

THE COUNTRY, THE PEOPLE AND THE CULTURE



Land

Turkey lies between Asia and Europe, serving as a bridge geographically, culturally and economically. Its location on two continents plays a central part in Turkish history and gives the country a major advantage in serving the markets of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Turkey is situated between 260 and 450 E, in the temperate middle latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. In the west it borders on Greece and Bulgaria, in the east on Georgia, Armenia, Nakhichevan and Iran, and in the south on Iraq and Syria. The area of Turkey is 774,815 square kilometers. 97% of Turkey lies in Asia (the Anatolian Plateau) and 3% in Europe (Thrace). The seacoasts of Turkey stretch for 8,210 kilometers along the Mediterranean in the south, the Aegean in the west and the Black Sea in the north. In the northwest there is also the important inland Sea of Marmara, between the straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus,

important waterways that connect the Black Sea with the rest of the world. The country is roughly rectangular in shape, measuring 1,600 kilometers from east to west, and 650 from north to south.

The high plateau region of Anatolia rises progressively towards the east and is divided by valleys formed by 15 rivers, including the Tigris and the Euphrates, which originate in eastern



Anatolia and flow southward to the Persian Gulf through Syria and Iraq. The largest river entirely within Turkey is Kızılırmak, which flows northward past Ankara to the Black Sea. Among the numerous lakes there are some, such as Lake Van, which are as large as inland seas.



The topography is extremely varied and climatic conditions differ widely among regions. The major part of the country consists of highland plateaus surrounded by mountainous areas, which rise towards the east and are dominated by Mount Ararat with a height of 5,165 meters. In the east, winter temperatures may fall to -40°C while in the southeast, summer temperatures may reach 45°C .

With 81 administrative provinces, Turkey is divided into seven geographical regions: the Marmara Region, the Black Sea Region, the Mediterranean Region, the Eastern Anatolian Region, the Aegean Region and the Central Anatolian Region, each of which possesses unique climatic and ecological features.



Population

When one looks at Turkish society in the last quarter of the 20th century, one is first struck by the intense dynamism and youth of its population. More than 50% of Turkey's population is below the age of 25 and as a result of that youth, society is in a state of activity and change. This change is evident in the economic, social, physical, cultural and political dimensions. Opening up to the outside world, domestic and foreign population movements, changes in professional structure, increasing demands for the services provided to society are just a few of the areas in which this activity and mutability are to be seen.



According to the former general census conducted in 2000, the population of the country has become 67,8 million. Turkey's population density is 88 persons per sq. km. on the average. The density is greatest in the western coastal regions. However, nearly 35% of the population still lives in rural areas despite the significant migration into towns. The major cities and their population according to general census of 2000 are; İstanbul (10 million), Ankara the capital city which is situated in the center of the Anatolian plain (4 million), İzmir (3.4 million), Konya (2.2 million), Bursa (2.1 million), Adana (1.9 million), Antalya (1.7 million).

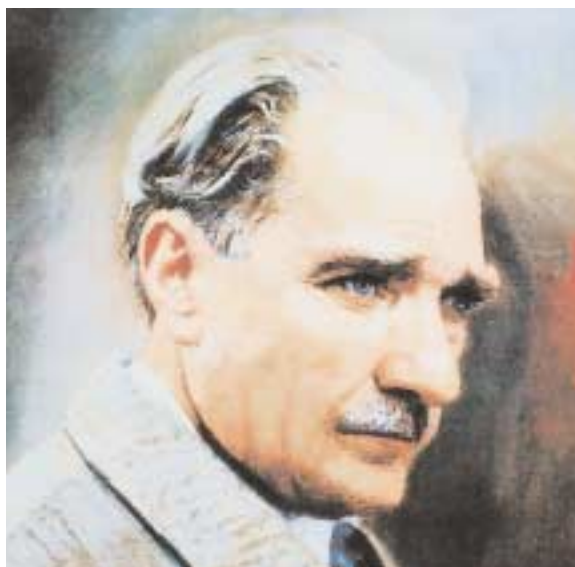
Of the economically active population, 35.4% is employed in the agricultural sector in 2001. Industry employs 18.3% of the working population. The service sector employs 46.3% of the working population.

99% of the population of Turkey is Moslem,





the remaining being Jews and members of various Christian churches, including Greek Orthodox, Gregorian, and Syrian Orthodox. However, everyone in Turkey has freedom of religion and



belief. Turkey is a secular state that guarantees complete freedom of worship to non-Moslems.

