

IMPROVEMENT AND OPTIMIZATION OF MODERN SPORTS GAMES OF THE EASTERN PEOPLES

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Annotation: *This article presents an opinion on the improvement and optimization of modern sports games of the Eastern peoples. Modern science shows how urgent it is to preserve folk games scientifically and as a cultural heritage of human civilization, to study them within the framework of historical pedagogical problems. In the processes of social modernization, it becomes necessary to study the development trends, mythology, transformation, historical-cultural and ethnic characteristics of folk games from an ethnographic aspect and to promote them to the world scientific community and youth. In this article, based on the historical genesis of sports games, the principles of development and their importance in the improvement of modern sports games, the factors of the educational system and their impact on the development of a new generation of sports culture are clarified from the perspective of a comparative-typological position:*

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Introduction: The emergence, formation, and developmental stages of traditional sports games among Eastern peoples trace back to ancient times. The sacred book "Avesto," which studies the peoples of Central Asia, also contains thoughts on ancient and traditional sports games. The modernization and optimization of modern sports games of Eastern peoples undoubtedly have ethnic and historical significance for each nation.

Like other world nations, the Uzbek people have their unique way of life, ethnography, and ethnocultural characteristics. Folk games reflect the folklore,

national attire, dance movements, cultural and economic traditions, and several ethnopedagogical elements of a specific people. The analysis of folk games includes examining their numerous forms, ethnopedagogical interpretations, rules and principles based on national customs, symbolic aspects, awarding traditions, and customs related to hospitality for every viewer and guest. In this context, it is essential to highlight the methods of sports games and their educational significance.

Today, special attention is paid to the development of physical education and sports in Uzbekistan. For instance, the Presidential Decrees of March 5, 2018, "On Measures for Fundamentally Improving the State Management System in Physical Education and Sports" (PF-5368), January 24, 2020, "On Measures to Further Popularize Physical Education and Sports in the Republic of Uzbekistan" (PF-5924), and November 3, 2020, "On Measures to Improve the System of Training Personnel in Physical Education and Sports and Enhance Scientific Potential" (PQ-4877), as well as other legal and regulatory documents on enhancing sports activities, serve as a practical program for the further development of physical education and mass sports.

Throughout the historical stages of Uzbek statehood, the study of physical culture and sports within teaching and education has always been one of the intriguing topics in pedagogy.

To date, several relevant studies on this topic have been conducted by global and Russian scholars such as Yu.S. Shodomiskiy, A.B. Sunik, V.Ya. Nepomnin, P.F. Lesgaft, and N.V. Zisman. Similarly, Uzbek scholars like R. Abdumalikov, X.A. Eshnazarov, A. Abdiyev, and M.S. Akhmatova have carried out a range of scientific research on this topic. However, these researchers have not sufficiently analyzed and classified the history of origin, ethnographic features, and factors underlying each type of national sport.

Objective of the Research: To analyze the historical genesis, principles of development, and significance of modern sports games' advancement.

Research Methods: The article employs a complex set of methods aimed at ensuring chronological systematicity, periodicity, logical approach, analysis,

synthesis, comparative analysis, and adequate study. These methods include theoretical (analytical-synthetic, comparative-analogical), diagnostic (surveys, tests, observations, and planned methodologies), prognostic (expert evaluations and summarization of independent assessments), pedagogical experiments, and mathematical methods (statistical data processing, graphical representation of results).

Results and Discussion: During the Soviet period, researchers built upon previous scientific achievements, gathering new materials and conducting scientific studies. In the research of the independence period, there is a noticeable revival of national values and traditions and a fresh scientific-theoretical approach to the problem by using the advanced experiences of various global scientific schools. In ancient times, primitive humans created certain games by imitating the behavior and movements of various animals. Hunting games of this era were often associated with totemistic and animistic beliefs. Initially, totemistic dances and movements, which were part of primitive rituals, later evolved into traditional games and performing arts. The scientific study of folk games, though initially descriptive in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, holds great significance for modern research as the authors of that period observed and documented realities directly. Thus, studying traditional folk games allows us to explore the worldview of our ancestors who lived in ancient times. These traditional games, reflecting the spiritual experiences, material and spiritual life, and national identity of our people, have become an integral part of the collective effort to preserve centuries-old spiritual values refined over three millennia. Mass celebrations and ceremonies of our people are incomplete without games. Therefore, studying traditional folk games enables us to understand the unique aspects of the spiritual and cultural life of the people. The lack of studies on the historical and genetic foundations of games has left the stages of formation and principles of development insufficiently explored. The need to scientifically classify traditional folk games, analyze their origins as a social phenomenon, examine the socio-economic elements within the games, and assess their aesthetic and educational functions highlights the importance of this topic. The search for

