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**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AWARDS IN SPORTS DURING THE
ANCIENT GREEK AND NEAR EASTERN SOCIETIES**

**ANTİK DÖNEM YUNAN VE ÖN ASYA TOPLUMLARINDA SPORDAKİ
ÖDÜLLERİN ÖZELLİKLERİ**

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The Characteristics of Awards in Sports During the Ancient Greek and Near Eastern Societies

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the characteristics of sports awards in Ancient Greek and Near Eastern societies. A literature review was conducted. In ancient times, the Olympic Games did not feature gold, silver, or bronze medals. It is mentioned that athletes' expenses were sometimes covered by wealthy nobles. Symbolic rewards were also observed in Ancient Greek sports. In funeral games, the prizes varied depending on the status of the deceased and the generosity of the organizers. Competitors, spectators, and prizes were considered essential components of such events. In Homeric epics, the rewards included tripods, horses and mules, strong cattle, finely dressed women, and grey iron, symbolizing the value of the deceased. Some of the prizes were given from the property of Patroclus. The depiction of the Goddess of Victory crowning an athlete suggests that even in those times, successful individuals received symbolic rewards similar to modern practices. In the funeral games, awards in boxing were considered valuable for the time and included a mule and a cup. In wrestling, two awards were mentioned: the first prize was twelve cattle, and the second was a woman who owned four oxen. In discus throwing, the prize was a bar of raw iron. Although the types of awards given in ancient times differed slightly between Ancient Greece and early Turkic societies, they both retained their significance. However, rewards appeared to be more prominent in Ancient Greece. Just like today, there were differences between prizes given in universal competitions and local events, and a variety of awards were presented through ceremonies. While awards in Ancient Greece often included tripods, amphorae, oxen, and olive wreaths, in Turkic culture, horses, male animals, and seals were more prominent. In conclusion, the nature of awards varied depending on the cultural values of each civilization.

Keywords: Ancient Greek, Turkic, Sport, Award

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Antik Dönem Yunan ve Ön Asya toplumlarında spordaki ödüllerin özelliklerinin araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Antik dönemlerdeki Olimpiyat Oyunlarında altın, gümüş veya bronz madalya yoktu. Bazen sporcuların masraflarının varlıklı asiller tarafından karşılandığı belirtilir. Antik Yunan sporunda sembolik ödüllerde görülür. Cenaze oyunlarında ödüller ölen kişinin durumuna ve organize edenlerin cömertliğine bağlı olarak değişebilirdi. Cenaze oyunlarında yarışmacılar yanında seyirciler ve ödüller gerekli görülmüştür. Homeros destanlarında ödüller Üçayaklı kazanlar, atlar ve katırlar, güçlü baş sığırlar ve güzel giyimli kadınlar ve gri demir olarak görülmüştür. Ödüller, ölü bir insanın değerini ifade ederdi. Ödüllerin bir kısmı Patroklos'un mülkünden veriliyordu. Zafer Tanrıçasının bir sporcuyla taçlandırırken tasvir edilmesi o tarihlerde de başarılı olanlara bugünkü gibi ödüller verildiğini düşündürülebilir. Cenaze oyunlarında Boks branşında verilen ödüller o zamanın değerlerine göre iyi kabul edilen Katır ve Kupa olarak belirtilmiştir. Cenaze oyunlarında Güreşte iki ödülden bahsedilir. Birincilik ödülü 12 büyükbaş hayvandı. İkinci ödül ise 4 sığır sahibi olan bir kadın idi. Cenaze oyunlarında Disk atma yarışmasında verilen ödül bir külçe ham demirdir. Antik çağlarda verilen ödüller Antik Yunanda ve eski Türklerde biraz farklı olsa da önemini korumuştur. Fakat Antik Yunanda daha fazla olduğu izlenimi yaygındır. Evrensel yarışmalarda verilen ödüller ile yerel organizasyonlarda verilen ödüller günümüzdeki gibi farklılıklar içerir. Verilen ödüllerde günümüzdeki gibi çeşitlilik vardır ve seremonilerle verilirlerdi. Antik Yunanda verilen ödüller Tripod, amfora, öküz, zeytin yaprağından saç ön planda iken Türklerde at, erkek hayvanlar ve mühürler önceliklidir. Yani her milletin kültürel değerlerine göre verilen ödüllerde değişmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antik Yunan, Türk, Spor, Ödül

