

## Philosophy of Some Turkish Traditional Sports

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**Abstract:** The physical activities of Turks during preparation to war depending on war tools and combat tactics, according to their individual and social value judgments and beliefs are traditional sports. They change according to the war tools and war tactics. These branches are shaped especially around archery, horse-riding and wrestling. This research is constructed more on why these traditional sports are played rather than how these traditional sports are being played. In the study, the philosophy of traditional sports for consideration, in order to describe the subject, topics which reflect the life philosophy, subjects that Turkish society praised and taken into consideration are included. There is a specific kind of human understanding, human description in the philosophy of traditional sports. In this description, the combatant and “well-mannered” human portrait is mostly highlighted. The philosophy of traditional sports gives important information about the structure and characteristics of Turkish cultures and civilizations. The Turkish society which reflects their life philosophy of living to their sports undersign very big successes in the history. The aim of this study, is to give meaning to our lives as successors of an origin which owns such a philosophy and to highlight the necessity to lay claim to and protect this heritage for mental and physical health.

**Key words:** Turk, traditional, sports, philosophy

### INTRODUCTION

Cultures and civilizations own precious heritages. Heritages display differences from one culture and civilization to other. They reveal the values which are possessed by the society. The traditions are structured in this way. In terms of sport activities, the individual and social value judgments and beliefs of Turks affected the physical activities they made and bring about some activities to loom large. Here it is important to keep in mind that all these traditions are based on a philosophy and have important contributions to human life (Adams *et al.*, 1992; Atalay, 2005; Cunbur, 1997; Iscan, 1998; Schmiede, 2000; Turan, 1996; Turktap, 1999).

- From Ouz Kaoan Saga.
- Sons I lived so long.
- I saw many wars.
- I rode much.
- I wrestled much.
- I made my enemies cry.
- I made my friends laugh.

These lines introduce the viewpoint of Turkish culture to sports. The civilizations which are constructed

by Turks claim the heritage mentioned in Ouz Kaoan Saga from the beginning. In order to reveal the reason of this claim, it is important to understand the philosophy of traditional sports. Traditional sports betray important hints in terms of Turkish Culture and Civilizations’ structure and characteristics. When we overview related literature, we can coincide many sources about how these sports are played while there is little sources about why they are played. In addition to its contribution as reference to our research, the philosophy of traditional sports familiarize the Turkish culture and civilization in term of sports much more closely. So, this philosophy is important for the fact that it gives profundity to such works in philosophical sense.

The aim of this study, is to introduce the life philosophy and priorities of Turks in the historical process in the light of the sports they made and to explain why we shall claim to be the owner this heritages (Aktepe, 2003; Atli, 1999; Anonym, 1974; Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Goral, 2008b; Guven, 1992; Halici, 1976; Oztek, 1999; Oztelli, 1976; Sumer, 1992).

Turks, when they settled up states at the Central Asia, taught horse-riding, shooting arrows, spearing lances according to some rules in order to prepare their boys and daughters to future. By giving awards to

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winners, they made the games attractive and in turn secured a continuity in these sports and made them activities of free times. These sports became continual leisure activities and in turn they transform war into game (Baechle and Earle, 2000; Baker, 2001; Baydar, 1999; Behm and Sale, 1993; Ongel, 2000; Ozcan, 2001; Wilson *et al.*, 1993).

### **ARCHERY AND ITS PHILOSOPHY**

Turkish Culture flourished as from 3000 BC between Altay and Tanri mountains and became the dominant culture at the Central Asia as of 1700 BC. This culture which is shaped by the conditions of life of steppe and is the same for all communities is called “nomadic culture with horse or steppe culture”. Nomadic culture with horse discovered the horse as game friend and sports tool, it improved riding. Riding skills developed to a point that riders can ride with hands free and this constituted the base of archery with horse. Rider shall ride hands free in order to string his archery, to aim at his enemy and to throw archery. For steppe war tactics which included series of attacks, getting backs, so called defeats and fall backs and attacks again requires to throw archery to all the directions on the horse. The riding tribes which owned these skills came to for their skills to throw archery to all directions on the horse at gallop (Aktepe, 2003; Anonym, 1974; Atay, 1997; Baydar, 1999; Huffman. and Holifield, 2003; Kahraman, 1989).

It must have been required a long and intense preparation stage to acquire the skill to turn back and shoot at a moving target on a moving horse. There is information that the skills for archery with horse began to be acquired at the early childhood in the game format. According to Chinese sources Hun children get acquainted with riding on sheep in the early childhood, after learning stringing the archery they began to go to hunting and made some experiments on little animals in order to improve their skills to shot perfectly. Orical process they reflected this privilege to their art works. The importance and penetration of archery to society brought forth the development of archery within social life in line with the economic and military areas. In the social life the performance for the skills for archery gave status to individual and was compared by others in the competitions. It is very natural that there is numerous sportive activities and several related competitions about horse and archery in a society in which most of the life is spent on horse and the most important arm is arch and row. It will not be wrong to classify arch as the national arm of Turks. Really when we look at history we can see little tribes that use arch as good as Turks and

Mongols. The perfection of Gokturks and other tribes of Middle Asia at marksmanship is a reality. Arch and arrow symbolizes sovereignty in Turks. In the culture of Gokturks arrow symbolizes “subjectivity” and slavery arch symbolizes metbuism and dominance. Arrow was used to describe each of ten tribes that composed Turkish population (Baker, 2001; Cunbur, 1997; Garhammer, 1993; Goral, 2008a; Koppedrayer, 2002; Kunter, 1938; Kunter, 1978).