historical roots, the restoration of cooperative relations among ethnically close nations historically connected by a shared cultural environment but currently existing as independent states, is becoming a vital necessity in today's world. Folk games have a very ancient and rich history, their roots dating back to the primitive era when humanity began. The genetic basis of folk games can be traced back to primitive rituals and ceremonies that were an integral part of early human cognition. Over time, games within such rituals lost their ritualistic nature and evolved into mere entertainment elements or amusement tools. Prominent scholar U. Koraboyev links games to the social lifestyle of humanity, emphasizing that since ancient times, games and competitions were born out of the need to share labor experiences.

The way of life of our ancestors required them to raise their children to become skilled horse riders, sharpshooters, and undefeated wrestlers. As a result, horse racing, archery competitions, wrestling, and even camel, ram, and rooster fighting were widely practiced from ancient times. Based on these traditions, it can be said that a comprehensive system of folk games evolved over centuries. The gradual development of production forces and the improvement of labor tools during the later stages of the primitive communal system led to children being unable to use those tools in daily life and productive work like adults. This contributed to the emergence of games suited to children. Consequently, children began to create toy versions of labor tools. It is likely that the means of children's play—toys—emerged in this way. A significant portion of folk games directly originated during ancient times from the need to artistically interpret everyday life through labor activities. Hunting, animal husbandry, farming, and ancient crafts, along with the daily life of our ancestors, served as the initial and primary social sources for the development of folk games. In this context, it is worth mentioning the information provided in N. Azizov's work *"Belt Wrestling of Turkistan"*, which refers to the opinion of renowned Hungarian writer L. Kun that the origins of Fergana wrestling date back to the 3rd millennium BCE. The scholar presents a bronze figurine of two wrestling individuals found in the Mesopotamian region as evidence, emphasizing that the posture of the figures resembles that of wrestlers in Fergana-style wrestling. Hunting

games, a subset of folk games, also have a unique history, with roots tracing back to the lifestyle and activities of primitive humans. Such games served as a form of training for hunting, organized as minor yet significant events characteristic of that era. In the past, our ancestors left behind a rich heritage of spiritual and material monuments, reflecting ancient statehood traditions. The Chinese, who repeatedly attempted but failed to conquer the Davan (Fergana) state, praised its cities, advanced agricultural culture, and the so-called "heavenly horses" in their writings. The people of that time excelled in horse riding, marksmanship, and hand-to-hand combat techniques.

Animal husbandry developed based on hunting, and over time, these activities became traditions among pastoralist tribes. Hunting games, which became customary during festive ceremonies, served as exercises for mental and physical preparation, fostering a sense of elevated mood. These games played a pivotal role in driving the development of early culture and art. In *Qabusnama*, it is written: “*When you hunt, do so in two ways, as kings hunt in two ways; some hunt with their own hands using falcons, while others do not. The purpose of royal hunting is not the meat but the spectacle.*”

To capture the attention of festival participants and engage them actively, hunting games became widely popularized. They were integrated into larger events, encompassing songs, quizzes, exhibitions, and sports competitions as part of a comprehensive set of activities.

In our view, since ancient times, hunting and capturing various animals required individuals to be agile, strong, and quick, especially to perform tasks like riding a horse at high speeds and executing various maneuvers while mounted. To develop such skills, consistent participation in sports competitions and rigorous training was essential. From this perspective, it can be concluded that equestrian games like *ulok-kupkari* (buzkashi) and racing emerged as the result of such exercises and practices. Written records about folk games can be found in *Devonu Lug‘otit Turk*, a seminal work by the famous 11th-century Turkologist Mahmud al-Kashgari. The information in this work offers insights into the history and evolution of folk games.

