



The Strategic Power of Running: How Peyks Shaped Communication Networks through Running in the Ottoman Empire

Muhammed Sıddık ÇEMÇ¹, Enes MADAK²

¹Boğaziçi University, Department of Physical Education and Sports

²National Defense University, Turkish Naval Academy

Abstract

The Ottoman Empire covered a vast surface area. From this perspective, a reliable and fast communication network was considered one of the most important elements for the smooth functioning of the military and administrative structure. Messenger runner peyks were one of the most important building blocks of this element. Despite the long distances and harsh natural conditions, peyks were tasked with delivering strategically important messages to strengthen state authority. Thanks to their running skills, administrative and military decision-making mechanisms were carried out quickly, contributing greatly to the operational efficiency of the state. Notable for their high level of endurance and speed, peyks were also noteworthy for their performance, as well as their ability to perform under difficult conditions and training activities involving strict discipline. Peyks were also an important figure that symbolized discipline and power. In this context, they took part in ceremonies. Running was historically used as a means of communication rather than a sport, and in this direction, the role of Peyks in the Ottoman Empire in the communication network is discussed. Thus, this research examines the benefits they had for the administrative and military structure of the state within the scope of the source scans of the period.

Review Article

Article Info

Received: 11.09.2024

Accepted: 25.12.2024

Published: 29.12.2024

Keywords: Communication, Ottoman Empire, Peyk, Running.

Koşunun Stratejik Gücü: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Peyklerin Koşu Yoluyla İletişim Ağını Şekillendirmesi

Öz

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu geniş bir yüz ölçümüne sahip olmuştur. Bu açıdan bakıldığında güvenilir ve hızlı bir haberleşme ağı, askeri ve idari yapının sorunsuz bir şekilde işlemesi adına en önemli unsurlardan biri olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Haberci koşucu peykler bu unsurun en önemli yapı taşlarından biridir. Peykler, devlet otoritesinin güçlendirilmesi hususunda stratejik önem kapsamında olan mesajları uzun mesafe ve zorlu doğa şartlarına rağmen ileterek görev almışlardır. Onların koşu yetenekleri sayesinde idari ve askeri karar mekanizmaları hızlı işleterek devletin operasyon etkinliğine büyük katkı sağlanmıştır. Yüksek seviye dayanıklılık ve hızlarıyla dikkat çeken peykler, performanslarının yanında zor şartlar altında görev alma ve sıkı disiplin içeren eğitim faaliyetleri ile de önem kazanmaktadır. Peykler ayrıca disiplin ve gücün sembolize edilmesi adına önemli bir figürdür. Bu kapsamda, törenlerde yer alarak boy göstermişlerdir. Bu araştırma ile koşunun tarihi açıdan bir spor dalı olmaktan ziyade haberleşme ve iletişim aracı olarak kullanıldığı belirtilmekte olup bu doğrultuda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda görevli Peyklerin iletişim ağındaki rolü ele alınmıştır. Böylece devletin idari ve askeri yapısına ne çeşit faydalarının olduğu döneme ait kaynak taramaları kapsamında incelenmiştir.

Derleme Makalesi

Yayın Bilgisi

Gönderi Tarihi: 11.09.2024

Kabul Tarihi: 25.12.2024

Yayın Tarihi: 29.12.2024

Anahtar kelimeler: Haberleşme, Koşu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Peyk.

Corresponding Author: Muhammed Sıddık ÇEMÇ

E-mail: mscec@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Çemç., M.S. & Madak, E. (2024). The Strategic Power of Running: How Peyks Shaped Communication Networks through Running in the Ottoman Empire. *Journal of Global Sport and Education Research*, VII (3):84-96. DOI: 10.55142/jogser.1545732

INTRODUCTION

With its administrative structure spread across vast territories, the Ottoman Empire required a reliable and swift flow of information and communication. The state's rule over diverse and changing regions necessitated an effective communication process (Kafadar, 1995; İnalçık, 2000). In this context, the communication network of the Ottoman Empire was maintained by Peyks, who were among the most skilled couriers of their time. Peyks were tasked with delivering crucial information to the correct locations within the designated time frame, utilizing their exceptional speed and endurance (Uzunçarşılı, 1988a). Their running abilities played a significant role in the political and military success of the Ottoman Empire by ensuring the rapid implementation of strategic decisions (Finkel, 2006).

