

# Windows into Turkish Culture



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# Preface

This eBook was written by undergraduate students and edited and compiled by their instructors. It is the result of a semester-long collaboration between staff, faculty, and students at The Ohio State University (OSU) and İstanbul University (İÜ). It represents the culmination of ideas and information shared in the context of TURK 2241 Introduction to Turkish Culture, a general education course offered by the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures (NELC) at OSU, in Autumn 2017. The course was co-taught by Danielle Schoon, Melinda McClimans, and Mehmet Açıkalın.

Dr. Danielle V. Schoon is a Lecturer in the department of NELC at OSU. She teaches the Turkish Studies curriculum, among other courses. Her training is in Cultural Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies (PhD, University of Arizona 2015). Her research is in Roma ('Gypsy') identity and political participation in contemporary Turkey.

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Dr. Mehmet Açıkalın is Associate Professor in the Department of Social Studies Education at İstanbul University. He received his Master's degree from the University of Missouri- Columbia in 2002 and Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in 2006. As an international student, he engaged in a variety of intercultural experiences and made significant connections to American and other international students. Since then, he has collaborated on many cross-cultural projects that promote learning about diverse world cultures. After he completed his studies, Dr. Açıkalın returned to Turkey to teach undergraduate and graduate-level courses at İstanbul University.

A note on the title we chose for this eBook, *Windows into Turkish Culture*. Our use of the word 'windows' is meant to reference several layered meanings. First, it avoids any assumptions that one introductory text can do justice to the breadth and width of Turkey's rich cultural heritage. This eBook provides glimpses into Turkish culture that are of central importance, to be sure, but the text is not exhaustive. The topics covered by the chapters herein were studied in the Introduction to Turkish Culture course: theatre, art, architecture, literature, dance, music, sports, fashion, film, TV/radio, and food. Each student was assigned two of these topics to research, present to the class, and write about in short papers, some of which became the chapters of this eBook.

Second, windows can provide a view to something outside, but also often provide a reflection of the viewer. The class emphasized the relationship between the self and others: the tensions, but also the possible connections and opportunities for greater awareness of the world and our place in it. Binaries like East/West cannot become obsolete in this process because they shape and define our global politics; however, questioning such dichotomies serves to challenge some of the stereotypes we might hold about each other and open up space for fresh inquiries and perspectives. This was the main goal of the class, and it is also our hope for the eBook.

Finally, *Windows* is a widely recognized term for a computer operating system, signaling the central importance of digital technology to this project. Students were able to engage online

and track their progress with several digital tools. The online discussions took place on OSU's Canvas learning management system (Carmen). We used the app [Suitable](#) to gather frequent reflections and other feedback, while also allowing students to track their progress and view the progress of their peers (they became rather competitive!). We offered optional [Buckeye Badges](#) ([Global Community Building](#) and [Global Media Project](#)) for students who successfully completed all of the submissions in Suitable in addition to the work required for their course assignments. Six out of eight students were awarded both badges, as well as one of the İstanbul University participants. These badges form the center of the [e-portfolio](#) of learning activities, reflections, and collaboration.

On the other side of the project, the İstanbul University students mostly took on the role of ambassador by representing their country and introducing their culture to their OSU peers. We appreciate their candor and willingness to share personal experiences and tastes with regard to the cultural traditions and artifacts we discussed. They enthusiastically assumed their role, taking pride in putting forward positive aspects of their culture as well as sharing their critiques. Their photographs and videos, along with their commentaries, were invaluable for understanding Turkish cultural elements such as food, music, celebrations, and clothing. Their personal photos were especially illuminating of aspects of Turkish culture such as weddings, henna nights, and other social events.

We would like to thank İstanbul University, especially the Faculty of Education, for their support of our online learning activities. We sincerely express our appreciation for the İstanbul University students who helped OSU students with their research on Turkey, for their generosity and openness.

This eBook and the e-portfolio associated with it would also not have been possible without the support of multiple internal OSU partners: the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, the Middle East Studies Center, the Office of International Affairs, the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching, the Office of Distance Education and e-Learning (ODEE), and the Buckeye Badges program. We especially thank the Affordable Learning Exchange (ALX) program in ODEE for their support in producing this eBook. We thank Dr. Joy McCorriston, Professor of Anthropology at The Ohio State University, for her ongoing contributions to the development of templates of cross-cultural learning activities that the e-portfolio is largely based on. We also express our gratitude to the instructional design experts of the university's Center for the Advancement of Teaching.

We express our gratitude to the guest scholars who presented to our students on aspects of Turkish society, language and culture: Bülent Bekçioğlu, Carolin Mueller, Nathan Young, and Eric Schoon.

Special thanks also go to Mark Visco, CEO and co-founder of Suitable, who provided invaluable technical support and feedback for the gamification of the e-portfolio.

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We would like to thank [Near Eastern Languages and Cultures](#) for their encouragement of the pilot during Autumn semester 2017. This eBook and the e-portfolio associated with it would also not have been possible without the support of multiple other internal OSU partners: the [Middle East Studies Center](#), [International Affairs](#), the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching, the [Office of Distance Education and e-Learning](#) (ODEE) and the [Buckeye Badges](#) program. We especially thank the Affordable Learning Exchange (ALX) program in ODEE for their support in producing this eBook. We thank Dr. Joy McCorriston, Professor of Anthropology at The Ohio State University, for her ongoing contributions to the development of templates of cross-cultural learning activities that the e-portfolio is largely based on. We also express our gratitude to the instructional design experts of the university's Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT), and the great feedback and support we received from Dr. Henry Griffy, Instructional Designer for ODEE.

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# Chapter 1 Theater

## **Turkish Theatre Through the Ages: An Act in History**

by Noah Bayindirli

Similar to the historical timelines in many countries, Turkish theatre arts plays a crucial role in the development of the nation itself. In the case of Turkey, the *traditional* aspects of this art form and its evolution over time are aesthetically dissimilar from that of European. As a consequence, Western readers need background information in order to fully understand Turkish theatre. At the same time, there are many commonalities, and the influence of European norms became stronger in the 19th century. This chapter approaches Turkish theatre chronologically, focusing on the early traditional forms, and ending with a discussion of the fusion of Turkish and European approaches. As we continue, we will discuss these varying techniques, as well as their origins and progression.

Turkish theatre provides a vast, colorful array of stages, characters, structures, and scripts. To begin, *Ortaoyunu*, otherwise known as “a play performed in the open,” sets the pace for some of the unique qualities of traditional Turkish theatre. Dating back to the thirteenth century, *Ortaoyunu* does not rely on written text and is typically staged within a circular arena, allowing for fluid interaction between the audience members and the actors themselves. Although preceded and ended with customary dances, it is this interaction that brings *Ortaoyunu* its improvisational structure, with a plot subject to dynamic interpretation.

Further distinguishing *Ortaoyunu* is a set of distinct characters, mainly *Kavuklu* and *Pisekâr*, known for their representation of the “common man” and a level-headed, charismatic conflict-mediator respectively, as well as a collection of character types used to represent varying facets of the population, including non-Muslims, entertainers, and supernatural beings.

Yet another form of traditional Turkish theatre is shadow puppetry. Shadow theater, or *Karagöz*, takes place on a stage composed of a muslin curtain surrounded by floral material, where the projections of puppets are manipulated to perform the story. The puppets are transparent, made from camel-hide- and vegetable pigment-composed figures. Traditionally, they would usually retell the tales of two misfit characters: *Karagöz* and *Hacivad*. Legend has it, while working on a mosque during the reign of the Ottoman empire in the capital of Bursa, the hijinks of these laborers proved so hilarious and distracting that the sultan had them executed in hopes to speed up the construction. Thus, these characters are memorials, who were supposed to have been created out of grief. The purpose of this characteristic form of traditional Turkish theatre was to preserve the spirit of *Karagöz*, known for his violent tendencies and uneducated yet witty outlook, and *Hacivad*, who, while intelligent, was no match for his friend’s antics.



This image is of Karagöz and Hacivat, the beloved main characters of Turkish shadow theatre. By Kıvanç from İstanbul, Turkey – İstanbul Toys Museum (Karagöz And Hacivat), CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4092519>

Lastly, Meddah, or “Storyteller,” is a form of Turkish theatre presented by a single individual responsible for depicting the entirety of the play: stage, characters and all. Resembling that of a standup comedian, the Meddah describes settings relating to aspects of daily life, tales, or legends and digresses into laughable, literary, or even moral stories. Plays of this type were typically performed in the Ottoman Palace, on Ramadan nights or at circumcision celebrations.



This image is of a Meddah during his performance. Open-source, [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meddah\\_story\\_teller.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meddah_story_teller.png)

While the traditional forms were responsible for a large segment of the history of theatre in Turkey, the Ottoman Empire's adoption of Western ideals in the 19th century made room for event organizers to begin working with European companies. This movement caused tensions to rise between those who believed the traditional practices were dated or primitive and those appalled by this divergence. However, despite the controversy, Western influence began to take over, bringing with it multi-staged, subsidized theatres like the Darülbedayi-i Osmani Conservatoire of

Istanbul and widely disparate themes, such as Shakespeare, social issues, and musicals. Following these changes, the Turkish scene expanded even further, incorporating private theatres to serve as the ground for younger, innovative playwrights to foster their new ideas and research—both political and economic—unregulated and censorship-free.

After decades of dramatic change within the Turkish theatre arts, Turkey now maintains an all-encapsulating display of modern, westernized theatre and traditional acting forms. Whether on the big stage for a musical in front of a dimly-lit audience or in a makeshift episode of Karagöz on a night of Ramadan, Turkish theatre continues to flourish for both old and new generations alike, bringing with it contemporary actors, researchers, and playwrights.

