

**GEOGRAPHY OF A HIDDEN CULTURAL HERITAGE:
CAMEL WRESTLES IN WESTERN ANATOLIA**

**SAKLI KALMIŞ KÜLTÜREL BİR MİRASIN COĞRAFYASI:
BATI ANADOLU'DA DEVE GÜREŞLERİ**

Vedat ÇALIŞKAN*

Özet

Çalışmada, Türkiye’de görülen ve buradaki dağılışı da sadece batı Anadolu ile sınırlı olan deve güreşleri ele alınmıştır. Ege ve Akdeniz kıyıları çevresindeki elli kadar yerleşmede kış sezonunda düzenlenen deve güreşi organizasyonları, daha çok kırsal toplumun halen önemli bir toplumsal eğlencesi durumundadır. Çalışma ile deve güreşi organizasyonlarının Anadolu’daki dağılışı, güreşler için yer seçimleri ve bu olgular üzerinde etkili olan faktörler açıklandı. Bunun yanı sıra deve güreşlerinin ekonomik ve kültürel işlevleri de değerlendirildi. Deve güreşleri ile ilişkili olan on beş yerleşmede gerçekleştirilen araştırma ve incelemelere dayanan bulgulara göre, sınırları belirli bir bölge içinde ekonomik, kültürel ilişkilerin ve etkileşimin varlığı saptandı. ‘Deve Güreşleri Kültür Bölgesi’ olarak adlandırılabilen bu çevredeki güreş etkinlikleri, kültürel bir değer olarak turizm açısından da yeni olanaklar sunmaktadır. Anadolu’nun bu bölümü, deve güreşlerine dayalı kültürel ve ekonomik bileşenleri ile karakteristik bir özellik göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Deve güreşleri, Batı Anadolu, kültürel miras, geleneksel kış eğlencesi, kırsal toplum.

Abstract

The study deals with camel wrestles observed in Turkey and the distribution of which is limited only to Western Anatolia. Held in winter in about fifty settlements surrounding the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, camel wrestling organizations are still important social entertainments largely of the rural society. The distribution of camel wrestling organizations in Anatolia, the choices of location for wrestles and the factors affecting these phenomena were described with the study. Furthermore, the economic and cultural functions of camel wrestles are evaluated. According to the findings based on researches and examinations in fifteen settlements pertaining to camel wrestles, the presence of economic and cultural relations and interaction have been detected in a region with specific boundaries. In this environment, which may be called ‘the Cultural Region of Camel Wrestles’, wrestling events provide new opportunities as a cultural value also in terms of tourism. This part of Anatolia displays a characteristic feature with its cultural and economic compounds based on camel wrestles.

Key words: Camel wrestles, western Anatolia, cultural heritage, traditional winter amusement, rural society.

Introduction

Today there are various events utilizing the unique abilities and features of some animals and also having a traditional dimension in various countries worldwide. The most commonly known example is the bull fights, which are associated with Spain and Mexico but different forms of which are observed also in countries such as Japan and Turkey (Shubert 2001; Ishii 2006; Türkoğlu 1990). Camel-related events held in the world, however, are in the form of camel races and camel wrestles. The events, where Arabian camels of Dromedary camel (*Camelus dromedarius*) species running faster than Asian camels are raced, are held in various Arabian countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in particular

* Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Science and Arts, Department of Geography, Human Geography, 17020, Çanakkale, Turkey.

(Khalaf 1999, 2000; Nawata 2005). Camel wrestles, however, are widely observed only in Western Anatolia today although there are many countries where camel raising is important. Apart from Anatolia, camel wrestles are known to be held in some periods in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well (Ibrahimi, 2007; Raza, 2008). Camel wrestles, however, are observed only in Western Anatolia today although there are many countries where camel raising is important. However, there are unfortunately no studies on this traditional event on the scale of Turkey. Furthermore, camel wrestles are not known so much outside Turkey due to the absence of studies, dealing with this subject, in a language other than Turkish. In this sense, the study conducted is the first record that deals with camel wrestles on the scale of Turkey.

The aspects of camel wrestles that can be examined geographically in fact overlap in many aspects with some subjects considered in the geographical examination of sporting activities and cultural events: among them are the distribution of sporting activities, the definition of sporting places, the effects of sport in terms of creating job opportunities, the development of relations among spaces and cultural and geographic landscape (Avcı 2007:9-10). The cultural dimension of wrestles is also of importance in many aspects. Culture is defined as 'the characteristic lifestyle of a group of people living in a specific place at a specific time' (Zimolzak and Stansfield 1983). Camel wrestles have an undeniable role in the formation of a characteristic common lifestyle particularly by the rural society dwelling in Western Anatolia. Residents in the region meet, are entertained, become socialized, earn money, produce and consume within this event in some period throughout the year.

Geographic landscape is the mirror of culture. Nutrition, clothing and entertainment, which are among the fundamental elements of humanity, are reflected visually on the space. Mostly the scene in a photograph can reveal to where this image belongs in the world (Tümertekin and Özgüç 1997: 105). Actually, it can easily be stated with an image of the region, where camel wrestles are held, to where it belongs, without being mistaken due to its uniqueness in the world. Upon the surrounding of the space of camel wrestles by the local culture during wrestles, the appearances of the settlements change obviously.

