

Turkish names, Christian faith

Armenians in 1455 Istanbul

Introduction

In 1455, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II ordered a census of taxpayers in the recently conquered city of Constantinople and its suburb Galata. The inhabitants of the city belonged to diverse ethnic and cultural groups: many were Byzantine Greeks, but there were also Italians, Armenians, Jews, and new Turkish settlers. Like the Byzantines, the Armenians were Christian. However, by the time the Ottomans entered Constantinople, Anatolia had been under Turkish control for hundreds of years.

We use the names of Armenians, as recorded in Halil İncalçik's edition of the 1455 survey (İncalçik 2012), to explore the construction of Armenian identity in the fifteenth century. Unlike their Greek neighbors, the Armenians in the surviving records have names which show a strong Turkish influence. However, the Armenians also have names very different from their Turkish neighbors, because they do not use characteristically Muslim names such as *Muhammed* or *Mustafa*. The name choices show Armenian strategies for adapting to Islamic rule of Anatolia while retaining a distinct identity.

Armenia in the fifteenth century

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Armenia was controlled by many different groups: Georgians, the Seljuk and Khwarazmian Turks, the Mongols, and later the

Timurids. In 1455, most of Armenia was under Timurid control, while the former Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia was ruled by the Mamluks. (For a timeline of Armenia's rulers, see Bedrosian 2015.) The successive invasions encouraged Armenian migration, and during the fifteenth century ethnic Armenians could be found across Anatolia and the Caucasus (Migliorino 2007). Thus, although in 1455 Constantinople had only recently acquired a Muslim ruler, the Armenians in the city came from a culture with a long history of contact with Islam.

The 1455 Survey

The survey of 1455 is an Ottoman *defter* or tax register. Defters typically record only the names of tax-paying adult males (Coşgel 2004). The 1455 survey includes the names of a handful of women, usually widows or heads of households.

The 1455 survey tracks two different types of potential revenue. The inhabitants of Galata surrendered to Mehmed the Conqueror, so most Galata residents were expected to pay *jizya*, the Islamic tax on non-Muslims. Widows paid a lower rate. On the other hand, Constantinople did not surrender and was sacked. Legally, all buildings in Constantinople proper became the property of the sultan, and were liable for rent (İnalçik 2012).

Like most official Ottoman records, the 1455 survey was written in Ottoman Turkish, using a Persian-influenced Arabic script. We tabulate and analyze the names of all people identified as Turkish or Armenian in the survey. In our analysis, we use İnalçik's

transcription of names according to modern Turkish spellings. Because the names were written in Ottoman Turkish, the spelling of non-Turkish names in our data is not always consistent. For example, both *Asasdor* and *Asudar* appear to be renderings of the Armenian name *Asadur*.

The Turkish Names

Ottoman Turkish names have several distinct etymological origins. Some names, such as *Tanrivermiş*, are etymologically Turkic. Many Turks used etymologically Arabic names, such as *Muhammedî*, due to their Islamic significance. We also find names with Persian roots, such as *Gülpaşa*, in the Ottoman naming pool. As the path of Turkic migration to Anatolia led through Persia, this is not a surprise. Indeed, Persian elements appear in Turkic names long before the date of our study: for example, Peter Zieme (2006) has studied Middle Iranian and New Persian elements in the names of the Old Turks and Ancient Uighurs beginning in the tenth century.

The 1455 census includes the names of 479 people identified as Turkish or Muslim. Only 9 of them are women. Women's names were only recorded if they were widows or otherwise heads of households without a free adult man, and the Muslim settlement of Istanbul was very recent.

The Muslims in the 1455 census use 170 different given names. On average, each given name is used by 2.8 people. In practice, of course, some names are far more popular,

and some names are used by only one person. The given names used by five or more people are listed by frequency in Table 1. In all, 247 or 51.6% of the Turkish people in our data set used one of these popular names. Most of the popular names were used by important men in the Qur'an or in Islamic history, such as *İbrâhîm* (equivalent to the Biblical Abraham) and *Hamza* (the name of Muhammad's uncle). The exceptions are *Halil*, *Hızır*, *Hacı*, *Tanrıvermiş*, and *Şahin*.