Introduction

In ancient times, it was common for sporting events to be held concurrently with religious ceremonies and festivals. A prize can be defined as a gift, gratuity, or reward given to individuals or groups, or an organization, in response to their actions or achievements (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021). In antiquity, athletes often competed under the influence of religious beliefs, and the prizes differed from those awarded today. As noted by Kyle (1996), on rare occasions, some renowned athletes were recorded to have received substantial monetary prizes. Some literature records that ancient athletes were rewarded with medal ceremonies immediately following competitions, similar to modern games. While a ribbon symbolizing victory was tied around the winner's head, in Ancient Greece, upon completion of the games, all champions were rewarded in ceremonies held at the Temple of Zeus. These ceremonies have been described as award rituals carrying symbolic and spiritual value for the victorious athletes, who were highly regarded and respected in society (Doğan, 2020; Tekin & Tekin, 2014; Swaddling, 2008). Competitors in the ancient Games could not be defined as either amateur or professional. The term "athlete" is derived from the roots "Athlos" and "Athlon," which mean "competition" and "prize," respectively (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021). In the Ancient Olympic Games, athletes or sportsmen would fiercely compete for prizes such as crowns made of olive leaves, palm branches, woolen bands, and flowers (Garland, 2009). The origins of prizes in sports history can be traced back to the Ancient Greek period according to existing written sources. This study aims to provide a detailed understanding of the prizes awarded during and after the Ancient Greek period by examining them.

Prizes given in ancient times can generally be categorized into two main groups: material and symbolic. Material prizes include items such as goods, currencies, and pottery.

Material Awards: Homer's *Iliad*, in its 23rd Book, recounts that during the funeral games organized in memory of Achilles' friend Patroclus, who died in the Trojan War, victors in eight different events were awarded material prizes such as tripods, vases, precious metals, oxen, and women. These prizes were similar in nature to those awarded in the Ancient Olympic Games. Athletes who emerged victorious from the Pan-Hellenic games held in the 8th, 7th, and 6th centuries BC became owners of significant fortunes as a reward for their Olympic victories. The Roman writer Plutarch mentions that an Athenian citizen and Olympic champion, in 600 BC, hoped to receive a cash prize of 500 drachmas, considered a great wealth at the time. It is stated that the victor in the Isthmian Games would receive a monetary prize worth 100 drachmas. An Athenian inscription dating back to the 5th century BC indicates that Olympic champion Athenian athletes were entitled to a lifetime of free meals every day at the City Hall, a reward that could be considered an early retirement program. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, a system of pensions for athletes was institutionalized (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021).

Symbolic Awards: In the Ancient Summer Games, victorious athletes were presented with a victory crown woven from olive branches, considered the sacred plant of the guardian deity. The senior Hellanodikos (Olympic judge) would undertake the task of crowning the Olympic champions with victory crowns made of olive branches in front of the spectators. Herodotus, in his work "The Histories," records that athletes who triumphed in Olympia were awarded a victory crown woven from olive branches. These crowns were prepared from olive branches grown in the back garden of the Temple of Zeus. The reason for using these branches, taken from wild olive trees, is that they were planted by Hercules and therefore considered sacred. There is no definitive information about the location where the victory crowns presented to athletes in the Ancient Olympic Games were bestowed or the venue where these ceremonies were conducted. The victory crown was deemed to have great importance due to the widespread belief that it endowed the bearer with mystical powers. Leading poets of the time were commissioned to write special victory odes to immortalize the achievements of the victorious athletes.

Olympic champions had the right to erect their own statues in the sacred area dedicated to the gods in Olympia, in honor of their victory. The victorious athletes of the Summer Games, in addition to various awards, earned the right to have their own statues erected; these statues were designed to include the athlete's name, their family names, and the city they belonged to. Thus, the champions attained not only material rewards but also the honor of being remembered as heroes. In Ancient Greece, crowns made of olive and palm branches, though simple in appearance, carried great spiritual value as a symbol of victory. Riders participated in competitions not in pursuit of material gain but with the aim of achieving victory and showcasing their skills in equestrian sports. Those who won returned to their cities having gained the most valuable honor and glory. Poets like Pindar celebrated these victories with praise; victory monuments were built in the names of the victors, and their statues were placed in public squares. The primary goal was a crown made of olive branches, representing fame and glory; it was never about material gain or profit. The victors were elevated on the shoulders of the people and entered their hometowns with victory parades. Riders, in turn, took great care of the horses that had brought them this honor. In Ancient Greece, the desire to achieve reward and prestige through victory was an important factor in athletes' participation in competitions. Historical records indicate that the participation of Greek athletes in competitions stemmed from their desire to gain reward and prestige through victory (Henri, 1975).