In the context of human history, running dates back to ancient times. From the earliest periods, people have utilized their running abilities to warn others, convey messages, and communicate during emergencies. Long-distance runners played key roles in the administration of civil and military affairs in Ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome (Cartledge, 2011). In the Roman Empire, courier runners were integral to the establishment of the state's communication network (Goldsworthy, 2007). This historical trajectory indicates that the peyks serving in the Ottoman Empire continued this tradition.

Running was not merely a responsibility for the peyks in the Ottoman Empire; rather, it was a physical skill that distinguished them as a specialized professional group (Goffman, 2002). The extraordinary performance of the peyks required rigorous discipline and systematic training. Their ability to operate under all weather conditions and across challenging terrains enabled the empire to maintain effective control over its vast territories. This integration of physical performance with the state's logistical and communication infrastructure contributed significantly to the strengthening of Ottoman governance (Faroqhi, 2017).

This research examines the role of Ottoman peyks in the imperial communication system, with a focus on the historical development of running. The study begins by analyzing the historical trajectory of running from ancient times to the Ottoman Empire, emphasizing the training and duties of the peyks, as well as their significance within the communication network. In this context, the research draws on contemporary sources and a literature review to highlight how the peyks contributed operationally to the Ottoman Empire.

From the perspective of human history, running

Running is regarded as a critical aspect of human evolutionary history. Around 2 million years ago, humans began to track their prey over long distances by running (Bramble & Lieberman, 2004). In early civilizations, running also held significant importance. In Ancient Egypt, running was incorporated into rituals. For example, the Sed Festival, a ceremony in which the Pharaoh performed a run to symbolize the continuation of his reign, illustrates how running was used not just as a physical activity but also as a marker of divine power and leadership (Redford, 1984). In Ancient Greece, running was a central element of the Olympic Games, symbolizing the competition between Greek city-states (Young, 2004). In the first Olympic Games, running was regarded as the most prestigious event. The Stadion, a short-

distance race of 192 meters, was the first and only event in these early games. Over time, the inclusion of long-distance races, such as the Dolichos, transformed running into a sport that tested not only speed but also endurance (Crowther, 2007).

Throughout history, running has served not only as a sport but also as a means of communication. For instance, following the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, fought between the Persians and Athenians, an Athenian soldier named Pheidippides ran approximately 42 kilometers to deliver the news of victory to Athens. This event laid the foundation for the marathon race and demonstrated the strategic use of running as a tool for conveying important messages (Hubbard, 2016). During the Middle Ages, running was commonly employed by messengers who carried messages. These runners were tasked with ensuring reliable and rapid communication along commercial and military routes. Although horses were widely used during this period, runners were often considered a more effective and quicker means of communication over short distances and in terrains where horse usage was challenging (Gajda, 2019). By the late 19th century, running had evolved into a modern sport. The global recognition of running was significantly boosted by the revival of the Olympic Games in 1896. The marathon race, included as part of these games, was won by Spiridon Louis of Greece, who gained international fame (Young, 2004). By the 20th century, running had become more than just a sport; it emerged as a vital tool for personal development and international diplomatic activities (Guttman, 2002).

The concept of communication and information transmission

Communication is an exceedingly broad concept that is not exclusive to humans. It forms a fundamental basis for all living beings on Earth. Humanity has utilized its intellect and abilities to enhance its communication skills (Gönenç, 2012).

From a historical perspective, the study of communication leads to the significant development of the invention of writing. According to widely accepted views, around 4000 BCE, humanity began using symbols, which are considered the ancestors of writing, for communication purposes. These symbols allowed thoughts and propositions to be transformed into concepts and words that could be stored and reused. Some scholars argue that human civilization began using symbol systems resembling writing much earlier. Evidence suggests that as early as 25,000 years ago, and possibly even earlier, long before the Phoenicians developed the first alphabet and writing techniques similar to those we use today, symbols were used for record-keeping. This practice is thought to have begun shortly after the emergence of modern humans in Europe during the Ice Age, around 35,000 BCE (Crowley & Heyer, 2011).