The Turkish Language

The geographical area where the Turkish language spread in parallel to Turkish history is very extensive. It extends over a large geographical area in Europe and Asia and shows many variations of dialect. Today, it is spoken in the Azeri, the Türkmeni, the Tartar, the Uzbeki, the Bashkurti, the Nogay, the Kirghiz, the Kazak, the Yakuti, the Civas and other dialects. The Turkish spoken in Turkey is that of the Turkish language group coming from the southwestern branch of the Uralic-Altai language family. The name of the script of the language spoken in Turkey is called Turkish. In the classification of the Turkish spoken in Turkey proper, the dialect falls into the southwestern dialects of the Western Turkish language family and also into the dialects of the Oguz Turkmeni Language group. When the Turkish spoken in Turkey is considered in a historical context, it can be classified in three separate periods because of the inherent characteristic of each of the periods:

- 1) Old Anatolian Turkish (old Ottoman - between the 13th and the 15th centuries)
- 2) Ottoman Turkish (from the 16th to the 19th century)
- 3) Turkey Turkish (20th century)

At present in the Republic of Turkey spoken and written Turkish is a derivative of the old Anatolian Turkish and Ottoman Turkish.

The first written scripts of the Turkish language to be found are the Orhun Monuments, which were carved on stone towards the end of the 7th and the first half of the 8th century. The Orhun monuments, which were raised first in honor of Kultigin in 732, then for Bilge Khan in 735 and for Tonyukuk in 720, are still considered

masterpieces of Turkish language, literature and history from the point of view of their content and language. The perfection of the language used in the records, which document the social and the political life of the Göktürk Dynasty, proves that Turkish, as a language of letters, has been in use since ancient times.

The most important event in Turkey after the First World War and the War of Independence was the disappearance of the institutions, social classes, philosophy of life, style and language of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, based on a new regime, mentality and social order.

The founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal, the father of the Turks, ATATÜRK believed that Turkey should benefit from the culture of the West in order to reach the level of contemporary modern civilizations. It is because of this that a version of the Latin alphabet reflecting Turkish phonetics was adopted in 1928. The Turkish Language Institute was established in 1932 to carry out linguistic research and contribute to the natural development of the language.

Folklore and Customs

Turkey has very rich folkloric traditions, which have been kept alive for centuries due to the characteristics of Turkish people. Folk music accompanies Anatolian people every single



moment of their lives. Every individual creates his own folk music suitable for his own situation. People create their own music, and do not write it down, but pass it from one to the other and the "Aşıklar" (Troubadours) who sing and play this music keep it alive. Turkish folk dance is also very vibrant and varied. Each region has its characteristic dance with particular costumes, steps, rhythms and instruments. Turkish people are very inventive in creating new dances for different situations. There are particular dances for weddings, for harvest or for guest welcoming and so on. Horon, a very fluid and swift dance, is peculiar to the Black Sea Region; Kaşık Oyunu, played



with spoons, is performed from Konya to Silifke; Kılıç-Kalkan is practiced in Bursa in memory of the capture of the city by the Ottomans; Zeybek, peculiar to the Aegean Region, symbolizes courage and heroism.

There are also some traditional sports, which are also occasions for celebration. They are essentially Turkish, largely unchanged and should be seen. Greased Wrestling (Ya lı Güreş) is the Turkish national sport dating from Ottoman times and every year in July wrestling championships is held in Kırkpınar, outside Edirne.

The contest is made more difficult by the fact that the wrestlers smear themselves with oil. The army was kept in good physical condition by this sport at Ottoman times. Cirit (javelin throwing) is a fast-paced game played on horseback. The



sport originates in Central Asia, where it was developed by soldiers to improve their fighting skills. Riders on fast horses throw short javelins to teammates who are also on horseback. The most important rule is to catch the javelin in the air. This game is mostly performed in Konya and Eastern Turkey.

Turkish folklore is varied, but there are some celebrated characters who reflect the peculiarities of Turkish people. Nasreddin Hoca is the best known. Tales of the Hoca abound and still enjoy great popularity. They have varied over the years and alter with the interpretation of the storytellers. They mostly begin, "One day Hoca..." and go on with his adventures, comic parables that expose the folly of man.