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# Chapter 2 Turkish Classical Music & Instrumentation: A History in the Sound of Music

by Noah Bayindirli

Music in Turkey produces familiar tones in the modern day, but its origins and past implementations may come as a surprise to some. Throughout the ages, Turkish music has grown and transformed dramatically, influencing issues as diverse as religion, social interaction, politics, and civil disobedience. From the late Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Republic, or even among the vast collection of instruments and its impact on musical structure, Turkey has truly had its hand in every facet of this art form. Provided this immense face of Turkish culture, this chapter focuses on classical Turkish music and its development, beginning in the Ottoman Empire.

Turkish music as we know it today has its roots in the period of Ottoman rule. Although the majority of its development took place under the reign of the sultan, the sound of Turkey was greatly influenced by surrounding cultures and their musical traditions. These include the Arabs, Persians, and even the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) churches of Istanbul, bringing with them their musical techniques and methodologies.

Initially a courtly art, classical music existed mainly within the walls of the Ottoman palace. Classical music eventually moved out and into the streets of the empire. From performances within the royal harems—for women, by women—these practices made their way to the public via male street performers, or *rakkas*. While their movements were part of the “belly dancing” canon, *rakkas* utilized the *Çiftetelli* rhythm and played *zils* (finger instruments) masterfully to accompany their dance. These dancers took this music, technique, and performance to a variety of celebrations in Turkey, including feasts, weddings, and festivals.

A further implementation of music within the Ottoman Empire is that of the *Mehter*, or Ottoman military band, which utilized *kös* drums and *zurnas* (a relative of the oboe) to follow the army into battle and instill strength and courage through sound. These bands served as a symbol of sovereignty and independence for the empire and followed the *Çorbacıbasi*, or band commander.



This image is of a group of the mehter or Ottoman military band, playing as their army enters battle. By Unknown painter – Top-kapi-Serail-Museum Hazine 1339, veröffentlicht bei Gezâ Fehér: *Türkische Miniaturen*. Leipzig u. Weimar 1978, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6649129>



Image credit: Mehter Band, by Michal Maňas, CC 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Along with the significant impact of courtly sensibilities on the development of Turkish music, it encompasses a rich variety of folk traditions. From the classical *çeng*, reminiscent of an open harp, to the folk *Kabak Kemane*, or “gourd fiddle”, Turkish folk instruments vary greatly in size, shape, sound, and style. With this incredible array of instruments comes a notable collection of musical types and patterns.



This image is of a man playing a çeng. By Melchior Lorck, 1576 – The Rebirth of the Angular Harp – Bo Lawergren, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16199123>

The principle of makam, loosely understood as a rule of composition, profoundly shaped Turkish music theory. It is a musical scale progression creating patterns of note, scale, and structure. Although there are hundreds of makams, many common to Central Asia and the Mediterranean region, very few are formally defined. Interestingly, Sufi teaching describes each makam as representing and conveying a particular psychological and spiritual state.

Folk music typically falls into two forms: songs (lyrical) and melodies (instrumental), with a variety of sounds from Anatolia and Thrace. There are typically two main kinds of artists: Türkü

singers and the Âsik, bards or minstrels. Although both types of musicians play and sing songs, Türkü typically perform their music anonymously and for a local audience, building off other artists and changing the pattern and words as they go. In contrast, Âsik utilize their own and other Âsik lyrics, producing sounds outside of the local music culture of where they currently perform. As a result, their music is typically personalized by their own style, voice, and experiences along their travels.

The final noteworthy type of music is that utilized by the whirling dervishes, who practice a form of Sama, or “listening,” known as Sufi whirling. During this form of active meditation, followers spin in circles while others sing and play instruments, in order to imitate the planets, abandon their egos, focus on God, and reach Kemal (perfection).



*Dervish Sufi Order. by Peter Morgan. CC 2.0. via Flickr*



This image is of whirling dervishes during an act of meditation. By William Hogarth – Metropolitan Museum of Art, online collection: entry 375804, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32833503>

The journey through Turkish classical music would not be complete without a look at Atatürk's utilization of the art form in his attempt to westernize the Republic of Turkey. During this movement in the early 20th century, Atatürk first changed the location and names of iconic music groups of the nation. For example, the Imperial Orchestra was relocated from Istanbul to the now-capital Ankara and renamed the Orchestra of the Presidency of the Republic; the Istanbul Oriental Music School employed western-style music teachers and was renamed the Istanbul Conservatory.

In addition to the establishment of orchestras and conservatories, Atatürk utilized technology to institutionalize Turkish music traditions. He implemented wide-scale classification and archiving of folk music samples from 1924-1953 and founded the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT). Through this state radio provider, the people of the Republic were able to find common ground with news, music, and television, and the effect of westernization was able to travel farther and faster throughout Turkey.

In sum, this chapter shows how the musical developments of classical courtly styles, folk

traditions, military band music, sufi musical practices, and a rich assortment of instruments set the groundwork for a broad range of music and social movements in today's Republic of Turkey.

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# Chapter 3 Contemporary Music and Social Movements

by Muhammad Mansour

An immense classical repertoire in conjunction with cultural dialogue with the West formed the foundation for Turkey's contemporary music. There are tensions, however, between different views on music and how it ought to play a role in Turkish society. Islamic theology, for example, has been a factor in judgments about the place of music in society. According to the most influential school of Islamic jurisprudence in Turkey, the Hanafi School, "if the instruments themselves are not unlawful, such as the bamboo and tambourine, then there is nothing wrong with that..." (al-Kasani). The Ottoman Empire, and subsequently Turkey, produced a rich and diverse musical landscape within certain restrictions imposed by Islam.

Arabesk music was an important genre which aided Turkey's transition to modernity. It was most popular from the 1960s through the 1990s, when the country experienced many social upheavals. Arabesk was a mixture of Turkish folk music with of Arabic and Kurdish musical sounds and styles. The music was linked to urbanization, as the migrants who were traveling from the Turkish provinces to larger cities created arabesk to express their experiences. The gecekondus (shanty houses, literally 'built overnight') came to designate a specific urban population and culture. Arabesk music and the gecekondus had a significant impact because the music expressed the desires, frustrations, and powerlessness felt by migrants and the urban poor who resided in them (Yildirim,2017). Gecekondu dwellers used Arabesk as a way to express their emotions through sound, rather than words. The lyrics themselves were not explicitly political; they were usually about tragic love.



*Musical Instruments in Grand Bazaar, Istanbul, 2014, by Miguel Virkkunen Carvalho, CC 2.0*

Other contemporary Turkish music genres include pop, rock, hip hop, and jazz. Pop music had its beginnings in the 1950s, as did rock music evolved during a time when Turkey began to undergo significant social changes. Western melodies were mixed with Turkish rock music and released to the public. Notable performers of the 1950s include İlham Gencer, who won the best composition award for his spectacular piano playing. Ajda Pekkan has been a very popular singer and actor since the early 1960s. Mogollar was a group that consisted of five young musicians who sang Turkish folk songs and used old style musical instruments. This group of young musicians gave a new sound to Anatolian pop.

Turkish hip hop music started with Turkish migrants in Germany in the 1960s and then later came to Turkey where it had a profound impact. Hip hop lyrics are usually about experiences of street life in the ghetto. Much like Arabesk, new urban migrants who brought their village culture to the city developed a domestic subculture in which hip hop could flourish. Hip hop has become very popular amongst Turkey's youth.

Eurovision is an annual international TV song competition that has been taking place since the early 1970s. Turkey's involvement in Eurovision allowed Turkish music to reach other parts of Europe. It was beneficial not only for Turkey but also for the rest of the European nations because it gave both sides a taste of diverse musical sounds. Eurovision gave Turkish artists a way to express themselves and show their talents to the world. Turkey won Eurovision in 2003; Sertab

Erener won for his song “Every way That I Can.” Turkish band Athena performed “For Real” in the following contest, which took place in Istanbul in 2004.



*Eurovision Opening Ceremony, 2004, Sertab Erener performing. By Daniel Aragay from Vacarisses, Catalunya (Eurovision Song Contes 2004 – Istanbul) CC 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons*

Like anywhere, music has played a central role in social and political movements in Turkey. There were three coups that took place in Turkey, in 1960, 1971, and 1980. Turkish music was used in all of them as a voice for the people. Famous musicians expressed their political thoughts through music. Songs had hidden meanings and showed that no one was alone during these times of crisis. However, music has also been used for political means by politicians; for example, Prime Minister Turgut Özal officially endorsed Arabesk music in the 1980s in order to reach an untapped pool of voters in the gecekondu districts (Stokes, 2010, p. 93).

Homosexuality has been lawful in Turkey since the mid-1800s, and transsexual individuals were granted the right to change their lawful sexual orientation in 1988. Bülent Ersoy is a transsexual performer regarded as one of the most popular singers of modern Turkish music who suffered from government discrimination and a ban on her performances in the 1980s, prior to a change in gender identity being legalized (Selen, 2012). Yet LGBTQ performers continue to face

discrimination and are the target of government suppression in the country. In 2015, Turkish authorities used water cannons and tear gas against performers in the LGBTQ Pride parade. According to human rights group Transgender Europe, Turkey has the highest rate of reported murders of trans people in Europe (Transgender Europe, 2016).



*Gay Pride Parade, Taksim Square, Istanbul, Turkey. by Jordy91, CC 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons*

In recent social movements such as the Gezi Park protests of summer 2013, music mobilized people across the country, along with other art forms. Hundreds of songs were written, for example, to raise awareness about police brutality. Many of these songs took aim at the government, and especially the economic and political conditions that marginalized people in Turkey live with every day. Music was also a way to create and maintain solidarity among the protesters.

During the 2016 failed coup attempt, sound was used by the government to have a social impact, instead of popular music, it was religious. The government asked mosques to project the call to prayer while the nation was under attack as part of its call for citizens to confront and defeat the soldiers attempting the coup (Gill, 2016).

