

⁹ For Crete, see: Spyropoulos (2017) and Ferguson (2010).

¹⁰ There are two exceptions. First, Saz initially published her memoirs in the early 1920s (Saz, 1999: 17). Second, although the book of Abdülaziz Bey (1950-1918) was first published in 1995, the editors estimate his note-taking process to be in the 1910s (Abdülaziz Bey, 2000: v).

¹¹ In her writings from the early 1920s, Saz indicates that she is "talking about a time more than fifty years ago" (1999: 98), which corresponds to approximately the 1870s.

¹² Erdem additionally touches on the presence of such organizations in different parts of the Ottoman Empire (1996: 173). In line with the focus of this article, I will concentrate on Istanbul but give some examples from Izmir, based on the articles of Boratav.

¹³ Erdem offers several variations of the term (*kolbashi*, *godya/godia*, *kulbachi*) as employed by different writers (1996: 221, note 66). Among the Ottoman/Turkish writers whose texts I refer to in this article, Leyla Saz employs *godya* in Turkish text (2012) and *godia* in English one (1999), while Abdülaziz Bey (2000), Alus (1959a), and Mümtaz (1948) utilize the term *kolbaşı*. Three texts from

indicated that under the guidance of the *kolbaşı/godya*, the individuals should go through an initiation ceremony to join the community; once initiated, they should undergo a similar ritual annually.¹⁴ As a highly respected figure of the community, the *kolbaşı/godya* assisted other members in their spiritual but also everyday difficulties, including finding jobs or a lodge to stay in. In the time that Garnett wrote her book (1891), black men were not accepted by those organizations but received support whenever they were in need (Garnett, 2009: 493).

In line with this structure, both the indoor rituals and the annual festivals were conducted by a female *kolbaşı/godya*, and attended only by women. While the interior ceremonies were called “Arap Düğünü” (wedding of Black),¹⁵ the annual festivals were not mentioned with a name. The writers commonly referred to it as a festival (*bayram*), a day of celebration (*merasim*), or a significant event for the community (Hiç, 1963: 3119; Alus, 1959a: 952; Mümtaz, 1948: 147; Saz, 1999: 98; Nesin, 1992: 45). Except for Mümtaz, whose text (1948) signals initial alterations of the festival as will be discussed below, the Ottoman and Turkish writers who conveyed their observations of Ottoman Istanbul life established the fact that the participants in the annual festivals were exclusively women.

In Istanbul, the African Ottomans gathered for three days in May at two locations on the European side and one on the Asian side (Saz, 2012: 64; Abdülaziz Bey, 2000: 372; Alus, 1959a: 952; Mümtaz, 1948: 148; Hiç, 1963: 3119; Boratav, 1958: 14).¹⁶ The festival took place on meadows and included activities such as walking around and collecting flowers and herbs; eating; playing instruments; singing African songs; and dancing. The writers, in general, did not elaborate on those activities but summarized the whole event in a few sentences. Several of them (Saz, 1999: 98; Nesin, 1992: 46),¹⁷ however, mentioned *babası tutmak*, a condition resembling a trance-like state, during which, according to the African Ottomans’ beliefs, a spirit was manifested within an individual. This condition was the central focus of the African Ottomans’ private indoor rituals, during which individuals sought resolutions to their difficulties by consulting with the spirits. The people in whom the spirit manifested herself or himself were called *babalı*. The *kolbaşıs/godyas* were the individuals in whom a spirit was manifested frequently, but other members of the organization could also become *babalı*. According to the accounts, their well-known spirits –usually referred to as fairies (*peri*)– were Yavru Bey (Yaver Bey, *Yavroubé*, and *Yarrabox*) and Rüküş Hanım.¹⁸

The state of *babası tutmak* did not appear commonly in the texts about the festivals, and none of the writers elaborated on it. As stated above, the annual festivals took place in the public sphere, but the community tried to preserve some privacy, despite the presence of others close to their vicinity. This arrangement did not prevent the African Ottoman women from offering food and fruit to the other people around them (Saz, 1999: 98-99). However, they did not accept undesirable intrusions (Alus, 1959a: 953).