Gokturks threw weazing arrows at the wars. Those sounds made a dread effect on the enemy and made them confused. These arrows which called sergeant arrow were also used as communication tools according to, the sounds they gave. There was a spiritual meaning of arch and arrow for Turks. We know that oaths made on arrow and arch has special meanings. To the effect that in the Ottoman descendance being drowned by arch string was an honour for the victim. If we analyze the Sultan’s signatures we would see that they had been based on arch and arrow figures (Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Garhammer, 1993; Markowitz, 2007; Marshall, 1993).

We can conclude that arch and arrow were symbols of sovereignty because of the fact that they were took their places in the coins which were made by Great Seljuks Sultan Tugrul Bey and in the niche of the mosque in Istanbul. Arch symbolized dominance, sovereignty in turn the khan because it throw arrow and arrow symbolized to be bounded to khan because it is directed by the arch. Arrow was sent to sultans, tribe leaders and emirs affiliated to khan by the khan as a tool for calling all the forces to the war. There is important place for arch and arrow in the war tactics too. The war tactics of Turks depended upon evading close fighting, attacking from sides, encircling from back and especially with skillfull drawing backs make the enemy to run to earth themselves and make the enemy tired in this endless prosecution. With these mobile tactics they almost won all the wars against Western armies with heavy weapons. These armies were used to fight with orderly arrangement and for this reason their movement alternatives were poor. For this reason Turkish forces raised fear and confusion in those armies. Turkish forces indebted to arch and arrow as long distance weapons for their effectiveness without close fighting with their enemies. We saw that the same holy importance was given to sports archery as well as military archery. In fact either in range or in race shots the arrows always shot with “Ya Hak” shout and shot for the sake of “gaza”. This holy belief had important role in the remanance of sport archery as a moral discipline for centuries after the military archery was abandoned. Again according to this belief the archery arenas were believed to be a part of eden. Drunks, guys without ritual

ablution and guys with shoes were forbidden to enter this arena. The person authorized person for this arena is called as Seyh and prayers for jihads, rain and disasters were took place in this area (Karahan, 1976; Munro, 2000; Owen, 2002; Kezar, 2004).

### **TARGET ARCHERY**

As a sport, target archery was born as a result of drills aiming to gain the ability to make successful hits either to the enemy or to the hunt. In archery, it is not only important to reach long distances, but also to hit the mark. People of Eastern world, owe their ability and skill to shoot long and succesfull arrows while riding to all directions to their contiuniing and ehausting exercises. According to, Cahiz, Turks had started archery exercises at very young at age and succeeded reaching all targets while riding horses at gallop. There were archery contests both on horse or on foot. In contests with horses, there were targets on pylons called "kabak" and ranges where archer had to hit while moving. The old Turkish proverb "Standig alone like kabak" (means standing alone without a reason) comes from this old archery contests. The aim of kabak game is to turning back and shoot the target which was placed at the top of a long pylon in an arena while riding the horse at gallop. Considering the popularity between 13th-17th centuries in the Turks places or Islam places under Turkish domination and adequety of shooting style to steppe war and combat strategies, the game shpold have been born in nomadic Asian communities.. Today's artillery ranges were called "talimhane". There were two types of talimhanes; one foe civils and one for military purpose. Military talimhanes were official institutions in which tirendaz's (archers) did exercise (Aktepe, 2003; Baker, 2001; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Goral, 2008a; Komi, 1979; Marshall, 1993).

People of talimhane (talimhaneciler) were teching newcomers how to hit while helping experienced archers make their daily exercises in order to keep them fit. The civil talimhanes in different parts of Istanbul were business houses in which people exercise on target shooting. Addition to Istanbul, there were such paid talimhanes in other big cities like Edirne, Bursa. It is understood that, as a center for sports and entartainment, talimhanes took the great intention of large popularities. Not only children or adolescents, old people also gathered there. There were about 45 talimhanes in Istanbul and so far all the talimhane owners were making living on these business places, the nterest of people must have been high. Another target in archery is "puta", the word used for pot or case made of soil, target or sight. The proverb "pot kirmak" (means breaking pot, making

something that should nit have been done or said) comes from here. After that, putas made of ladder and stuffed with cotton were used. During the governance of Murad III. A vegabond decribes puta shootings as given below: Each on the two sides of the arena, four piles of stones with equal hight and distance were made and on top of each leather targets with wooden handles were put. About 50 archer riders run their horses at gallop beyween two group of targets and they shot arrows and hit puta at the moment they were about to turn back. They were so fast, thus it was almost impossible to see their moves while taking arrow from quiver and taking the aim at targets. They were sometimes using left and sometimes right hands (Anonym, 1974; Kafali, 1999; Kahraman, 1995; Oztopcu, 2002; Turktap, 1999).

### **RANGE ARCHERY**

Range archery, has a seperate meaning and importance in history of Turkish archery. In Islam world, only examples of independent institutions built for this purpose could be seen within the territories of Ottoman Empire. These places were assets of very well organized and governed foundations. Since, both courtieiers and people from all classes of society paid attention to those places, range archery continued and developed for centuries. Range archery, here could be seen as a contest or sport based on tour de force. According to, Arab sources, range archery had been seen in early years of Islam. Due to study of Hadiths, competition in archery had been the most accepted game or even some sort of divine service in the eye of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). In the Ottoman Empire, which continued governance on different countries on ditterent continents for centuries, archery, whose importance was mostly came to stage at war times, developed day by day with new tecniques. To contribute these developments, business centers that can be named as archery clubs organized various contests during peace times, thus, they made this sport popular in even peace times and helped soldies to use their experience gained in peace time on war arena when necessary (Berger, 1985; Halici, 1976; Kahraman, 1989; Guven, 1992; Munro, 2000; Garhammer, 1993).