# Chapter 4 Architecture

by Jordan Murphy

Turkey has some of the world's most notable architectural sites. From the ancient ruins of Çatalhöyük to post-modern buildings, there is always something of architectural interest to see in Turkey. Some of the most significant ancient architectural sites in the world are found in modern-day Turkey. Çatalhöyük, for example, possesses some of the earliest known buildings of permanent settlement. Innovation continued to put Turkey on the map in the architectural realm with wonders such as the Hagia Sophia.



*Image of the Hagia Sophia. Picture taken by Osvaldo Gago. Source: Wikimedia Commons. CC 3.0*

In the year 537 CE, the Hagia Sophia became what some consider to be the pinnacle of architecture at the time. The city of Constantinople (known as Istanbul today), was the location of the church, and the center of the relatively new state religion of Christianity. The resplendent building remained a church until 1453 when Mehmet the Conqueror converted it into a mosque; today it is a museum. Minarets were added later to help it conform to the style of other mosques being built around the Islamic world. Inside the mosque is ornate, featuring mosaics, and aniconic artwork that was added later by the Ottomans. The names of the Prophet, Allah, and others were placed near the top of the central dome. The inside is made of stone and brick; the building itself is comprised of the famous domes and arches of Byzantine architecture. The Hagia Sophia became a source of inspiration around the world.

Architecture in the Ottoman Empire cannot be mentioned without introducing the most famous and prolific architect in Turkish history, Mimar Sinan (“Architect Sinan”). He lived and worked in the 16th century and is credited with over 300 structures, his two most famous sites being the Şehzade Mosque and the Süleymaniye Mosque, both in Istanbul. The Süleymaniye Mosque became Mimar Sinan’s career-defining work. When looking at the mosque, it is almost identical in its proportions and style to the Hagia Sophia, which was his inspiration. . The inside of the mosque is filled with Iznik tiles as well as the aniconic art work that is found in all of Sinan’s work.



*Image of Ataturk's Tomb in Ankara. Picture taken by Bahar101. Source: Wikimedia Commons. C.C.3.0*

If modern architecture is more of your style, Turkey has much to offer in that area, as well. Head over to Ankara, the capital of Turkey, to see some great examples. Ankara was built like a Western city, with many of the buildings featuring German architectural elements. The wide streets and city organization are reminiscent of some major cities found in Europe and America. Ankara is also home to the final resting place of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, called Anıtkabir. This memorial center features modern architectural styles while at the same time echoing the form of the Greek Parthenon, with its imposing columns.



Şakirin Mosque, Şakirin Cami 2 Istanbul Üsküdar, Designed by Turkish Architects, Zeynep Fadılhoğlu, Hüseyin Tayla, Flickr, CC 2.0 – <https://www.flickr.com/photos/148989606@N08/33717190175>

The Şakirin Mosque in Istanbul is both aesthetically pleasing and culturally relevant, combining tradition with modernity. Its lines are modern but it foregrounds Islamic requirements for mosque construction. Thus the mihrab niche, the minbar, and appropriate spaces for male and female worshippers are easily recognizable, while these elements also appear fluid compared with the typical design. The main architect of the building, Zeynep Fadılhoğlu, is the first woman to design and build a mosque in Turkey (Designboom). It is not surprising, then, that many of the design elements enhance the experience of the sacred building for women (Moustafa, 2013).

In Turkey, there is immense variety and richness when it comes to architecture. Whether in Istanbul viewing the Sultan Ahmet Mosque or the Hagia Sophia, or at Atatürk's Mausoleum in Ankara, surely visitors can find a place that will take their breath away. This chapter merely skimmed the surface, as there are many more wonders to behold across the map of Turkey.

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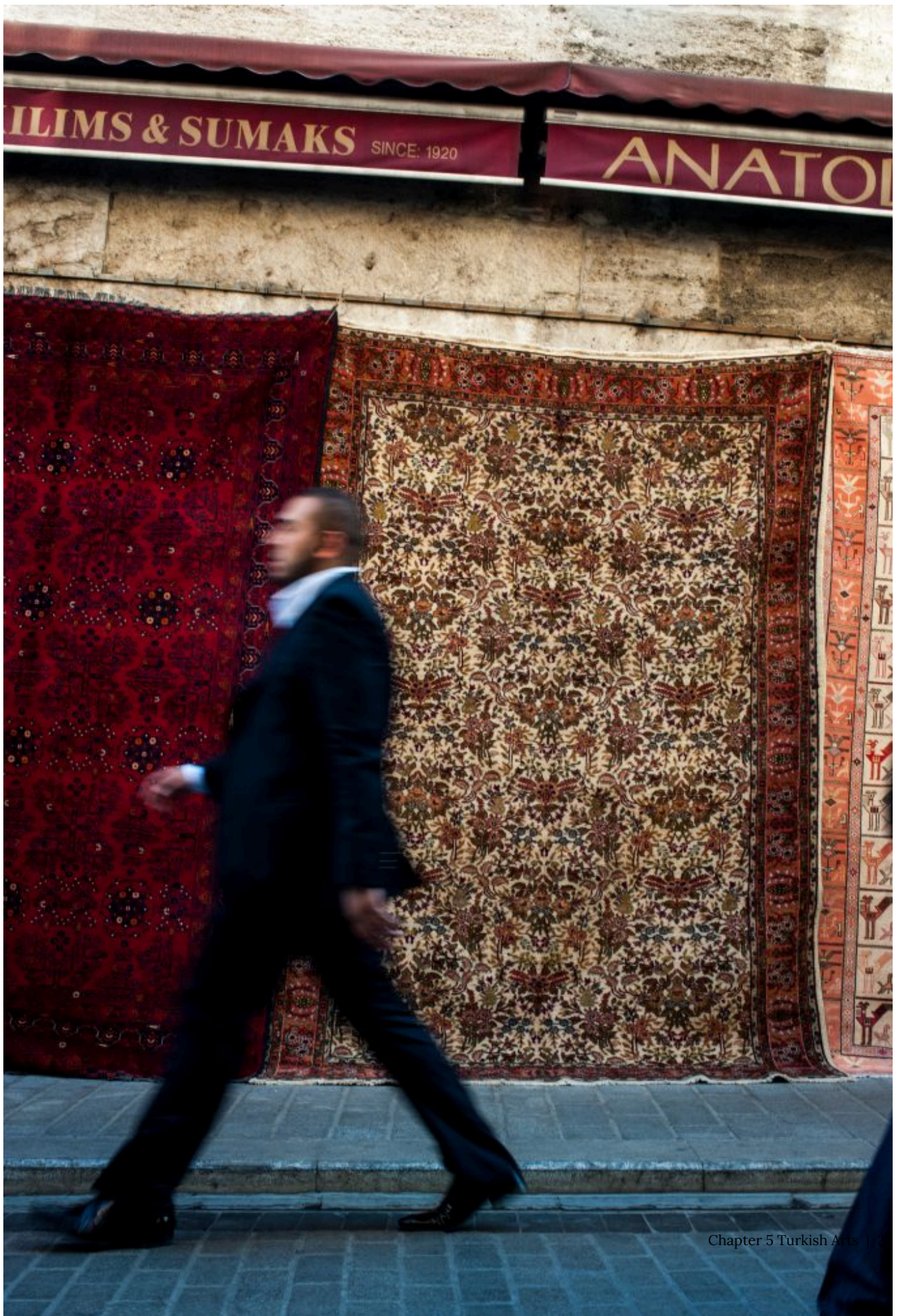
# Chapter 5 Turkish Arts

by Ashley Clark

## Turkish Rugs

Rug weaving represents a significant portion of Turkish aesthetics and material culture, with a continuing tradition of carpet-making since the time of the Turkic migrations from Central Asia that originally brought Turkish culture to Anatolia. The oldest surviving examples of original Turkish rugs are from the Seljuk Period in the 13th century, immediately prior to the Ottomans coming into power in Asia Minor. Girls were taught to weave these carpets as a form of education and upbringing, to prepare them for entering womanhood. They could express their creativity and imagination through carpet weaving. Popular imagery focused at first on animal motifs, then the imagery evolved into very ornate geographic patterns.

The second major era of rug weaving began in the 16th century with the Ottoman Turks. These rugs were functional, used for everything from wedding ceremonies to tombs.



Today, rug weaving is a diminishing practice in Turkey. Only 20% of rugs sold in the Grand Bazaar were actually made in Turkey, some imported from China among other places. There are currently no new carpet weavers and people worry that the trade could die off in about 20 years. The industry itself is becoming less profitable as fewer people are purchasing carpets.

### Calligraphy

Calligraphy is not actually of Turkish origin, but the Ottomans adopted it and made it uniquely their own. Calligraphy was written in the Arabic script and reeds were used to write and draw with ink. Calligraphy had the ability to transform any mundane document, such as tax receipts and legislature, into a work of art. Calligraphy not only involved a fluid representation of words, but also included creative forms, taking written words and rendering them into images (such as the lion image below).



*Ottoman Calligraphy. By voyageAnatolia.blogspot, via flickr, C.C.2.0*

During the Republican period, calligraphy began to die out. This may have been due in part to the language reform and introduction of the Latin alphabet, the goal of which was to Westernize the language while also making it correspond with Turkic vocabulary. Thus, the Persian and Arabic language influence was diminished, along with their aesthetic influences.

undefined

## Miniatures

Miniatures are paintings used to accompany a text that tells a story, from folk narratives to biblical tales. Miniatures reflected the daily life and folklore of people across cultures. Turkish miniatures reached their peak in the 16th century. These works were typically anonymous.