The writers, lacking familiarity with the culture and beliefs of the African Ottomans, tended to provide short but more concrete descriptions of several common aspects of the celebrations that

the early decades of the Republican period that I will discuss in the following parts also employ the term *kolbaşı*. Nesin (1992) and Hiç (1963) provide short texts on their observations of the event and do not mention anything about the leader of the community. Boratav (1958), a well-known folklorist who conducted interviews in Izmir and Istanbul, uses the term *godya*, which is provided by his informants from Izmir. His informant’s narrative from Istanbul is very short and does not cover this issue. In his previously published English text (1951), he employed the term *godia*. However, it is worth noting that in legal documents, the term *kolbaşı* is used. The documents indicated that the *kolbaşıs* had certain obligations towards the government (Erdem, 1996: 176). For a further discussion on *kolbaşıs*, see: Spyropoulos (2017).

¹⁴ Based on the narratives of his informants from Izmir, Boratav reveals that anyone who wants to join the “mystic religious community must participate in a ceremony in which incense, called Arab incense, is burned” for that person. Once initiated, that person should repeat fumigation on a yearly basis (1951: 88). Abdülaziz Bey (2000: 371) does not give information on the initiation ritual but indicates that the yearly ceremony is referred to as “ota koymak” (literally to put in herbs; however, in this context, there is a possibility that “ot” (herb) refers to incense) and underlines the use of incense in various parts of indoor rituals.

¹⁵ For further information, see: Erdem, (1996: 176), Toledano (2007: 238-239), Spyropoulos (2017: 190-192).

¹⁶ The places where the annual festivals were celebrated in Istanbul are as follows: On the European side: Veli Efendi Çayırı, Kasımpaşa, Bülbül Deresi, Bayrampaşa, Çırpıcı meadows, Okmaydanı, Kağıthane. On the Asian side: Üsküdar, Bülbül Deresi, Çamlıca-Çilehane Tepesi, Bulgurlu.

¹⁷ Alus (1959a: 953-954) also writes about *babası tutmak*, but not as a part of the festival.

¹⁸ On the topics of the spirits that the African Ottomans/Turks respected and the condition of *babası tutmak*, see: Abdülaziz Bey (2000: 371-372), Erdem (1996: 174-175, and on variants of Yavru Bey —“Yavroubé” and “Yarrabox”— 211, n.66), Toledano (2007: 204-254), Boratav (1958: 21-22) and Saz (1999: 95-96). Garnett gives information only on Yavru Bey (“Yavru”) and writes that he was revered as a deity by the African women who worshipped him (2009: 493).

they could observe and relate to. In addition to how the African Ottomans walked around, picked up flowers, and wore them (Alus, 1959a: 952; Saz, 1999: 98; Hiç, 1963: 3119; Mümtaz, 1948: 148), they offered information on their foods, music, and ritual movements. Saz conveyed that there was “a special dish” called “Aside,” which was prepared by them. It was “made of boiled rice, lightly crushed, and in the middle of it there is a small hollow or a pocket filled with small pieces of meat, pimentos, peppers and okra — all cooked up together” (1999: 98). Unlike the ritual movements, several musical instruments were described. In addition to tambourines (Saz, 1999: 98), Alus talked about darbuka and introduced “ganga,” which were played while performing movements or singing songs in their own languages.¹⁹ He described it as “two large, iron, bagel-shaped hoops with rings on top. As these hoops beat against each other, the rings make a sound and keep the beat” (1959a: 952).²⁰

Mümtaz (1948: 148) is the only writer who mentioned the gourd (“kabak”) players, in addition to the participation of the African Ottoman men in the annual festivals.²¹ The novelties that he introduced would be significant in the following annual festivals, as well as various activities of the African Ottoman/Turkish community members in Istanbul. Therefore, the information that he delivered signals the initial transformation process of the African Ottomans’ celebrations.

2. The Appearance of *Kabakçı Araplar* (gourd-playing Blacks)²² as Street Musicians in Istanbul

The increase in the number of manumitted individuals in the latter half of the nineteenth century required the government to implement measures in order to ensure their welfare. The documents, however, do not contain sufficient information to determine the extent of those measures’ effectiveness (Erdem, 1996: 181-184). In the end, many people were left to rely on their own creativity and resources in order to ensure their survival.²³ In many cases, their prior experiences facilitated their job search or enabled them to generate income.²⁴ It seems that new forms of music performances, such as those performed by *Kabakçı Araplar* that stemmed from the community’s festivals, functioned as a mechanism to enable certain African individuals to sustain their livelihoods. Mümtaz, who brought the earliest evidence of the alteration of the African Ottoman’s annual festivals, delivered valuable information on playing gourd as a means of generating income for African Ottomans: “[...] as it was customary at that time, they wore a gourd around their necks, sang songs, walked the streets, and earned money [...]” (1948: 148). Mümtaz did not reveal anything about whether or not they played their gourds at the festival. There has been a lack of detailed evidence on the Istanbul annual festivals for about two decades, but in the 1930s, Kaygılı emphasized the participation of the gourd players in the annual celebrations (1938; 1939).²⁵ Mümtaz, who conveyed the involvement of male members of the community in the annual rituals, did not mention the sex of the gourd players in his short narrative. However, even if there were female gourd players, available data points to men when the writers describe the *Kabakçı Araplar*, who were working as street musicians outside of a festive milieu of the African Ottomans.