Name	Frequency
Mustafa	31
Yûsuf	28
Hamza	21
Muhammedî	21
İbrâhîm	16
Halil	15
Ahmed	13
Ali	13
İlyâs	9
Hızır	9
İsma`il	8
Yunus	8
Hacı	7
`İsâ	7
Süleyman	7
Hüseyin	6
Mehmed	6
Şahin	6
Tanrıvermiş	6
Mahmud	5
Musa	5

Table 1. Most popular Turkish names.

Three of the exceptions are etymologically Arabic. The name *Halil* derives from an Arabic word meaning 'friend'; forms of *Halil* or *Khalil* are found throughout the medieval Islamic world. (Ahmed 1999: 98) The name *Hızır* is taken from the Arabic *Khidr*. In the Islamic tradition, *Khidr* was a mystical being, identified as a messenger or servant of God

(Augustinović 1972). The name *Hacı* refers to someone who has completed the *haji*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. Several people in the 1455 census use *Hacı* as a descriptive byname; the byname precedes the given name, as in the case of *Hacı Mustafa*. However, seven men were identified only as *Hacı*, with no other name given.

Tanrivermiş, which means ‘God-given’, is the only name in our list of popular Turkish names from the 1455 census that has a Turkic etymology. (Nişanyan 2015 s.vv. *tanrı, vermek*.) The remaining exception, *Şahin*, derives from a Persian word meaning ‘buzzard’.

We see that Islamic identity is strongly reflected in the names of the new settlers in Istanbul: nearly all of the popular names used by Turks reference Islamic history or faith.

The Armenian Names

Like their Turkish neighbors, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Armenians used names with many different origins (cf. Pamuk 2008). Some names, like *Mıgırdiç* (*Mkrtič*), are etymologically Armenian; others, such as *Sahak*, a form of *Isaac*, are distinctively Armenian versions of names used in many cultures. Names such as *Istefanos* and *Marina* are Christian names used by both the Armenians and their Greek neighbors. Some Armenians are named after religious figures, such as *Yunus* (*Jonah*) or *Yahya* (*John*), who are common to the Christian and Islamic traditions. Because the 1455 census was written in Turkish, these names are standardized to the typical Islamic form in our records. Finally,

we find Armenians using names which are part of the medieval Islamic naming pool and have Turkic, Persian, or Arabic roots. Examples include Turkic *Orhan* ('great khan'), Persian *Shirin*, and Arabic *Sa'âdet* ('happiness').

There are 113 people identified as Armenian in the 1455 census. Of these people, 22 are women: the higher representation of Armenian women as heads of households reflects the fact that Armenians had lived in Constantinople far longer than the Turks.

Many of the Armenian women use names incorporating the Turkish element *Hatun*, such as *Ana-Hatun* or *Taci-Hatun*. Literally, *Hatun* means 'khan-woman'. In some cases, *Hatun* may have been an integral part of a compound given name. The Persian titles *Sultan*, *Pasha*, and *Shah* all appear as given names or elements of compound given names in our Armenian data. We also find *Hatun* used as an element of Armenian names in earlier sources. Weitenberg's analysis of Armenian names in twelfth- to fourteenth-century colophons shows that *Mama-Xat'un* was one of the most popular feminine Armenian names in the thirteenth century and remained popular in the fourteenth century, while *Ēl-Xat'un* gained popularity in the fourteenth century (Weitenberg 2005). On the other hand, rather than forming an integral part of a name, *Hatun* may have been used as a title of respect, equivalent to *Lady* or *Mrs.* In the sixteenth century, this usage would become common among Ottoman women in Istanbul (Seng 1998).

If we identify different spellings of the same name, such as *Merderos* and *Marteros*, we find that the Armenians in the 1455 census use 87 different given names. Thus, each name is used by an average of 1.30 people. Though there are more than five times as many Turks as Armenians in our data set, we have only about twice as many names used by

Turks compared to names used by Armenians. Clearly, the Armenians in our data set are using a far greater variety of names than the Turks. The higher number of women in the Armenian sample may contribute to the increased variety, since women and men tend to use different given names. The names used by more than one Armenian in the 1455 census are listed in Table 2. These names were used by 44 people, or about 39% of the Armenians in the survey.