*Tulip Ebru. by Nedim Sönmez CC4.0 via wikimedia Commons*

## Ebru

Ebru is a technique where pigments of color are placed on oily water and manipulated to create images and paintings. Once the marbled painting is completed to the artist's desire, a paper is placed onto the oily surface of the water, soaking up the pigment into the sheet of paper. Then the artist gently lifts the paper off of the water and leaves it to air dry. Ebru was invented in 13th-century Turkistan; from there, it migrated to Anatolia where it was adopted by both the Seljuks and the Ottomans. Floral imagery, especially tulips, abstract shapes, and other images are very popular motifs. These paintings are used to decorate books and documents and the art form is still alive and thriving today.

### Westernization of Turkish Arts

Westernized Turkish painting only began in the 19th century with the founding of the Academy of Fine Arts by Osman Hamdi Bey. The Sultan sent Turkish painters to France and Italy to learn Western techniques; meanwhile, foreign painters were brought from Europe to share their skills. In the 20th century, many artistic movements began in Turkey with various groups of artists returning from Europe.

The 1914 Generation was a group of students sent to study art in Europe around 1908 – 1910, that was forced to return to Turkey in 1914 due to WWI. When they returned, they brought back European impressionism and so they were known as the 'Turkish Impressionists'. More emphasis was placed on lightness, color, shape, and design. Impressionist paintings were primarily composed of landscapes, portraits, nudes, and daily life.

The first community of artists in Turkey were called the 'Independents,' or the 'Union of Independent Painters and Sculptors.' These were students who studied art in Europe in the 1920's, returning to Turkey with the influence of Fauvism, Cubism, and Expressionism.

Another contemporary movement of Turkish painters was 'Group D,' founded in 1933 and very influential in the Turkish art community well into the 1980's. These artists utilized post-Cubism and stressed composition over construction. Group D accelerated the process of modernization and Westernization in Turkey.

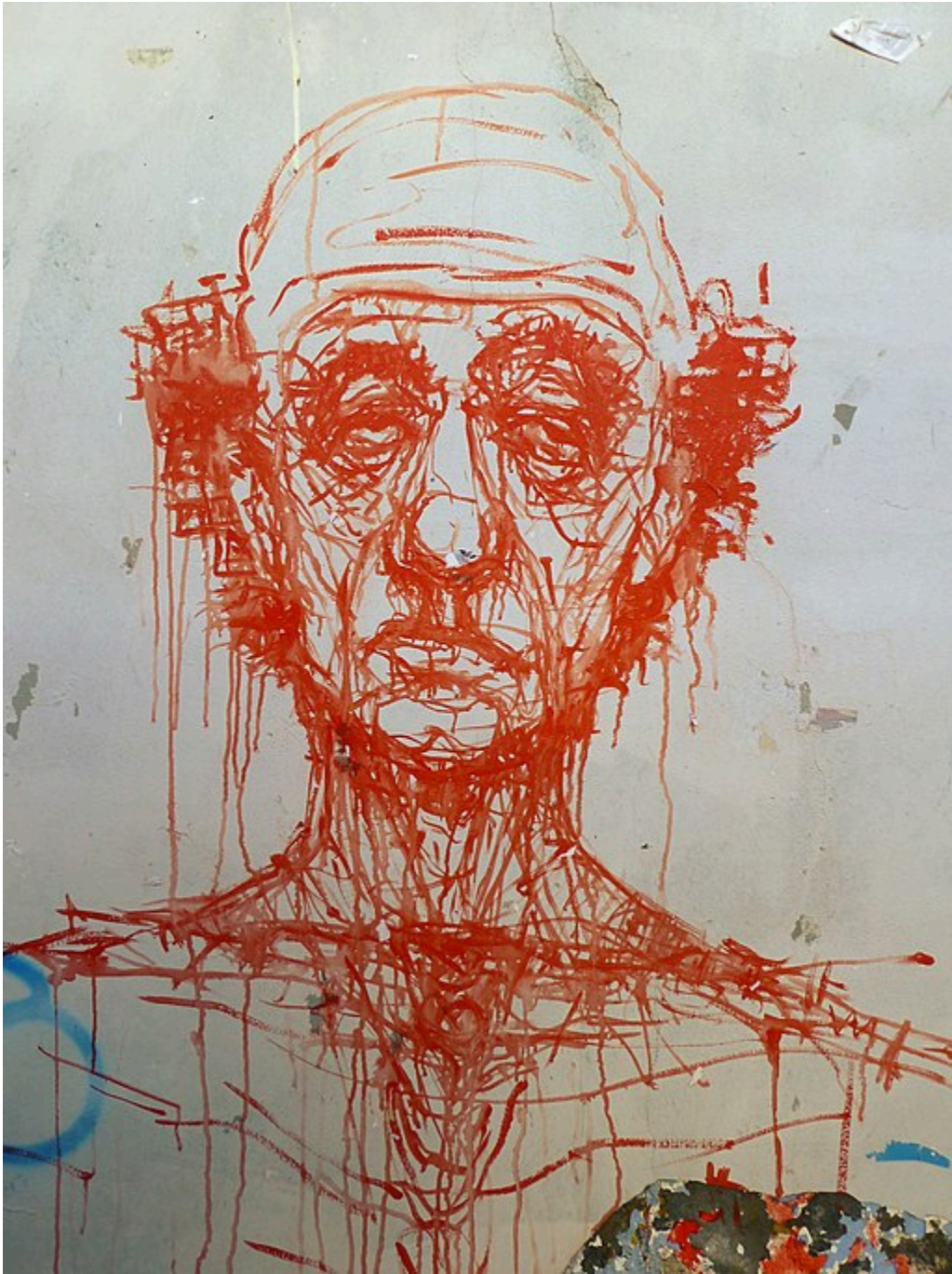


*Hoca Ali Rıza Painting C.C.0*

#### Graffiti and Street Art Graffiti, Paint, Photography, Travel, Background, Wall

Graffiti began in Istanbul in 1984 with Dunc “Turbo” Dindas, known as the father of Turkish graffiti. He began making street art and graffiti after watching the American film *Beat Street*, a movie about street art in New York City. There was some controversy after Turbo began spray-painting the streets of Istanbul; some were upset while others supported the new artistic style.

This form of art exploded in 2013 in response to the Gezi protests and police brutality. Protestors were against the government’s plans to privatize a public park in the center of Istanbul, Gezi Park. They rallied opposition in what became known as the Gezi protests. Protesters were met with tear gas and brutality from local enforcement. As a result, graffiti and street art became a popular form of expression to display citizen’s dismay with the tragedy of events and the government. People spray painted phrases targeted at the police and government or images of brave protesters.



Graffiti in Şişli, İstanbul, Turkey, image by Nevit Dilmen, CC BY-SA 3.0, from Wikimedia Commons

Kadıköy's Yeldeğirmeni district became a popular place for graffiti after the Gezi protests. The Istanbul art scene grew very much out of the Gezi protests, not only through graffiti; art galleries saw a rise in attendance after the protests.

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# Chapter 6 Turkish Fashion: Ottoman Times Until Today

by Paige Jordan

## Fashion Today

One will find a range of fashion in Turkey today, from traditional to modern, from religious to secular. In urban areas dress appears Western for the most part, but reflects a synthesis of traditional, Islamic, and Western designs. *İstanbulite*, Melisa Akbulut, on her personal style:

***“I think a person’s style provides information about [their] character and mood. . . I would describe my personal style as simple. I usually wear a sweater, a shirt inside of the sweater. After that, I combine it with a jean.”*** **Melisa Akbulut**



Street Scene in Istanbul, CCo, via Pxhere



The rest of this chapter will provide a chronology of Turkish clothing developments which led up to the state of fashion in Turkey today.

### Pre-Ottoman to Ottoman Period

Turkish fashion finds its roots in functionality. Historically, the most common form of transportation in Central Asia was horseback riding. This mode of transportation meant that clothing had to be functional and, as a result, most was unisex. Due to their practicality, leather and felt were the most common materials used. As tribes from Asia began to settle in Anatolia,

the new cultures brought along changes in clothing. The varying climate in the area meant that clothing needed to be useful in all conditions, which lead to the use of removable fur linings.

Later, during the Tanzimat and Meşrutiyet periods of the 19th century, socio-economic status began to heavily influence clothing styles. Commoners maintained traditional clothing styles, while royals or wealthy folk changed their style to *redingot*, which consisted of a waistcoat, jacket, tie, and high-heeled shoes (Turkish Cultural Foundation). Even so, as the Ottoman Empire expanded, local clothing traditions became more fixed. By this time, weaving had become prominent throughout Turkey and was commonly used to make clothes.

### Socio-Economic Status and Clothing Differences

Upper-class or royal people in the Ottoman Empire wore fur-lined, embroidered kaftans. The middle class wore *cübbe* and *hırka*, a specific style of jacket. The lower class also wore a different style of jacket, called *cepken* or *yelek*. *Bashlyks*, a type of hat, were the most important status signifier: *kavuk* was the most common type, and a tradesmanship was formed due to the significance of *bashlyks* in the 17th Century.



*Yelek, Turkish Jacket, first half 19th century, made of wool, metallic and silk thread, cotton, metal, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons*



*Turkish Effendi with fur kaftan with fox skin lining (c. 1900)*, Source: Paul Larisch und Josef Schmid: *Das Kürschner-Handwerk*, Paris, 1. Jahrgang Nos 3 – 4. I. Teil; *Die Geschichte des Kürschnerhandwerkes*, Kapitel Türkei, S. 82. CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

## Ottoman Sultan Fashion

In the 16th century, economics, politics, and arts thrived as the Ottoman Empire entered the Golden Age. Textiles also reached a peak with the introduction of weaving, especially metallic threads. Sultans took the utmost pride in their fashion, wearing robes or *kaftans* of the finest, most expensive materials. The designs for court clothing were made by specific people in the palace called *hassa nakkaşları*. Due to high demand, there were also places in Bursa and Istanbul that made the designs. Specific fabrics were used for the Sultan's clothing, such as brocade, velvet, metallic silk, taffeta, cashmere, and cotton. These materials were occasionally ordered from areas in the West (for example, Italy). Sultans specifically wore kaftans, *şalvar* (a type of pant), and an inner robe, as well as headgear. The headgear went through five types over the span of the Ottoman Empire. For formal or official events, Sultans wore an inner robe with long sleeves that buttoned from the elbow down to the wrist and consisted of cuffs, a short kaftan made of heavier silk material, and a long outer-robe with fur lining and buttons made of jewels (Turkish Cultural Foundation).