### **OLD STADIUMS AND CLUBS**

There has been a square in Istanbul called Ok Meydani (arrow square) for 5 centuries. In this Stadium, the largeat place was seperated for arrow shooting and archery exercises. The place takes its name from the various marble monuments placed differnt cornern in the memory of record holder archers. In the arena, besides

places for archery, there were also places for people to walk around and have fresh air. Ok Arenna, which contains many facilities for sports, was both a centre for sport and meeting point for residents of Istanbul. Ottomans had established schools, exercise places called talimhane and other institutions to grow up successful archers (kemakes) and appointed experienced and vice teachers to those institutions. Ottoman governances also supported publishing of books on archery and they made classification archers as 900, 1000 and 1100, they made registration of hits and to remember the record holder archers, they made monuments in their names. Addition to those, Ottomans had special laws for archery and Ottoman prime ministers, even sometimes the Sultan himself, came to Ok Arenna and competed with other sportsmen. This is the unique example of applications and understanding of sports of a nation in world history (Atalay, 2005; Baechle and Earle, 2000; Busbecq, 2005; Gozcelioolu, 2003; Newton and Kraemer, 1994; Newton *et al.*, 1996).

Since, arrow could be shot from a distance and it was effective, great intention was paid to education and good archers were awarded with such prices that could not even be imagined today by the government authorities or sultan. These awarded were not given to the archers, each popular and successful archer had its own master that made arrows and arc for him and only for him, especially not to the competing archers. Old Turkish, Atabic. Ottoman and Persian masters of arc and arrow, associated mental of arc with human body. According to, them, mental of arc was composed of wood, bone, nerves and glue, just like human body composed of bones, flesh, muscles and blood. Due to, Islamic belief, this similarity is a divine wisdom of God. There was the Law of Archers (Aticilar Kanunnamesi) as a guide for the top referees. The Law mostly supervised the courtesy of sports and overcoming of sportsmen their own ambitions. Very organized registration notebooks were kept in the Ok Arenna and each of archers were being registered to those. To have a name in these notebooks, one had to have "kabza", means should have succeeded in 900 geze arrow shooting. The ceremony named having kabza, was a sportsman taking licence from trainer or president of club (Behm and Sale, 1993; Chambers *et al.*, 1998; Gumilov, 1999; Hakkinen and Komi, 1985; Kunter, 1938; Kunter, 1978).

Kabza days were the most crowded and bright days os school and arena. All kabza holders were gathered in the arena and sit in the line according to their scores of range. The ceremony began with the Sheh's prayer and thoseprayers were sent to the ones that had passed away. The ones who took kabza at the same ceremony were

called "kabzadas" means "friends of kabza", their names and the date they took kabza was written in the registration notebook. In the arena, if one of archers was disobeying the rules, he was warned by older ones. If he continued his disobeying behaviours, he was given notice by the Master of Janissary Corps. If he insisted, he was isolated from that society (Adams *et al.*, 1992; Clutch *et al.*, 1983; Cunbur, 1997; Halici, 1976).

## STONE PLANTING

The stone planting tradition of Ottomans for archers, the rules they developed for planting stone was a sign they gave to archery, sports, sportsman and could not be seen in other culture. Tis tradidition that had started 500 years ago during Orhan Gazi governance, had no doubt contributed to developing popular archers and successful scores. It is estimated that first range store was placed in Ottoman Empire in Bursa Archers Square by Sultan Mahmud II. The stone had been placed for 2 reasons. All archers, with permission, succeeded throwing over 900 gez distance had the right to place stone. Secondly, if an archer succeeded passing an opened range called "Bastas" (the main stone), with the permission of older ones, he could have placed stone. It is not difficult to imagine how hard an archer worked with many challenges in Arrow Square just to throw a distance over the Main Stone (Aktepe, 2003; Kahraman, 1995; Kahraman, 1997; Karahan, 1976; Knuttgen and Kraemer, 1987; Newton *et al.*, 1997; Newton *et al.*, 1999).

At first sight, archery can be considered as a type of entertainment, but, there was a serious dicipline came from dependency to traditions and principles. Archers should not only have to be successful shooters, but they had to respect each other and had to establish good friendships as well. Without an extension, all old ones, experienced archers and masters had to be respected. The ones that cheated during contests or who chose a lifestyle without dicipline were isolated from the group with declaration: "Do not sit with us". In the books, archers were not only told with their success in the arena, their personalities were also mentioned. Mostly terms like "trustworthy", "strong believer", "man with bright soul", "man with settled character" were used while describing them. Arrow is not only a tool for war, a sport for youth, a train session for soldiers or a beautiful tradition inherited from the old ones. Sometimes it describes the cruelty of the beloved one, the the power of the beloved's looks, power that can be considered as a symbol of death in the combat arena (Cunbur, 1997; Turan, 1996; Turktap, 1999; Unver, 1976; Yazaloolu, 1999; Yildiran, 1986; Yildiran, 2000; Yildiran, 2002).