Despite the existence of camels dating back to very early times in Turkey, it is uncertain where and how camel wrestles originated. However, it is possible to state that it began to become widespread in the Aegean Region towards the second half of the nineteenth century. No information about camel wrestles is encountered in the primary references providing essential information about the social and cultural life in Anatolia between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Evliya Çelebi, the famous traveller in the Ottoman period, comprehensively mentioned about the social life in many settlements, where camel wrestles are held today, during the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, he gave no information about camel wrestles (Çelebi 1985). Neither Faroqhi, who evaluated camel raising and the Anatolian nomads in the second half of the seventeenth century, nor Mantran, who touched upon camel caravans in Anatolia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, mentioned about wrestles (Faroqhi 1988; Mantran 1990). This is also valid for many studies on the economic and social life of Anatolia in various aspects in various periods from the seventeenth century to the beginnings of the twentieth century (Faroqhi 2004, 2005, 2006; Stewig 1970; Ramsay 1961; Texier 2002; Moltke 1999; Refik 1988). In some recent references, however, there are sections dealing also with camel wrestles. Thus, these works constitute the basic references concerning camel wrestles in Anatolia (Armağan 1984; Özbekler 1986; Erşen 2002). Furthermore, camel wrestles also entered into the Turkish literature with the story called 'Yenilmeyen' (1980) by Necati Cumalı (Cumalı 2003:113-141). This story is about the competition of two settlements via wrestling camels.

Wrestles are held between male camels of a special genus called 'Tülü'. They are male camels obtained by hybridizing the single-hump female Arabian camels of Dromedary species and double-hump Asian male camels of Bactrian Camel species (*Camelus bactrianus*) (Özbeyaz 1997:48).

A camel wrestle is an event where games based on animal power and ability are exhibited in front of a community of spectators. It is outstanding as it is called a wrestle rather than a fight. Despite the lack of written rules, wrestling rules are the same everywhere. These rules first cover some precautions in order for camels not to be injured and worn out. In time, the rules changed in such a way that would reduce violence and prevent animals from being hurt. Camels are wrestled once a week and for 10 minutes. In the 1980s, this period was 15 minutes. As a matter of fact, most games today end in a draw since the period was shortened.

Held in winter, camel wrestles are distributed within a specific region in Western Anatolia. This is a different cultural environment where camel wrestles are demanded and traditional accessories and

materials are produced. Social and economic relations and interactions are not among the settlements, where camel wrestles are held, only. There is a wide network of relations also covering the places raising camels or producing traditional materials for camels. In the study, it was intended to find out the effects of this event on the space and the society in the region of camel wrestles. It was aimed at putting forth the distribution features of wrestles and various elements about wrestles. Moreover, since wrestles are held more in rural and touristic settlements, it was intended in the study via suggestions to draw attention to the touristic attraction of camel wrestles.

Material and method

The information and findings obtained by observations and interviews during fieldwork constitute the main material due to the absence of data about camel wrestles. Within this scope, wrestling organizations in Çan, Karacaören (Çanakkale), Kuşadası, Kuyucak (Aydın), Burhaniye (Balıkesir), Selçuk (Izmir) and Kumluca (Antalya) were watched in 2007-2008 season. People in organization committees, camel owners and spectators were interviewed. Additionally, the people experienced in wrestles and the masters producing materials for the wrestling camels in the settlements of Dikili, Tire (Izmir), Aydın, İncirliova (Aydın), Yalıkavak, Bodrum (Muğla), Emirhacılı (Manisa) and Gönen (Balıkesir) were interviewed at an out-of-season time. Maps were prepared where current data showing the spatial distribution of camels, wrestling camels, camel wrestles and the centres in Turkey where various materials are produced for this activity are processed (Figure 1).

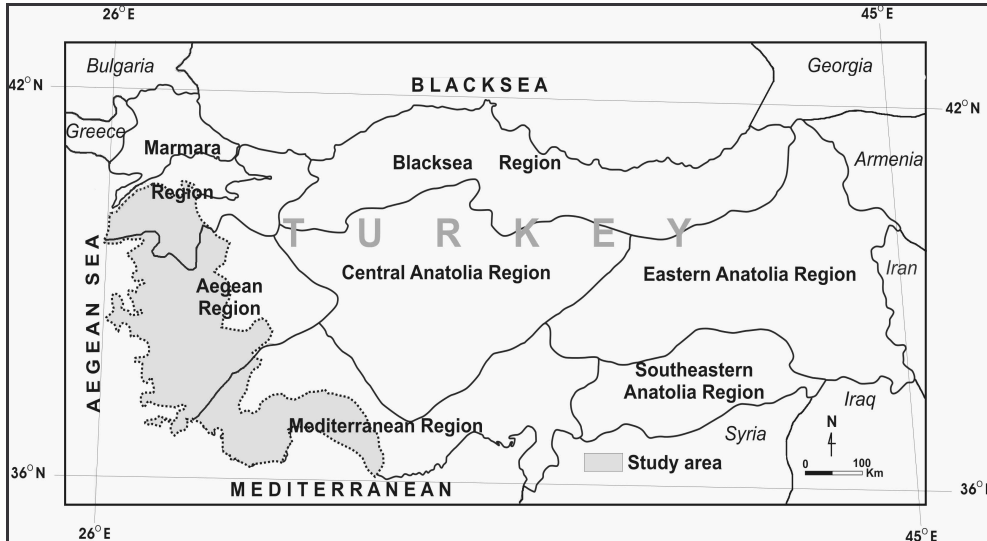


Figure 1. Borders of the geographical regions in Turkey and the study area

1. Distribution features of camel wrestles: the center and boundaries of a special cultural environment are being revealed

Before dealing with the distribution of camel wrestles, it would be useful to take a look at the distribution of camels and wrestling camels in Anatolia. The distribution of camels in Turkey covers a far wider area than does the distribution of camel wrestles. Camel wrestles are not observed in every province where camels are located. However, no matter what their number is, camel wrestles are also held in the provinces where wrestling camels are located. There are a total of 1004 camels in Turkey whereas the number of wrestling camels is 459. The presence of 75 per cent of the wrestling camels in Aydın, Izmir and Muğla draws the attentions to the central location of Aydın and its vicinity (figure 2).