For instance, one of the ancient games widely played among Turkic tribes was “chavgon” (polo). The work mentions several terms related to this game:

Tanguq: A silk garment awarded to a player who successfully passed the ball through a designated tent opening. **Tasal:** A line marking the boundary on the chavgon field. **Tobiq:** The ball or object hit with a chavgon stick.

The adult game of chavgon later inspired a children's game known as *O't bandal*. The term *bandal* refers to a wooden stick with a curved head, which was typically used to hit the ball in chavgon. In the children's game, they would light the tip of the stick on fire and play by aiming these sticks at one another, making the game somewhat dangerous and requiring extreme caution. This game was only played by boys to instill fearlessness and courage in them.

In ancient times, to defend themselves against attacks from enemy tribes, ancestors had to master the art of combat thoroughly. Therefore, they devised various martial games to hone skills in swordsmanship, spear-throwing, and archery.

Firstly, in *Qabusnama*, Kaykovus provides detailed rules for the chavgon game, emphasizing that each team should consist of eight mounted players and that two individuals should stand on either side of the field. He highlights that the game demands agility and high activity from participants. The goal was to strike the ball and drive it toward the other end of the field without throwing it into the crowd. Kaykovus also advises that while chavgon can be played for entertainment, it should be done in moderation, warning against excessive gatherings of mounted players.

Secondly, another horse-based folk game, *ulok* (buzkashi), is closely tied to Turkic mythology. According to ancient beliefs, the wolf (*bo'ri*) was revered as a sacred animal. In Turkic legends, the *ko'kbo'ri* (blue wolf) is credited with guiding Oguz Khan, the mythical ancestor of the Turks, to sources of sustenance. This event is said to have occurred on Navruz, the day of renewal, which became associated with the wolf as a symbol of enlightenment and prosperity.

Thirdly, the *Ko'kbo'ri* game, played in honor of this sacred wolf, reflects its symbolic status as a totem. The qualities of the *ko'kbo'ri*—speed, agility, and a relentless drive to capture its prey—are mirrored in the dynamics of *ulok*. This game

is rooted in totemistic beliefs and remains culturally significant among certain Turkic communities. For example, in ancient Turkmen traditions, the *ko'kbo'ri* was linked to wedding rituals. During these ceremonies, the groom's friends would approach the host, demanding, "Give us the Ko'kbo'ri." Instead of the actual wolf, symbolic gifts such as money, sheep, or goats were given in its place, preserving the custom in a symbolic form.

Fourthly, the "Walnut Game" remains one of the seasonal games that Uzbek children play during the autumn and winter months. It seems that the "Transfer Game" was originally played using round stones. Later, the tradition of using walnuts in place of stones in this object-based game emerged.

Fifthly, the types of children's games recorded in Mahmud Kashgari's *Devonu Lug'otit Turk* are a significant source in understanding the origins of games and their impact on developing children's physical and mental strength, fostering their intellect, and cultivating their willpower. Regardless of their form, theme, or direction—whether involving mud and soil, wood and sticks, or rope and string—children's games served as unique schools that prepared children for the intricacies of life, household chores, and work, equipping them for adulthood [9; p. 249]. Our ancestors recognized the importance of physical exercise in raising children, knowing that physically fit children would be resilient in the face of life's challenges and better prepared for adulthood. Since ancient times, the Turkic tribes and clans of the East deeply understood that physical games played a crucial role in fostering teamwork and social adaptability in children. This awareness led to the existence of various types of children's games in ancient times. G. Jahongirov notes that *Devonu Lug'otit Turk* provides information on nearly 150 national games, of which over 20 are children's games [6; pp. 27-29].