¹⁹ The fact that they sang songs in their native languages is revealed by multiple writers. In addition to Alus, see: Saz (1998: 98) and Mümtaz (1948: 148).

²⁰ “Demirden, simit şeklinde, üstü halkalı büyükçe iki çember. Bu çemberler birbirine vurdukça halkalar ses çıkarır ve tempo tutar.”

²¹ Mümtaz might have witnessed the most recent annual festivals among the other writers, whose texts have been utilized in this article. Mümtaz left the Ottoman Empire during the Second Constitutional Period (1908) for France. Although he occasionally visited his hometown (except 1914-1918), he did not return to Turkey until 1937 (Mümtaz, 2011: 8). His narrative (1948) suggests that he observed the African Ottoman festivals during the Ottoman period, most probably at the time of Abdülhamit II.

²² In this article, I will use the term “Kabakçı Araplar,” instead of other options. I employed the terms “African Ottomans” and “African Turks” based on the specific historical contexts to which they pertained. However, “Kabakçı Araplar” is another case where there is not efficient data to locate them in a certain historical period. Therefore, in the title, I utilized “Blacks” to include all cases.

²³ The texts of Abdülaziz Bey (1995: 314-324) and Güneş (1999: 5-6) provide a depiction of the impoverished living conditions of the freed African people, respectively in Istanbul and Izmir, in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. See also: Ferguson and Toledano (2017: 213-214).

²⁴ For example, many enslaved African women were known as talented cooks. When they were left alone as freed individuals, in addition to performing domestic chores like cleaning and cooking in households, some of them were actively engaged in preparing and selling sesame halva (*susam helvası*) and *dolma* (grape leaves or bell peppers stuffed with rice) at public baths (*hamam*) and weddings (Abdülaziz Bey, 1995: 321; Güneş, 1999: 6; Alus, 1931b).

²⁵ On the other hand, information regarding their participation in the annual festivals of the African Ottomans in Izmir (the Calf Festival) has been reported (Güneş, 1999: 7; Boratav, 1951: 88 and 1958: 13, 16-17). Boratav describes the instrument as “guitars made of bottle gourds and having tiny rings attached to the strings and cymbals, which are decorated with rings at the corners” (1951: 88).

Gökhan Akçura has published an article on street musicians in Istanbul, in which he reserved several pages for African Ottoman/Turkish gourd players who worked as street musicians in Istanbul (2022: 51-53). Based on the newspaper columns of Ahmet Rasim, Sermet Muhtar Alus, and Burhan Felek from the 1930s–1940s, he delivered that *Kabakçı Araplar* entertained the public, especially in summers and various festival times, like that of *Hidrellez*, but usually walked around Istanbul from door to door to collect tips. Alus described two *Kabakçı Arap* that he knew in Istanbul with their physical appearances, dresses, and accessories (Alus, 1944: 5 and 1931a: 5).²⁶ The names of the gourd players were not mentioned, and it is uncertain whether his observations encompassed all the gourd players in Istanbul. The lack of personal names of the gourd players appears to be a distinguishing feature of the texts on the *Kabakçı Araplar*. When writers talked about other African Ottoman/Turkish musicians, they provided their personal names, such as *Gazelhan* (Ghazal Singer) Arap İbrahim, *Borazan* (Trumpet Player) Arap Ahmet, or *Hanende* (Songster) Topal Sıdika Hanım (Alus, 1939: 8). In the case of the gourd players, they used a generic title, which was characterized within the context of a performing style with the objective of generating income.

Abdülaziz Bey, classified different underprivileged segments of Ottoman society in Istanbul based on their occupations. In his text, the subtitle *Kabakçı Araplar* was devoted to African Ottomans who played gourds on the streets to earn their lives. Abdülaziz Bey stated that they were visiting mansions one after another and entertaining the household. While playing gourds and singing, they were performing various mimics or moving in a funny way to make the audience, especially the children, laugh. After receiving their tips, they were bowing to the audience (the household members) and passing on to another mansion. It can be argued that the gourd, which eventually became an essential instrument in the African Ottomans' annual festivals, played a significant role in the emergence of *Kabakçı Araplar* as a genre of street performance, enabling several men to make a living.