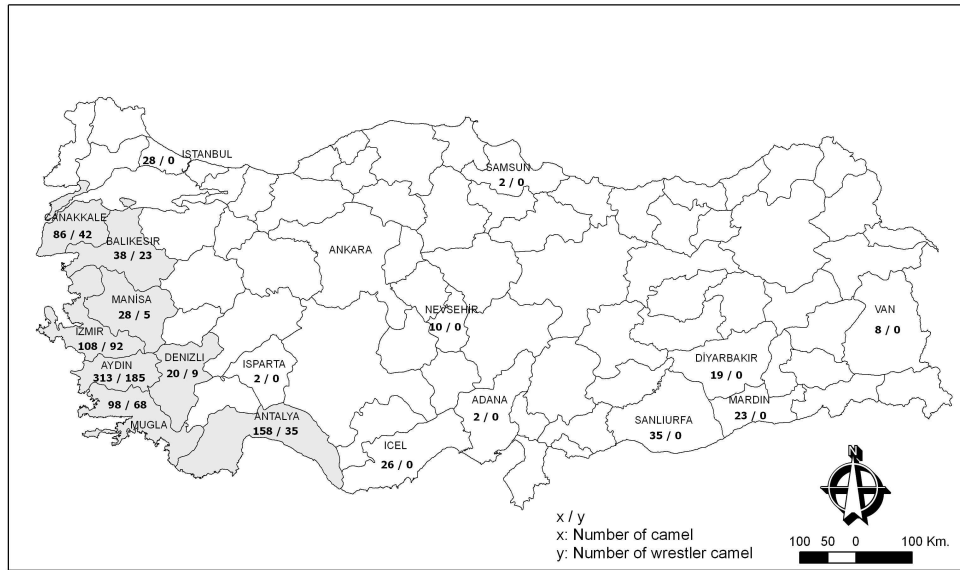


Figure 2. Distribution of camels and wrestling camels considering the provinces in Turkey

The number of camels in Anatolia began to decrease as caravans lost importance. The total number of camels was 118,647 in Turkey in 1935 (Karadağ 1941: 40). The total number of camels, which was 72,034 in 1955, receded to 12,000 in 1980 (Özbeyaz 1997: 48). The fact that the nomadic Yuruks around Antalya began settled life has a role in this decline (Yalman 1991: 20). The number of camels, constant at 2,000 between 1993 and 1996, had a continuous decrease from 1996 up to 2006. The number of camels decreased to 1,350 in 1999 and 811 in 2005. The decrease in the use of camels in forestry affairs in rural areas was influential in this decrease. In 2006, however, the number of camels increased to 1,004. This increase is undoubtedly related to the increase in the interest in camel wrestles since camels are raised largely with sporting purposes rather than as a farm animal today. In the near future, an increase may be expected in the number of wrestling camels. However, great increases do not seem possible since there are no ventures in Turkey for the production of wrestling camels. Such camels are mostly brought from Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Very few of them are provided from the semi-nomads still existing on Taurus Mountains.

Camel wrestles are held particularly in the Aegean region and in the eight provinces located more on the coastal zone of the Mediterranean and Marmara regions. This area, where wrestling organizations are observed, is bordered by Çanakkale strait in the north and the Aegean Sea in the west while covering Manisa and Denizli in the east and Antalya in the south (figure 3). The places, where wrestles are held, are largely the settlements on Bakırçay, Gediz, Küçük Menderes and Büyük Menderes grabens called by Stewig as the four great river valleys. Connecting the Coastal Aegean region and the Central western Anatolia, these grooves have maintained to be an active network of roads since the Roman period (Stewig 1970: 296). The interaction between human beings and spaces are generally concentrated more on the transportation lines. The distribution characteristics of camel wrestles show that the cultural and economic interaction concerning camel wrestles are performed more on these lines. The lines concerned are the routes used densely by camel caravans in the past and by railway and highway today.

Most formal cultural regions have a central area where the feature concerned displays itself clearly. The basic feature weakens and is lost as one goes away from this centre (Tümertekin and Özgüç 1997: 134-135). This is also observed in the distribution of camel wrestles. Wrestling events also have a centre. This covers Aydın in particular and İzmir and Muğla. During 2007-2008 season, 59% of the wrestling organizations in Turkey were held in these three provinces. In addition, the organizations in these provinces succeeded in attracting 72% of the spectators nationwide. The density decreases from the centre to the periphery. We have found five settlements where camel wrestles have disappeared for the last twenty years. It is striking that these settlements are located at the periphery of the region of wrestles. It can be thought that some basic cultural and economic features creating camel wrestles are weakened in

the margins. When the narrowing starting from the northern margin of the region concerned continues, it will make the centre of this region more obvious but narrow its area.