Classification of Awards: In Ancient Greece, victors expected not only the crown prize but also various honors following major festivals, such as victory parades, the erection of their statues in the agora, and material rewards (Pomeroy et al., 2004). Although winners in Ancient Greek competitions were mostly presented with simple crowns, there are records of exceptional awards being given in some cases (Pleket, 1995). The only officially recognized award for victors in the Olympic Games was a crown made of olive leaves. However, the fame and honor an athlete brought to their homeland often led to various material rewards. The city-state to which the athlete belonged frequently financed the construction of statues and provided significant monetary rewards to the athlete. For example, an Athenian victor could receive a substantial sum of 500 drachmas, in addition to a lifetime of free meals at the city hall. Olympic champions could receive honorary privileges such as lifetime salaries, tax exemptions, and priority seating in theaters at different times and places. Monumental statues, poems, and coins were among the frequently offered gifts, and some successful athletes converted their achievements into political careers (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021).

The Negative Impact of External Rewards on the Concept of Excellence in Sports: The Greek term "athlete" describes individuals who compete for a prize. In Ancient Greek athletics, the primary goal of competitions was victory; there was no reward for second place, and defeat was considered shameful. Sporting competitions allowed heroes to showcase their talents and superior qualities, reinforcing their status within society. A victory on the battlefield was more than just an indicator of individual physical strength; it was a higher expression of the concept of arete (excellence). Heroes aimed to win the appreciation and honor of the people. Victory was the highest achievement desired by the ancient Greeks, as it provided them with an honor that remained as an immortal monument. Both victory and an honorable death were worthy of the highest respect and worth the sacrifice. These beliefs fueled the Greeks' passion for victories won through competition and sacrifice. The initial sporting contests in Olympia were termed "competitions for the victory crown" rather than "competitions for money." This indicates that the original inspiration for sports competitions was the contests themselves, and various rewards were added in subsequent years. The essence of the original competition lay in creativity and revealing the truth through winning victory and honor. However, the addition of material rewards struck the first blow to the essence of competition. From that point on, the energy and motivation of sports competitions began to derive largely from external material rewards (Bıyık & Yazıcı, 2023; Pisk, 2006).

Sacred and Crown Awards: Sacred and crown awards hold an immeasurable level of respect and value compared to monetary prize competitions. These awards are recognized and esteemed in the international arena as competition prizes. Olympic champions were honored with victory crowns made from the leaves of the sacred olive tree in Olympia.

Monetary Awards: Monetary awards are typically the prizes for competitions organized at the local level and are considered less prestigious compared to sacred and crown awards. Competitions with monetary prizes are categorized according to the amount of the award (Golden, 2004). During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the monetary prizes awarded to athletes usually ranged between 3000 and 6000 drachmas (Henri, 1988). The awarding process did not always occur at fixed amounts. The organization and program of the Panhellenic festivals were the responsibility of the cities that held the festivals. In local festivals, the city or individuals organizing the competitions were the decision-makers. Therefore, the amount of the prizes, which groups the competitions would be open to, what types and disciplines they would be organized in, and which age categories would be appropriate, were all criteria determined by the respective city or individuals. Additionally, the financing of local competitions was directly provided by the budgets of the relevant cities (Henri, 1995).

Pottery, Animal, and Beverage Awards: The Panathenaic prize amphoras served as status symbols, emphasizing the athletic structure of these games and the cultural value of winning (Eils, Jennifer, 1992). Achilles, displaying the prizes determined for the wrestling match to the Danaans, offered a fireproof tripod worth twelve oxen for the winner, and promised a skilled woman worth four oxen for the loser. Achilles called upon those who would participate in the wrestling to stand up, addressing the Argives (Akıncı, 2018). In the Hellenic Games, winners were usually awarded 100 amphoras filled with olive oil as a prize. It is recorded that the price of the least valuable amphora of olive oil was 12 drachmas and the total prize value was around 1200 drachmas (Young, 1983). In ceremonies dedicated to Apollo, winners were presented with bronze tripods as prizes. An example of a bronze tripod, thought to be older than 776 BC and discovered by archaeologists, is shown in Figure 3. However, there is no definitive information on whether these tripods were awards given to athletes or offerings (<http://ancientolympics.arts>).



Figure 1. Ancient crown presentation.



Figure 2. A crown made of olive leaves from ancient times.



Figure 3. Bronze tripod cauldron at the Museum in Olympia, 8th Century BC.