The communication revolution and the relationship with messenger running

The domestication of animals for the rapid transmission of news following the advent of writing stands as a pivotal moment in the history of communication. A horse, capable of reaching speeds of 25 km per hour, could run twice as fast as a human messenger. Various civilizations utilized different types of animals for communication purposes. In the Arab civilization, for instance, dromedary camels, which could travel up to 80 km a day in the

desert, were used for communication. In addition to camels and horses, carrier pigeons were widely employed by Muslims during the Islamic conquests to deliver written messages. This method proved to be highly effective for its time. The institutionalization of communication also developed in the same geographical region. During the Achaemenid Empire of Persia, units resembling modern postal centers were established. This development was observed in subsequent historical periods in ancient Greece, Rome, Byzantium, and the Islamic world (Jeanneney, 2009). The communication system maintained by the Seljuks in the 13th century, using messengers known as "çapar," "ulak," and "kaasid," continued until the Mongol invasion of Anatolia (Özdemir, 1998). The secure and rapid transmission of news has always been of paramount importance throughout history. In addition to communication methods like pigeons, horses, camels, and signal-based systems, it is well-known that major empires of the past relied on messenger runners to convey messages over long distances (Oettermann, 1984).

The earliest written records of human use in rapid message transmission through running come from the Sumerians. In a Sumerian epic, the messenger of Uruk's ruler, Enmerkar, is described as embarking on his journey "like a dragon hunting in the fields," while in another verse, a messenger is said to move "as swiftly as a wolf chasing a kid to deliver the message" (Kramer, 1998). These Sumerian epics, however, do not provide sufficient information regarding whether the messenger running was part of a systematic approach. In contrast, an organized system of messenger runners is known to have existed in Ancient Greece. Within this cultural framework, the fastest and strongest young runners were selected as messengers. They were capable of covering incredible distances in a very short time to deliver messages. These messenger runners were referred to as hemerodrome (all-day runners), a term combining the words "day" and "running," highlighting their remarkable endurance and speed (Yıldırım, 2012).

Some of the most original examples of communication services carried out by runners, notable for their functional and structural excellence, can be found in the Inca civilization (Lennartz, 1991), in 13th-century China under Mongol rule (Polo, 1983), and in 14th-century India during the Delhi Sultanate (Battuta, 1974). In the Near East, the message transmission system maintained by mounted couriers under the Sassanids and Byzantines was adopted and further developed by the Islamic caliphs. The mounted postal system, known as berid in the Abbasid Caliphate, became one of the most crucial state institutions. By the 9th and 10th centuries, a network of postal stations had spread across the entire country. However, in the 10th century, the Buyids, who weakened the caliphs, abandoned the mounted postal system to cut off the flow of information to the caliphs and undermine their position. As a result, the first messenger-runners (su'at) emerged in this region (Thorau, 1987). Despite the decline of the mounted postal organization and the Seljuk ruler Alp Arslan's advice on the necessity of messengers and couriers (Köymen, 1982), it was completely abolished in 1063 (Alptekin, 1986). Consequently, pigeons, fast camels, and runners became the primary means of communication (Thorau, 1987). This transformation led to the employment of professional runners by sultans, state officials, and merchants in the Islamic states of the 10th to 13th centuries (Klemens, 1980). In particular, the Mamluk communication system, reorganized by

Sultan Baybars, also employed runners at each relay station alongside swift animals (Özgen, 1984).

In the *Siyasetname*, it is mentioned that the Great Seljuk state employed swift runners known as "peykan" for postal services. Nizam al-Mulk's work also indicates that by positioning these peyks along specific routes, any message could be received day and night from a distance of 50 farsakhs (Köymen, 1982). An examination of the 12th-century Seljuk period reveals that a runner could cover a distance of 120 kilometers in a single day (Köymen, 1970), which is a testament to the impressive performance of these messenger runners.

Communication within the Ottoman Empire

As the Ottoman principality rapidly expanded and reached vast borders, the need for a strong communication network in political, military, economic, and social terms became essential. In response, effective, secure, and swift communication systems were organized. The Ottomans strengthened their communication network through established road systems, utilizing runners, mounted messengers, and pigeons (Halaçoğlu, 1995). During the periods when the state reached extensive borders, it also employed couriers and Tatars to maintain continuous communication between the center and the provinces, ensuring secure military-state correspondence and preventing any disruption in communication. It was during this time that messenger peyks, who held a special place at the sultan's court, emerged on the historical stage, distinct from the revised ulak system that accompanied the establishment of the mounted postal organization (Özdemir, 1998).