3. A Music Performance and the Revival of African Ottoman Festivals as Performances

In the Republican era, although slavery was almost completely abolished, as discussed above, in relation to a law passed in 1925, the African Turks seem to have encountered a major obstacle regarding the celebration of their annual festivals in the public sphere. Yet, a limited number of newspaper articles written on various topics by journalist Osman Cemal Kaygılı (1890-1945) suggest that the festivals continued to be celebrated even in the early 1930s.²⁷ In the late 1930s, he also published two newspaper articles specifically focused on the annual festivals of the African Turks, offering comprehensive information (1938; 1939). Prior to delving into an examination of these texts, I would like to highlight another material from 1927 that again maintains a relationship with the annual festivals. The three texts that will be discussed in this section provide further data to discuss the transformation process of the annual festivals and associated performances.

According to an announcement published in a newspaper, the “respectable public” in Istanbul was invited to a “harmonious performance” (*icray-ı ahenk*) of the “Arabs,” who would play “gourd and other instruments.”²⁸ The event would take place at Çırpıcı meadow, a favorite venue for the African Ottomans' former festivals. Moreover, the announcement was signed by a community leader (*kolbaşı*). The increasing significance of the gourd in the events of the community is discerned from the fact that it is specifically singled out as the sole instrument to be mentioned. Like the case of the *Kabakçı Araplar*, this concert appears to have been associated with the annual festivals of the community. But it presents distinctions from the *Kabakçı Araplar*, highlighting diverse ways in which the new performances of the African Turks have evolved: First, the musicians would play their instruments not by walking around the streets,

²⁶ Alus describes one of them as an extremely dark-colored (*kuzguni siyah*) “negro,” whose “cheeks were decorated with lines implemented by a knife.” According to him, the other *Kabakçı Arap* was a notably tall, robust individual whose complexion resembled that of Abyssinians, “or more accurately, was reddish akin to that of American savages.” The writer’s portrayal of their clothing underscores their low economic status, marked by tattered materials. Yet, he emphasizes that the former one wore a special ornament, a cone-like skullcap with a martentail on top. He stated that, according to the rumors, one of them was formerly a slave of an influential pasha (a vizier or a grand vizier) (1944: 5).

²⁷ The first one dates back to the early 1930s (2019: 184), while the second one was released in 1935 (2022: 145).

²⁸ *Araplar Kolbaşısı* Said Ağa (1927: 6); also cited in Aktaş (2013: 31).

but while remaining in one place. Second, it was not an individual but a group endeavor. Lastly, the focus of the event would be on the music, excluding additional acts that the *Kabakçı Araps* used to perform in order to attract people's attention for the purpose of gathering tips. Considering that the event was intended for a public venue and there was no mention of tickets or fees, it is difficult to assert that the music group had a profit-oriented objective. On the other hand, since the underlying idea of publishing an announcement is usually to generate revenue by attracting a large audience, the possibility of earning money should be considered for future research. What can be asserted from the available evidence is that this concert confirms a connection with African culture and rituals, but is characterized as a performance.

Another intriguing piece of information provided by this announcement relates to the structure of the African Turkish community. While the gender of the musicians was not specified, the announcement was signed by a male leader: Araplar Kolbaşısı Said Ağa. Contrary to previous data that specified the African Ottoman leaders typically as elderly women, an alteration in the gender dynamics of society can be observed with the emergence of a male leader. In the absence of sufficient evidence, it is impossible to establish the proportion of male leaders to female ones. Nevertheless, the only data that I was able to obtain from the post-1927 period are the articles written by Kaygılı, who solely speaks of female *kolbaşıs*. In any case, it is at least evident that there had been an alteration in the community structure of the African Turks, allowing the appearance of male leaders. However, female *kolbaşıs* do not seem to have lost their ground.

According to Kaygılı's narrative, female *kolbaşıs* were present during the annual festivals of both 1938 and 1939, which occurred long after the emergence of a male leader. He also highlights that it was those female *kolbaşıs* who were responsible for the festivals (1939). What seems to be confusing about Kaygılı's narrative at first glance is the emphasis that he placed on a young Abyssinian man, who worked relentlessly to manage the event and effectively communicated with the spectators. As it will be discussed below, it appears that the young man undertook responsibility for the tasks associated with the current trend towards a performance-oriented style, while the *kolbaşıs* provided the backbone of the event.