The terracotta Panathenaic prize amphora made by Kleophrades, seen in Figure 4 (circa 500 BC), offers an example of the recognition of athletic achievements. This amphora emphasizes the importance of athletics in Ancient Greece and the recognition of athletic success by depicting the event itself. In Figure 6, two athletes running a short distance race are depicted; their open arms and wide strides indicate a fast run. The athlete on the left holding his arms closer to his body may give the impression that he is running out of strength (<http://ancientolympics.arts>). The Panathenaic prize amphora shown in Figure 7 depicts a foot race or stadium on one side and the statue of Athena on the other. This black-figure painted Panathenaic amphora represents a stadium race of the Panathenaic games. The runners' strides, swinging

arms, and open fingers reflect the dynamism of a short-distance run (could be a stadion or diaulos). (<http://ancientolympics arts>). Like other prize amphoras, this amphora represents athleticism and the victor of these events (Neer, 2011).



Image 4. Kleophrades terracotta Panathenaic prize amphora

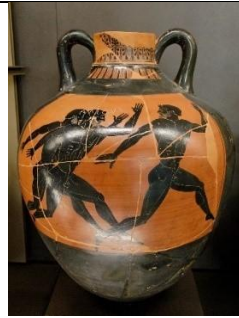


Image 5. Runners (circa 500 BC)

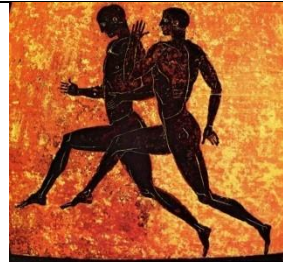


Image 6. Full Speed Run: This Panathenaic amphora (4th century BC).



Image 7: Panathenaic amphora and Five runners (circa 530 BC).

In the context of funeral games, it is stated that Achilles offered various valuable prizes to all contestants, not just the winners, such as horses, mules, female slaves, cauldrons, and tripods. Figure 8 depicts the horse races held during Patroclus' funeral games; it is noted that spectators sat in the stands, usually positioned on the hills surrounding the hippodrome. The vessel features short inscriptions such as 'Achilles', 'Patroclus: games', and 'Sophilos painted me' (<http://ancientolympics arts>). The Panathenaic amphora seen in Figure 11 is one of the prizes given to the victor of the chariot race at the Panathenaia festival, held annually to honor Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. This amphora represents one of the 140 prize amphoras presented to the winner, each with a capacity of about 40 liters of olive oil.



Image 8. Spectators at the horse races: A fragment of a wine cup (circa 580-570 BC).



Image 9. Attic Panathenaic Amphora, circa 490-480 BC.



Image 10. Horse race winner and tripod prize: Athenian black-figure vase, 6th century BC.



Image 11. Panathenaic amphora (circa 410-400 BC).

The Virtue Award in Sports: While severe penalties were applied to individuals associated with cheating or bribery, athletes who avoided such misconduct and achieved victory were also awarded. For instance, between AD 293 and 305, Emperor Diocletian legislated the granting of citizenship freedom to athletes in Rome or Ancient Greece who were proven to have competed every season and won three crowns without cheating or bribery in three sacred festivals (Poter, 2012). In the Ancient Greek Olympics, when an athlete was declared champion in their discipline, they received a victory crown made from olive leaves cut from the sacred grove of Zeus in Olympia and a statue erected in Olympia as a reward. Due to the great importance of the honor brought by winning, the rewards were modest. When an athlete won a competition in the Ancient Greek Olympics, they were given a palm branch and

adorned with red ribbons. In Ancient Greek society, it was not the material value of the reward that drove an athlete to compete, but its spiritual meaning. Sometimes, dedicating the won prize to the temple instead of taking it home bestowed greater honor upon the athlete (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021).

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Recognition of Identity Award: In the Ancient Olympic Games, the names of victorious athletes were recorded, and renowned poets would compose victory odes for them. The fame and reputation of these athletes would spread throughout Greece. While a general statue was allowed to be erected for a single victory, athletes who won three times were granted the right to have individual portrait statues made (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021).

Awards in the Ancient Greek Games were different:

Award for only the first place: In the event crowned with a wreath made of wild olive leaves gathered from a sacred tree near the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, there was only one winner (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021).

Olympia, Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean Games Awards: The Olympic and Pythian games, known as Panhellenic games and held at religious temples, took place every four years, while the Nemean and Isthmian games occurred biennially. In these games, leaf crowns of symbolic value were awarded as prizes, which is why fourth-century writers referred to these games as “crown games.” The winners of these games received significant rewards upon returning to their hometowns. Although valuable prizes were distributed in smaller competitions, the awards for these four games typically consisted of leaf crowns. While the first five Olympics awarded “apples” to the winners, this prize was changed to an “olive wreath” at the request of the Delphic oracles. This wreath, emerging from the region’s ancient tree cult, was considered a legacy symbolizing the natural vitality of the winners. According to Homer, the prizes won in these competitions also included armor and weapons. In the Panhellenic games, winners were awarded simple crowns made from “olive branches” in Olympia, “laurel leaves” in Pythia, “pine branches” in Isthmia, and “wild celery” in Nemea (Weiler, 1981). Therefore, the Panhellenic games were also termed “sacred and crown competitions” (Pleket, 1995).