Peyks

The term "peyk" in the dictionary is defined as "courier, runner, or messenger." Peyks were a group of messengers tasked with carrying and delivering messages on behalf of the sultan, characterized by their exceptional speed and the trust and confidentiality with which they operated. In the early periods of the Ottoman Empire, this group served as guards and foot-postmen. However, beginning with the empire's rise, they also took on roles within imperial processions, serving as special ceremonial units distinguished by their unique decorations (Abdülaziz Bey, 1995).

The exact date of the emergence of peyks is unknown. However, based on the statement in the Fatih lawbook (*kanunname*) that reads, "When my victorious campaign takes place, let the Solakbaşı and Peykbaşı walk beside my imperial stirrup," it is understood that these foot messengers serving under the sultan existed around the mid-15th century (Tanrıbuyurdu & Tandoğan, 2021).

According to information provided by Pakalın (1993), peyks were special foot messengers within the Ottoman palace organization. They were stationed within the *bîrûn* (the outer section of the palace), which consisted of various service detachments, and were responsible for conveying the sultan's orders and commands. The administrative organization to which the peyks were attached was the *Peykhâne-i Hassa Ocağı*. This barracks was located near the Sultanahmet Mosque, in the same area where it still stands today and is still referred to as *Peykhâne*. The number of peyks serving as "express couriers" within the Ottoman palace

organization varied over the centuries. For instance, in the mid-16th century, there were 40 peyks; by the end of the century, their number had increased to 80-100; in the 17th century, there were about 60; and by the 18th century, the number had risen to approximately 150.

Figure 1: The image of peyks in the 17th century (Majda, T. 2006)



In the Ottoman Empire, earning the title of peyk was as arduous as completing the most challenging tasks. Peyks began their running training at a very young age, undergoing a grueling and boundary-pushing training process, as documented in the travelogues of that period. For instance, Gerlach (2007), who accompanied the Austrian embassy delegation to Ottoman lands, recorded his observations during his five-year stay. He described the peyk selection trial he witnessed on June 10th with the following words:

"On June 10th, two peyks set out early in the morning, with one running to Silivri and the other even farther, returning around five or six in the evening. This round trip, lasting 15 hours, covered a distance of 18 German miles. When the men returned, they were not allowed to sit down; instead, they had to continue walking until midnight, and at times, they were hung by their feet. They said that if this wasn't done, they would die immediately. Those who accompanied them on horseback during the run would occasionally sprinkle water on them and clear the way to ensure no obstacles hindered their path. This was considered a test, and anyone to be accepted as a peyk first had to undergo such an examination."

Gerlach (2007) reports that during this process, a tent was set up in the At Meydanı (Hippodrome), and sherbet was served to those present, accompanied by the sounds of zurna and drums. He mentions that the two peyks were accompanied by another person as they ran in circles around the square without stopping. Finally, the three of them presented themselves before the pasha, who, impressed by their demonstrated abilities, rewarded them with silk garments and money. According to the traveler's notes, each year, one to four individuals underwent such a test.

Figure 2: A peyk with running gear in the early 16th century (Nicolas de Nicolay, 1576)



Nicolas de Nicolay (1585) referenced Menavino as the first to provide detailed accounts of peyks and further elaborated on the peyks of Istanbul and Edirne during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Both authors emphasized the Iranian origin of the peyks. Chardin (2013), who was in Isfahan during the reign of Sultan Suleiman, provided similar information regarding the selection exams conducted there. Chardin reported that the runners had to retrieve one of the bows placed beside a column located 6.5 km from the palace and return with it. During this process, the runner was monitored by the Shah's observer from behind for control purposes. Chardin also noted that the candidate had to run to the column and back six times within a 12-hour period, covering a total distance of 78 km. He continued his observations of the selection exam with the following remarks:

"While the riders and runners accompanied the candidate, the spectators kept the running path clear, cooling him by sprinkling fragrant liquids on him, encouraging him with cries of 'May Allah help you!' and promising rewards. Following the selection exam, a grand ceremony for induction into the profession, attended by both the Shah and the public, was held."