Kaygılı published his articles on the annual festivals of the African Turks that he observed in two consecutive years, 1938 and 1939, in June. Those two festivals, like the music performance from 1927, took place at famous locations of the African Ottoman celebrations: respectively, at Kağıthane and Çırpıcı meadows. In terms of the instruments played, Kaygılı underlined the gourd, among others like *danga*, darbuka, and *gagap*. Quite remarkably, several decades after the emergence of *Kabakçı Araplar*, he refers to Abdişah,²⁹ an old and "famous gourd player" (1938), with his personal name, suggesting that either the genre of *Kabakçı Araplar* has either dissolved or evolved, or several gourd players have attained individual recognition.

Kaygılı delivered that the African Turks played melodies originating from their homelands, mainly around Sudan. Some of them were accompanied by songs in their own language, and others by dances. He emphasized the immense fascination of the audiences when they liked the performance: At the end of a lively dance "originating from somewhere between Sudan and Fezzan," and performed by two men (Bay Settar and Bay Ahmet) with short sticks, the audiences applauded enthusiastically and requested an encore (1938). Kaygılı, himself, was captivated by another dance performed by two elderly women, who, in his imagination, appeared to be communicating with the stars in awe on a particularly dark night in an African jungle (1938). Among the texts examined for this study, these are the only ones that delivered information on the dances of the community.

In addition to dances and music, the last significant part of the festivals that Kaygılı delivers is about the state of trance (*babası tutmak*). As indicated above, it was an essential component of the indoor rituals, while rarely observed in the outdoor festivals of the Ottoman Turks, which were carefully arranged to maintain a certain level of privacy for the community members. Therefore, Kaygılı's and the audiences' enthusiasm about the *babası tutmak* seems to be a phenomenon that emerged at a later stage. In the festival of 1938, Kadem Hayır Bacı entered into a powerful state of trance. She underwent a challenging recovery process, but a *kolbaşıs*

²⁹ Abdişah was written as Abdi Şah in Kaygılı's other newspaper article (1939) on the annual festivals.

finally managed to soothe her in an appropriate manner. In 1939, Kaygılı wrote that there were approximately two dozen individuals, including several non-Africans, who had the potential to achieve a state of trance, but were unable to do so (1939). He expressed that the festival of 1939 was not very inspiring, even though some elderly women performed dances to please the audiences. The problem with the festival of 1939 was justified in relation to the unfavorable weather conditions experienced the day earlier. Bay Settar, “who conducted music and dances very skillfully [...]” explained that their main musicians, singers, and players did not attend the festival because they were concerned about the weather. He added, “[n]ext week, God willing, we’ll come as the full group and with our costumes. And then, together with all of our songs and dances, it will be a great amusement” (1939).

Kaygılı’s attempts at providing the names of the performers, specifying the origins of dances and music, and describing each of them, sometimes using the words “famous” (1938), and “star” (1939) for the musicians or dancers, are all in line with capturing the event as a performance. In other words, he seems to offer his readers a comprehensive overview of a performance’s program. Kaygılı was known as a realistic writer, who had keen observations and was able to communicate well with ordinary and marginalized people.³⁰ Even if painting a lively picture of the event might be related to his writing style or appreciation for marginalized people, it is impossible to ignore the changes that have taken place over time. The more recent festivals included several qualities of the former ones, but also departed from them in significant ways. Most importantly, the annual festival was no longer a communal meeting of the African Turks, as it lacked a certain level of seclusion, which previously the community members insisted on. On the contrary, the new festivals seemed to have been organized with regard to the spectators’ expectations. They attended the festival to be entertained. They requested encores, and people on the stage tried to please them as much as they could. Eventually, in contrast to the accounts of the festivals during the Ottoman era, the dances, music, and ritual trance of an individual became increasingly important by the late 1930s.