Table 1. Characteristics of Quadruple Games in Ancient Greece (Swaddling, 2000)

Games and start dates	Editing Location	How many years is it done	Months in which they were made	Awards Given
Olympic- B.C. 776	Olympia	4 years	End of July, Beginning of August	Wild Olive
Pythian –B.C. 582	Delphi	4 years	August- September	Bay
Isthmian –B.C. 581	Corinth	2 years	April-September	Wild Celery
Nemean –B.C. 573	Nemea	2 years	September	Wild Celery – Pine after 146 B.C.

In the first Olympic Games, a wreath made of olive leaves obtained from a sacred tree just outside the Temple of Zeus in Olympia was awarded as a prize, namely an olive leaf crown. The games held in Delphi were called the Pythian Games, and the prize was a crown made of laurel leaves. In the Isthmian Games, it is believed that the prize was a parsley crown. In addition to these four major festivals, the Panathenaia festival, held annually in Athens in honor of Athena, is also an important event (Tekin, 2004).

Local Festival Awards: In the Panhellenic games held in Nemea, Delphi, and Isthmia, the prizes awarded to winners were usually wreaths symbolizing victory. However, athletes competing in smaller-scale local festivals often received prizes of high material value. For example, winners in Argos received a shield, while those in Athens were rewarded with amphoras filled with olive oil (Tekin, 2004). An amphora dating back to the 6th century BC, filled with olive oil and presented to a victorious athlete at a local festival in Athens, is on display at the Vienna Museum of Art History (Figure 12). This amphora, although equivalent to the Panhellenic festivals, differs from them in that winners were awarded amphoras filled with olive oil in addition to crowns (Romano, 2018).

Panathenaic Games Awards: In Ancient Greece, athletes who performed exceptionally in the Panathenaic Games were honored with large Panathenaic amphoras, symbolizing the games and filled with approximately forty liters of first-class olive oil. The number of amphoras varied depending on the nature of the competition, the age category of the participant, and the rank achieved. For instance, a young athlete who came second in the pentathlon was rewarded with six amphoras, while a young male who won the pankration was honored with a significant amount of sixty amphoras. In some events like horse races, winners were awarded the highest number of amphoras. In traditional sports, victories were crowned with different prizes, such as a cow. Most of the amphoras found in archaeological excavations date from the 6th to the 4th century BC. By the Hellenistic period, prizes containing hundreds or even thousands of liters of olive oil became increasingly impractical for traveling athletes. Nonetheless, victorious athletes continued to be awarded with a symbolic amphora.

Hera Games Awards in Argos: Starting around 460 BC, evidence for the Hera Games organized in the city of Argos can be found in inscriptions on bronze prize vases and in the victory odes of the poet Pindar. In the early fourth and third centuries, these games were called “Hekatomboia” (the festival where a hundred cows were sacrificed). During this period, the importance and scope of the games were also emphasized by the increase in the number of animals dedicated.

Awards for Runners-Up: In the Panathenaic Games and some local competitions, there was a practice of awarding prizes to athletes who finished in top positions, such as second place. However, victorious athletes were usually honored with more splendid prizes.

The prizes given at the Patroclus Games can be listed as follows:

1. A woman and a three-legged cauldron,
2. A pregnant mare and a trained horse,
3. A bell or basin,
4. Two gold coins,
5. A double-handled vase.

These prizes were designed to reflect the prestige of the games and the status of the winning athletes in society.

Specific Rules for Prizes: In Ancient Greece, prizes won in competitions were usually left in temples as offerings to the gods. However, Agasikles of Halicarnassus violated this tradition by taking home the

three-legged cauldron he won and hanging it on his wall. Because of this behavior, the cities of Lindos, Ialysos, Kameiros, Kos, Knidos, and Halicarnassus, members of the Dorian Hexapolis, imposed a penalty of closing the temple doors against Halicarnassus.

Prizes Were Given with Ceremonies: The evening banquets held in honor of the victorious athletes at the Ancient Games were part of the celebration traditions of that era. The next day, it was expected that the winning athletes would offer their thanks to the gods who they believed had helped them in their victory and be honored by receiving their gifts. At the end of the Olympic Games, all champions were crowned in a grand ceremony; judges honored each victor with wreaths made from sacred olive branches. These rituals were designed to celebrate the athletes' achievements in a divine context and reinforce their reputation within society. This information confirms the existence of closing ceremonies conducted at the end of the Ancient Games. These ceremonies marked the official end of the games and were organized to honor the achievements of the winning athletes.