Due to their running abilities, peyks were initially tasked with delivering the sultan's commands. They also had the duties of announcing the return of the Hajj caravan to the sultan and accompanying the sultan's mounted excursions by running ahead of his horse. Within the palace organization, there were şatır (courier-messenger runners), who bore similarities to peyks and were also renowned for their running abilities. By the mid-17th century, those selected for the position of şatır were chosen from among the peyks (Reyhanlı, 1989). This selection process explains why they were such successful runners. During the same period, messenger runners in the Safavid Empire of Iran were also referred to as şatır (Klemens, 1980).

Peyks played a significant role as key elements of the decorative procession in various ceremonial parades such as the Cuma Procession, the Bayram Procession, the Şehzade Procession, the Surre Procession, and the Hümayun Procession, which were conducted due to military campaigns. When sultans attended these parades and ceremonies, they were typically accompanied by 30 peyks, while 12 peyks were present during their private outings (Mustafa Nuri Paşa, 1979). It was considered a privilege for anyone outside the sultan to have peyks accompanying them. Şehzades sent to provinces as governors were also accompanied by peyks (Pakalın, 1993). The governors of Egypt, Baghdad, and Buda had the privilege of having peyks walk beside them (Mustafa Nuri Paşa, 1979). Additionally, certain individuals with special privileges were also provided with peyks. For instance, during the 1596 Egri campaign led by Sultan Mehmed III, an English ambassador was given a peyk to run beside his horse all the way to Egri (Reyhanlı, 1983). The number of peyks within the palace organization varied between 30 and 150 from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The peyk organization was abolished in 1828 (Pakalın, 1993). From the most talented and skilled peyks, a new corps called Hademe-i Rikâb-ı Hümayûn-u Hassa was established (Mustafa Nuri Paşa, 1979).

Physical characteristics, running performance, and equipment of peyks

Peyks were described as physically slender and agile (Uzunçarşılı, 1988b). Based on the characteristics depicted in travelogues, it is evident that peyks were well-trained. Galland (1973) observed the peyks in Edirne, noting that they created a pleasing sight with their similar ages and physiques. He also remarked on the sure-footed and harmonious nature of their walk. Nicolas de Nicolay (1585) mentioned that when accompanying the sultan, peyks did not simply run but incorporated peculiar jumps and dance-like movements. Until the late 16th century, they ran barefoot during their performances. They practiced training methods that included different running techniques on hot sand while barefoot. As a result, the soles of

their feet became almost like horseshoes—insensitive, calloused, and hardened (Happel, 1683).

The sources do not provide sufficient information regarding the training methods of peyks. However, Tavernier, who made several trips to Iran by 1630, offered insights into the training of messenger runners in the Safavid state, which may shed light on the training system of the Ottoman peyks. Tavernier reported that children began training for this profession at the age of six, starting with walking exercises that gradually extended to running distances of 5 kilometers or more. By the age of 18, the intensity of the training increased, with runners enhancing their performance by carrying daily provisions as weight. This profession was typically passed down from father to son. Tavernier also mentioned a specialized examination for runners, which consisted of a 120-kilometer run. The test was required to begin at sunrise and be completed by sunset (Diem, 1960).

In the Ottoman Empire, peyks were employed to swiftly deliver urgent messages to distant regions (Nicolas de Nicolay, 1585). Due to their ability to run without interruption, peyks were considered faster and more reliable in reaching their destinations (Riedel, 1942). It is reported that peyks covered a daily distance of 25-30 fersah (approximately 150-180 km), and the journey between Istanbul and Edirne, which spans 156 km, would typically take them one day and one night (Happel, 1683). Gerlach (2007) provided an account of a peyk selection trial he observed in June 1577. He noted that the candidates set out early in the morning, covering a distance of 18 German miles (135 km) over 15 hours, returning around 5-6 in the evening, thereby maintaining an average speed of 9 km per hour.

