

Culture of Sports and Wrestling in Turkey

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Abstract: *Sports appeared as a kind of game creates a skill, with the sense of a game, recreation, entertainment and breaking away from work five or six thousand years ago. Culture is a considerable quality and accumulation phenomenon. Sport culture identifies all kinds of values, products and behaviors related to sport. The objective of the sport policies in Turkey focus on supporting the whole society to take on a habit of regular physical activity with a perspective of sport for everyone, contributing the wealth of society and individual through sport, improving socio-economic standards, detecting talented kids and youngs. When Turkish is mentioned, warfare, military service and therefore wrestling come to mind. The Turks considered wrestling as a way of worship, the wrestling area as a temple, and the wrestling square as a soldier's square.*

Keywords: sports, wrestling, culture, Turkey

1. Introduction

Sport, which has its own peculiar rules, performed individually or as a team, is a combination of fun activities enabling the development of physical and mental skills (Savaş, 1989). They are the activities performed with the purpose to improve person's physical and mental health who is the basic element of social and cultural advancement, to ensure the development of his characteristic features, to form the personality, to pave the way for the orientation to the environment by providing knowledge and skills, to wrestle within the limits of competition in accordance with the certain rules, to feel excitement, to compete and to overcome (Yetim, 2020). In other words we can define sports, a multidimensional and a complex phenomenon, as the social activities directed by the different objectives, values and sanctions, consciously aiming at formation of difficulties based on performance, and overcoming them. Sports is not only a factor that provides us income and makes us spend good time by entertainment, it, at the same time, presents a beautiful example of an alive, living, sustainable high culture with its own values which does not consider any criteria like age, gender, race, height, weight, which has the capability to be common ground for everyone and especially for young people, possesses the characteristic of a savior (Kaplan and Akkaya, 2014).

Besides its being formed with different perspectives and being called as sports, it is known that sport activities were performed in ancient times (Erdemli 1996). Sports appeared as a kind of game creates a skill, with the sense of a game, recreation, entertainment and breaking away from work five or six thousand years ago. In this context, when we take into account the fact that at least in the historical aspect the first sport types that are remarkable or known appeared in the societies which had become states, in other words historically in the first governments, we could find out that sport's social structure is an institution not only seen in our age but also seen back to the beginning of man's history (Kılıçgil, 1998).

Today due to the dimension sport gained, it is an important global phenomenon that brings the different cultures and societies closer to each other, and at the same time it is one of the social, political, cultural and economical events.

People are now able to choose various sports branches not only for having fun and killing time in their leisure but also they choose sport as a lifestyle, as "work and profession" to maintain their life. For this purpose, almost every branch of sport goes beyond national borders and takes its place in organizations such as world cups and olympic games, etc., national and international institutions, organizations and organizations such as FIFA and FIBA. Insomuch that, sports activities, as an economic sector, have become one of the sectors that contribute the most to the world economy and constitute the political economy of the world (Akgül, 2014). Culture is a considerable quality and accumulation phenomenon. According to the common view, sport is considered as an element of popular culture, which is defined as the cultural and fun activities of individuals. Sport is a part of universal culture, an important means of uniting people of different languages, races and religions in the world (Ozturk, 1998: 84).

Culture is a group phenomenon. It cannot exist only within a single person, nor is it the mean of personal characteristics. It covers shared behaviors, values, and assumptions. Sport is commonly experienced through a group's norms, expectations, via unwritten rules. In addition, culture can lead the thoughts and actions of group members in the long term. People feel that they belong to groups with similar characteristics. These groups are more likely to be compatible with the same attitudes and behaviors as themselves. Those who do not adapt to the group tend to leave over time. Thus, culture is resistant to change and external influences. This makes culture a self-reinforcing social model (Groysberg et al., 2018).

Sport culture identifies all kinds of values, products and behaviors related to sport. As social actors, we participate in some activities and play some roles in social life. Individuals of similar culture know (or should) know the requirements of the roles they play, and they act (or should) act in accordance with these roles. These concepts, of which we can count hundreds more, such as meeting culture, library culture, food culture, sports culture, have common or special meanings for all of us. The processes are as important and meaningful as the results, sometimes even more. In this sense, sports as a cultural element is not only a score (as goals, points, grades); it is in fact much more. In this respect,

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not cheering badly (or doing so) as a spectator, playing fairly (or not playing) as an athlete, being objective (or not) as a referee is a sport culture (or lack of culture). In short, sports culture, identifies all kinds of positive-negative; material and moral value, product and behavior, related to culture.