Second, Kaygılı is the only writer who mentioned a particular name for the annual festivals: “Araplar Düğünü” (wedding of Blacks),³¹ which closely corresponds to the name of the traditional indoor rituals of the African Ottomans, “Arap Düğünü;” the only difference is the pluralization of the term Arab. The lack of sufficient data hinders the ability to propose a satisfactory explanation for the recurrence or resemblance of the name of another ritual for the community’s annual celebrations. Still, based on the existing data, it is plausible to propose that the indoor rituals of the community might have gained more recognition over time and started to serve as a basis for identifying different African Ottoman/Turkish events under the same or similar titles. There is evidence indicating an increase in the popularity of indoor rituals practiced by African women as they served non-African individuals, both women and men, even “prominent” men (Abdülaziz Bey, 2000: 370), who were seeking aid in finding a cure or resolving their challenges. Helping the people in need of their assistance was a means of generating income for the community members.³² In the majority of those instances, the spirits were called upon for the purpose of seeking advice or guidance. Furthermore, a number of non-African women were also engaged in the practice of getting in touch with spirits. Although they typically collaborated with the African Ottoman/Turkish women and participated in their indoor rituals, some others, like Arziye Hanım (Edib Adıvar, 2004: 42-45; Alus, 1959b: 1078), individually pursued their endeavors.³³

³⁰ Kaygılı is described as a realistic writer, possessing keen observations and the ability to generate conversation with people (Mangır, 2011: 766). Akçura identifies him as a person living among the people, and he highlights his ability to provide information from ordinary and marginalized individuals, who reside on the outskirts of society (2005: 357).

³¹ He used the same name (*Araplar Düğünü*) in his earlier articles, published again in the 1930s.

³² While Abdülaziz Bey (2000: 369-373) is very critical of the indoor rituals and women engaged in organizing sessions for those who seek their help, Boratav (1958: 12) conveys his informant’s narrative in the context of how she managed to survive: “[...] she earned her living by renting out two rooms in her house and carrying out fumigations.”

³³ For further information concerning the indoor rituals, see: Abdülaziz Bey (2000: 369-373). In terms of non-African women, developing a relationship with the spirits was explained according to a prevailing notion of the time that certain women had spiritual encounters shortly after giving birth, especially the first forty days (Abdülaziz Bey, 2000: 369; Edib Adıvar, 2004: 42; Alus, 1959b: 1078).

Kaygılı noted the participation of non-African Turkish women in both of the festivals that he observed. In 1938, he delivered that among eight to ten women who were playing instruments and singing, there were four white women who were regularly participating in the Africans' annual festivals, as well as exclusive meetings held in the private houses of the African women. According to him, those non-African women had a profound understanding of the protocols and customs associated with those events. Kaygılı added that just like the African Turkish women, who were referred to as *babalı*, they were "among the most terrific *babalı*s" (1938). In other words, by the time that Kaygılı published his articles, there was already an acknowledgement of the indoor rites and established interactions between African and non-African Turks in Istanbul.³⁴

In the examples discussed above, a more definitive development towards establishing African Turkish annual festivals as performances was observed. However, despite the fact that they were outwardly expressed as performances, it may be argued that the African Turks' beliefs and traditions nevertheless served as a fundamental basis for the festivals. For example, while the act of *babası tutmak* may seem like an act for the spectators, the *babalı*s' inability to carry it out in 1939 raises the question of whether or not it was merely a show for them. In the same vein, the *kolbaşıs* were still described as people who were responsible for the festival. On the other hand, in addition to what has already been discussed regarding the event's attributes pertaining to its presentation as a performance, Bay Settar's explanation directed towards the audience (1939) is significant. His effort to invite people to future events could be seen as a deliberate attempt to build a professional relationship with the audience in order to sustain the performances. Regrettably, the texts do not offer further information on the significance of these events for the African Turks, which should be at the heart of any development that took place over time.

I could not locate further data on the *Araplar Düğünü* after 1939, but Kaygılı's interpretations suggest that the event was already in decline at the time that he observed them. After sighing that the *Araplar Düğünü* "has become a thing of the past," Kaygılı (1939) compared the recent festivals with the former ones that he witnessed during his childhood. He indicated a substantial decrease in the number of individuals involved in the festivals, both as participants and as spectators. According to his account, the past activities included the participation of at least two or three thousand African Ottomans/Turks, while the number of African Turks has dropped to a maximum of one-tenth of that number (1939). A similar case was apparent in terms of the participants. He stated that many of the African Turkish women who performed in the festivals were old and only two African Turkish gourd players remained, in contrast to the previous count of at least fifteen to twenty: "One of them, Abdi Şah, an eighty-five-year-old man who now lives in Darülâceze³⁵ and goes out once or twice a year, one of them is Arab Settar [..]" that he mentioned as the organizer of the event (1939). In general, he noted that the number of African Turkish people in Istanbul was gradually decreasing and their colors were becoming lighter, implying a trend towards the disappearance of their population (1938).

