

Examination of Traditional Sports Games in The Context of Ethnosport Events

Fikret ALINCAK

Gaziantep University

Hilva ÇILKIZ

Gaziantep University

To Cite This Chapter:

Alincak, F., & Cilkiz, H. (2025). Examination of traditional sports games in the context of ethnosport events. In F. Alincak (Ed.), *Current studies in sports science* (pp. 1–7). ISRES Publishing.

Introduction

Ethnosport is a new institutional form that combines traditional physical activity types, including national sports, and is revived as historical reconstructions of traditional indigenous games (Kylasov, 2011). Ethnosport is an important part of the cultural heritage of the world's peoples and acts as a type of ethnocultural identity. It includes traditional games and ethnocultural physical activity types related to national lifestyles and customs (Kylasov, 2013). Ethnosport, based on the concept of ethno, is defined as “an inclusive term that refers to sporting events that have filtered through different traditional cultures and survived to the present day, containing many elements specific to local identities” (World Ethnosport Federation, 2019).

Central Asian countries are engaged in efforts to preserve nomadic traditions and culture and revitalize their own identities. The World Ethnosport Confederation's initiatives in this area, aimed at helping preserve cultural uniqueness and promoting the development of ethnosport, are viewed positively by Central Asian countries. For example, the “Rukhani Zhagyru” strategic program developed by the government of Kazakhstan. One of the program's goals is to preserve folk traditions, customs, games, rituals, and holidays. All of this is described in detail in N. Nazarbayev's articles “A Look to the Future: Modernization of Public Consciousness” and “The Seven Faces of the Great Steppe” (World Ethnosport Confederation, 2024).

Tourists participating in ethnosport events from abroad gain an understanding of the nation by seeing the history and current situation of the country they visit. Increasing these activities and imposing them on the tourism sector, treating them as part of tourism, will benefit the promotion of the country and provide a source of income for the local population. It will also contribute to the preservation of culture. Language, customs, and traditions are social riches inherited from the past in cultural terms (Imamoğlu,

Taşmektepligil, and Turkmen, 1997). Therefore, ethnosport practices are extremely important in terms of revealing social character. It can be said that the lifestyles of societies in their daily lives have led to the emergence of the concept of ethnosport culture. For this reason, cultural values differentiate nations from one another and give them intrinsic value. Due to the importance of ethnosport activities, it has been determined that sports organizations in Turkey that fall within this scope should be supported and their capacity increased.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine traditional sports games in the context of ethnosport events.

Sport Concept

The term “sport,” which has spread globally through English, is derived from Spanish words like “deportore.” These words carry meanings such as dispersion and separation (Şahan, 2007). People have engaged in sports since ancient times, often without a conscious goal. These activities are techniques that help individuals improve their physical and mental health and revitalize themselves by gaining strength and skills. Sports has a structure that divides physical education activities into various categories, and when practiced professionally, it transforms into an activity with specific rules and competitions that require a high level of physical and mental effort. The primary goal of sports is generally to win and compete (Aracı, 1999).

For those interested in sports from another perspective, competition is a physical, mental, and practical struggle aimed at winning. Studies are being developed and conducted to inspire excitement and enthusiasm in spectators, supported by fields such as anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, and psychology. This is a sustainable technique (Erkal, 1992). However, when applied as a game that combines fun and competition in an atmosphere of excitement and movement, which begins as a social state and effect, it helps relieve anxiety and calm. In a competitive situation, it is the exercises and intense muscle movement that ultimately wins after a high-energy struggle. Therefore, sport is considered an enjoyable and technical endeavor that contributes to the struggle and victory of professionals and amateurs, and to the social development of spectators (Taşçıoğlu, 2000). Sport is a competitive, cooperative, and cultural process that alters an individual’s natural state through human influence. It is practiced individually or collectively, with or without equipment, within a timeframe, or professionally, within specific rules. It integrates individuals into a socialized society and develops both spirit and body (Erkal, 1982).

In other words, sport is a branch of science that fosters the spiritual, physical, and intellectual development of individuals and fosters coordination among these areas

(Harris, 1972).

Sport is a source of excitement. This excitement in people is eternal and will undoubtedly remain so. Consequently, sports such as shooting, horseback riding, and wrestling have been among the national sports enjoyed by Turks since ancient times (Karaküçük, 1992). Sports improves physical health and, conversely, has positive effects on mental and social well-being. Regular physical activity supports cardiovascular health, strengthens muscle and bone structure, and strengthens the immune system. Psychologically, it plays an active role in reducing negative conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Furthermore, sports contribute to socialization by strengthening teamwork, leadership, and social interaction (Açıkada, 1990).