## **THE PHILOSOPHY OF RIDING**

In the thousand years life of Turks, sports continued, developed and became richer, thus sports are the corps and results of culture. These values, as the corps of culture, continue to live, as long as the nations exist. The horse plays the major role in the sports developed by Turks, because the horse had always top level place in the lives of Turkish nations. Horses were considered as important as human, thus they were given names and their stories were respectfully told in the old Turkish epitaphs. It can be said that, in Turkish culture, horses are individuals that move freely and share faith with owners. It is obvious how important horses were in the daily life of Old Turks. The horses were important for Turks just the same as camels were important for Arabic culture. In the big and never ending steppe area, they were riding with hoeses, eating the meat, making drink (kimiz) from their milk and using the leather and hair. In the epitaphs, the importance given to horses by the sons of Oouz tribe was definite. In the sayings, there were sentences like ‘Man without a horse has no hope’, ‘Horse rides but the man praises himself’ (Chambers *et al.*, 1998; Clutch *et al.*, 1983; Cunbur, 1997; Mutlu, 1976; Oztek, 1999; Oztelli, 1976; Oztopcu, 2002; Pakalin, 1972).

Due to, an old Turkish tradition about horse, when a legend or noble person died, the tail of his horse was cut and the horse walked in front of the funeral cortege with saddle backwardsly settled on its dorso. Ottomans continued the same rituel about funerals. When a sultan or son of sultan who joined a war died, the tail of his horse was cut and the saddle was put backwards and the horse walked in front of funeral cortege. Turkish people had many beliefs about horses that prove the importance of horses for them; seeing horse in dreams is commented as that person will hear good news, will rise, get rid of problems and people nail on horseshoes on front doors for good luck. Riding horse had been custom and tradition for Turks. Even today, the brides are taken from their houses and brought to new house with horse. The bride is taken from the house with the traditional music and brought to groom’s house on horse. Even those 2 houses are very close in distance, this ceremony is absolutely made. If a bride is not puton horse, it is believed that she will never have a full happiness. The term ‘Horse is wish’ proves this understanding. Today, all children, youngs and old ones on horse from around villages and towns gather in the mousoleum of Ertuorul Gazi and attend to ceremonies. Riding horse is considered as a sign and activity of braveness. Turkish riders who had learned riding at very early ages, exhausted their enemies with their talents. Oh the walls of enemy castles,

it was written ‘God save us from fire, water and Turkish riders’. Games with horses had been national sports for Turks, thus they always had been successful and popular in those games. Throwing javelin (jereed) on horses and game ‘cooen’, a game with horse, were the games they were most talented at. The game ‘cooen’ had also been played during Seljuks and took place in the epigraphs of Seljuks. Riding horse was very necessary for life in those days. They were going to wars not only with horses, but horses at a gallop that they even reached to a speed of flying. Thus, one had to an excellent rider to be a good warrior (Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Garhammer, 1993, Halici, 1976; Ozcan, 2001).

## **JAVELIN WITH HORSE (JEREED)**

Javelin, which is similar with the lance used in wars had been given to the hands of rider. Warrior with horse had his sword, arrows and arch and his mace with him addition to his lance but none of them took the place of lange in war. Because the war between riders was a combat of mobile targets and none of the weapons were as effective as lance in terms of agility. Javelin game with horse can be considered as rehearsal of lance combat. In this game, faithal lances were replaced by lance-like wooden sticks. Jereed was a kind of exercise for warriors but beyond that, it was a popular entertainment of people in which men proved their braveness in competition. In this kind of militarized popular game, there has been all episodes of a riders combat. Jereed games is a sports with horse for young Turkish men. This difficult and challenging game aims to grow brave and hero youngsters. The game was originated with the aim to improve man’s ability to throw lance to mobile targets in war. It can be estimated that the jereed sticks were initaly being used for exercising tool in the beginning by riders and by time the game had been originated from their training sessions. Jereed game, which had not been seen in Middle Asia, firstly seen in Ottoman Empire in Anadolu and in 16th century we witness 2 types of jereed games in the Palace. First was pedestrian jereed (range jereed) and second was well known jereed with horse. Jereed is an old Turkish combat game. Jereed players do not make sound or scream during the game. Only when they are ready to attack, they yell the name of his enemy or (other player) and tell him to be ready and throw javelin (jereed) towards him as fast as possible (Cunbur, 1997; Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Kafali, 1999; Kahraman, 1989; Kahraman, 1995; Kahraman, 1997; Karahan, 1976).

In the Gokturk Epigraphs, we come across with the term ‘yarip yazisi’ means competition plain, thus it is obvious that there hed been an arena in which horse

aces and activities were made. Jereed game still continues its existence among games played with horses, but in Ottoman period this game was much more popular. This is a very beautiful and complicated sport, in which rider has to become united with his horse and in which rider and horse should make same moves together. In Dede Korkut sayings, it was said "Gave you camel to burden, gave you horse to ride". Jereed with horses was the most popular and mostly played game in the Palace, Ottoman Sultans were willing to show the game especially to foreign ambassadors. Since, it was played continuously, it was called "Harhari" jereed. Although, it is a dangerous game, since it suits well with traditions and characteristics of Turkish people, jereed was being played in almost every wedding entertainments in the villages of Anatolia since The World War II. The horses in the villages were taken by the government during the War and after the war the agricultural activities began to be done with more developed and motorized tools, thus, the horse population in the villages decreased speedily. As a result of these developments, the game jereed was left to be forgotten (Chambers *et al.*, 1998; Clutch *et al.*, 1983; Cunbur, 1997; Gozcelioolu, 2003; Gumilov, 1999; Guven, 1992; Yildiran, 1986; Yildiran, 2000; Yildiran, 2002).

