

The Placenames of Turkey as a Guide to Toponymic Studies

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Turkey still has on the map -- of two continents, because the nation lies in both Europe and Asia -- some of the oldest placenames of the world. Turkey's history, with the rise and fall of a number of empires, including some named for individuals (such as the Selucid and Ottoman), has been the site of three of the greatest empires of the world. Consequently its placenames record and reveal the histories of a surprising number of peoples. Extraordinarily, Turkish nationalism in the present century has altered many of the placenames of classical and later times, so that Antioch, Smyrna, Hallicarnassus, Adrianople, Constantinople and many other familiar names are no longer in use. At the same time, the nationalism has, at the instigation of Gazi Mustafa Kemal (known as Atatürk after he introduced surnames to Turkey), made the discussion of Turkish names of all sorts easier for the Westerner, for a modified Roman alphabet was imposed by fiat on a language that previously was written in Arabic script. More than half a century has passed since that notable reform was instituted and yet there is no adequate English treatment of the toponymy of Turkey. The purpose of this paper is to review that toponymy and to indicate the ways in which Turkish toponymy conforms to or significantly differs from what is familiar to students of placenames in the European tradition.

Many empires have existed in what is now Turkey, the remnant of the once great Ottoman Empire (named from the given name of its founder, also called the Osmanli). That hegemony faded and was at last termed "The Sick Man of Europe" by stronger powers who vied with each other to cut it into pieces in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century Turkey was created as a secular republic by Gazi Mustafa Kemal. (*Gazi* meaning "Victorious" was a military title, *Mustafa* was his given name, and a teacher impressed by his abilities in his youth gave him *Kemal*, which translates "Perfect.") He became Kemal Atatürk when his countrymen honored him with the surname *Atatürk* (Father of the Turks). His revolution pushed Turks into the modern age and gave them new customs (banning the fez, for instance) and even new names (*Atatürk* altered the age-old "X son of Y" to the Western forename plus surname).

Here we do not discuss the extraordinary event of the creation of surnames for a whole people or the language reform, which *Atatürk* also demanded and which caused the Turkish language to be written not in Arabic script but phonetically in a modified Roman script. Brothers might

take different surnames, their families later lacking a mark of relationship. Everyone could assume any surname desired. Atatürk's lieutenant, for instance, took the placename İönönü; it named the site of one of his famous victories, just as Britons were ennobled as Nelson of The Nile, Montgomery of Alamein, or Alexander of Tunis -- all these examples being particularly striking because none of these placenames is British. Nor do we touch on the striking popularity in the secular state of many religious names from *The Koran*, the many names of Allah, or The Prophet and his relatives. Rather, we concentrate on Turkish placenames and, further, within the small compass of this paper, not only on those toponyms simply descriptive in Turkish -- their meaning is obvious to anyone who knows Turkish or can use a dictionary -- but also on those famous when Turkey was *Magna Graecia* and the Roman province of *Asia Minor*.

The modernizing and Turkification efforts of Atatürk swept away ancient Greek and Roman names. Atatürk was determined that Turkish (forms of which are even now spoken from Sinkiang to Sköpje) would prevail and that Ottoman glory would not be discarded but that European technology and modernity would prevail in the old Ottoman dominions. Not only did Constantinople become İstanbul but the name that gave us the expression "cutting the Gordian knot," a familiar story of Gordium's place in the career of Alexander the Great, was changed. (It is now a ruined village called Yassi Höyük). Caria and Carian marble are forgotten (and Caria's king Mausolus, from which *mausoleum*), buried under the name Milâs. Words such as *Byzantine* and *parchment* (from Pergamon or Pergamum) no longer evoke their origins. Do you recognize such names of old as Mt. Ararat, where Noah's ark landed? The Hellespont, which Byron swam? Antioch, where St. Peter first used the equivalent of *Christian* in a sermon? Ephesus, where St. Paul (of Tarsus) walked? Troy? All gone, or hidden under names such as Agri Dağı, Canakkale, Antakya, Efes, and Truva.