Name	Gender	Frequency
Marderos (Martiros)	Male	6
Hızır	Male	4
Melek	Female	3
Parun	Male	3
Mıgırdıç (Mkrtič')	Male	3
Sahak	Male	3
Ana	Female	2
Anita	Female	2
Asudar	Male	2
Civan	Male	2
Istefanos	Male	2
İvaz	Male	2
Nikola	Male	2
Pulbek	Male	2
Sa'âdet	Female	2
Tanrıvermiş	Male	2
Yahya	Male	2

Table 2. Popular Armenian names.

Three names appear in both the list of popular Turkish names and the list of popular Armenian names: *Hızır*, *Yahya*, and *Tanrıvermiş*. The name *Yahya* is the Islamic form of *John*. As a Muslim name, *Yahya* would honor John the Baptist, who appears in the Qur'an as the miraculous son of Zacharias. (cf. Qur'an 19.7) As the name of an Armenian, *Yahya* may be a Turkish rendering of *Yovhannēs*, used in honor of John the Baptist or Saint John the Evangelist.

The use of *Hızır* and *Tanrıvermiş* by Armenian Christians is more surprising. In Islamic mysticism, the messenger al-Khidr is often associated with the prophet Elijah. Some Christians associate al-Khidr with Saint George (Augustinović 1972). Theo van Lint has argued that in early modern Anatolia, Ottoman veneration of al-Khidr paralleled Armenian veneration of John the Baptist (van Lint 2005). Thus, Armenians may have viewed the name *Hızır* as a reference to a divine figure honored by both Christians and Muslims, rather than a specifically Islamic name. Similarly, they may have parsed the God in *Tanrıvermiş* ‘God-given’ as a reference to a shared God, rather than considering *Tanrıvermiş* an Islamic name.

The popular names in our sample are very different from the popular names in Weitenberg’s analysis of twelfth- to fourteenth-century colophons. Throughout that time period, *Yovhannēs*, *Step’anos*, and *Grigor* dominated the masculine names; together, they make up 21% of Weitenberg’s fourteenth-century sample (Weitenberg 2005). In our sample, the related forms *Yahya* and *Istefanos* appear twice, and *Kirkor* only once; the once-popular names have dropped to only 4% of the sample. On the other hand, forms of *Marderos* and *Hızır*, the most popular names in our Istanbul data, do not appear in Weitenberg’s top-ten lists for any century.

Names may be chosen for many reasons, including personal connections, historical or religious significance, and apparent meaning. We wish to use name choices to identify interactions between Armenian culture and the other cultures of Anatolia. To do so, we classify the cultural source of the names used by Armenians. Our categories indicate both the linguistic or etymological origin of names and religious influences on their choice. We

also bear in mind that the names were recorded by Ottoman scribes rather than by the Armenians themselves, and may have been transformed according to Ottoman norms. (One may compare transformations of Muslim names by Christian scribes; for example, Laliena (2002) has analyzed the names of Muslims and Franks in medieval Spain.)

We classify each name’s cultural origin as Armenian, Biblical, Greek, Persian/Turkish, or Unknown. The Armenian category includes etymologically Armenian names and names with characteristically Armenian forms. We classify names as Biblical if they appear in our data as the Turkish form of names found in both the Qur’an and the Bible. These names are culturally ambiguous: we do not know whether the Armenians used characteristically Christian forms of the names among themselves, which were then standardized in Ottoman form by the Ottoman scribes, or whether the Armenians had already adopted the Turkish forms for personal use. We classify names which are used by both Armenians and Byzantine Greeks in our data as Greek. Many of these names indicate an awareness of a common Christian identity. We group names with Persian, Turkic, and Arabic roots in the Turkish cultural category, as these names reflect the influences of the Ottoman naming pool. Finally, approximately 1/5 of the names used by Armenians are of unknown etymology, either because the name is not found elsewhere or because it cannot be identified based on the rendering in Ottoman Turkish. The results of our classification are summarized in Table 3; we give the full details in Appendix A.

Name Culture	Number of People	Percentage
Armenian	25	22.1%
Biblical	7	6.2%

Greek	14	12.4%
Persian/Turkish	42	37.2%
Unknown	25	22.1%

Table 3. Origin of Armenian names.