Welcoming Victorious Athletes: Athletes who achieved victory in the Ancient Games were greeted as great heroes upon their return home and celebrated with various ceremonies. Notably, it has been recorded that an Athenian athlete who succeeded in the Olympic Games was entitled to a free dinner provided by the city council every day for the rest of their life. Such rewards were significant elements that reinforced the athletes' reputation and the value of their achievements within society (İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021).

Different Rewards Based on the Sport: In the Ancient Games, the rewards varied according to the disciplines in which the athletes competed. For example, the rewards given to winners in competitions like Pankration and Pentathlon were six times greater than those given to winners in Hoplitodromos races (races where runners wore full armor). Athletes who won athletic competitions in the quadrennial games would earn the right to free meals for life at the city stadium. Athletes who achieved victory in chariot or equestrian races would have the right to free meals for life in the city hall, and their names would be inscribed on honor stones, thus permanently commemorating their achievements (Sweet, 1987).

The chariot races often mentioned in Homer's works, especially those in the Elis region where three-legged cauldrons were awarded as prizes, are noteworthy. In this context, some scholars suggest that the tripods given in Elis might be related to the early period races held in Olympia and that these prizes were sacred offerings dedicated to the gods by the winners of the races (Young, 2004).

In the Hera Games, female contestants who succeeded in running competitions were rewarded with crowns woven from olive branches and also received a portion of the heifer sacrificed in the ceremonies offered to the goddess Hera. This practice was considered a fulfillment of the winners' religious vows and a sign of divine favor (Çağlar, 2016).

In Ancient Greece, the prizes in horse races were given to the owners of the horses, rather than the charioteers or riders who performed the races. This practice was chosen to appreciate the effort and investment in breeding and training the horses (Toohey & Veal, 2007). The prizes given to athletes in ancient chariot races were crowns woven from olive and palm branches. Despite their simple appearance, these crowns held great spiritual value as the most prominent and tangible symbol of the victory achieved.

Awards in Other Countries During Ancient Times:

Roman Era Awards: During the Roman Empire, "crown games" were initially called "sacred crown games," and later this term was shortened to simply "sacred games." During the reign of Emperor Trajan, due to the increasing number of games, a distinction was made between "sacred games" that

provided exemption from taxes and other obligations and “sacred games with city rights” that allowed ceremonial entry. Those who succeeded in these games had the honor of winning awards such as ceremonial entry rights and retirement pensions. In the same period, additional classifications were developed for lower-tier competitions such as “talent games” and “thematic games.” The winners of these competitions were awarded an olive crown as a symbol of victory. Despite being a simple olive branch wreath, this award carried great spiritual value as a tangible indicator of the victory won (<http://ancientolympics.arts>). In the 1st century AD, the games dedicated to Hera began to be referred to as “Argos’ Shield.” From the 4th century BC onwards, the standard prize given in these games was a bronze shield. This tradition is thought to reflect the prestige of the games and the status of the winners in society.

Awards in the Is-Olympic and iso-Pythian games: The iso-Pythian and Is-Olympic games had the same program, the same age categories, and the same awards.



Figure 13 shows a coin from the era of Geta and Caracalla (AD 209-211). This coin has a design depicting a prize table with palm branches, two victory crowns, five apples, and an amphora. The two crowns symbolize two local races held in the city of Perinthos, the Actian and Pythian games. This depiction reflects not only the dedication of athletic successes to the gods in ancient times but also the reputation and honor of the winners within society (<http://ancientolympics.arts>). Figure 14 displays eight different inscriptions with wreaths from various ancient games. When arranged from left to right and top to bottom, these inscriptions represent the Olympic Games, the Capitolia Games in Rome, the Games in Naples, the Actian Games in Ephesus, the Pythian Games with two victories in the men’s category, local competitions in Ephesus and Smyrna, and competitions in the youth and men’s categories in Pergamon. These inscriptions reflect the dedication of athletic successes to the gods in ancient times, as well as the reputation and honor of the winners within society (<http://ancientolympics.arts>). Figure 15 depicts an unfinished marble inscription from the Roman period, showing the prizes won by an athlete. This inscription is an important archaeological find that illustrates the rewards received by athletes who achieved success in ancient sports competitions and sheds light on the sports culture of the period (<http://ancientolympics.arts>).