#### **AMBLE WITH HORSE (ATLI RAHVAN)**

It is one of traditional riding sports and can be defined as making the horse go at an amble. There is evidence that this sport had seen in 13th and 14th centuries during the Ottoman Empire around Kutahya region. In the game amble with horse, the horse has to finish a certain distance by going at amble with various burden on its torso (rider+horse+additional weights). Horses of this sport have been trained specially. The competitions are organized either considering the ages of the horses or due to the distance the horse has to go at amble. (such as 1.5 or 2 km) Today, especially in Aegean and Marmara regions this game is being played, not common in big cities but in small towns and villages. Horse going at amble is based on the fact that the horse moves its feet towards side ways and by walking with this style, the horse and rider will have the possible minimum convulsion. Horse at amble, is suitable with nomadic and steppe cultures and one of the kind of traditional national sports for Turks (Cunbur, 1997; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Mutlu, 1976; Schmiede, 2000; Sumer, 1992; Taylor, 2006; Yazaloolu, 1999).

#### **CEVGEN (COOEN) (POLO)**

The game Cogen (cevgen, polo) is one of national games of Turks played with horse that had been invented by Turks in the Central Asia. Cooen was a sort of military

training that developed riders skills on horse. This game was accepted among society as a game on horse for the young population. With this game, the young ones were developing their skills in riding. The game polo that is being played all over the world today, comes from the Tibetan name "pulu". In the game cevgen, there are two competing teams and players aim to carry the ball with the help of sticks they carry to the defined target while riding the horses. The team, which succeeds getting the before defined score, wins the game (Atli, 1999; Atalay, 2005; Busbecq, 2005; Cunbur, 1997; Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Sumer, 1992; Turan, 1996; Oztelli, 1976).

#### **HISTORY OF CUNDILISM (CNDILIK)**

In Ottoman Empire, the word "Cundi" was only used for riders who had extraordinary skills. In The Ottoman Palace, there was not any separate corps or dormitory that was known with this name. This term was only used as an adjective to define for very talented riders. The Enderun was a big education institution that gave academic education aiming to develop individuals that would work for Palace. People who studied here were sent to different missions in the Palace while they were also brought up with Turkish culture. In this school, there were lessons on how to behave in the Palace, Islamic sciences, maths, arts and also sports. Sports had an importance because it would make them fit and ready in case of war. Turkish warriors had made the war some kind of sport and made sport a useful education tool. They won victories for centuries and the horses accompanied them had a big share in those victories. The training sessions that Turks made before wars gave birth to today's national sport of riding. If we examine sports like jereed, horse at amble or cogen, we understand how Turkish children were brought up. Many generations came together with horses, considered horses as as friends, thus it is not surprising to see, beyond other activities, riding had a very unique place for them (Kahraman, 1989; Kahraman, 1995; Kahraman, 1997; Karahan, 1976; Sumer, 1992; Turan, 1996).

#### **WRESTLING AND ITS PHILOSOPHY**

Wrestling is a kind of sports that is loved and is popular in all Turkish communities both at old times and in modern times. Many types of wrestling that had been developed within historical period such as yaoli, aba, palvar, kemer or karakucak continued their existence Turkey and came today. Yaoli wrestling (wrestling with oil) which had been developed by Ottoman was considered as an traditional asset to be protected and supported. Wrestling was one of the major national sports of Turks. Long years before converting to Islam, Turks

had known wrestling. It is known that Turks had great interest in wrestling before they joined to Islam world. Warriors were buried with their weapons and apart from religious ceremony, near their graves wrestling games were organized that lasted nine days and nights. On anniversaries of death, three days and nights-lasting wrestling games were made. Turkish people consider wrestling as basis for all kind of sports. Homeland of this sport. The Mountains of Karahurum and Tanri still belongs to Turks as it had been before. In his novel "Cengiz Khan" the history autor Harold Lamp says; "In these territories, if a man does not have the ability to ride and wrestling, he can not even get a girl to marry" (Atli, 1999; Baker, 2001; Bernthal, 2003; Behm and Sale, 1993; Chambers *et al.*, 1998; Gumus, 1990).

Turks that moved to West with migration routes, continued wrestling as national sport. After the Malazgirt War (26th August 1071) young Turkish pioneers also came to Anatolia from Khorassan along with Turkoman tribes and contributed to dispersing of Islam to Anatolian and Rumelian lands. Haji Bektashi Veli, who had been the follower of first Turkish Sufi Hodja Ahmet Yesevi came to Anatolia. Again Mehmet Buhari Saltuk Baba, who was also a follower of Ahmet Yesevi and sufi brother of Bab Ilyas Horasani came to Rumelia. Both of them opened dervish lodges and rest houses in places they settled and contributed to honoring of Turkish mind and language. Due to those period's language, collogs and wrestlers who stayed in those lodges were called dervish and ones who administered lodges and made prayers were called "Sheikh". Especially, in wrestling competitions organized in Enderun, during the opening prayer, recalling the name of Sari Saltuk was an important tradition. For Kirkpinar wrestlings, mentioning Sari Saltuk's name has been an obligation. Sari Saltuk had been a pioneer, he had been a veiled pioneer. Because of violent actions of Mogols and some kind of disputes among Seljuks, some Turkomans, who were followers of Sari Saltuk in Amasya region migrated to Rumelia and other Turkomans migrated to Crimea. When Sari Saltuk went to Rumelia, he took Edirne from Bulgarian governance and settled there. Sari Saltuk, who had been a real pioneer, was known as a wrestler among Rumelian Turks. Based on these facts, we can say that Sari Saltuk was the person who took Edirne from Bulgarians 100 years before Ottomans and who made the first Turkish wrestling competition in Kirkpinar fairground, a place 17 kilometers away from Edirne (Baechle and Earle, 2000; Cunbur, 1997; Du Rand, 2006; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Garhammer, 1993; Oztek, 1999; Taylor, 2006; Yucel, 1999).