This paper will in the first part list and comment upon a considerable number of ancient names and discuss the nature and impact of their recent Turkish names. In the second part our examination of Turkish placenames will bring us up to date and, noting that modern commemorative names are comparatively few, will suggest that with a small and select lexicon of Turkish geographical terms the average person who reads about or travels in modern Turkey will be able to understand the meaning of the toponymy. With the old and the new placenames briefly treated in this way, the toponymy of what at first appears to be an exotic land with names on it impenetrable to the English-speaking foreigner will seem less forbidding. Further, this examination of a country whose placenames for thousands of years were unknown to Westerners because, written in a script very few here could even spell out or pronounce, may encourage the salutary belief that knowing something about the placenames of any foreign country you might read about or visit is not only useful but, with a

small list of basic words of its toponymy, to a great degree both possible and pleasurable. Let us now turn to ancient times uniquely erased from the modern map.

With a name change, reference to the goddess Lekto (who had a shrine there) is lost; today the place is called Babakale (Papa's Fortress). Old Daphne is now Harbiye. Our Santa Claus was a fourth-century bishop of Myra; now Myra is Demre. Hadrianapolis (later Adrianople, honoring the Roman emperor) is now the major Turkish city in Europe, Edirne. Germaniceia for Germanicus is now Marquasi. Theodosiopolis is Erzurum. Pompeiopolis, also once known as Soles, is unrecognizable as Vuranşehir. Caesarea is Kayseri, Caesarea ad Anazarbus is Anavarza, Neocaesarea is Niksar, and Diocaesarea (also once known as Olbia) is Urzuncaburç. There was once a Sebastopolis, but now it is Sulusary (a saint giving way to a waystation, a *serai*, the same word as in *caravansary*). The Byzantine Greeks renamed a place Stavropolis (City of The Cross). Gone. In Turkey were once many places one of Alexander's generals called Antioch, after the general's father; one remains with the name somewhat changed, as was noted above, and the Antioch of Pisidia is now Yalvac. Another general, Seleucis, created a dynasty and an empire named for himself. Today Selucia Pera is Çevilik and Seleucia in Isauria is Silifke. Of the many places named for Alexander the Great himself, little is left. Now Alexandria Troas keeps its name only because it is uninhabited -- that frequently defeats updating -- and is chiefly one great ruined arch, and the Alexandria later given the Italian name Alexandretta bears the Turkish version of Alexander's name, İskanderun.

The Nicæan Creed is central to Christianity, but now Nicæa is İznik. The Council of Chalcedon (431 A.D.) was another landmark in church history, but the place is now Kadıköy. Teos, Tuspa, and other places long abandoned often retain ancient names, but many early Christian names from an area where Peter and Paul preached, where The Blessed Virgin died, where St. John wrote, have vanished, causing modern Turks to forget the Christian times and the Eastern Empire of which Byzantium (now İstanbul) was the capital. The Turkish capital of today is Ankara. That name causes us to forget the wool trade that flourished there when the city and the fine wool were both called Angora (What we call "angora," the Turks called *tifliz*.)

Other names famous in classical times but replaced include Philadelphia (Ataşehir), Sardis (Sart), Hallicarnus (Bodrum), Harran (Aktinbasak), Metropolis (Ayzazynkoyu), Priene (Gullbache), Nicomedia (Koaeli), and Tralles (Aydin), Smyrna (İzmir), and Edessa (Şanlıurfa). Some such names have undergone many changes as hegemony after hegemony has swept across the territory. Some tools of the Neolithic period have been found in modern Turkey, settlements of the Bronze Age, ruins of Assyrian trade colonies, Hittite empires, Phrygian, Lydian, Urartrian, Ionian, Carian, Lycian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine

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Seljuk, crusader and Ottoman empires have come and gone, each leaving some mark on the land. At Çatal Höyük, southeast of Konya (ancient capital of Turkey) is a Neolithic village said to be the oldest human settlement (unless you can make a case for Jericho). The once great Hittite city of Kanesh is now called Kultepe (Pile of Ashes). Times change and names change. Each has a story.