The preference for peyks over mounted couriers for long-distance message delivery was not without reason. Sources frequently highlight that when it comes to sustained endurance, runners were often superior to horses (Guer, 1746). While peyks could cover the distance between Istanbul and Edirne, approximately 156 km, within 24 hours without rest, mounted postal Tatars required two days to complete the same journey (Pakalın, 1993). Mounted couriers could change horses when they became fatigued, allowing them to cover distances as quickly as possible, but since they could only travel during daylight hours, they required more time overall. The performance difference between horses and runners over very long distances was also noted during the 12th-century Seljuk period. In this context, it was stated that a well-prepared horse could cover 90 km in a day, while a well-trained peyk could cover 120 km daily (Köymen, 1970). Considering that messages were commonly transmitted between Istanbul and Edirne by peyks, it is evident that covering this distance in a single stretch required an exceptional level of endurance. In contrast, the relay-style running systems reminiscent of a relay race, as observed in the Inca civilization and in the Mongol and Delhi Sultanates, involved each runner covering a maximum distance of about 5 km (Battuta, 1974).

Peyks were equipped with certain tools to help maintain their performance during runs. One example is the use of beautifully toned bells tied to their belts and knees (Uzunçarşılı, 1988b). Similarly, messengers in the 14th-century Delhi Sultanate carried whips with bells at the ends, and 13th-century Mongol messenger runners wore high-pitched bells on their belts. The sound of these bells acted as an early warning system for the next runner waiting at the relay point,

allowing them to be prepared (Polo, 1983). Additionally, peyks carried a hollow metal sphere with holes in it in their mouths during runs as a form of mechanical ergogenic aid. This sphere was believed to help prevent breathlessness (Uzunçarşılı, 1988b) or facilitate easier breathing (Happel, 1683) during the run. Diem (1960) speculated that the perforated sphere might help maintain salivation or promote more economical nasal breathing.

Regarding the performance of peyks over long distances, sources from the 16th and 17th centuries contain various rumors. One such rumor suggested that peyks had their spleens removed during their youth. It was also speculated that this practice was a method the Turks did not wish to explain to other nations (Nicolas de Nicolay, 1585). However, there is no concrete evidence supporting the notion that the spleens of runners were medically removed for training purposes. The persistence of this belief seems to stem from a longstanding popular notion that there is a connection between the spleen and running-related discomfort, known today as a side stitch. Additionally, it appears that the condition, now referred to as a side stitch, was a common issue that European messenger runners of the same period had to contend with. Individuals trained as messenger runners were taught to breathe through their noses regularly, to take preventive measures by tightly wrapping a belt around their abdomen, or, if pain occurred, to press both sides with their fists (Oettermann, 1984).

Peyks carried a handkerchief filled with hard (akide) candy and almonds in their hands while performing their duties of delivering messages. According to sources, they would consume these during the run to "prevent fainting" and "gain strength" (Nicolas de Nicolay, 1585). This practice indicates that peyks relied on nutrition-based ergogenic aids to sustain their energy during long-distance runs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The reliable, efficient, and swift functioning of the Ottoman Empire's internal communication network played a critical role in the administrative operations of the state. Given the extensive borders of the empire, the rapid transmission of information was an indispensable element for the timely implementation of military and administrative decisions. In this context, peyks, who were the backbone of the Ottoman communication system, formed the skeletal structure of this network through their reliability, endurance, and speed. As a specially trained group of foot messengers responsible for transmitting information within the Ottoman administration, peyks operated over large territories. In doing so, they contributed significantly to the maintenance of the state's authority as a powerful entity.

To comprehend the mission of peyks within the Ottoman Empire, it is essential to examine the historical development of running and its impact on communication. Running is one of the oldest physical activities in human history. Since the earliest civilizations, it has been used as a means of communication. In the periods of Ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome, messenger runners were employed to deliver important information and messages. This tradition was continued by the Ottomans through the peyks. The peyks serving within the Ottoman Empire demonstrate how running became institutionalized as a method of message transmission and how crucial their role was in serving the state.

Peyks were included in specialized training programs from a very young age. These training regimens focused on intensive running exercises. These exercises were designed to enhance speed and increase physical endurance. Sources indicate that peyks were capable of covering long distances throughout the day without stopping. This suggests that, in addition to being fast, peyks underwent a difficult training process that emphasized discipline and endurance. The goal of their training was to ensure that they could perform their duties optimally, even under physically demanding conditions. For instance, as the Ottoman Empire was spread across a vast geographical region, there were significant challenges for peyks while they were carrying out their message delivery duties. Weather conditions, geographical obstacles, and enemy threats were among the primary difficulties. Despite these challenges, they successfully delivered messages reliably and in the shortest possible time.