We see that 39 of the names fall into the Armenian or Greek categories, thereby indicating Christian identity. Another 42 of the names are in the Persian/Turkish category, and could have been shared with the Armenians' Islamic neighbors. The 7 Biblical names are ambiguous: the recorders of the survey clearly viewed these names as part of a shared Muslim and Christian heritage, but we cannot be certain of how much the names were transformed when they were written down.

In her pioneering study of the names of medieval Armenian aristocrats, Nina Garsoïan observed that thirteenth- and fourteenth-century names reveal “une société de plus en plus mixte” (Garsoïan 1996). This mixing accelerated in the fifteenth century. In his analysis of 6704 men's names from the twelfth- to fourteenth centuries, Weitenberg noted “87% carry names which one might term as ‘traditional.’” 363 men, or approximately 5% of the total, had names which Weitenberg categorized as Arabo-Persian or Turco-Mongolian in origin. In contrast, our Persian/Turkish cultural category includes the names of 28 Armenian men, or 31% of the Armenian men in our sample. Weitenberg found that women were more likely than men to use names with Arabo-Persian or Turco-Mongolian roots; this pattern continues in a more exaggerated form in our data, with approximately 59% of the women using names in the Persian/Turkish category, as compared to 17% of the women in Weitenberg's earlier sample (Weitenberg 2005).

Although names with Turkic, Persian, and Arabic roots are common in the Armenian data from Istanbul, we have already seen that there is little overlap between the most popular names for Turks and the most popular names for Armenians. Names such as *Mustafa* and *Hamza*, which belonged to key figures in Islamic history, are very popular among the Turks, but the Armenians avoid them. Instead, the Armenians are likely to use names with Turkic, Persian, or Arabic roots which indicate aristocracy or desirable qualities, such as *Sultan*, *Nadir* 'dear' or 'rare', and *Sa'âdet* 'happiness'. Some of the Armenians do use names such as *Melek* 'angel', which could reference either Christian or Muslim religion; we have seen that *Hızır* and *Tanrıvermiş* may also fall into this category.

The Armenian names in the 1455 census show both the effects of exposure to Islamic society, and strategies for maintaining a distinct Armenian identity. Though some names are shared, the Armenians avoid names with clear references to Islamic history. On the other hand, some of the shared names do incorporate references to God and other supernatural figures. These overlaps suggest that the medieval Armenians recognized similarities between the Islamic and Christian faiths.

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Appendix A: Names of Armenians

Each row in this table represents an individual identified as Armenian.

Armenians	Given Name	Gender	Standard Form	Cultural Origin	Notes
Akosti	Akosti				
Amir	Amir			Persian/Turkish	
Ana	Ana	f	Anna	Greek	
Ana-Hatun	Ana	f		Persian/Turkish	
Anita	Anita	f		Greek	
Anita	Anita	f		Greek	
Arnuta	Arnuta				
Asasdor	Asasdor		Asadur	Armenian	
Asfador	Asfador		Asdvadzadur	Armenian	
Asudar	Asudar		Asadur	Armenian	
Aydın	Aydın			Persian/Turkish	
Ayonîz	Ayonîz			Armenian	
Baba	Baba			Persian/Turkish	
Babas-oglu Methol	Methol				
Bari Kevork	Kevork		Gēorg	Armenian	Byname is Armenian 'good, kind'
Çarn	Çarn				
Çire-Hatun	Çire-Hatun	f		Persian/Turkish	cf. 16th century Chaghatay <i>Çihre</i> 'face'
Civan	Civan			Persian/Turkish	
Civan	Civan			Persian/Turkish	
Çolban	Çolban			Persian/Turkish	
David	David			Biblical	
Dhospina	Dhospina	f		Greek	
Diharbun	Diharbun				
Dilsuz Mıgırdic	Mıgırdic		Mkrtič'	Armenian	Byname is Turkish 'mute'
Duntek	Duntek				
Emirane	Emirane			Persian/Turkish	
Gedon	Gedon		Gedēon	Armenian	
Gülef	Gülef	f		Persian/Turkish	
Haceroz	Haceroz				
Haçik	Haçik			Armenian	