Some cultural elements are also related to the distribution of camel wrestles and may help detect the borders of the region of camel wrestles. Camel wrestles are a part of public life in a limited region. Considering that formal cultural region is the area where people sharing one or more cultural features are located, this region displays a unique character. Cultural geographical landscape and various cultural elements also involve valuable evidence about the distribution and unique character of cultures (Tümertekin and Özgüç 1997: 135). Some striking features in musical and folk dances performed within the framework of the wrestles show the presence of a different cultural environment. It is observed that the Aegean folk tunes such as Zeybek and Harmandalı are played in traditional forms and the zurna of Germencik (Aydın) is used during the wrestles. The distribution of the features concerned overlaps with the cultural region of camel wrestles.

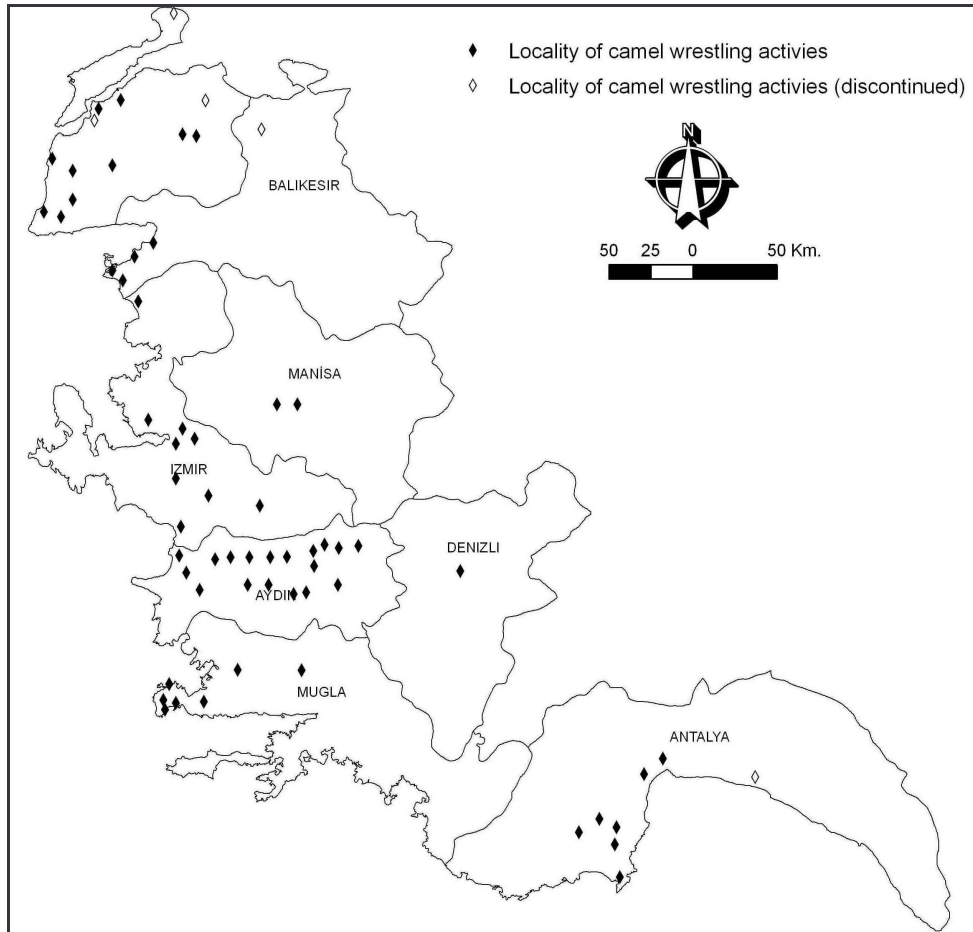


Figure 3. Distribution of camel wrestling organizations

The award of the winner camel in the wrestle is the carpet laid on the camel after the game. The award's being a carpet and various materials used in camel adornment prove the relation of camel wrestles and the Yuruk culture. The manufacturing of carpet was brought to Anatolia by means of the nomadic Turks (Stewig 1970:139) and the Yuruks are very good at weaving kilim, sack, saddlebag and haircloth besides carpet weaving (Yalman 1993:59, Halaçoğlu 1997: 19). As a matter of fact, the woven items by felt and haircloth used in camel wrestles and the production of materials like bells are carried out largely by the Yuruks within the cultural region of camel wrestles. Such equipment and accessory needs of camels in this region are met by the production in this region.

The periodical distribution of camel wrestles throughout the year is closely related with seasonal features. Beginning in December due to the biological properties of camels, the wrestles continue until the middle of March. The wrestling season is limited to the winter months when camels begin to go into heat

during their mating period. Great organizations are generally held in December and January since these are the months when the wrestling performance of camels is at the highest level. The dates of great wrestles are now adopted and do not change so much. However, the organizations with social purposes and for help, the examples of which are gradually decreasing, are held as of the second week of March, when the wrestling will of camels begin to alleviate. Wrestles are held only on Sundays everywhere. Thus, wrestling events are held in three distinct places in the region on average on the same day.

The areas, where camel wrestles are held, are primarily influenced by the Mediterranean climate, which generally covers a narrow coastal zone in Turkey. Nevertheless, the wide grabens extending vertically to the coast in the Aegean region have caused the marine effects to progress in the central parts and area of influence of the Mediterranean climate to widen in this environment (İzbirak 2001: 327). The Mediterranean climate is also effective in the environments other than the region of camel wrestles in Turkey. However, camel wrestles are not observed in these places. In this case, no relations can be considered that overlap between the area of influence of the Mediterranean climate and the area where camel wrestles are distributed. However, it can be understood that camel wrestles are distributed in the areas influenced by the Mediterranean climate since camel wrestles are held in winter and outdoors.