*Sultan Abdülmecid I, emperor of the Ottoman Empire (1823–1861), circa 1840. CC0, via Wikimedia Commons*



Painting by George Willison – Nancy Parsons in Turkish Dress – Google Art Project, CC0, ca.1771, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

### Oya in Anatolia

Oya, also known as Turkish lace, has a different name depending on what implement is used to create it. Oya made with a sewing needle was made by aristocrats. Crochet oya is made with a thicker needle and looks less delicate, while shuttle oya is more often produced by women in provincial areas. Hairpin oya uses beads, sequins, pearls, or coral on a single-colored thread. Beaded edges are a very popular embellishment in Turkey. Headdresses and scarves are traditionally decorated with oya, as well as undergarments, outerwear, towels, and napkins. Oya is commonly used by young women to express their feelings or mark life events. Floral oya is worn atop a woman's head. The flowers vary depending on the age of the woman. Older women use wildflowers, while younger women use roses, carnations, jasmine, and many other flowers. Women at the age of forty specifically wear a bent tulip (Turkish Cultural Foundation).

### The Hat and Dress Revolution of 1925

After the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, Atatürk believed that wearing modern clothing represented civility. He instituted a number of clothing reforms aimed at modernization, which at that time meant Westernization. This included outlawing the fez, the banning of Islamic robes and veils, and the general encouragement of Western styles. These reforms were meant to demonstrate Turkey's commitment to modernization and promote national unity.

### 20th Century Fashion

Atatürk's reforms in the early twentieth century greatly increased Turkish women's rights and freedoms, whose appearance in public symbolized equality in the late Ottoman Empire. Thus, this time period signified a rapid change in fashion for women. As women gained more personal liberty and felt the pressure of the national movement to modernize, their clothing became more Westernized. With European influence, women began to wear more expressive outdoor clothing,

in colors that had been restricted in the past (İnal, 2011, p.234). They also began to wear a new type of outdoor clothing, *çarşaf*, instead of the traditional outdoor robe, *ferace*. This was then shortened and tightened to reveal the contours of the body.

Veils were either made transparent or were completely replaced with an umbrella used to hide the face. Surprisingly, this innovation wasn't due to government reforms. Rather, this public presence of women's faces had more to do with women joining the workforce as men left for war. Thus, practicality also played a role in the transformation towards Western styles.

Some women wore a new style of headscarf called *rusbaşı* that showed some of their hair and neck. Comfortable shoes and new accessories were also introduced. Skirts were shortened and pants were worn by women of specific industries. Women began to wear their hair short, following trends in Europe and the United States. Women in Istanbul, specifically, were heavily influenced by Parisian fashion.

## Islamic Dress

Islamic dress has continually been a source of tension in Turkey. In the 1970s, headscarves were regulated, and women were asked not to cover their hair at their workplace. A new way of wearing the headscarf came into fashion in the 1990s among the urban middle class. The style was larger, used pins, and covered both the hair and neck completely. In 1982, the headscarf was banned at universities. This ban was also put into order in other public institutions in the late '80s and '90s, including the military, parliament, and courtrooms. This was widely debated, and some women were even denied access to education due to wearing a headscarf. The Justice and Development Party, or AKP, attempted to overturn this ban in 2008, but it did not pass. They continue to develop new amendments to reduce restrictions regarding the veil. Due to more recent changes in politics, though, the ban has been lifted in most universities.

## Islamic Fashion Commercialized on the Runway

Islamic clothing has been used as a symbol for religious freedom in contemporary Turkey, especially as headscarves are taking over the runway. Headscarves are now colorful with many patterns, with the most popular being yellow, blue, camouflage, and tropical leaves. Istanbul wants to become the Islamic fashion capital—they hosted the Istanbul Modest Fashion Week, which featured designers from all over the Islamic world. The market for Islamic fashion is now increasing as mainstream designers, including Tommy Hilfiger and DKNY, have designed their own lines of Islamic fashion for *Ramazan*.

## Defining Factors of Turkish Fashion

Turkish clothing has continually been defined by economics, social structure, geography, climate, and available materials. In early periods, clothing signified social status, while traditional dress remained prevalent throughout the country. Certain regional specialties in textiles or in styles can also reveal ethnicity. At the same time the Ottoman empires diverse religious and cultural communities expressed their identities in their dress.

Today, one's clothing choices still can reveal information about them. For example, you can identify where a person is from in Turkey based on how they're dressed, as fashion varies significantly between each of the seven regions. Sometimes, one can even distinguish what village they're from! In addition to the types of cloth, or the way clothing is tailored, other expressions can give clues to identity. For example, in *Turkoman* villages, the way a woman wears her hair communicates her relationship status.

Traditionally, clothing was handmade and its style depended greatly on location as it was made from natural, available materials. Today, modern clothing is ready-to-wear and bought in stores. It is influenced both by traditional, Ottoman styles and European trends. Clothing continues to be an important device in which one can communicate their social status, wealth, piety, and personality.

# Chapter 7 Turkish Literature Through the Ottoman Empire

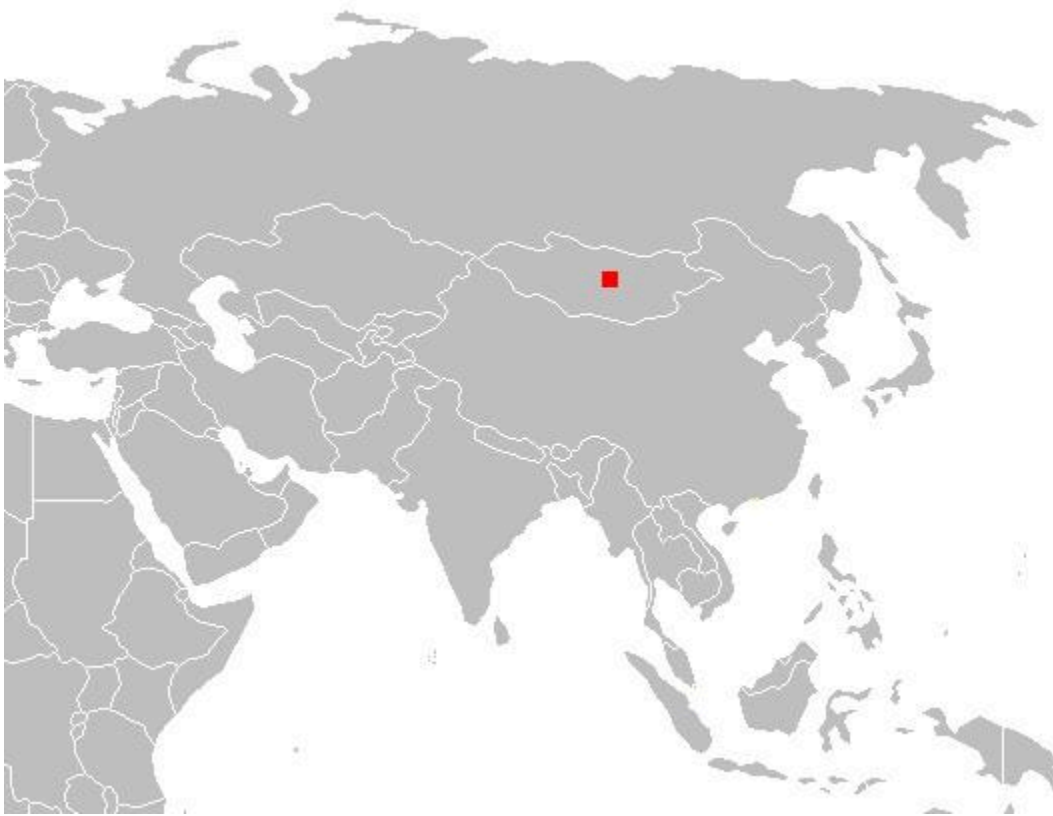
By Ashley Clark

## Early Writings

Turkic literature spans approximately 1,300 years. The earliest known writings in a Turkic language (see the Introduction on Turkish linguistic roots) are the Orhan (Orkhon) Inscriptions, discovered in the valley of the Orhan River in Northern Mongolia in 1889. The two large monuments date to 735 CE and 732 CE. They were made to honor Turkish Kül 'Tigin' (prince) and Bilge 'Khagan' (emperor), two brothers. The advanced style of writing suggests that there were earlier developments of the written language.



*Bilge Tonyukuk Orhon Inscriptions. by Vezirtonyukuk CC 4.0, from Wikimedia Commons*



*Location of Orhon Valley. by DragonTiger23, CC0, from Wikimedia Commons*

Oral tradition was the prominent early form of Turkish literature between the 9th and 11th centuries. The most popular genre at that time was the epic, such as the Book of the Dede Korkut of the Oghuz Turks (details, below), one of the cultural and linguistic ancestors of modern Turks.

Only after the Seljuk victory in the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 CE, when they began to settle in Anatolia, did written literature become prominent. Written literature was largely influenced by Arabic and Persian literature until the Republican era, when Atatürk expunged the Turkish language of most Persian and Arabic influences. Until the fall of the Ottoman Empire, written and oral literature were two separate entities.