Ottoman Empire, which was established after the collapse of Anatolian Seljuks State, gave great importance

to sports which had been effective activity for victories in wars, while trying to transform from nomadic tribes to a settled state. Just like in Konya Seljuks, to give opportunity for making sports, during Orhan Gazi governance, facilities were built for wrestlers and other sportsmen. Wrestlers were using the opportunities brought by those lodges while training. Wrestling, that had been done as a tradition of Oguz tribes since, was becoming a special institution of Ottomans. Since, those days, wrestling competitions or trainings, either in lodges or in Palace were being made according to traditions that were considered as law. After the conquest of Anatolia, our founding fathers who came to Rumelia started historical Kirkpinar wrestlings. Kirkpinar wrestlings have been made for 615 years. What makes this sport traditional is the traditional and ceremonial applications of this national sport. Thus, within this context, oil wrestlings has its own a cultural appointments with oil, cazzgir (announcer), pray, salutation, kisbet (special designed pants for wrestlers), peprev (entry of wrestlers), music and agha institution (Atalay, 2005; Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Goral, 2008b; Guven, 1992; Kahraman, 1989; Kahraman, 1995; Kahraman, 1997; Karahan, 1976; Young and Bilby, 1993; Yucel, 1999; Wathen, 1993; Wilson *et al.*, 1993).

## HISTORY OF KIRKPINAR

In 1346, Suleyman Pasha, who was the brother of Orhan Gazi, along with 40 pioneers attempted to siege Rumelia and succeeded with a incursion to Domuzhisari of Byzantium. This may be considered as the birth of Kirkpinar. Forty pioneers, who passed Dardanelles to Rumelia, after settling to Domuzhisari that belonged to Byzantians, after coming of additional forces, moved towards Edirne as advanced guards. Each of them looked like wrestling champions and during their journey, they were wrestling in their free times. When these pioneers came to Ahirkoy near Edirne, they once again started wrestling in their break. Two brothers, Ali and Selim, which did not defeat one another in any of competitions, became finalists of wrestling again. Although, they continued wrestling all day, they could not beat each other and wrestling continued during night under candle and lanterns. They were so tired that their hearts were beating like drums and bodies were shaking. At midnight, they lost their breath and lied death and became martires. Their fellows buried two brothers under a fig tree and continued their raids. After Edirne was conquered and became capital for Ottomans, alive members of the group went to the Ahirkoy to visit their friends and make them a moseum but when they get there they saw that fountains were born under the fig tree.

Village residents heard the story and believed that those brothers were mystic people and that land was known as Kirkpınar (40 fountains) since then. In the memory of 40 pioneers who once wrestled there, residents of village organized wrestling competitions on May 6th festival each year (Atlı, 1999; Halici, 1976; Kahraman, 1989; Kahraman, 1995; Kahraman, 1997; Halici, 1976; Pakalın, 1972; Ünver, 1976; Yazaloolu, 1999; Yücel, 1999).

In Turkish culture, the number 40 has a special place. Near Turkish Khans there were "40 yioit" (40 brave men) ready to follow his orders and there were 40 "ince kız" (40 thin girls) to sit with the Hatun, the wife of Khan. Number 40 is also blessed in terms of religion. There were graves of "Forties-40 mystics" where Turkish people lived. Residents of those places, visited to graves and prayed in certain days of the week. After prayers, meals were eaten and games were played. Kirkpınar wrestlings can never be considered as just a wrestling competition. A great fairground was being established and activities continued for 15 days. Kirkpınar wrestlings were made as the opening ceremony of this fairground. Fairground brought mountain and plain villages and villagers together and many people meet their needs for summer by shopping at this fairground. In Kirkpınar, not only professional wrestlers were in competition, amateur men who had self confidence also attended competition. In those wrestlings, for long years many new and famous wrestlers showed themselves. Wrestling was never considered as a single occupation, thus every wrestler had an occupation to make living. Because due to the type of sport, a period of regression would start. In those regression days, wrestler would have another occupation not to force his body unnecessarily. That is why wrestlers who took place in Kirkpınar were not only wrestlers (Atalay, 2005; Gumus, 1990; İscan, 1998; Mutlu, 1976; Ongel, 2000; Öztöpcü, 2002; Şahin, 2003).

Wearing wrestlers costume *kisbet* was considered as an important event and ceremony was made while wearing it. Only wrestlers with enough experience were allowed to wear *kisbet*. The day a young wrestler would wear his own *kisbet* was determined by his master. Old wrestlers, audience and relatives of wrestler would gather in the *kisbet* ceremony. Young wrestler would kiss his master's and old wrestlers' hands and made a competition with friend in ceremony. Two Rakah of prayer was performed before ceremony. One of the wrestlers would pray "Fatiha" prayer in the name of Holly Hamza. Again, due to the customs, a few amount of rose water would be added to oil pot or pitcher. Thus, oil wrestling was more like a ritual than sports. One of the reasons why wrestling developed in Ottoman period was the special interest of sultans to this sport. There were Sultans like Murat IV and