Awards in Sports in Central Asian Societies: The Orkhon inscriptions, among the oldest known Turkic inscriptions, used the term “öndül” for the word “award.” In ancient Turkic-Mongolian culture, an award was considered not only as part of a sporting event but also as a badge of honor with certain norms in disciplines such as horse riding, archery, and wrestling. In horse races, every horse that completed the race was rewarded, while the owner and rider of the winning horse were sometimes awarded numerous live male animals, sometimes reaching into the thousands. This granted the horse’s owner superior social prestige within the community. In ancient times, what was truly important was

not the material reward one received, but the social status one gained (Uzunaslan, 2008). In ancient Turkic-Mongolian culture, it was a traditional practice to award prizes to contestants who placed in the top three in sports such as wrestling and archery. The monetary value of these awards was determined by the financial status of the individuals organizing the festival (toy) or mourning ceremony (yuğ). Similarly, on special days tied to the calendar, such as national and religious holidays, competitions were held, and live male animals were given as prizes, with the amounts usually being generously determined. Chinese sources express astonishment that the Turks, also known as the Huns, their northern neighbors, highlighted equestrian, archery, and wrestling sports in festivals organized in the early 3rd century BC, awarding numerous animals such as horses, camels, yaks, and sheep to the winners. In Northeast Asia, the Yakuts, isolated from global cultural currents and living in the secluded areas of the Altai and Sayan mountains, Siberian Turkic peoples, have managed to maintain their existence among themselves despite great difficulties and persistently continue the award traditions dating back to the Great Hun Empire period (220 BC - 45 BC). In Turkish sports culture, the gifting of male animals in epics and real life is a common practice. As mentioned in the stories of Dede Korkut, the phrase “I gave stallions from horses, rams from sheep, and bulls from camels” also appears in traditional sports organizations held among the people outside the Ottoman Palace. The tradition of “yettileme / yedileme” and “tokkuzlama / dokuzlama” practiced by the Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks refers to the increase of the predetermined prize by seven or nine times during the competition. This practice aims to carry the spirit of strong bodies, that is, to the God and the spirits of the ancestors. During the Ottoman period, this tradition gained Islamic legitimacy as “İhsân-ı âlel ihsân / generosity upon generosity.” Among the Tuvan Turks, both the winner and the loser in wrestling are respected equally, and the person chosen by God is considered “victorious.” His spirit is likened to the soul of an eagle flying to the Eternal Blue Sky. The sentence “He raced me with a rabbit as the prize” in “Dîvânü Lugâtî’t-Türk” indicates the existence of the tradition of awarding prizes. Horse races hold an important place in Kyrgyz festivities, and games and competitions related to horses are organized during grand ceremonies. The most prestigious race is the one involving mature horses, known as the “grand prize.” These prizes vary according to the financial status of the organizers, and the practice of giving nine of each animal is common. (Akmoldoyeva, 1987; İmamoğlu & Koca, 2021; Türkmen, 2017; Türkmen & Useev, 2020).

In ancient Turks, it is known that generous prizes were given to the winners of competitions. It has been recorded that women were so involved in sports that statues were made to honor them. For example, a visual dating back to 400 BC, depicting Scythian female warriors in an archery position, supports this situation. A golden female figurine found in the Kul Oba kurgan in Altai, now on display at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, is a figure with hair tied back in a bun, displaying a strong and muscular body image.

Additionally, scenes of Uighur women horseback riding are said to date back to around the 600s AD, during the Tang Dynasty period. Stone tablets found in Baghdad, dating back approximately 7000 years, depict two men preparing for a prize fight. These findings highlight the richness of the ancient Turks’ sports and competition culture and the place of women within this culture. The phrase “The horse is the wing of the Turk” found in the work “Divan-ı Lügat-it Türk” symbolizes the Turks reaching their goals with horses. In ancient Turkic times, horse games and races were usually held in the middle of summer or autumn months. At the finish line of the races, a rope was stretched, and the first contestant to reach this rope was considered the winner and received the predetermined prize. It is recorded that the most valuable prize in the Turkic society of the time was a horse (Çınar, 1995).

Awards/Generosity in Turkish Sports Tradition: In the Turkish sports tradition, instead of material rewards, achievements representing the honor of the village, tribe, or nation are emphasized. This understanding is expressed by the saying “Palwan’s qunı juz jılkı, arı min jılkı / The value of a wrestler is a hundred yılkı, even a thousand yılkı,” which is also seen in Kazakh and Kyrgyz communities. In the

Ottoman period, outside of palace wrestling, traditional wrestling events held in places such as Kırkpınar, Elmalı, Biga, Seyyid Baba, Razgrad, Shumen, Boyabat, Tosya awarded live animal prizes ritually until the 1950s. It is known that in the Şalvar wrestling held in Kahramanmaraş, this tradition continued until 1985, after which gold and then money prizes were given instead of male animals in the last 10-15 years.