## Folk Literature

Folk literature was rooted in the nomadic lifestyle, primarily composed of oral tradition, and was typically intended to be sung. Sometimes performers would be accompanied by an instrument such as a saz (lute). Much of the oral tradition and folklore were centered on storytelling. Some of the primary genres that grew out of folk literature were epics, legends, folktales, fables, proverbs, anecdotes, and minstrel music.

The most prominent epic to have come out of Anatolia was The Book of Dede Korkut, (Dede means Grandfather), written in Oghuz Turkish. This epic was primarily performed by Âşiks, Oghuz

Turkish poet-musicians. They were performers who sang epics along with other poems and lyrical songs. The Book of Dede Korkut has survived through two 16th century manuscripts. It was circulated centuries prior to these manuscripts, but the exact date of its origin is unknown.

A very important character in Turkish folk literature is Nasreddin Hoca (pronounced “Hoja”), a folk philosopher, comedian, and trickster. He represents the “indomitable spirit of the common people” (“Turkish Language & Literature”). Little is known about his life. However, he probably lived in the 13th century. He served as a religious teacher, preacher, and judge. For centuries, he has remained a prominent character in both Muslim and non-Islamic communities in the Middle East. His wit transcended national and cultural borders, as his stories have been translated into many languages, attesting to his universal appeal.



*Nasreddin Hoca. by Dennis Jarvis, CC 2.0, via Flickr*

## Folk Literature vs. Ottoman Literature

The literature created for the consumption of the Ottoman Sultan and nobility, or Ottoman literature forms the basis of formal Turkish literary aesthetics. Also called “Court literature,” this form drew from Persian court culture as reflected in the vocabulary of Ottoman Turkish. Ottoman Turkish is quite distinct from modern Turkish because it incorporated many more Persian and Arabic vocabularies. The Persian words tended to relate to court life, poetry, and fine arts.

Folk literature remained primarily separate from Ottoman literature, as an oral tradition. Ottoman literature, in contrast to Folk literature was also a written form throughout almost the entire duration of the Ottoman Empire. This was in part an expression of its formality. It was written in the Arabic script, a mode which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk did away with under his modernizing reforms. Another difference between the two is that folk literature was primarily structurally comprised of quatrains (lines of four verses), while Ottoman literature was composed of couplets (lines of two verses).

This systematic difference in writing and delivery method between folk and Ottoman literature in effect separated people within the Empire into literate and non-literate, upper and lower, classes. The one thing that these two forms of literature had in common, however, was musical performance, which eventually brought the two genres together just before the fall of the Ottoman Empire. During the 17th century, traveling minstrel music, or the music of the âşık, became a bridge between the court and the people.



Âşık. by Ecomecom, CC 2.5, via at Turkish Wikipedia

## Sufi Poetry

Sufi poetry is another major cultural influence on Turkish literature, dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. It became a major branch of Turkish literature in the 13th century. Sufi mystics expressed their love and devotion to God through their poetry. Âşık Paşa and Yunus Emre were the most prominent Sufi poets of the 13th and 14th centuries. Âşık Paşa wrote *Garībnāme* ("The Book of the Stranger"), which comprises 11,000 couplets and is known as one of the finest *mesnevîs* (rhyming couplets that usually have spiritual meaning related to Sufism).

Yunus Emre, born in Eskişehir, is one of the most influential Sufi poets in Turkish literature. He wrote the prominent, *Risâlet'ün nushiyye*, "Treatise of Counsel". His poetry often took the form of love poetry but with a twist, the "Beloved" he mentioned was a reference to God. The following sample (Smith, 1993) demonstrates this way of writing about love:

"O man of love, open your eyes; look at the face of the earth. See how these lovely flowers, bedecking themselves came and the passed on.

These, bedecking themselves in this way, stretching out toward the Beloved – ask them, Brother, where are they going.

Every flower, with a thousand coquettish airs, praises God with supplications.” (p. 12)

His writings today remain central to the dhikr, or chanting, practiced by tarikas, or Sunni brotherhoods, and to the ayîn-i cem ritual of the Alevî Bektashi, an order of tribal Shī'ite Sufis.



Rumi's Shrine. Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi Türbesi ve Dergahi. by Michael Greenhalgh. Entrance to shrine (Tilavet Chamber); detail of inscriptions after restoration. The taliq panel above the door, composed by calligrapher Mehmed Sadik, reads: "This place is the Qa'ba of lovers; he who comes here lacking is made complete." The name of the first museum, "Konya Asar-i Atika Muzesi" is written below it in floriated kufic by calligrapher Yusuf Akkurt. Michael Greenhalgh, image courtesy of Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT.

Rumi is another very prominent Sufi scholar and poet, who is now world-renowned. He was born in Balkh (in modern-day Afghanistan), and lived the majority of his life in Konya, Turkey, where he is buried. A prominent work of his is *The Mathnawī* and *Diwan-e Shams-e Tabriz-I*.

## Divan Poetry and Classic Turkish Literature

As mentioned, Ottoman literature was primarily produced in the written form with a great deal of influence from both Arabic and Persian. Divan poetry is a significant example of this

form of Ottoman literature (Mesnevi and Qasida) was the most prominent form of Ottoman literature. Mesnevi and Qasidas were most prominent in early Ottoman history, but in later Ottoman literature new genres came to the forefront such as biographical dictionaries (tezkiyes), urban song (şarkı), and tâze-gû'î ("fresh speech").

Qasida ( or Kaside) are praises, either of God or a leader (like the Prophet Mohammad, the Sultan, or a military leader). These were long and comprised of various sections. Gazel poetry was often sung and accompanied by instruments. The poetry was composed of couplets and the theme was usually love.

Ottoman poetry of the 15th and 16th centuries represent a fusion of the three major Islamic languages—Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. In the 17th century, Mesnevis were on the decline. Some prominent names from Ottoman literature include (in addition to the Sufi poets mentioned) Hayali Bey, Mahmud Abdülbâkî (also known as Bâkî), Cevri and Neşatî (the leaders in the form of "fresh speech"), Nâbî (whose most prominent work is the mesnevi), Hayrîyye, Âşık Ömer (a prominent âşık of the later 17th century), and Şeyh Galib (1782; mesnevî Hüsn ü aşk translates to "Beauty and Love", was one of the most prominent works of late Ottoman Literature). Beauty and love were prominent themes.

## The 19th Century and Western Influence

In the 18th century, there were many great changes in style and with the genesis of Western influence. The Tanzimat Period (1839 – 1876 CE), brought many reforms in Ottoman society, culture, and government, which affected the literature. By 1859, İbrahim Şinasi completed the first theater play, his stage comedy Marriage of a Poet, or Şâir Evlenmesi (Turkey Music Lit, n.d.).

By 1860 the literary format of the novel "first appeared in Ottoman cities" (Göknar, 2008, p. 472). These Western forms took on a unique Turkish form, however, as they integrated the three aforementioned folk, Sufi, and Ottoman forms of literature and oral tradition (Göknar, 2008).

Major changes associated with movements toward a Turkish national identity shaped Turkish literature of the early 20th century, and continued evolving as a result of the "linguistic engineering" (Göknar, 2008, p. 474) which occurred during that time. The alphabet was changed as part of this in 1929 from Arabic to the Roman alphabet. These reforms represented a break from the Ottoman past as part of a turn to the West and a national commitment to modernization. Yet, the definition of modernization wasn't to be determined by simple East/West, traditional/modern binaries. Novels, short stories, and other modern formats, published throughout the rest of the 20th century until today reflected and contributed to a modern Turkish identity shaped by multiple, uniquely Turkish, internal discourses (Göknar, 2008).

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# Chapter 8 Modern Turkish Literature

By Meghan Cahill

Twentieth-century Turkey can be characterized by tensions between old and new, East and West. These were caused by the claiming of her new identity as the modern Turkish Republic. Modern Turkish literature reflects this in a number of ways. As Turkey transitioned from Ottoman to European, so did literature. Stories from oral traditions were largely replaced by short stories and novels, as well as literary imports from Europe. With the founding of the Turkish Republic, the educational efforts of the Turkish language reform actually caused literacy rates to skyrocket. This increased not only the consumption of literature, but also gave more citizens the ability to write. Republican authors were apt to write about a variety of social and political themes that grappled with these tensions. They utilized three main genres, which I will cover in this chapter: poetry, short stories, and novels.

## Poetry: A Spectrum of Simple to Complex Styles

While poetry was undoubtedly a fixture of Ottoman era literature, it remained important throughout the Republican era, as well. In twentieth century Turkey, poetry was often synonymous with politics. The new, simpler style and folk influence that emerged during this period as part of the Garip Movement was the antithesis to the ornate and philosophical Ottoman Era poetry (see the Early Literature chapter). This change in poetic style represented how far-reaching the restructuring of Turkey's new identity was. Poetry also began to focus more on the everyday lives of ordinary Turks, reinforcing a shared national identity. For example, "Full of", a poem by Orhan Veli:

We have seas, full of the sun;  
We have trees, full of leaves;  
From dawn to dusk we go and go and come  
Among our seas, among our trees  
Full of  
The blues.

(Translated by Murat Nemet-Nejat)

However, not all poets agreed with this simplicity of structure and thought. Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, one of the most famous Turkish poets of all time, was known for his neo-Ottoman style. Beyatlı was from a wealthy, bureaucratic family and had studied extensively in France. His poetry blended ornate French and Ottoman styles. Known both for his Parisian tendencies and service in Parliament, his poetic style incorporated the European aspect that Turkey longed for, but was also reminiscent of a past that the new administration was trying to forget (Arslanbenzer).