Abdulaziz, who were also not fans and wrestlers. *Vezi*rs "Prime ministers" and other men of state, no matter how old they were, organized wrestling competitions and *jereed* games among themselves. In traditional wrestlings that came from Ottoman to today, entry of wrestlers were aesthetic movements of wrestlers to warm up and to prepare audience to competition. During entry of wrestlers, wrestling announcer say wise mottoes such as "two pioneers gathered in the square, each one is very brave", "mothers bother all, fathers do not understand" or "do not be proud that you are big, do not be sorry that you are weak". During entry of wrestling ceremony, two wrestlers control each other's trotters. They bend to each other's toe, as a sign of modesty, a gesture saying "I will be a friend of your feet". After the game, if winner is younger, he kisses the rival's hand, if older, the loser kiss winner's forehead. If rivals were at same age, they cuddle up a sign of brotherhood, they never make gestures to show or celebrate the game. Defeated wrestler is taken from the ground respectfully, the audience does not make sound and these are the signs of supreme culture of a world state Ottoman's (Aktepe, 2003; Cünbur, 1997; Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Goral, 2008b; Kafalı, 1999; Turktas, 1999).

### **KARAKUCAK WRESTLINGS**

Karakucak wrestlings are real national wrestlings of Turks. The game was originated in Central Asia and only a few rules and rituals had changed since then. Karakucak, in other words, free style of wrestling is a very well known type of wrestling in a large geography containing Mancu's, Yakut Turks, Mogols, Azerbaijan, Crimean Turks and Kazakh Turks. The wrestling is the same played in Oguz community and old Turkish tribes and is still being made in Turkey in places where oil wrestling is not performed. Wrestling is indispensable rituals of wedding ceremonies and religious feasts. Drums, clarion and wrestling always exist in those days (Atlı, 1999; Gumus, 1990; Güven, 1992; Kahraman, 1989; Sumer, 1992; Turan, 1996; Yücel, 1999).

### **ABA (WOOLEN CLOTH) WRESTLING**

All types of wrestling, developed in a legal framework by time. There occurred some sort of rules to prevent one wrestler to kill or hurt his rival; thus wrestling developed as a sport and it became more important in societies. Wrestling competitions were also parts of children's games. The transforming of imitative wrestling to traditional wrestling became possible with religious ritual dances. People warming up for these dances, were also preparing themselves for wrestling. Different types of



wrestling was being used while educating soldiers and children. After that, many wrestling competitions around the world turned into festivals. If we look at the history of wrestling as sport, we see aba wrestling as one of the oldest style of wrestling. This style of wrestling had been done in Central Asia by Turks. Today, it is performed in Gaziantep and Antakya regions within the territory of Turkey. This style took its name from the woolen cloth called "aba". Village games for audience, was one of the few things that bring color and entertainment in the village life. These games that were born abundance rituals and enjoyment of audience are performed without a text, stage. Aba wrestling, which is one of the oldest kinds of wrestling was the first wrestling sport performed with clothes. The game takes the same name of cloth worn by the wrestlers. As it is known, aba, that had been knitted from wool, which is thick, strong and rough, was being used as daily costume in old times. The rules of the wrestling barely changed since the game was originated. These wrestlings were being performed with big festivals, but today they are performed twice a year "without text, stage and in accordance with audience". Today, aba wrestlings are organized twice a year and sometimes we see aba wrestling organizations in special days like wedding entertainments (Atalay, 2005; Cunbur, 1997; Gumus, 1990; Iscan, 1998; Kafali, 1999; Ongel, 2000).

We observe that, the wrestling which was performed as training for combats, is considered as mystic prayer session more than just physical activities. All legendary pioneers in Turkish history were also good wrestler and this fact proved that one of the conditions of being a good warrior was to be also a good wrestler. In Ottoman Empire, in the lodges and schools, raising a man with good character was much more important than raising a wrestler. All steps of the activities were being made in a ceremonial way. Turks, after converting to Islam, considered wrestling as an inheritance of the Prophet. The wrestling announcer has a special place and considered as an important status in oil wrestlings. He tells the characteristics of wrestlers while cites the name of Prophet and declares Holly Hamza as the greatest wrestler ever. Today, if we examine the lives of many great wrestlers such as Koca Yusuf, Adali Halil, Mumin Wrestler, Kara Ahmet, we come up with exemplary life stories. We can say that, wrestling, which is the most common sport and has a special place in traditional sports, reflects Turkish traditions and customs totally both in terms of living style and physical (Kahraman, 1995; Kahraman, 1997; Oztek, 1999; Oztopcu, 2002; Yildiran, 2000).

Sports in Turkish communities went beyond 4 thousand years before Christ. Not only Seljuks and Ottomans, but Gokturks, Uighurs, Huns, Sumerian Turks were also giving special importance and interest to sports. When Turkish epigraphs are examined, we can clearly see the model Turks parents give to their children. Description of a person who is warrior, pioneer but very well-mannered can be seen in all epigraphs. We can understand from Dede Korkut's stories that one should have a skill or to be brave to deserve a name or title. We learn from the stories that to have the name Boocac Han, the son of Dirse Khan had to fight with a bull and defeated it with a fist, or we learn that Bamsi Beyrek had to hit targets and wrestled with her to have Bani Cicek Hatun as his wife. These examples prove that, boys and girls both were grown up with disciplined physical culture (Anonym, 1974; Busbecq, 2005; Clutcz *et al.*, 1983; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Guven, 1992; Holcomb *et al.*, 1998; Gumilov, 1999; Knuttgen and Kraemer, 1987; Newton and Kraemer, 1994).