Winter temperatures in the Mediterranean climate prepare a favourable medium for spectators. Rainy winter, however, has negative effects on wrestles. Although in small amounts, rain makes the ground slippery and may cause camels to be injured. Therefore, rainy weather has a negative effect on wrestles and in such cases, wrestles are cancelled. As a matter of fact, although organizations had been planned in fifty-eight distinct places during 2007-2008 season, nine wrestles were cancelled due to rainy weather conditions. Temperature is another effective factor on wrestles. Low temperatures are observed to have a negative effect on spectators. However, camels perform better in cold weather.

2. Social, Cultural and Economic Environments of Camel Wrestles

The area, where camel wrestles are distributed today, is a human environment where cultural, economic, social relations and events shaped under the influence of wrestles are carried out. Wrestles are events determining the common time and common space of the rural society in particular in Western Anatolia. A seasonal activity is formed among specific places within a specific region at a specific period in a year. Due to the wrestling calendar, this activity has a specific direction and, therefore, a rhythm. A number of people making a living out of a relation with camel wrestles are in this activity in economic sense and they move within the region throughout the season.

2.1. Changing Appearances in Western Anatolia in Winter

It should not be thought that the effect of camel wrestles on local people in places, where wrestles are held, is limited only to the wrestle day. The rituals, traditions and productions concerning wrestles affect social life in the region of wrestles almost throughout the year. For instance, at the end of October, packsaddles are put on the wrestling camels by ceremonies and camels are adorned and taken for a walk in the settlement. In the evening of the same day, an entertainment is held upon the invitation of the camel owner. A month before the wrestles, camels are taken for a walk almost for 10 kilometres every day. In these walks with exercising purposes, camels draw attention like the sportsmen representing the settlement. Camels begin to arrive in settlements, where wrestles are held, a week earlier. So, the most active week of the year commences. All camels are adorned a day before the wrestles. Camel owners in their traditional clothes also participate in the parade next to their camel. In the evening of the same day, 'the carpet night', demanded as much as the wrestles, is held. This meeting is held for enabling camel owners to meet. It takes its name from the carpet sale by public auction to provide the financing of the organization. Watching the female dancers brought from cities is a part of the carpet night tradition as much as playing local dances.

In our research, it was considered that camel wrestles might form strong traces in the spaces where they are organized. However, no information about any squares, square names or the presence of museums in the settlements containing elements such as any sculptures about camel wrestles could be reached. Yet, there are some traces. The small bay of Kargı in Bodrum is known as 'camel beach' due to the camels on the beach in summer. The cafés (kahvehane in Turkish) and restaurants, of which wrestle-lovers are the regular customers, are quite common in the settlements where wrestles are held. In 'deveci

kahvehaneleri' (cafés for camel owners) (they are known with this name in every settlement despite having private names), some exciting old games from the video archive are watched repeatedly and everything about camels and wrestles are discussed. The spaces concerned are in a sense social clubs where wrestle-lovers meet.

2.2. Arena and its Surrounding

There are no structures specially designed for wrestles among the spaces, where wrestles are held, called arena. Basically two factors are effective on the choice of location of the arenas. It is observed that the spaces, which bear the characteristics to enable camels to wrestle and spectators to watch wrestles, are preferred to this end. The areas chosen for wrestles are natural arenas. They are generally areas with soil ground and where a broad plain is surrounded by slopes. The slopes surrounding the area function as a stand for spectators. Areas with hard and rocky surfaces are not preferred since the camel's feet are unable to grasp the surface well and they may cause injuries if camels fall down. During the wrestles around Antalya, some stadiums with soil ground are used. In the past, some camel wrestles used to be held in historical spaces. For instance, the Selçuk wrestles used to be held in the ancient Ephesus theatre, Antalya wrestles in Aspendos ancient theatre in Serik and Çanakkale camel wrestles in the historical Çimenlik castle. However, these applications were terminated in 1998 with the concern that historical works may be damaged during the wrestles. Consequently, Selçuk wrestles were taken to Pamucak, Çanakkale wrestles to Karacaören village while Serik wrestles were omitted.



Photo 1. The camel wrestle held in Selçuk (2008)

The places, where wrestles are held, are rather unkept since they are used once annually. There are no sitting places for spectators on the slopes covered by maquis and grass. Thus, spectators bring their cushions and portable chairs and etc. with them. It is not easy to move due to the picnickers on the slopes and the crowd. Therefore, intermediary ways are created in some places by terracing the slopes. The spectators watch the wrestle while grilling on the brazier. 'Camel sausage' is the only food cooked on the food counters in the place concerned and around the arena. Another most important element in the dining concept of camel wrestles is 'raki', the Turkish traditional drink. Sometimes the firms producing raki undertake the sponsorship of wrestles. These features are not encountered within the framework of any sporting activities in Turkey. Camel wrestles quite differentiate from other sporting activities also as an event gathering spectators composed of children or the elderly and women or men. Wrestling spectators from the surrounding villages generally attend as a whole family. Hence, a number of female spectators

are encountered in the wrestles. This is another characteristic which is not observed in many sporting games in Turkey (photo 1, photo 2).



Photo 2. Spectators at any age from children to the elderly are encountered among the spectators of camel wrestles. The presence of women among the spectators of wrestles is striking, too (Kumluca-Antalya).