## The Short Story: A Literary Form Suited to Critique

Short stories made their Turkish debut at the turn of the century and proved to be immensely popular during the Republican Era. Like poetry, short stories were entwined with politics, especially as many authors used short stories as a means of “social edification and commentary” (Turkish Literature). Two authors, Sait Faik Abasıyanık and Sabahattin Ali, had great influence via their writing style and political assertions. Similar to poetic styles of the time, both authors emphasized the everyday life of their characters. Unlike the heroic epics of the previous eras, these stories often focused on the mundane. Abasıyanık, in particular, was known for introducing the stream of consciousness approach to Turkish literature. This took the emphasis off of the plot and placed it on the character’s experience. Ali, on the other hand, was most remembered for his political themes in his short stories. He was killed shortly after its publication, an event which his daughter believes was an assassination (Battersby, 2017). She believes he was targeted for his ideas which “challenged accepted attitudes about men and women,” (Battersby, 2017) especially his novel *Madonna in a Fur Coat*

## The Novel: A Prolific Form of Literature in Turkey

Like short stories, novels were a new literary style in Turkey. Turkish novels do not shy away from political and social themes and often address issues such as class, gender, national identity, and history. However, they did not become extremely popular until the latter half of the twentieth century, when authors such as Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin made novels more accessible to readers, both inside and outside of Turkey. Orhan Pamuk is one of the most famous Turkish novelists outside of Turkey – he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006.

Turkey’s many novelists have made a significant impact on the country’s unique literary landscape. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar was a jack of all trades and one of the most highly regarded writers of the twentieth century. He was a scholar, author, literary critic, and poet that was best known both for his introduction of modernist fiction to Turkey and for his construction of highly complex novels that were unrivaled by any Turkish authors before him. He was a student of Beyatlı and he greatly influenced contemporary authors, especially Orhan Pamuk. Several influential female authors, such as Halide Edib Adıvar and Elif Shafak, became well known both for their novels and their advocacy work, although they were active at very different times in Turkey’s history.

Two contemporary novelists, Orhan Pamuk and Latife Tekin, have equally influential, but very different, approaches to writing. Tekin, who was a poor Anatolian village transplant in Istanbul, is known for her semi-autobiographical novels. She also introduced magic realism as a genre to Turkey. Pamuk, on the other hand, came from an upper class family and was highly educated. His novels are complex and meticulous. While both Tekin and Pamuk tackle controversial themes such as identity, history, modernity, class, and the tensions between East and West, their different backgrounds and styles allow them to approach the same issues in their own unique ways.

## Conclusion: Literature as a Significant Means for Political Engagement in Turkey

This chapter emphasized the political dimensions of literature in Turkey because literature served as an important means to advocate for political stances, often becoming a source of controversy. Censorship has been a prominent issue since the late Ottoman period due to critique apparent in literary texts, especially with regard to policies and cultural movements which severed Turkey from its past. In more recent years, contemporary authors like Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak have been put on trial for their political commentary, or the commentary of their fictional characters. Both authors were eventually acquitted amidst international outcry. Şafak, however, continues to face scrutiny for her advocacy work for LGBTQ rights and gender equality.

Yahya Kemal Beyatli was a highly renowned Turkish poet who was known for his French and Ottoman inspirations.



Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı). C.C.O,  
via Wikimedia Commons

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# Chapter 9 Family and Kinship in Turkey

by Paige Jordan

Family is the foundation of everyday life in Turkey. While family dynamics and expectations have been affected by social changes in Turkey since the 1950s, the significance of family has not been shaken. Even in the midst of political turmoil today, the family remains a stable, close-knit, and enduring social structure.

## The Significance of Family

In Turkey, one's everyday needs are primarily fulfilled by the family. From providing social interactions and a listening ear, to assistance finding a job or making political connections, family is the first place Turks turn to when in need of support (Yapp and Dewdney 2017). In this way, family provides the necessary safety net that in more individualistic nations is often replaced by government-run social services.

## History

Traditionally, Turks were divided into extensive familial groups or clans. These groups would live in close proximity to one another and would provide mutual support and defense (Yapp and Dewdney 2017). In a rural community, agricultural collaboration within the clan was key to ensuring the life and prosperity of the whole family, as well as the ability of the clan to defend itself. The clan also came together to support one another through important life events such as marriage, birth, and death. In rural areas especially, one's clan was often the sole source of social interaction and relationships.

## Family Structure and Social Change

Today, while the value of family has not diminished, many differences in family structure, expectations, and experiences have evolved. This is true largely based on where the family lives. Generally, this has been divided into an urban/rural dichotomy. With increased rural migration to cities starting in the 1950s, the situation became more complicated.

Typically, urban Turks put more emphasis on the nuclear family while rural Turks are more reliant on their extended family, in a manner reminiscent of the traditional clans. The development of the nuclear family itself is an element of Westernization and/or modernization in Turkey,

reflecting individualist values and family structures often found in European and other Westernized countries. This difference of urban vs. rural and modern vs. traditional sheds light on the question of whether or not “modernization” is the same as “Westernization”, a debate that is very important for understanding how Turkey has evolved (but is not within the scope of this eBook).

The differences between urban and rural families also apply to views on religion, marriage and dating, children, gender roles, and even living situations. Yet there are still many familial aspects to Turkish culture that remain the same across even the most different of families. These include the importance of living near one another, the reverence of elders, the participation of family in life-cycle events, and coming together for holidays.

## Marriage

Marriage is generally expected of Turkish youth, with most young Turks getting married somewhere around their early to mid-twenties (Turkish Statistical Institute). The wedding ceremonies are often quite elaborate, loyal to tradition, and include multiple days of celebration. One of these celebrations is a night for the bride prior to the ceremony that gives her a chance to celebrate with her family and friends. Traditionally, she and her friends apply ornate henna decorations to their hands as the central activity of the evening, or “Henna Night.” The civil ceremony is the only part of the marriage that carries any legal weight, meaning that a religious ceremony is completely optional and not required. This promotion of civil, rather than purely religious, marriages was a key aspect of Atatürk’s modernization and secularization reforms.

Image: by Akbulut, Melisa. “Picture of a Turkish Henna Night.” October 26, 2017.

## The Culture of Marriage

Today, there is a very strong social expectation for Turkish citizens to marry. This traditional view on marriage and family has remained mainly unchanged since Ottoman times. The practices surrounding marriage, however, have undergone significant changes since the formation of the Turkish Republic. In 1926, the Family Law abolished the Islamic Family Law and established marriages as primarily civil ceremonies. This move to make marriage civil rather than religious created tension in some communities due to the importance of religious observance for many Turks.

Occasionally, families still have religious ceremonies prior to the civil ceremony to honor both state and cultural expectations, as well as personal beliefs. One aspect of traditional Turkish weddings is an event called *kına gecesi* (henna night). The henna night takes place on the third night before the wedding ceremony and is an important event for the bride as she prepares to

leave her home and join her husband's family. Traditionally, the bride dresses in a red or purple gown and veil. The mother of the groom then places a gold coin in the bride's hand and covers it with a ball of henna. Her palm is wrapped and covered with a red glove until the henna sets. During this time, the women sing songs to make the bride cry. Her tears symbolize her grief as she prepares to leave her mother and family. On the second night, a wedding party is held in the bride's home. The official wedding is held the night before the legal ceremony and occurs at the groom's home. It's a night of feasting and celebration. On the day of the civil ceremony, the groom and groomsmen place the Turkish flag at the front of the home. The groom and his family then pick up the bride in a parade of cars decorated with flowers and streamers. During the wedding, guests are expected to pin money or gold to the bride's gown in order to financially prepare the young couple. At the end of the ceremony, during the signing of the marriage certificate, the bride and groom attempt to step on each other's toes to signify who will have the "final word" in their marriage.

Familial expectations regarding marriage and the process of finding a spouse vary across families, with the main differences being found between urban and rural families. Most often, urban families are more supportive of dating and/or longer courtships. Rural families, on the other hand, are more likely to support arranged marriages and closely monitored courtships. In fact, nearly 60% of first marriages in Turkey are still arranged (Turkish Statistical Institute).

Just as Atatürk reformed marriage, he also reformed divorce. By making divorce secular and free of ties to Islamic law, men and women gained equal rights in the eyes of the law. This has given more rights to women in divorce proceedings, allowing them to more easily obtain a divorce and be protected from unwarranted divorce, and given them more power with regard to property rights (Pinar 2018).

## Children

Children are cherished in Turkish culture. Growing up, kids rarely go to daycare. Instead, their mother or a grandparent takes care of them during the day until they are old enough to go to school. The centrality of extended family remains apparent in this fact.

There is still a preference for boys over girls in Turkey. While this preference does not often have an impact on the opportunities a child is given, it does affect how they are raised and their family's expectations of them. Typically, girls are taught to be more passive and boys are encouraged to be more aggressive and tenacious ("The Extended Family"). These expectations reflect gender inequality in Turkey, especially as women remain inactive in high profile positions in business and politics ("Economies").

Even though many mothers work, particularly in urban areas, the children still remain the responsibility of the mother. With only 2.8% of Turkish children attending daycare (Turkish Statistical Institute), a mother must find a balance between her children and her job. Grandparents have a vital role in caring for and raising the children, especially as they often live in close proximity to one another.

[image: "Children in Northern Nicosia." Anjadora. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Children\\_in\\_North\\_Nicosia.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Children_in_North_Nicosia.jpg). CC. Accessed October 25, 2017.]

## Aging Relatives

In Turkey, respect comes with age. Grandparents, then, are deeply revered, making their care a priority for younger family members. The responsibility of elderly care generally falls to the relative's children. In the past, it was extremely common for grandparents to live in the same house as their children as they aged, and this practice of co-residence remains particularly common in rural areas. Alternate arrangements exist, however, and this is especially found in urban areas. Grandparents may live in a neighboring apartment or have private, in-home care provided for them.

## Gender

Same-sex sexual activity was legal in the late Ottoman Empire and is still technically legal in Turkey today, but LGBTQ couples do not have the same legal protections as heterosexual couples and discrimination protections have not been legislated. Transsexuals are allowed to change their legal gender, but public opinion on homosexuality remains conservative and LGBTQ people experience increasing discrimination and even violence.