In Turkish culture and characteristics, a struggling and combative man had always been complimented. Turks were brought up from very early ages playing cevgan ball, riding fast horses, throwing arrows to mobile targets such as birds diving for their and by that time their discipline and manners were being tightly controlled. With their discipline and understanding of duty in the armies they established, Turks had various military victories in history. Their warrior characteristics and their exhausting skills in archery and riding was very well known by the rest of the world. An Armenian author Mathieu of Urfa wrote; "Armenians who had never seen Turkish rider in their lives surprised. They watched these riders with long hairs, arrows and arches in astonishment" as he was describing Seljuks exodus (Adams *et al.*, 1992; Baker, 2001; Bernthal, 2003; Du Rand, 2006; Holcomb *et al.*, 1998; Karahan, 1976; Markowitz, 2007; Munro, 2000; Ongel, 2000; Turktap, 1999; Yazaloolu, 1999).

During Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, ambassador of German Empire to Istanbul, Busbecq, explains the unchanging characteristics of Turkish nation five centuries after with these words: "The order and quietness in this mass crowd is really something to be admired. No sound, cries, shouts and humming. On the other hand, when it comes to us, when 2 people come together, they can not stand quiet. Here, all men stand calm and quiet in their places like statues". The prime minister of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, Ibrahim Pasha, beautifully defined Turkish character to French, Hungarian and Polish ambassadors with his words,

‘‘Turks speak less but does more’’. In turks, physical training came transported from one generation to another was developed in Oguz, Seljuks and Ottomans day by day. After they succeeded in taming of horses, riding, archery, using bayonet became part of their cultures as well as wrestling. This culture also contained spiritual development and was the pro culture of a world empire that included heroism, warriorism, sovereignty (Atalay, 2005; Hakkinen and Komi, 1985; Komi, 1979; Marshall, 1993; Newton *et al.*, 1999; Ozcan, 2001; Pakalin, 1972; Wathen, 1993).

Heroism (alplik) was an institution developed by Turks in social life. In the journey from Central Asia to Balkans, these heroes and mystic heroes always played a major role. Alp has always been brave, strong, generous and talented in various sports. Alp, rides well, runs fast, good hunter and also a good wrestler. Hodja Ahmet Yesevi has an important place here. Ahmet Yesevi must have had a preparation period for being ghazi that, he first faced with conquest evanger of Koran when he was a student in school. When he first read the conquest sura of Koran, he asked teachers and learnt meaning of it. He had been a model and symbol for all armies going to war in Islam world. The followers of this ideal were called as ghazi, ahi, abdal, alp, alperen, Horasan ereni. These followers placed a key role in settling of Turkish Anatolia in all places. Some of them even saw the conquest of Istanbul. Considering all these characteristics, we see that Turks which have been brought up with war manoeuvres, turned these into an understanding and carried these training in their daily life. This culture that continued for generations, left important inheritances to the coming generations. One of those heritages is national sports. These sports developed due to training for combats and changing war tactics. Thus, explaining philosophy of national sports like wrestling, riding or archery, is a way of understanding turkish culture and living philosophy (Behm and Sale, 1993; Berger, 1985; Chambers *et al.*, 1998; Gumilov, 1999; Holcomb *et al.*, 1998; Kezar, 2004; Koppedraye, 2002; Markowitz, 2007; Schmiede, 2000; Young and Bilby, 1993; Wathen, 1993).

### CONCLUSION

Culture and civilisations have important inheritances for those who live in that society. It would be a great mistake trying to expect all members of a society understand the same thing and have the same kind of mind. When people try to understand and adopt the inheritances of their civilization, they will face with the milestones of an adequate life for them. Turks were very

much choosy while raising their children. Due to their antropological structure, they determined the best way of living and defined it in an absolute and strict framework. Thus, Turks had always focused on issues that they considered as vital importance. The most important ones of these issues are to be a good warrior and a good-mannered person. Within this framework, they developed concepts like alp and alperen to the world as a model. The children that were brought up with this understanding prepared themselves to have a name with honour. The physical parts of these trainings gave birth to national sports (Aktepe, 2003; Atay, 1997; Baydar, 1999; Berger, 1985; Erkal *et al.*, 1998; Gumus, 1990; Holcomb *et al.*, 1998; Kahraman, 1997; Koppedraye, 2002; Koppedraye, 2002; Schmiede, 2000).

On the other hand, the changing tactics of Turks in war was also effective in the formation of national sports. After combating a while, Turkish army was receding in the war, but while receding, warriors were throwing arrows to defeat the enemy. Skills in riding and archery helped Turks to defeat their enemies in many wars. In social life, we also see the same roles. Single young men should have to fight and defeat young women to marry them. This custom was being told in all Turkish epigraphs (Clutch *et al.*, 1983; Cunbur, 1997; Goral, 2008a; Gozcelioolu, 2003; Iscan, 1998; Kezar, 2004; Munro, 2000; Owen, 2002; Oztopcu, 2002; Sahin, 2003).

One other aspect of traditional sports beyond the warrior philosophy is the definition of well mannered person. All these sports were protected and accepted as inheritances of Prophet especially after Turks converted to Islam. We see, respect to other’s rights were at top level in those days, something we hardly witness in today’s modern world. Thus, the performing of traditional sports as religious ceremony is a proof of this understanding (Baker, 2001; Du Rand, 2006; Fleck and Kraemer, 2004; Guven, 1992; Kunter, 1938; Stevenson and Howard, 2002).

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