Haçriz	Haçriz				
Hanumelek	Hanumelek			Persian/Turkish	
Harsend	Harsend				
Hızır	Hızır			Persian/Turkish	
Hızır	Hızır			Persian/Turkish	
Hızır	Hızır			Persian/Turkish	
Hızır	Hızır			Persian/Turkish	
Hızırşa	Hızırşa		Hızırşah	Persian/Turkish	
Hristadulos	Hristadulos			Greek	
İbrâhîm	İbrâhîm			Biblical	
İnbek	İnbek	f		Persian/Turkish	
Istafanos	Istafanos		Istefanos	Greek	
Istefanos	Istefanos		Istefanos	Greek	
İvaz	İvaz			Persian/Turkish	
İvaz	İvaz			Persian/Turkish	
Kaçarez	Kaçarez				
Kader	Kader				
Kanalo	Kanalo	f			
Kazancı	Kazancı			Persian/Turkish	Turkish occupational for cauldron-maker
Kazder	Kazder				
Kelef-Hatun	Kelef-Hatun	f			
Kirkor	Kirkor		Grigor	Armenian	
Kiryakos	Kiryakos		Kirakos	Greek	
Kiryazi	Kiryazi				
Lorandır	Lorandır				
Marderos	Marderos		Martiros	Armenian	
Mardhoroz	Mardhoroz		Martiros	Armenian	
Marina	Marina	f		Greek	
Marko	Marko			Greek	
Marteros	Marteros		Martiros	Armenian	
Melek	Melek	f		Persian/Turkish	
Melek	Melek	f		Persian/Turkish	
Melek-Hatun	Melek	f		Persian/Turkish	
Melike	Melike	f		Persian/Turkish	
Merderos	Merderos		Martiros	Armenian	
Merderos	Merderos		Martiros	Armenian	
Merdros	Merdros		Martiros	Armenian	
Mıgırdic	Mıgırdic		Mkrtič'	Armenian	

Mıgırdiç	Mıgırdiç		Mkrtič'	Armenian	
Migtezi	Migtezi		Mahtesi	Armenian	
Mihal	Mihal			Greek	
Murad	Murad			Persian/Turkish	
Nadir	Nadir			Persian/Turkish	
Nikola	Nikola			Greek	
Nikola	Nikola			Greek	
Nurbek	Nurbek			Persian/Turkish	
Obernemo	Obernemo				
Orhan	Orhan			Persian/Turkish	
Ovakim	Ovakim		Yovakim	Armenian	
Parinkok	Parinkok				
Parkvork	Parkvork				
Parun	Parun			Armenian	
Parun	Parun			Armenian	
Parun Gök	Parun			Armenian	
Paşacık	Paşacık			Persian/Turkish	
Perpul	Perpul				
Prenkor Kalyoroz Sahak	Sahak			Armenian	
Pulbek	Pulbek			Persian/Turkish	
Pulbek	Pulbek			Persian/Turkish	
Sa'âdet	Sa'âdet			Persian/Turkish	
Sa'âdet	Sa'âdet	f		Persian/Turkish	
Sabi-Melek	Sabi-Melek	f		Persian/Turkish	
Şadhibek	Şadhibek			Persian/Turkish	
Safer-Melek	Safer-Melek	f		Persian/Turkish	
Sahak	Sahak			Armenian	
Sahak	Sahak			Armenian	
Sarova	Sarova				
Shirin	Shirin	f		Persian/Turkish	
Simon	Simon			Greek	
Sultan	Sultan			Persian/Turkish	
Sürme- Hatun	Sürme- Hatun	f		Persian/Turkish	
Tabtak	Tabtak				
Taci-Hatun	Taci-Hatun	f		Persian/Turkish	
Tanrıvermiş	Tanrıvermiş			Persian/Turkish	
Tanrıvermiş	Tanrıvermiş			Persian/Turkish	
Tavus	Tavus				
Urhandi	Urhandi	f			

Yahya	Yahya			Biblical	
Yahya	Yahya			Biblical	
Ya'kub	Ya'kub			Biblical	
Yami	Yami				
Yunus	Yunus			Biblical	
Zekeriyya	Zekeriyya			Biblical	