In conclusion, this research highlights the role of peyks in the Ottoman communication network and their place in the historical development of running, emphasizing that running was more than just a physical activity—it was a strategic tool. Throughout human history, running has been used to facilitate the rapid flow of information and to support the functioning of states. The peyks who served within the Ottoman Empire were a continuation of this tradition as they acted as a crucial element in enhancing the state's efficiency and power. The significant role of peyks offers a compelling example of how critical swift information flow and communication are for the functioning of states.

Acknowledgment

We extend our gratitude to Professor İbrahim Yıldırım, a member of the Fair Play Commission of the Turkish National Olympic Committee, for his valuable suggestions provided within the scope of this research.

Conflict of interest

The authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. Additionally, the authors declare that there is no conflict of interest and have agreed on the order of authorship.

Ethical approval

Ethical committee approval is not required for this research.

REFERENCES

- Abdülaziz Bey. (1995). Osmanlı Adet Merasim ve Tabirleri, (Haz: Kazım Arısan, Duygu Arısan Günay), İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.
- Alptekin, C. (1986). Musul Atabegliği Zamanında Posta Teşkilatı, Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi, 2, s. 15.
- Battuta, I. (1974). *Reisen ans Ende der Welt. 1325-1353* (Tübingen: Erdmann-Verlag), s. 45-46.
- Bramble, D. M., & Lieberman, D. E. (2004). Endurance running and the evolution of Homo. *Nature*, 432(7015), 345-352. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature03052>
- Cartledge, P. (2011). *The Battle of Marathon*. Pan Macmillan.
- Chardin, J. (2013), *Chardin Seyahatnamesi: İstanbul, Osmanlı Toprakları, Gürcistan, Ermenistan, İran 1671-1673*, (Çeviren: Ayşe Meral), İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi.
- Crowley, D., & Heyer, P. (2011). *İletişim Tarihi*. Çeviren: Berkay Ersöz. Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.
- Crowther, N. B. (2007). *Sport in Ancient Times*. Praeger.
- Diem, C. (1960). *Weltgeschichte des Sports und der Leibeserziehung* (Stuttgart: Cotta-Verlag), s. 344.
- Faroqhi, S. (2017). *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*. I.B. Tauris.
- Finkel, C. (2006). *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire*. Basic Books.
- Gajda, A. (2019). Foot messengers and their role in medieval Europe. *Historical Research Journal*, 45(1), 123-145.
- Galland, A. (1973). *İstanbul'a Ait Günlük Anılar (1672-1673)*, II. Cilt, çeviri. Nahid Sırrı Örik (Ankara 1973), s. 74.
- Gerlach, S. (2007). *Türkiye Günlüğü (1577-1578) 2. Cilt*, (Çeviri: Türkis Noyan) İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi.
- Goffman, D. (2002). *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Goldsworthy, A. (2007). *Caesar: Life of a Colossus*. Yale University Press.
- Gönenç, E. Ö. (2012). İletişimin Tarihsel Süreci. *İstanbul Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, İstanbul University Faculty of Communication Journal (28).
- Guer, M. (1746). *Moeurs et Usages des Turcs, leur Religion, leur Gouvernement Civil, Militaire et Politique, avec un abrege de l'histoire Ottomane*. I. Bd. (Paris), s. 397.
- Guttman, A. (2002). *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*. University of Illinois Press.
- Halaçoğlu, Y. (1995). Klasik Dönemde Osmanlılarda Haberleşme ve Yol Sistemi, Çağını Yakalayan Osmanlı, IRCICA, Yayın Hazırlayanlar: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Mustafa Kaçar, ss. 13-21.
- Happel, E. G. (1683). *Gröste Denckwürdigkeiten der Welt. Oder sogenannte Relationes Curiosae* (Hamburg), s. 429.
- Hubbard, T. (2016). Pheidippides and the Marathon: The historical context. *Journal of Greek Studies*, 53(2), 217-234.
- İnalçık, H. (2000). *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*. Phoenix.
- Jeanneney, J. N. (2009). *Medya Tarihi*, Çeviren Esra Atuk, İstanbul. Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Kafadar, C. (1995). *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. University of California Press.