In Assyrian culture, hunting scenes and seals have been significant from early periods. Cylinder seals providing important information about hunting from different periods up to the Neo-Assyrian era have been found, and archaeological finds such as the “Uruk Lion Hunt Stele” have provided information about the hunting culture of the time. A seal dating to the Early Dynastic III period (2600-2500 BC) depicts hunters hunting deer and lions, and it is thought that these seals were likely used as gifts or awards (Türkmen & Alimov, 2020; Türkmen & Doğan, 2021; Türkmen & Belek, 2020).

In the Turkish sports tradition, the awards given to winners in competitions such as wrestling include various items of material and spiritual value, such as fabric, flags, şalvar, aba, cloth, prayer rugs, lambs, rams, calves, heifers, bulls, and horses. Considering that depictions on tripods and vases were given as awards in Ancient Greece, it is a reasonable assumption that tablets found in Turkish culture may have been used as awards for similar purposes. It can be thought that the tradition of awarding prizes was part of the cultural transmission as sports and its related elements spread from the ancient Turks or other societies in Central Asia. Therefore, the claim that certain documents and artifacts were given as awards can be considered a meaningful interpretation when evaluated in a historical and cultural context.



Image 16. Gold female figurine, Altai, Kul Oba.



Picture 17: Uyghur woman riding a horse"



Image 18. Woman with the appearance of a lion and an angel, Nimrud, Neo-Assyrian period.



Picture 19. Archery and hunting

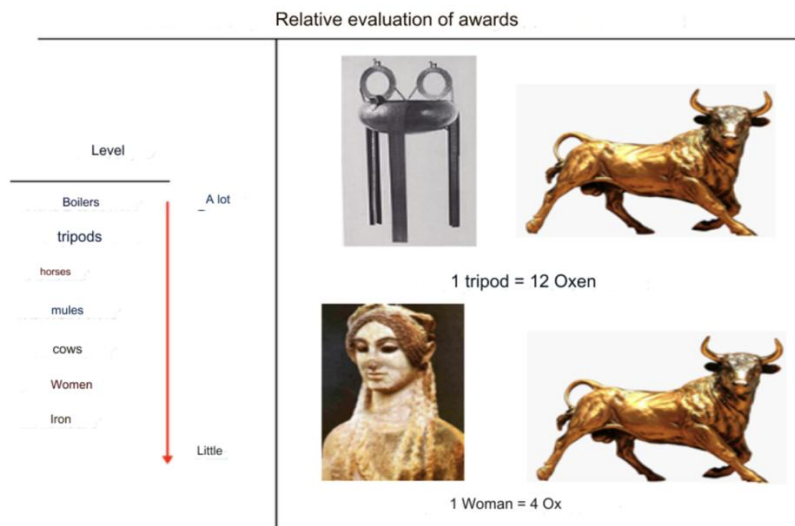


Image 20. Hunting depictions (hunting deer and lion).



Image 21. Seal from the Akkadian period.

The relative evaluation of awards



In Ancient Greece, the ranking of awards differed from the understanding of today and that of the ancient Turks. In ancient Turkic culture, the place and value of women were incomparably high compared to other beings or objects, and this held an important place in the social value system.

Results

In the ancient Olympic Games, there were no gold, silver, or bronze medals as we have today. It is known that sometimes the expenses of athletes were covered by wealthy nobles. In Ancient Greece, symbolic awards were given in sports competitions. In funeral games, the prizes varied according to the social status of the deceased and the generosity of those organizing the event. In Homer's epics, prizes such as tripods, horses, mules, strong lead oxen, beautifully dressed women, and raw iron are described as being awarded. These prizes reflected the value and reputation of the deceased, and some were provided from the estate of Patroclus. Depictions of the Victory Goddess crowning an athlete emphasize the importance of the awards given to successful competitors. In the funeral games, the prizes for boxing included a mule and a cup, while for wrestling, the first prize was 12 large cattle, and the second prize was a woman who owned four oxen. In the discus throw competition, a raw iron ingot was given as a prize. Although the awards given in Ancient Greece and among the ancient Turks differed, the importance of awards was preserved in both cultures. However, the impression that the awards in Ancient Greece were more diverse and numerous is widespread. There were differences between the awards given in universal competitions and local organizations, similar to today. Among the awards given in Ancient Greece were tripods, amphorae, oxen, and crowns made of olive leaves, while among the Turks, horses, male animals, and seals stood out. Thus, the awards varied according to the cultural values of each nation.

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