2.3. Two Outstanding Factors in Holding Wrestling Organizations: Transportation and Communication

Wrestling camels participate in not only the wrestles in their own locality but also the organizations at far distances. Participation of 100 camels on average in each organization creates a regional activity in terms of transportation. Camels, their owners and their carers travel from one organization to another by trucks throughout the season (photo 2). The number and frequency of these journeys and the distance length vary depending on the location of the wrestles preferred. For instance, the camels called Alex, which participated in the wrestles from İncirliova, and Balkış from Çanakkale in 2007-2008 season participated in eleven wrestles in total while the camel called Ufuk from Pelitköy participated in ten organizations in total. Throughout one season, Alex travelled for 2,417 kilometres, Balkış for 3,800 kilometres and Ufuk for 3,590 kilometres (figure 4). The location and fame of organizations are strong factors affecting participation due to transportation costs. Thus, organizations are generally attended by camels from distances of 200 kilometres at the most. Prestigious organizations like Selçuk, however, draw participants from farther distances. Nevertheless, the organizations remaining at the periphery are attended mostly by the camels of that locality. For instance, 80 per cent of the camels participating in the organizations in Antalya are the camels of Antalya region.



Photo 3. Camels are carried to far distances by trucks. The comfort features of trucks vary depending on the financial power of camel owners.

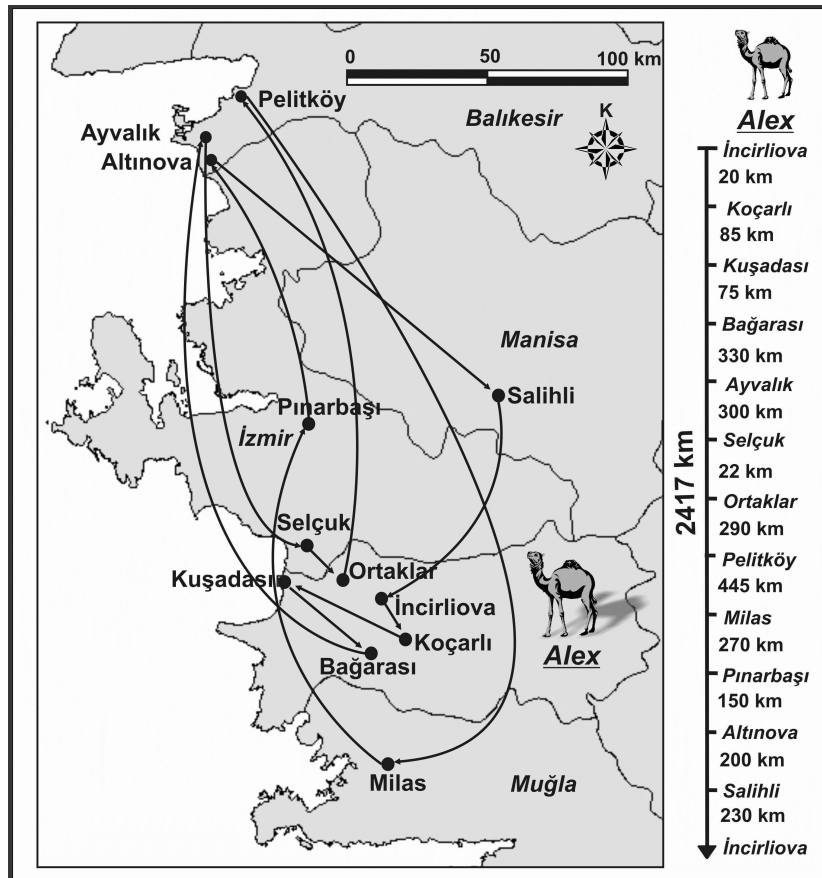


Figure 4. The camel name Alex, throughout last season (2007-2008) travelled for 2,417 kilometres by trucks.

The most important difficulty encountered in the past organizations was communication. Problems occurred at any time in issues such as sending invitations for wrestles, making participant camels definite, matching and announcement of cancellations. Widespread use of internet in Turkey as of the 2000s was the commencement of a new era for camel wrestles. The communication commenced between organization committees and camel owners via internet not only helped solving these problems but also had further benefits. Today almost all camel owners communicate via the website they have formed. They meet in the forums in this website, birth or death news of camels and their purchasing and sales announcements are shared and comments and suggestions are conveyed. In the past, it was observed that camel owners argued frequently and sometimes fought during wrestles. Fights have decreased fairly depending on meetings and communication in virtual media. Another characteristic distinguishing this community is that almost all camel owners largely with farmer origins and the people interested in wrestles benefit from internet today since Turkey does not have so much good indications in the use of internet. For instance, 70 per cent of the public have never used internet while 22 per cent do not have any information about internet. There is no internet connection in 81 per cent of the houses (BSTKP; 2008).

Wrestles are cancelled in cases of unfavourable weather conditions for the wrestles. Therefore, weather forecasts are followed closely by wrestling circles. People interested in camel wrestles constitute a group which follows weather forecasts closely via internet. Widespread use of internet also caused other results. For instance, the camel wrestles held in Bozdoğan in 2008 were broadcast live on internet and watched by 9,000 people.

2.4. Economic Functions of Camel Wrestles

Camel wrestles and many related elements also have an economic dimension. The provision, caring and carriage of wrestling camels, finding wrestling spectators and supporters and production of materials required for camel wrestles indicate the presence of a quite large economic environment.

Wrestling camels have a great financial value. The prices of young camels famous for their wrestles vary between YTL 40,000 and 160,000. Caring, adornment and carriage of camels also cause important costs. A camel consumes approximately five tons of feed annually. Depending on the feed type, the annual feeding costs of camels vary between YTL 2,000 and 5,000. 'Savrans', who undertake the care of camels, receive a salary varying between YTL 500 and 1,000. So, only the caring cost of a camel varies between YTL 8,000 and 17,000 annually excluding its accessories.