Contrary to the traditional understanding of sports and sports culture, in modern times, the concept of sports/exercise for a healthy life besides leisure and entertainment is an increasingly prominent situation. To describe this situation as a reflection of globalization and popular culture should not be seen as an extreme claim. Because in the past, sport culture in the simple sense, was considered as an activity belonging to sports-related institutions and organizations, as well as to those who were interested in sports as a business and profession. The underlying point of this understanding was due to the division of labor in modern society, it was a 'leisure time' and 'entertainment activity' held on weekends for people who got tired in a busy week. It was also known that this business possessed a political and economical dimension. However, in our age, the culture and understanding of sports have moved beyond leisure and entertainment life, and has become a lifestyle, a multi-purpose activity within the reshaped construction of human life in the globalizing world. It has even become a cluster of culture and activities that have settled in the center of life (Akgül, 2014).

In a cultural system, sports and culture not only interact with each other but also reflect the common aspects of society. For this reason, sport is one of the elements that constitute culture. The culture that advances and transfers from the past to the present with the accumulations created, is transferred to the new generations. In other words, the sustainability of culture is possible through transmission. As in other elements of culture, transferring sports heritage to future generations is of great importance for the sustainability of sports culture (Korkmaz, 2019; Yu, 2020). Different points of view should be developed with respect to the relationship of sport and broader social, economic and political processes. Studies can give various messages within the societies of the nations through the popular forms of sports culture (life style). In addition, together with the sport culture created in this aspect, sport can contribute positively to the shape of the social order (Nematovich, 2021; Wheaton, 2010). Acquiring a sports culture among young people in the United States being thought to reveal these following results, could be set as an example: increased physical activity's producing useful hobbies, positive aspects such as better health, social and moral development through skill improvement, and withdrawal from crime and aggressive behaviors. (Seefeldt et al., 1997). It is observed that in the process of young people's acquiring a sport culture, sport creates positive, emotional and developmental impressions on children. In order to reshape youth sports and to create a healthier environment for the participants, it is necessary to focus on the efforts to disseminate the sports culture (Cox, 2011).

The objective of the sport policies in Turkey focus on supporting the whole society to take on a habit of regular physical activity with a perspective of sport for everyone, contributing the wealth of society and individual through

sport, improving socio-economic standards, detecting talented kids and youngs. It aims at making Turkey a leading sport country through supporting and training successful athletes, providing necessary support to amateur branches, encouraging excellence and participation thus creating an innovative sport culture. (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2012). This issue is clearly stated in Article 59 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey that the state grants equal rights to people from all sections of life and protects successful athletes.

A youth policy meeting the needs of young population in our time and corresponding to the social structure holds two basic characteristics. The first of these is designing the policies to be prepared in a form to cover all the sectors aiming at the youth, to set up a structure to make the correspondence and cooperation between the sectors more prominent. The second one is to put the structures which enable the youth to be active citizens forward (Acar, 2008). Life styles of societies and their cultural structure reflected on their recreative activities and these kinds of recreative activities to be done has played an important role on the formation of the future of society. In that human beings due to their nature have always wanted to keep their body vigorous and alive to supply food and to save their own lives. Sport activities were practiced in the beginnings of human history with the purpose of recreative activities, commercial concerns, psychological relaxation and healthy living. Turkish societies by the way have performed sport activities to be constantly ready for wars and develop themselves under war conditions. Sources of history have revealed that Turkish people gave the utmost importance to active life style and developed itself in a better way in this aspect than other societies in that time zone (Özen, 2013).

From a general point of view sport activities done on a daily basis have turned into an international organisation functioning as a vehicle to bring people together, to maintain the culture, to train the new generation and harmonise people thus in this aspect it is more than a war preparation. In accordance with Chinese resources of B. C 200, it was stated that Turkish kids from earlier ages were trained to get the skills of wrestling, horseback riding, shooting arrows, using swords and shields, hunting, throwing spears and gaining fighting (İmamoğlu and Taşmdepligil, 1997: 145-150).

Throughout history, sport has been valued sufficiently by Turkish society. Sports activities such as wrestling, archery and horse riding have always existed as of the first periods of the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, sport first progressed with the understanding of training, and later on, it continued its progress through sports lodges. In sports lodges, together with our ancestral sport wrestling, sports branches such as archery, mace, javelin and horse riding were given due importance. With the beginning of the Tanzimat Period, westernization movements started to move towards club formation (Özer and Gül, 2020).

The traditional institutions that formed the sports organization in the Ottoman Empire were replaced by the clubs towards the end of Tanzimat reform in the 19th century. During Tanzimat period, as in every field,

innovation showed itself in the field of sports, and the transition to universally practised sports and organization accelerated by quitting traditional institutions and practised sports. And in the modern sense the entry of sports into Turkey has taken place through our educational institutions. With the Tanzimat period, physical education and sports courses were seen as life-oriented subject, as in the West, and began to appear in the curriculum of schools (Kıyıcı, Konca, Burmaoğlu, 2010).