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

This article is concerned with the transformation of the annual festivals of the African Ottomans and Turks in Istanbul. The scarcity of available data concerning the annual festivals posed difficulties in establishing an uninterrupted historical process. Moreover, the absence of research on the circumstances of African Turks following their emancipation created additional challenges in contextualizing the existing information. Nevertheless, I was able to locate several valuable pieces of evidence that provide insight into the process of the transformation of the festivals and show their connection to two critical historical developments. The first one is the rise in the number of manumitted individuals, which began in the mid-nineteenth century under

³⁴ The absence of data hinders the investigation of the impact of Law No. 677 on the indoor rituals. Although Kaygılı's texts provide evidence of their survival in the 1930s, there is still insufficient evidence concerning potential modifications of the rituals, aside from their inclusion of non-African women.

³⁵ Dârülâceze is a charitable organization with the purpose of providing refuge to orphaned children, the elderly, and individuals in need. It was established in Istanbul in 1896 (Nuhoglu, 1993: 512).

Ottoman rule and continued until the early years of the Republican era. The materials regarding new forms of music performances that stemmed from the community's festivals provided evidence to establish a correlation between the performances and the survival strategies adopted by some freed Africans in Istanbul. The second historical development is the implementation of a law in 1925 pertaining to the closure of all dervish lodges and the ending of their activities. Given that the festivals of the African Turks were rooted in their community's native culture and belief system, this legislation ought to push them either to end or seek alternate ways to celebrate them in public spaces. Evidence from the late 1930s provided data that confirms their existence in a renewed form.

Based on the evidence that I was able to obtain, I examined three performances in modernizing Istanbul that stemmed from the African Ottomans' festivals and belief systems and started to transform with the growing momentum in the manumission processes. First, the emergence of *Kabakçı Araplar* as a genre of street performance validated the ability of several men from the community to sustain a living during a period when many emancipated African Ottomans faced difficulties in supporting themselves on their own. Second, a male community leader publicly announced a music performance scheduled to take place in a public venue commonly utilized during the former annual festivals. It signified a shift in the community structure that the leadership of the community no longer belonged exclusively to elderly women. It also implied an inclination towards gathering income through the organization of a public performance based on their cultural and religious heritage. However, the validity of this claim cannot be confirmed without supplementary evidence.

The third case is the annual festivals themselves, for which there is evidence from the late 1930s. Those festivals were again organized by the community members, but unlike the former ones, the African Turks did not attempt to preserve their privacy. Instead, for the most part, the festivals were aimed at pleasing the audience, even though there was no indication of charging them or collecting tips. While a young man oversaw the entire event and interacted with the audience, the female *kolbaşıs* were still highlighted as the individuals who were responsible for the festival. In the new festivals, three components came to the fore: dances, music, and the state of *babası tutmak*. While dance and music are more relatable for the non-African audience, the state of *babası tutmak* seems to have been acknowledged due to the public's increasing familiarity with the indoor rituals. Over time, African Turkish women began accepting individuals outside of their own community, both those who sought and compensated for their assistance and others who engaged in their activities. Eventually, it can be asserted that the establishment of annual festivals as performances served the dual purpose of evading legal obligations and aligning with the changing circumstances of the community. Although there was a rising inclination to promote festivals as performances, their foundation still relied on the beliefs and traditions of the community.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET**GELENEKSEL FESTİVALLERDEN HALKA AÇIK PERFORMANSLARA: İSTANBUL'DAKİ
AFRİKALI OSMANLILARIN/TÜRKLERİN YILLIK BAYRAMLARI ÖRNEĞİ****Giriş ve Çalışmanın Amacı (Introduction and Research Purpose):**

On altıncı yüzyıldan itibaren, çok sayıda Afrikalı insan köle ticareti kapsamında Osmanlı topraklarına getirilmiştir. Afrikalı Osmanlıların hem evlerinde düzenledikleri törenler hem de yılda bir kere ev dışında kutladıkları bayramlar olduğu bilinmektedir. Bu konuda on altıncı yüzyıla ait bir veriye ulaşılmış olmakla birlikte, yayınların çoğunluğu on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ortalarında köle ticaretinin sonlandırılmaya çalışılmasıyla birlikte azat edilen kişi sayısının artmasıyla birlikte ortaya çıkan törenlere odaklanmaktadır. Ev içi törenler topluluğa mensup kişilerce yapıldığı için yazarların çoğunluğu bunlardan değil, yılda bir kez açık alanda yapılan bayramlardan söz ederler. Bu bayramlar özel bir ad altında değil, Afrikalı Osmanlıların özel bir kutlaması veya bahar bayramı gibi sözcüklerle ifade edilir. Toplulukta lider konumunda olan ve kolbaşı veya godya adı ile bilinen kadınların öncülünde organize edilirler. Yılda bir kez yapılan bayramlara dair yürütülen çalışmada, 1910'larda bazı değişikliklerin ortaya çıkmakta olduğuna dair veriler saptanmıştır. 1930'ların sonlarına kadar devam eden süreçte de hem bayramlar hem de bağlı oldukları inanç ve kültür zemini ile ilişkilenen birtakım gelişmeler belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada da Afrikalı Osmanlıların/Türklerin İstanbul'da yılda bir kez yaptığı törenlerin değişim sürecinin aydınlatılması amaçlanmıştır.