In cases when wrestling camels become physically disabled, old and when their wrestling ability decreases, they are slaughtered. Nevertheless, camel meat is not sold commercially in Turkey, but it becomes a subject of commerce only as sausages. Camel sausage in Turkey is produced only in İncirliova (Aydın). Produced by the families slaughtering their camels in İncirliova since very old times, camel sausage was taken under the control of the municipality in 1949. Today seventy camels are processed on average annually in two factories located in İncirliova. These factories, where only six workers are employed, also process other meat types and their annual sausage production capacities are 101 tons. Retail sales constitute the sources of income for more than 100 people during the camel wrestling season (photo 3). The sausages produced in İncirliova are sold in all camel wrestles in Turkey.



Photo 3. Portable shops, where camel sausages are sold, are encountered in all organizations. These places also attract attention as much as the wrestles do (Çan-Çanakkale).

The actual elements encouraging sports and providing the creation of an economic value are the spectators. There are no definite data about the number of spectators in the wrestles. The numbers of spectators quite vary depending on organizations. The three greatest organizations are the Ephesus-Selçuk, Bozdoğan and Kuşadası wrestles. More than 10,000 people watch each of these wrestles. The number of spectators varies between 2,000 and 2,500 in the wrestles held in towns whereas 1,000 spectators on average attend village organizations. Our calculations put forth that the total number of spectators in 2007-2008 season was 172,500. Nevertheless, considering the cancelled wrestles, this number would be over 200,000. Besides this, considering that each wrestling organization is watched by 3,520 spectators on average, the importance of the economic and social dimensions of wrestles become outstanding (Table 1). The incoming wrestling spectators and camel owners activate local economies by their several-day accommodation demands. In 2008, nearly five hundred tourists came from various countries to watch the camel wrestling festival in Selçuk.

Table 1. Several indicators about camel wrestling in Turkey (2007-2008).

Name of province	Number of wrestling camels	Number of organizations held in 2007-2008 season	Total number of spectators	Number of spectators per organization
Çanakkale	42	8	20 500	2 563
Balıkesir	23	3	7 500	2 500
İzmir	92	8	40 000	5 000
Aydın	185	16	65 000	4 063
Muğla	68	5	20 000	4 000
Antalya	35	6	7 500	1 250
Manisa	5	2	7 500	3 750
Denizli	9	1	2 500	2 500
Total	459	49	172 500	3 520

In 2007-2008 season, the price of the spectator ticket for camel wrestles was YTL 10 in almost everywhere. Incomes by ticket sales are used for meeting the costs such as accommodation, transportation and awards of camel owners. Incomes by wrestles are sometimes used for meeting some needs of the settlement (such as the construction of school, hospital and mosque, bringing water to the village and afforestation activities).

A number of accessories such as havut (camel's packsaddle), peş (the embroidered piece of cloth with the camel's name on), ring, bell, neck bead, haircloth, under stomach felts and etc. required for the wrestling camels are met from the settlements in the region of wrestles. In time, settlements occurred that have specialized in supplying raw materials for such traditional materials. For instance, ropes for tying the mouth are supplied from Tire, haircloth and felt from Bozdoğan, Balıkesir and Tire, reed from Çivril and woven clothes to be embroidered from Buldan. The demand from various points in the region of camel wrestles to these production spaces has been a determinant for the direction of spatial and economic relations. The number of masters dealing with packsaddle and adornments for wrestling camels are rather low today. It has been found that there are a total of ten packsaddle masters and six saddlers in the region today (figure 5).