When Turkish is mentioned, warfare, military service and therefore wrestling come to mind. Historical inscriptions, findings and documents mention seventy kinds of traditional Turkish Sports. Some of them present a form identified with the nation (such as shooting, horse riding, gules, thunderbolt, javelin, etc.). Again, we can see the sport of wrestling at the beginning of these ancestral heirloom sports branches. Turkish people had fun with wrestling and embraced it. It seems that these sports and their traditional rules are very suitable for the basic characteristic structure and physiology of the Turkish nation (İşler, 1992). When we look at the cases in which wrestling is practiced in Turkish communities within the cultural process, first of all, besides the personal benefits of the individual such as increasing body strength and improving reflexes, the birth, name, which reflects the joy and sadness of the inevitable processes of life, such as proving himself to the society, war training, life, happiness and finally death. wrestling/wrestling/wrestling has shown itself in giving, wedding, death, mourning ceremonies (Çelik, 2021).

Wrestling is the world's first and oldest known sport. The beginning of wrestling goes back to ancient times. According to historical sources, the first known civilizations were established in the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian basins, the Nile valley, China and India, and the existence of wrestling was documented in these areas. E. g; Wrestling-themed paintings were found on the walls of King Menes tomb in Egypt around 3400 BC. In a relief in the Istanbul Archeology Museum, it is documented that wrestling was practiced by the Phoenicians 2700 years ago. As in other societies, in the past, sport was practiced by both men and women to make the body resistant to natural conditions and to prepare for war. "The sword, shield, javelin, archery, horse races, lobe, mace, spear throwing and wrestling were means of protecting the material and spiritual possessions in case of a possible war, and were also accepted as a means of socialization. Wrestling, one of the oldest sports in the history of humanity, has integrated with the Turkish concept and has been adopted by Turkish people as a means of competition, sports, show, entertainment and socialization in palaces, barracks, fairs, wedding celebrations, victory feasts, and has survived to the present day by being applied uninterruptedly in the historical process (Kayın, 2019).

The Turks considered wrestling as a way of worship, the wrestling area as a temple, and the wrestling square as a soldier's square. Nevruz, which the Turks celebrate as the beginning of New Year's, means the revival of nature. Turks organized sports competitions and various entertainments on the day of Nevruz as an expression of the revival of nature and the arrival of spring. For Turks, wrestling took place in almost all parts of the social life of the society, and it was

widely performed in weddings, holidays, ceremonies, festivals, funerals and in every corner of the society. However, as a result of some changes in the globalizing world in the 21st century, wrestling has lost its former importance and many of the traditions have disappeared as well (Fişne, Bardakçı and Karagöz, 2017: 29-31).

Wrestling is one of our important sport branches has become traditional throughout the years and is called with various names changing accordingly to the type of practise, to the area it is performed, to the clothes worn. Wrestling of two persons left together alone to knock down the other with intelligence, strength and wisdom has existed since the beginning of history and practiced up to today. Wrestling has been the one among all the performed sports to be adopted by the people and it has become traditional thereby. The integration of wrestling with Turkish concept based upon a long historical past and goes back to Middle Asia known as Turks' Homeland (Toksöz vd.2011: 19). . By integrating with the Turkish concept, it has been adopted as a means of competition, sports, show, entertainment and socialization by people from residents to nomads in palaces, barracks, weddings and fairs and has reached today by being practised. (Kayın, 2019).

It has been understood that the basis of most sports that Turks do is based on a tradition. There are many rituals in traditional sports among Turks. These rituals seem to be influenced by the Islamic Civilization. Therefore, it is known that many movements in traditional sports are based on a religious basis. Wearing kispet and pesrev in traditional oil wrestling, religious practices in small and large tang ceremonies in archery, and the sanctity attributed to horses in horse riding could be examples of this (Gül, Gül, Uzun, 2021).

In Atatürk's period, it is seen that the state's facilities were used to support the institutions and organizations, sports clubs and athletes engaging in sports activities in order to organize Turkish sports and create a healthy and strong sports infrastructure all over the country (Sümer, 1990).

In this context, Atatürk gave special importance to Turkish ancestral sports such as wrestling, which contains the feelings of bravery, valor and humility; horse riding and javelin, where agility is displayed, and archery, which represents skill, ability and dominance. He paid special attention to ensure that these are lived and maintained, and that Turkish athletes display their abilities in these sports in the national and international arenas (Yıldız, 2008). Referring to the innate inclination of the Turkish nation to sports, Atatürk, pointing to the connection between wrestling and national culture, stated that it is possible to see even toddlers wrestling in the threshing floor. He saw those involved in this sport as monuments that instill confidence and happiness. Atatürk, who has information about wrestling quite enough to sense the mistakes and tactics of the wrestlers during the competitions, supported Arabacı İsmail, who was among the Turkish wrestlers during the Turkey-Italy national wrestling matches in 1933, Saim Arıkan, who defeated the famous Italian wrestler Fidere Lombardi, and Çoban Mehmet the heavyweight champion. He personally supported Mehmet by going to the Maxim Hall, where the

competitions were held, and cheered for them (Güven, 1996).

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