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# Chapter 10 Turkish Cuisine

by Kerem Postacıoğlu

Turkish cuisine is remarkable for its immense diversity. It is based on Ottoman and Seljuk food culture and influenced by surrounding countries and regions. During the time of the Seljuks and Ottomans, Turks managed to control some parts of the spice route, which gave them an economical advantage and also impacted the food culture significantly. Although common recipes changed and modernized over time, many of them still contain the original flavors traced back to Ottoman and Seljuk roots.

Turkish breakfast is one example of the diversity found in Turkish cuisine. A standard breakfast will include many different types of cheeses, jams, and breads, as well as honey and cream, sausage, eggs, menemen, sigara boreği, and most importantly, tea. Breakfast in Turkish (kahvaltı) means “before coffee,” so coffee is not a part of this meal.

Tea is one of the the most-consumed drinks in Turkey. Tea is grown in the Karadeniz region in the northern part of Turkey, due to high precipitation that favors its growth. The most valuable tea is called “two and a half tea,” which is made from the top and the two rows of leaves below it on the tree. These leaves get the most sunlight, so their taste is more flavorful than the rest of the leaves. Turkish tea is always served in a transparent glass called ince belli bardak to show its color. Turks indicate the exact strength of tea they prefer with specific designations – these can then be observed through the transparent glass in which the tea is served.



Tea at Kahve Dunyasi, Istanbul, Turkey. by Melinda McClimans. C.C.0

When discussing Turkish food and drink, it is also important to mention rakı, an alcoholic beverage that many consider to be Turkey's national drink. It is made by distilling raisin and aniseed, has a dark liquorice taste, and its alcohol level is 80-100 proof. After a certain amount is poured into a glass, the rakı is diluted with water and turns white. Since there are particular rules to drink it, rakı is not like any other drink. Turks refer to it as “lion's milk,” due to it being a strong alcoholic beverage that is the color of milk.



*Girl Drinking a Glass of Raki with Water, C.C.O, via Pixabay*

Meze is the general name for small appetizers served with either rakı or fish. Meze is another example of diverse Turkish food, ranging from yogurt based to meat based. There are also vegetarian selections made from lentils or other legumes. The main goal of eating meze is not to fill the stomach, but to try and enjoy many different tastes.

The main courses in Turkish cuisine are as diverse as its breakfast and meze menu. The most recognizable ones are: İskender, pita topped with meat, tomato sauce, and melted butter; mantı, Turkish ravioli that resembles dumplings with meat inside, served with yogurt and oil sauce; adana, meat on a skewer served with greens and tomatoes; and lahmacun, thin pizza crust topped with minced meat. Most of Turkish food is meat-based due to the nomadic roots of Turkish culture. Turkic nomadic tribes couldn't depend on crops, but rather placed an emphasis on pastoral foodstuffs they could take with them on their journeys, including sheep and other animals.



*Shish Kebab. By roland Tanglao. C.C.O, via Flickr*

This is an example of a Turkish main course meal called şiş kebab.

Some of the popular street food in Turkey includes söğüs, kokoreç, and midye dolma. Unlike the U.S., organ meats are very popular in Turkey and tend to sell out at restaurants and butchers. Söğüs is made from a lamb's tongue, eyes, cheeks, and brain, and served wrapped in a pita with added greens and spices. Kokoreç is lamb intestines that are cleaned and cooked over fire and served in bread with lots of spices. Midye dolma is clam shells stuffed with rice and can be found being sold on the streets throughout the day and into the evening.



A chef preparing kokoreç for the customers. Gala Kokorec in Beşiktaş İstanbul, 2011. By Danwithnoname. C.C.2.0. Via Flickr. Gala Kokorec in Istanbul – 2011 by Danwithnoname [www.thestupidforeigner.com](http://www.thestupidforeigner.com)

Desserts and coffee are another important part of Turkish cuisine. Baklava and Turkish delight, or lokum, are the most internationally-known desserts. Baklava is a pastry with pistachios or almonds and syrup. These desserts are generally served with Turkish coffee, which is a particular way of preparing unfiltered coffee. Another fun fact about Turkish coffee is that it is also used for fortune telling by interpreting the shapes of the grounds left in the cup after drinking.

The topic of food is tied to cultural identity and therefore not devoid of political meaning. In Greece, Turkish coffee was referred to as “Turkish” until the Cyprus incident and political conflicts between two countries in the 1960s caused the Greeks to change the name of the drink to “Greek coffee.” Baklava is another food which is contested in the Mediterranean and Western Asia with regard to cultural ownership.

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# Chapter II Sports in Turkey

By Muhammad Mansour

According to Yurdadon (1992), Turkish culture can be understood via the history of “physical cultural activities [which] document the nation’s values, its spirit, times and mentalities” (p.5). Turkey’s love of sports extends from such universally recognized sports as soccer (futbol), to unique regional sports such as camel fighting. Traditional sports extend back to the Ottomans (Green, 2001), and even further into antiquity (Poliakoff, 2018). There is evidence of both Hellenistic and Persian influences on Turkish wrestling traditions (Green, 2001). (The annual wrestling tournament of Kırkpınar dates back over 650 years (Yurdadon,1992)). According to Yurdadon:

The successes of Turkish wrestlers in the modern Olympic Games until the 1968 Mexico City Games were not a coincidence but extensions of these historical and cultural sport traditions in Turkish culture. (p. 2)

Some of the earliest inscriptions of Turkic tribes in Mongolia and Siberia, circa the 8th century B.C., mention archery, horseback riding, and wrestling (Yurdadon,1992).

Football (soccer) was established as an organized sport just prior to the founding of the Turkish Republic, and helped cultivate the post-Ottoman Turkish national identity (Güney, 2017). Established at the beginning of the 20th century, Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, and Beşiktaş remain the most prominent of the national futbol clubs (Güney, 2017). Non-team sports, such as sailing, rowing, bird watching, and ballooning, are also very popular. Sports are played with enthusiasm and often develop fan communities, especially futbol (Güney, 2017). Futbol matches are played in various arenas, such as the Telekom Stadium located in the Eastern part of Istanbul for the Galatasaray club and the Vodafone arena for Beşiktaş club. While futbol in Turkey is dominated by the Istanbul-based ‘big three’ mentioned above, other teams throughout the country can pose serious competition.

In recent years, basketball has also become popular in Turkey (Washburn, 2012) which hosted the 2010 FIBA World Championship. Turkey came in second to the United States in that event. The national team made it to the finals of the Eurobasket Cup in 2001, but lost the number one position to Serbia. The Turkish Efes Pilsen team was the national champion for the 1995-1996 season (Turkish Basketball Super League History).

As mentioned, some popular sports in Turkey date back to earliest civilization. Oil wrestling, for example, originated in ancient Greece (Harris, 1979), and evidence of wrestling exists for civilizations as ancient as Sumerian and Babylonian (Dellinger, n.d.). The key to oil wrestling is not about size or strength but about technique. It doesn’t matter how big your opponent is, as you are both greased up with oil and the first one to face his belly button to the sky loses the match (or the one who taps out from submission).

Camel fighting, a particularly entertaining sport which includes visual and musical performative elements (Berrakçay & Yükselsin, 2015), originated with the Turkic tribes of Central Asia. The earliest recording of a camel wrestling match in Turkey dates back 200 years (Aydin, 2011). Two camels enter the field and use their necks as leverage in order to pin the other camel down. These aren't typical camels: they are well fed and trained to fight (Aydin, 2011). According to Aydin (2011): "A camel can win by making the other camel retreat, by making the other camel scream, or by making the other camel fall" (p. 57). The sport has remained popular in Western Turkey as a way to celebrate Turkish heritage and attract people with festive events (Aydin, 2011; Berrakçay & Yükselsin, 2015).

Lastly, cirit (pronounced "jerred") dates back to Central Asia. In this sport, two teams have men who ride horses and launch javelins at their opponents. If a rider fails to hit the opponent and hits the horse instead, it shows that he is inexperienced in the sport and he is asked to leave the playing field. Cirit was used for battle training in the Ottoman period, but its origins are much older as part of horse-centered nomadic culture in Central Asia (Yurdadon, 1992). Erzurum, in Eastern Turkey, continues the cirit tradition with annual festivals dating back at least 200 years (Yurdadon, 1992).

Today, Turkish women are demonstrating that they can be just as competitive as men in sports. Hulya Sahin (a German citizen of Turkish identity), for example, has won numerous international championships and gold medals in boxing. Yurdadon (1992) observed that even in the oldest records of Turkic sport, athletic achievement was celebrated "regardless of gender" (p. 2).

Turkey has made great efforts to host the Olympics several times and continues to vie for the hosting position of various prestigious international sports events. They lost the bid to Japan to host the Olympics in 2012, but they were able to host the 2012 European Capital of Sports.

Sports are part of Turks' daily lives and are built into the culture of Turkey. They use sports not only as a form of entertainment and enjoyment, but also as a way to communicate with the rest of the world. Turkey's love for sports has taken them far on the global scene and they continue to impress the rest of the world with their talents.



Oil Wrestling.No machine-readable author provided. Math34 assumed (based on copyright claims). CC.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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# Afterword

We asked the students to share their “personal geographies,” or an account of their daily commute to university and what they encounter. This was a way to tap into lived experience and connect the theoretical with reality “on the ground.” The physical experience of a place is a central component of cultural experience – the tangible aspect of one’s circumstances. The images below were taken by Melisa Akbulut, one of our Turkish authors. The haptic quality of these images, their ability to temporarily immerse the viewer in a particular landscape, reflect the goal of the project to experience “windows” into another culture. We continue to seek experiences where university students from distant geographies can connect authentically to gain an understanding of other cultural perspectives.



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