- Klemens C. (1980). Wildt, Daten zur Sportgeschichte. Teil IV (Schorndorf: Hofmann), s. 106.
- Köymen, M. A. (1970). Alp Arslan Zamani Selçuklu Askeri Teşkilatı (Ankara), s. 68, dipnot 3.
- Köymen, M. A. (1982). Nizâmü'l-mülk, Siyâsetnâme. Haz. M. (Ankara), s. 110.
- Kramer, S. N. (1998). Tarih Sümerde Başlar. Çev.: Muazzez İlmiye Çığ (Ankara: TTK), s. 14-24, 233.
- Lennartz, B. (1991). Boten und Jaeger der Natur Völker, Condition, 7-8 s. 52-53.
- Majda, T. (2006). Rälamb'ın Türk Kıyafetleri Albümü, Alay-ı Hümayun, İsveç Elçisi Rälamb'ın İstanbul Ziyareti ve Resimleri, 1657-1658, Karin Adahl (ed.), Ali Özdamar (çev.), İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi.
- Mustafa Nuri Paşa. (1979). Netayic ül-Vukuât: Kurumları ve Örgütleriyle Osmanlı Tarihi. C. I-II, Sadeleştiren, notlar ve açıklamaları ekleyen Neşet Çağatay (Ankara: TTK).
- Nicolas de Nicolay. (1576). Vier bücher von der raisz und schiffart in die turckey. Antwerp.
- Nicolas de Nicolay. (1585). The Navigations, Peregrinations and Voyages, made into Turkie (London, 1585), s. 82.
- Oettermann S. (1984). Laeuffer und Vorlaeuffer. Zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Laufsports (Frankfurt: Syndikat), s. 7-10; Bk. ayrıca, Korkmaz Alemdar, Türkiye'de Çağdaş Haberleşmenin Tarihsel Kökenleri (Ankara, 1981), s. 13-81.
- Özdemir, O. (1998). Türkiye'de Modern Posta Teşkilatının Kuruluşu ve Gelişimi, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Anadolu Üniversitesi.
- Özgen, D. (1984). Memluk İmparatorluğunda Posta Hizmetleri, Yeni Koleksiyon Dergisi, 34, 5-7.
- Pakalın, M. Z. (1993). Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü, İstanbul: Mili Eğitim Basımevi.
- Polo. M. (1983). Die Reisen des Venezianers. Hrsg. Hans Eckart Rubesamen (München), s. 141-144.
- Redford, D. B. (1984). Kingship and festival in ancient Egypt: The case of Heb Sed. Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 43(4), 281-295. <https://doi.org/10.1086/373097>
- Reyhanlı, T. (1983). İngiliz Gezginlerine Göre XVI. Yüzyılda İstanbul'da Hayat. 1582-1599. Ankara, s. 64.
- Reyhanlı, T. (1989). Nicolas de Nicolay'ın Türkiye Seyahatnamesi ve Desenleri, Erdem, 5, 14, s. 598-599.
- Riedel, H. (1942). Leibesübungen und körperliche Erziehung in der osmanischen und kamalistischen Türkei (Würzburg: Konrad Triltsch-Verlag), s. 14.
- Tanrıbuyurdu, G. & Tandoğan H. (2021). Osmanlı'nın Cesur Yürek Yalın Ayak Habercileri Yahut Klasik Türk Şiirinde "Peyk". Eski Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi, 4 (2) 465-84.
- Thorau, P. (1987). Sultan Baybars I. Von Aegypten. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vorderen Orients im XIII. Jahrhunderts. Dissertation, Eberhard-Karls-Universitaet (Tübingen), s. 127.
- Uzunçarşılı, İ. H. (1988a). Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapıkulu Ocakları: Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı (Vol. 1). Türk Tarih Kurumu.
- Uzunçarşılı, İ. H. (1988b). Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilâtı. 3. Baskı (Ankara), s. 443.
- Yıldırım, İ. (2012). Anadolu Uygarlıklarında Spor, Atlı Halkın Yaya Haberci Koşucuları: Peykler Ve Performansları. Spor Yayınevi ve Kitabevi. Ankara.
- Young, D. C. (2004). A brief history of the Olympic games. Blackwell Publishing.