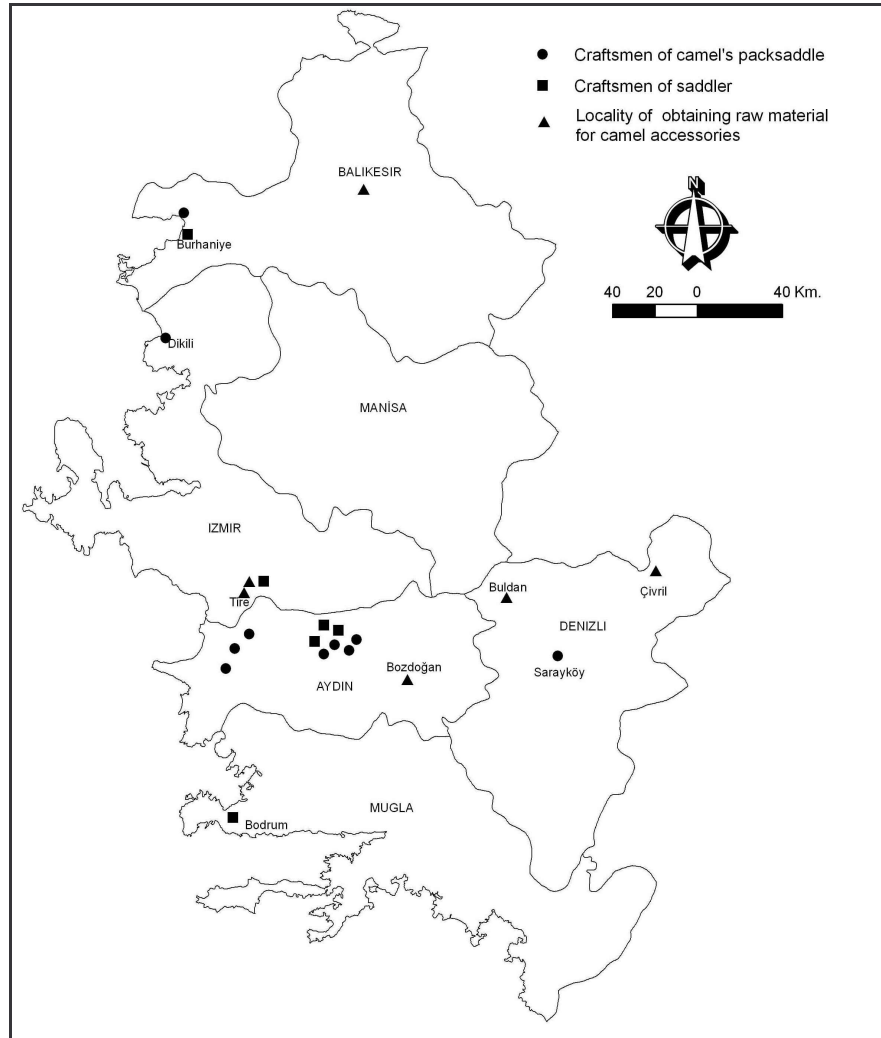


Figure 5. Places indicating the locations of the masters producing materials for the wrestling camels and the places providing raw materials for these materials.

Camel wrestles attract producers or sellers of souvenirs from a wide area. In the settlements, where wrestles are held, camel sausage, camel accessories, memorial gifts and video records of camel wrestles

of various localities are sold by peddlers on the roads to the wrestling area. These sellers make a living by moving according to the wrestling calendar throughout the wrestling season. Their number is about 500 in Selçuk, which is the greatest organization.

Conclusion and recommendations

Camel wrestles in Western Anatolia are essential social and cultural events with their uniqueness and traditional features. The absence of researches to this end was an important deficiency in terms of providing data and evaluation. The current conditions, distribution, distribution features, functions and effects of camel wrestles have been found out with the study for comprehensive evaluations and plannings.

The area, likely to be called 'the cultural region of camel wrestles' in Western Anatolia, has many characteristic features. There are various traditional productions, commercial activities, spaces, rituals, clothing, music, dances and etc. that continue to exist in relation with camel wrestles in this region. These rich elements and relations form a special economic and cultural texture supporting the existence of each other. The disappearance of some of these elements will affect the future of other elements of this system negatively. It is true that the unstable past of wrestles increases concerns about the future. For instance, the number of masters manufacturing some materials needed for the wrestling camels reduced considerably in time. Due to economic reasons, masters have difficulty in finding young employees to train in their place. These professions, the last representatives of which have become old, may disappear in the near future. It seems necessary to open vocational courses by making use of the experience of the existing masters for the continuation and promotion of these vocations.

Some recent changes are striking in camel wrestling organizations. The fact that the wrestling camels change hands more frequently than the past shows the formation of a market of wrestling camels beginning to commercialize now. The quality of wrestles has increased recently with the contribution of well-raised camels. This has increased the caring costs and prices of camels. Nonetheless, the organizations attended by camels of good quality draw more spectators from a wider area since they present bickering games. Actually, this process may cause some differentiations in the near future. Small organizations with social purposes, largely held in villages and small towns and far away from commercial objectives, will preserve their traditional identities and struggle for existence with their largely rural spectator profile. Furthermore, in touristic settlements close to big city centres, organizations will develop that draw domestic and foreign tourists, that become professional by gaining a commercial and touristic identity and that are in the form of a festival.

There have been no institutions or organizations, which are interested in and plan camel wrestles at regional or national scale, in Turkey so far despite their economic, social and cultural advantages. All organizations excluding Selçuk are held by local means. Organization committees rather have difficulty in overcoming financial problems about carrying on camel wrestles. The fact that the wrestles have continued to exist so far without being supported in fact reflects the will of the local society about wrestles. Before all, camel wrestles have to be considered by dealing with them widely with their touristic, cultural and sporting dimensions at national scale. In this sense, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism may increase its financial support and undertake planning activities. By considering the contributions of camel wrestles to tourism, national and local economy and rural life and their potentials, they can be restructured.

Today uncertainties continue about the future of camel wrestles. Economic difficulties underlie this. In many settlements, wrestles are financed with difficulty. Furthermore, this event is held in an image of chaos in inconvenient spaces in many places. Actually, the continuation of organizations in this way does not seem possible due to increasing criticisms. Tourism-based suggestions may help solve these problems. Holding wrestles in winter and the fact that the places, where wrestles are held, are touristic centres or that their locations enable easy access to touristic centres provide an important opportunity for activating tourism in winter. Destinations joining wrestling events and opportunities of nature, history, culture and thermal tourism in winter months will provide a stable support for handing down this cultural heritage to the future.

It may provide great advantages for planning organizations at national scale under the framework of a federation. So, wrestles and the areas, where wrestles are held, can reach some standards and better opportunities of use. By starting from some big organizations, new design examples, where arenas and

spectator stands are considered together, may be formed. It may be possible to hold wrestles in some historical spaces again as in the past by taking the measures required. Provided that the spaces such as historical theatres and castle surroundings are turned into areas, where traditional shows will be displayed, original products will have been gained for tourism. Making use of camel wrestles as a touristic attraction will also strengthen wrestling organizations. The most favourable places to this end are the Bodrum peninsula, the vicinity of the Gulf of Kuşadası in İzmir and Aydın, the vicinity of the Gulf of Edremit in Balıkesir and Çanakkale and Antalya. Camel wrestles provide a new opportunity waiting to be realized for the diversification of tourism in Turkey and spreading the activity in tourism throughout the year.

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