That name Şanlıurfa for the Edessa of Alexander the Great is interesting enough to warrant an excursus, if it is brief. *Şanlıurfa* means something like "Renowned Urfa," *Urfa* being "East." The place, like others in Turkey, had a series of names bestowed on it as one people after another took the town and made it theirs by labeling with a word from their own language. (The same tendency to claim territory by naming is well illustrated in our own history in America by the replacing of the aboriginal Amerindian placenames with placenames that appealed to the invading settlers, names such as Boston, New London, Providence, and so on.) For a long time it was simply Urfa. Then, during the revolution of the nineteen-twenties, the brave battling population of another place, first called Aintab and later Antep (yielding to local pronunciation), gained national prominence. In time, Antep became Gaziantep (*Gazi* being used for "Victorious" as part of some placenames as well as for a military title). If Antep was "Victorious," Urfa thought it ought to be Şanlıurfa, and so in time it became. This was rather like adding an honorific because of its fierce resistance in what the Russians called their "patriotic war" to the name of Stalingrad.

Some changes were minor. Sinope became Sinop, Çeramos became Keramos, Anamurium became Anamur, Didyma (which boasted on of the greatest temples of the ancient world, to Apollo) to Dídím. Miletus was shortened to Milet. Mylassa became Mylas. Milidia became Malatya. Prusa (Prusias was a great king) became Bursa, while Pergamum became Bergama. Taurus became Yoros. Trapezus became Trabzon (which we often, after the British, call Trebizond). Some classical names record that the ancient cities became Islamic forts as the religion was spread by the sword: Thyatira became Akhisar (White Fort), Andriace became Dalyanagazi (Dalyana the Victorious), Arsameia of Nymphalos became Eskikale (Old Castle), Cibyra became Gölhisar (Lake Fort), and on and on. (The Ottoman way to spread the empire was to advance into a territory, conquer, build a fort to hold it, and then build a great mosque in order to draw a host of workmen there, some of whom would settle and start a town.) Placenames everywhere reveal cultural facts: the Ottoman Empire was built by the soldiers and mercenaries of Islam in defense of the Faith. Placenames in Turkey over the centuries record places famous in the past (The Chimera is Yanartas, "Burning Rock") and events as different as the arrival and the expulsion of the Greeks and the invention by the ancients in Turkey of a god called Kaunos (supposed son of Apollo) so that a city and shrine to him could be set up and vie with Greek temples of Apollo. The Lydian mode in music goes back to the great Lydia

(where Midas was rich), but Telemessos of Lydia is now called Fethiye (Conquest).

A little less obvious if you do not know Turkish were Aegius to Erciyes Dağı (the second element meaning "mountain"), Phoencius to Finike, Therepeia to Tarabya, Magnesia ad Sipylus to Manisa, Attaleia to Antalya, Iconium to Konya. At the same time there is a long story in changes such as the following: Antiphellus to Kaş (which is pronounced "Kosh" not "Kash," despite the tourist trap there called for the benefit of English-speakers Kas n' Carry) and Assos to Beyrhamkale and Hierapolis (now a ghost town, or necropolis, with a thriving tourist attraction nearby) to Pamukkale, which means "Cotton Castle," the reference being to the billowy white deposits of mineral that the naturally hot waters gushing down the hill make. They look like cotton -- or did to someone, in the tradition of our American place called Monkey's Eyebrow). Some great cities fell into decline: Simena became simply the village by the Muslim castle, which is what *Kaleköy* means. Pamphilian is mere Perge ruins. Xanthos is a ruin at Kınık. Peristrema has ruined churches at Ilhara. Sardis, where Croesus was famous for wealth, is no longer on the map. Try Sart. *La Grande Rue de Pera* where the fashionable French once paraded in Constantinople -- one caught the eye of a sultan -- is now *İstikal caddesi*. Some names have been mysteriously altered: one is Sepetçi to Beyaz Altın -- what does "White Gold" signify? Some are much more obviously improved. We have room for two examples only: Prostanna became Akrotiti or "High Place" and then Egridir. Now it is Egirdir. (*Egridir* means "crooked" and *egirdir* means "sweet.") The best change of all was from Çirıncke to Sirince -- which was from "Ugliness" to "Pleasantness." To appreciate such changes fully, of course, one has to know more of the language than can be counted on here. It won't help you to know about The Bosphorus, The Golden Horn, The Sublime Porte -- Turks never have used those terms any more than the Italians have ever used Rome, Leghorn, or Milan.