Sixthly, reflecting on folk games and their types reveals that, over millennia, these games are tied to mythological beliefs and ideas, as evidenced by material and spiritual monuments. In particular, games involving horses are often linked to early religious beliefs such as totemism, animism, and fetishism. For example, a clay jar discovered at the Ko'ykirilgan Qala site in Khorezm depicts a Massagetae riding a

horse and attacking an animal with a spear, while another jar features the image of a winged horse. Similar depictions—scenes of horseback riders killing or attacking animals such as lions, deer, or leopards—can be frequently found in early and medieval art [4; pp. 46-49]. Furthermore, historical and literary sources often mention ceremonies associated with horses in Central Asian cultures. For instance, Abulqasim Ferdowsi's thousand-year-old epic *Shahnameh* provides valuable insights into these customs.

There are also myths and legends connecting ancient folk games, such as *kurash* (wrestling), to the influence of mythological beliefs [7; pp. 59-62]. Academic A.A. Asqarov analyzes *kurash* and horse-related mythological beliefs among Turkic-speaking peoples as follows: “In the Ordos belt ornament, the depiction of two wrestlers amidst lush trees with horses tied to them, and birds flying above the wrestlers, reflects mythological concepts. While the saddled horses depicted during the wrestling process may initially seem irrelevant, a creative analysis reveals their significance. The horse appears as an inseparable companion in all adventures, serving as a loyal helper. Thus, in ancient epics, the hero's horse always stood by him as a steadfast ally” [2; pp. 3-13].

Seventhly, the origins of some folk games can be traced to *Avesto*, the ancient written heritage of Central Asian peoples. In *Avesto*, Zoroastrians considered the four elements—water, air, earth, and fire—to be sacred. The children's game *Mo'ng'iz-Mo'ng'iz*, which involves diving into water as a purification ritual, is rooted in the sacred nature of water. Mahmud Kashgari describes such water-related games in *Devonu Lug'otit Turk*: “*Qalinguladi*—a person floated on water, moving their legs and knees to stay afloat. This game of swimming on water was called *chapsar* in ancient times.”

Eighthly, the ethnologist Kashgari provides valuable insights into the ancient children's game *Mo'ng'iz-Mo'ng'iz*, which promotes quick thinking and expands children's intellectual capacity. He describes it as follows: “*Mo'ng'iz-Mo'ng'iz* is a type of children's game. In this game, children sit kneeling by the shore, placing wet sand between their thighs and patting it with their hands. One child, called the

‘mother leader,’ says, ‘Mo‘ng‘iz-Mo‘ng‘iz.’ The others ask, ‘What Mo‘ng‘iz?’ or ‘What kind of Mo‘ng‘iz (horned creature)?’ The leader begins listing horned animals, and the others repeat after them. Then, the leader deliberately mentions an animal without horns, such as a camel or donkey, to confuse the others. If a child mistakenly names a hornless animal, they are pushed into the water.”

Regardless of the tools or themes—whether involving mud, sticks, or ropes—children’s games served as schools for life, preparing them for household chores and social responsibilities. Since ancient times, children participated alongside their parents in social and daily life, contributing within their capabilities and talents. Through rituals organized by adults, children sang songs, danced, and expressed their views on life events. When these activities were in the form of games, children were filled with joy and energy. However, when involving forced labor, the games reflected fatigue and sadness.

Finally, some games were designed specifically for girls. For example, the game *Yanqu*, played by maidens, involved swinging on a rope tied to a tree or pole. Another similar game, *Yalingular*, involved swinging on a rope tied at both ends to objects, resembling a swing.

Conclusion and Recommendations. In conclusion, this article discusses the development and optimization of modern sports games among Eastern peoples. It highlights the current importance of scientifically preserving folk games as part of humanity's cultural heritage and studying them within the context of historical pedagogical issues. Folk games are essential and prevalent, being seasonal and tailored to different groups within society, such as children, adolescents, youth, girls, women, and men. They vary in character depending on the participants and can occur in urban and rural settings, during the day or night. Furthermore, games can be classified based on the participants, such as children's games, games for adolescents, youth, women, and men. They also differ based on their expressive means, such as verbal, sung, danced, motion-based, or competitive ethnographic forms. It is common to categorize games for children and adolescents, as well as games for older individuals. Games for older people include those that are more

physically demanding and include activities like *uloq* (kokpari), *shavqi baland* games, and traditional competitions involving goats, dogs, and rooster fights, as well as the *oshiq* game.

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