The Concept of Ethnosport

Ethnosport is a concept created to preserve and promote traditional sports derived from folk culture in today's world. The disciplines practiced are those that foster social relationships, enhance solidarity among individuals, and support the preservation of cultural identities. For example, sports such as javelin throwing, horseback archery, and oil wrestling, which are played around the world and in Turkey, fall under the scope of ethnosport (Çalışkan, 2020).

Ethnosport is now considered not only a physical activity but also an occasion that reminds a society of its cultural heritage. These sports support the preservation of the history of the people internationally and in our country, while also greatly increasing social solidarity (Büyük, 2015).

When we look at the origins of ethnosport, we see games that emerged from the community's own identity and extended to the community's religious beliefs. Looking back at the dusty pages of history, the games played have been a means for people to survive and gain respect within society. For example, in the Ottoman Empire, javelin throwing and oil wrestling were important sports both for maintaining social interaction and for defending themselves in the military sphere (Kara, 2020).

The Social and Cultural Importance of Ethnosport

Ethnosport brings people in rural areas together and strengthens internal politics through social solidarity. Traditional sporting events held in certain rural areas, in particular, reinforce social cohesion among individuals. At the same time, the sports practiced greatly support the physical and mental development of young people (Erkal, 1982).

Ethnosport plays a crucial role in preserving cultural richness. These sports ensure that traditional values, cultivated over the years like flowers across various cultures, are kept alive and passed on to future generations. For example, the inclusion of oil wrestling, which has been practiced in Turkey for centuries, in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage has contributed to the international recognition of this sport (Büyük,

2017).

Ethnosport events not only attract tourists to the host country but also foster cultural interaction and, so to speak, breathe life into local businesses through shopping. In addition to the events themselves, the fairs, exhibitions, and sales of products unique to the region demonstrate that these activities contribute significantly not only to culture but also to the economy (Türk and Kılıç, 2017).

World Ethnosport Confederation

The World Ethnosport Confederation began its operations in Istanbul in 2015 as an international organization dedicated to the preservation, development, and international promotion of traditional sports. The primary purpose of the World Ethnosport Confederation was to address the widespread prevalence of modern sports across all disciplines, leading to the disappearance of traditional sports from our history. The World Ethnosport Confederation has adopted the principle of offering a solution to this problem, aiming to recognize traditional sports as cultural heritage and promote them internationally (Çalışkan, 2020).

Throughout the history of the World Ethnosport Confederation, traditional sports belonging to Turkish and Central Asian cultures have been at the forefront. For example, disciplines such as oil wrestling, javelin throwing, and horseback archery, which have retained their influence from the Ottoman period to the present day, have been among the first areas of focus for the World Ethnosport Confederation. Furthermore, the Ethnosport Culture Festival, one of the first major initiatives organized by the World Ethnosport Confederation, was intended to be an important step in introducing traditional sports to a wider audience. Held annually since 2016, this festival, like the initiatives planned for future years by TEKNOFEST, known as the World's Largest Technology Festival, was prepared by the World Ethnosport Confederation to support the revival of traditional sports in the modern world (Büyük, 2017).

Another important event that enabled the Confederation to gain international recognition was the World Nomadic Games held in 2018. This organization increased the global visibility of traditional sports and strengthened the World Ethnosport Confederation's influence in the international arena (Türk and Kılıç, 2017).

The Purpose of Establishing the World Ethnosport Confederation

The purpose of the World Ethnosport Confederation is to revive, preserve, and pass on traditional sports that have been forgotten under the influence of the modern era to younger generations. Traditional sports are important components that reflect the history, social structure, and cultural values of a society. The World Ethnosport Confederation believes that these sports should be regarded not only as physical activities but also as a

form of social memory and an element of a society's identity (Kara, 2020).

Another important goal of the Confederation is to promote traditional sports in all countries around the world and to use these sports as a tool for cultural diplomacy. Traditional sports increase mutual understanding and cooperation by establishing interactions between different cultures. Through the events it organizes, the World Ethnosport Confederation highlights the unifying and community-building power of traditional sports. For example, events such as the Ethnosport Culture Festival and the World Nomadic Games have brought together participants from many nations, facilitating cultural and commercial exchange. (Türk and Kılıç, 2017). Another priority in the founding purpose of the World Ethnosport Confederation is to introduce young people to traditional sports and ensure that these sports become part of their daily lives. In line with this goal, projects such as training programs, seminars, and experience centers have been implemented. These efforts aim to convey to young people that traditional sports are not just activities, but reflections of cultural values (Erkal, 1982).