Kavramsal/kuramsal çerçeve (Literature Review):

Afrikalı Osmanlıların/Türklerin her yıl düzenledikleri törenler hakkında az sayıda çalışma mevcuttur. Fakat bunlar daha çok İzmir'de yapılan Dana Bayramı'nı konu alır. İstanbul'daki bayramlar çok az gündeme gelmiş, dönüşüm süreci ise henüz incelenmemiştir. Bunun en önemli nedenlerinden biri sadece sözü geçen bayramlarla ilgili araştırmaların değil, özellikle azat edilen Afrikalı Türklerin nasıl yaşadıklarına dair çalışmaların da son derece sınırlı olmasıdır. Bu durum, bu makalede amaçlandığı üzere verilerin tarihsel bağlama yerleştirilmesini güçleştirmiştir. Diğer yandan ise eldeki veriler bağlama yerleştirilebildikleri ölçüde Afrikalı Türklerin azat edilmeleri sonrasındaki deneyimlerine dair çeşitli bilgiler sağlama potansiyeli göstermiştir. Hatıratlar, gazete yazıları ve Reşat Ekrem Koçu'nun çıkardığı *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* gibi sıradan insanlara, marjinalize edilmiş kesimlere dair bilgi sağlayan metinler bu çalışmaya kaynaklık etmiştir. Gazete taramalarında da özellikle Alus ve Kaygılı gibi İstanbul'daki hayata, insan deneyimlerine odaklanan çalışmalara ağırlık verilmiştir.

Yöntem ve Bulgular (Methodology and Findings):

Yukarıda belirtilen çalışmalar hem karşılaştırmalı analize tabi tutulmuş hem de daha geniş çerçevedeki akademik çalışmalar ile bağlantılı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bayramların dönüşümüne ve farklı performanslara kaynaklık etmelerine dair bulduğum veriler, tarihsel anlamda iki süreci ön plana çıkarmıştır. Birincisi, azat edilmelerinin ertesinde birçok kişinin geçim sorunuyla karşı karşıya kalmasıdır. Bu süreçte pek çok kişi mevcut bilgisine ve deneyimlerine bağlı olarak geçimini sağlamaya yönelmiştir. İkincisi ise 1925 tarihli bir kanunun tarikat ve benzeri dini yapıları ve bunların etkinliklerini yasaklamasıdır. Bu kanun, Afrika kaynaklı kültür ve inançlara dayanan törenlerin kamusal görünürlüğüne etkilemiştir. Fakat törenler tamamen ortadan kalkmamıştır.

Sonuç ve Öneriler (Conclusions and Recommendation):

Bu çalışmada öncelikle Osmanlı Devleti'nin son yıllarında İstanbul'da ortaya çıkan Kabakçı Arapların, ilanı 1927'de yayımlanan bir konserin ve 1930'ların sonlarındaki yıllık bayramların kamuya açık alanlarda gerçekleştirilen performanslar olarak ortaya çıktığı savunulmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, bir taraftan performans özellikleri gösterebilir de bunların Afrikalı Osmanlıların inançları ve gelenekleri üzerine temellendiği iddia edilmektedir.

Belli sonuçlara ulaşılmakla birlikte, veri eksikliğinden dolayı kesintisiz bir değişim süreci örnek mümkün olamamıştır. Dolayısıyla bu konuda yeni çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır. Ayrıca, araştırma sürecinde toplanmakla birlikte tarihsel veya kültürel bağlamına yerleştirilmesi mümkün olmayan çeşitli veriler, metnin akışını bozmadan dipnotlar aracılığıyla belirtilmeye çalışılmış; başka çalışmalara kaynaklık etmesi hedeflenmiştir.

KATKI ORANI BEYANI VE ÇIKAR ÇATIŞMASI BİLDİRİMİ

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