However, as promised, we can have a little language lesson which will give anyone the key to the majority of Turkish placenames. You need to know the following terms. (In Turkish, a *c* is pronounced like English *j*: *camı* is "jamee" and *blucin* is the popular "blue jeans." A *cedilla* under a *c* makes it a *ch*, under an *s* an *sh*. An accent like *í* indicates *ee*. A *ğ* between vowels is not sounded, a final *ğ* is our *j*, as in *Nemrut Dağ*, Mt. Nimrod. Umlauts you know. This is not too hard, and you can watch for cognates with languages you know. Soldier on now.)

bahçe garden

banyo swimming place

bedesten warehouse

bir one

bulvari boulevard

caddesi street

çarşı market

çeşme spring, fountain

chora rural area

dağ(i) mountain

deniz sea

düdenler falls

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<i>eski</i> old (not used of persons)	<i>meydan(i)</i> public square
<i>garajı</i> garage	<i>mezarlık</i> necropolis
<i>göl(u)</i> lake	<i>nehir</i> river
<i>güzel</i> beautiful	<i>nehri</i> river
<i>hamam(i)</i> bath	<i>nev</i> new
<i>hasatanesi</i> hospital	<i>ören</i> ruin
<i>havuz</i> pool	<i>orman</i> forest
<i>hısar</i> fort (you knew this one)	<i>ova(si)</i> plain
<i>iki</i> two	<i>parkı</i> public park
<i>il(i)</i> province	<i>pazzari bazaar</i>
<i>ilica</i> hot spring	<i>pasaje</i> passage
<i>imaret</i> soup kitchen (of a mosque)	<i>plaj</i> beach
<i>iskele</i> dock	<i>saray(i)</i> palace, waystation
<i>kale(si)</i> fort, citadel	<i>şehir</i> market, town
<i>kapi</i> gate (of walled city)	<i>sokak</i> street
<i>kaplıca</i> spa	<i>soguk</i> street
<i>kilise(se)</i> church	<i>tabhane</i> hostel
<i>konağı</i> mansion	<i>tatil köyü sitesi</i> holiday village site
<i>köprü</i> bridge	<i>tersane</i> shipyard
<i>köy</i> village	<i>türbe</i> tomb
<i>küle</i> tower	<i>ulu</i> great, large
<i>kümbet</i> tomb (above ground)	<i>vilayet</i> province, department
<i>kıman</i> port	<i>yayla</i> nomads' summer village
<i>mahalle</i> neighborhood	<i>yeni</i> new
<i>mağara</i> cave	<i>yeri</i> place
<i>manasteri</i> monastery	<i>yolu</i> road, way

Add useful terms such as *büyük* (big -- the main branch of the river Meander, which gave us a word, is Büyük Menderes). And *küçük* (small -- a palace on The Bosphorus is Küçük Su, Small by the Water). In any language, along with the equivalents of *please, thank you, yes, no*, the names of colors -- the Turks tend to stress white, green, black, red, blue, mostly in that order of frequency, and *ak* is "white," *yesil* "green," etc. Rebellious Kurds call Diyarbakir (much earlier called Amida) Kara (Black). There is a Kara Ada (Black Island) elsewhere. There is, as you probably know, a famous Blue Mosque, a Green Mosque of the Sufis, and so on. You need also to know numbers: *Dortkilisi* is "Four Churches."