Despite the global dominance of modern sports today, the World Ethnosport Confederation aims to compete by preserving the cultural and spiritual values of traditional sports. The Confederation carries out various working protocols, projects, and promotional campaigns to ensure the viability of traditional sports at the national and international levels (Çalışkan, 2020). The World Ethnosport Confederation aims to introduce and foster interaction among the traditional sports and games of different cultures through its annual Ethnosport Culture Festival. The festival includes activities such as archery, javelin (cirit), and aba wrestling, along with demonstrations of traditional musical instruments, handicrafts, and local cuisines. In this way, cultural harmony is achieved (Kara, 2020). Through seminars and workshops, the Confederation enables young people to become acquainted with traditional sports. Additionally, it aims to remain effective over time by conducting promotional activities both online and in person (Çalışkan, 2020).

Conclusion

Ethnosport festivals are held in various cities in Turkey with the aim of preserving ethnosport disciplines and passing them on to future generations. This makes it possible to preserve the common Turkish culture and disseminate cultural elements. In particular, events with international participation benefit Turkey both in terms of tourism activities and in terms of promoting cultural values abroad. In addition, festivals showcasing the same shared values with the Turkic Republics serve to spread Turkish culture and strengthen cultural dialogue. In this respect, ethnosport festivals combine many beneficial elements. Thus, on the one hand, economic benefits will emerge and significant revenue can be generated, while on the other hand, the goal of sharing and spreading Turkish cultural values can be achieved.

References

- Açıkada, C. (1990). Selected Sports Articles. Ankara, 2.
- Aracı, H. (1999). Physical Education in Schools. Ankara: Nobel Publications.
- Büyük, A. (2017). Ethnosport Festivals and the Role of Traditional Sports in the Modern World. *Turkish Journal of Sports Sciences*, 22(1), 89-102.
- Büyük, A. (2020). Ethnosport and the Future of Cultural Heritage. *Turkish Journal of Sports Sciences*, 25(1), 99-113.
- Çalışkan, M. (2020). Traditional Sports and Cultural Identity. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15(2), 45-58.
- Erkal, M. (1982). Sport from a Sociological Perspective. Ankara: Filiz Publishing House.
- Erkal, M. (1982). Sports from a Sociological Perspective. Ankara: Filiz Bookstore.
- Harris, D. (1972). Sports Psychology and Performance. London: Academic Press.
- İmamoğlu, O., & Taşmektepligil, M. Y. (2014). Sports in Turkish Culture. *Ondokuz Mayıs University Journal of Education Faculty*, 10(1), 145-150.
- Kara, S. (2020). The Ethnosport Confederation and the Popularization of Traditional Sports. *Sports and Culture Research*, 10(3), 33-47.
- Karakucuk, S. (1992). Turkish Sports Association Journal: Selected Sports Articles. Ankara, 2, 31-32.
- Kylasov, A. (2011). "Methodology and Terminology of Ethnosport." *Bulletin of Sports Science*, No. 5: 41-43.
- Kylasov, A. (2013). Ethnosport. The End of the Era of Degeneration. Moscow: Territory of the Future.
- Şahan, H. (2007). The role of sports activities in the socialization process of university students. (Doctoral Thesis). Selçuk University Institute of Social Sciences, Konya.
- Tascioglu, R. (2000). The Role of Sports Organizations in the International Promotion of Turkey. (Master's Thesis). Dokuz Eylul University, Institute of Social Sciences, Izmir.
- Türk, A. & Kılıç, R. (2017). Sports Tourism and Ethnosport Events. *Journal of Tourism Research*, 14(1), 23-39.
- World Ethnosport Confederation (2024). 6th Ethnosport Culture Festival. Access address: <https://etnosportkulturfestivali.com/>
- World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC). (2019). 4th Ethnosport Culture Festival Report. Istanbul. <https://etnosportkulturfestivali.com/>

About the Authors

Prof. Dr. Fikret ALINCAK received his PhD in 2016 from Kırıkkale University, Institute of Health Sciences, Department of Physical Education and Sports. Research and interests; Physical education and game teaching, sports culture are included. Research articles have been published in national and international journals. There are also book chapters in different publishing houses.

E-mail: alincakfikret27@gmail.com, **ORCID:** 0000-0003-3459-3441

Hilva ÇİLKIZ graduated from the First Aid and Emergency Care Department at Gaziantep University in 2011. In 2018, she graduated from the Physical Education and Sports Teaching Department at the Gaziantep University School of Physical Education and Sports. She began her master's degree in Sports Management at the Institute of

Social Sciences at Gaziantep University. Her research areas include physical education, sports hockey, and youth education leadership. She currently works at the Gaziantep Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports.

E-mail: hilvacilkiz@hotmail.com, **ORCID:** 0009-0008-8881-5928

Similarity Index:

The similarity index obtained from the plagiarism software for this book chapter is 1%.