One always needs to know the alphabet (Turkish has 29 letters, some extras with accents but no *q,w,x*) and a few language rules (Turkish has no articles, which is helpful, but does have vowel harmony and agglutination, which are not). With this small list of fewer than 100 words you can translate thousands upon thousands of Turkish placenames. You will be able to translate *Uludağ* (even if you don't know it used to be Mt. Olympus) but not, of course, recognize Dicle as The Tigris or Asi as The Euphrates. If you add a knowledge of titles used by the Ottomans and still

found in places named for old heroes (and a very few women -- one had a palace named for her nickname, *Yildiz*, which translates "Star") -- you can make out hundreds of commemorative toponyms. These titles (unlike the English custom) follow the name, suggesting they are added to the person, except *Aya*, *Sankta*, *Gazi*, and *Sultan*, and occasionally *Baba* and (in placenames only) *Gazi*.

Fatih Sultan Commander of the Faithful

Sultan Valide Mother of the Commander

Aga Sir

Ata Father, also used as a term of respect

Aya Saint

Baba Father (Papa, also used for saints)

Bey Lord (pronounced *by*, by the way)

Efendi Sir

Emir Governor (often a military title)

Hatun Lady

Hidiv Khedive (military leader, as with Lord Kitchener, Khedive of Egypt)

Şah King

Padaşa Great King, Emperor

Paşa Général

Gazi Victor

Sankta Saint

Now you can face placenames such as Sultanahmet, Osmangazi, and Dr. Emin Pasa Sokak. If you see a placename with forename and surname together, with or without a title (as in Adnan Menderes) you know the person commemorated is post-Ottoman. Forenames are used chiefly when the surname would give inadequate particularity -- as we say Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard instead of King Boulevard -- or mislead. In Turkey, a road named Menderes would be thought to be named for the river; if you want to honor the former prime minister you would call it Adnan Menderes. Mezraa became Mamuretulaziz to honor a governor, but then it went to Elaziz and to Elazig, so the name of the person once honored has disappeared. Street names are even more easily altered. There is a *Kennedy caddesi* now, but you may still see it as *Sahil Yolu* on the maps (because it runs along the water in İstanbul, as the street of the same name does in Trabzon). Some foreign commemorated names get mangled naturally. *Şanso-Panso*.

Finally, concerning micronyms, streets were often called the equivalent of *The Street of the Carpet Menders* (*Örücüler*) or *The Street of the Oil Merchants* (*Yağçılar*), so it is helpful to add to your vocabulary the words for the likes of *darners*, *silversmiths*, *fruit merchants*, and so on. In Izmir, *Atatürk caddesi* (the name is in so many cities) is locally always called *Birinci Cordon* (First Street, as it were). One notes that New

Yorkers always say *Sixth Avenue*; only foreigners with maps say *Avenue of the Americas*. Unofficial *versus* official names is a notable reality anywhere in the world. Entering any Turkish town of any size without a map you can always find the centrum by following signs to the *şehîr* (main market) and the inevitable monument to Atatürk. There may be several streets named for him, replacing earlier names.

What you may not be ready for is the habit in large cities of changing the name of street, avenue, boulevard, or way, as it goes along. (This often has resulted in separate old ways being later connected.) One example: leaving the gate of Topkapi, the sultans' palace in İstanbul, you set off for Aya Sophia ("Saint Sophia," Greek *Hagia Sophia*, not a saint's name as you would expect of a basilica but "Holy Wisdom") on *Millet caddesi*. The street as it goes along becomes *Ördü caddesi*, then *Yeniçeriler caddesi*, then *Divan Yolu* (the *divan* was the sultan's council and we picked up the name for our sofa resembling their seat). If you look up the words in a dictionary you will learn of "hordes" of soldiers, and Turkish "new soldiers" (which we call janissaries), and more. As always and everywhere, placenames encapsulate history and reflect changing culture. In Turkey that goes back some 8000 years. Here we can simply touch on it.

In conclusion, this paper has attempted to tempt you to study the placenames if not of Turkey then of any country at all whose language is at first forbidding. Toponymy will teach you much. As more and more countries' toponymic history and current practices are known to us, onomasticians can construct and improve theories about how and why placenaming operates. We can discover not only each culture's uniqueness but also identify universals regarding what mankind chooses to name and how it names it.