Other important figures in Turkish folklore are Karagöz and his friend Hacivat. According to legend, they were working as workmen in the construction of Bursa's Ulu Mosque. Their satiric jokes made the sultan very angry and anxious about whether Karagöz and Hacivat could encourage rebellion in others, so they were condemned to death. The construction of the

mosque was completed without them, but their comrades did not forget them and kept their jokes alive, telling them over and over. In time, the adventures of Karagöz and Hacivat gained a new dimension and the traditional Turkish shadow puppet theatre was born. Shadow puppets cut from camel hide and painted to look like Karagöz and Hacivat are held against a wide white cloth and operated as a strong light shines from behind. Karagöz and Hacivat still come to life today, with the addition of some new characters. The stories include everything about human existence, from moral plays to the classic encounters between husband and wife. Unfortunately, shadow theatres are seldom seen today except in a few places and on some special occasions. In Bursa, the Karagöz Antique Shop sometimes organizes shadow puppet theatre plays and often has modern puppets of Karagöz and Hacivat for sale.

Hospitality is one of the cornerstones of the Turkish way of life. Following the teachings of the Koran and their naturally friendly instincts, Turkish people are the most gracious and generous hosts. Every individual feels bound to honor his guest in the best possible manner. They will happily open their houses to a guest and in all sincerity offer the best seat and cook the best food. Turkish people are tolerant of foreign customs



but relate to visitors according to their traditional code of hospitality. That hospitality says that whatever religion you belong to, whichever country you come from, whatever language you speak, you are "God's Guest", so deserve to be welcomed in the best manner.

The coffee-house (kahvehane) is at the heart of any Turkish community. Even the smallest village has at least one where men used to smoke hubble-bubble pipes (nargile) while talking about

yet discovered. And each has left its mark in terms of buildings and works of art. Turkey offers a wealth of study for art historians and archaeologists alike; it is a real open-air museum of art and architecture

The Hittites rose to prominence in Anatolia in 1800 BC and reigned until 1200 BC. They were experts in metalwork and have left behind delicate statues made from gold, bronze and copper, mainly of the fertility goddess they worshiped.



the matters of the day. You can still smoke nargile but only in a few coffee-houses. If you ever had a chance to see a kahvehane, especially in İstanbul, take the time to sip a cup of strong Turkish coffee and perhaps play a round of Tavla, the Turkish national game of Backgammon.

With the stress that Islam places on cleanliness, a feature of Turkish life that has become an international symbol of the country is the Turkish bath (hamam). There have been public bathhouses since medieval times and the older tiled and marbled baths retain an architectural and historical importance.

Art and Architecture

Anatolia has been home to many cultures and civilizations in the course of a history that dates back to some of the earliest human settlements

Many examples of these are on exhibition at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. Metal tablets written in Hittite hieroglyphics give us some clues about the daily, and ceremonial, lives of the Hittites. In their capital, Hattuşaş (Bozazköy), still stand the remnants of the temple, the Royal Gate and the Lion Gate, which give a sense of the splendor of the Hittite Empire.

The scale, frequency and the quality of the remains from the Greek and Roman Empires in Turkey, especially on the southern Mediterranean coast, impart the feeling that you have traveled through a time machine and arrived in the Hellenistic Era. Most cities and towns in Turkey have museums preserving the artifacts, sculptural reliefs, statues, jewellery, household utensils, frescoes and mosaics that at one time littered the country. Perhaps more importantly,



there are some ancient cities that exhibit their treasures as an open-air museum. The most memorable of these are Pergamum, on the Aegean coast, Aphrodisias with the Temple of Aphrodite, and the astounding Ephesus, with its wide streets bordered by Corinthian columns, amphitheaters, and world famous Temple of Artemis - one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.

By the 4th century, the Roman Empire had been divided into East and West, and Christianity was firmly rooted in both, giving rise to the numerous churches and monasteries spread all over the country. Cappadocia in particular displays magnificent examples of these monuments carved into rock and decorated with colored frescoes. The Byzantine churches or basilica have their own unique style that blends Roman and oriental influences. The great Saint Sofia in İstanbul, built during the reign of Emperor Justinian, is



the largest Christian basilica on earth. Its interior is marble and decorated with mosaics of deep blue and rich red. Sumela Monastery near Trabzon is another important Byzantine ruin.

In 1071, the Seljuk Turks won a decisive victory over the Byzantine Empire and from then on, the Turkish presence in Anatolia was permanent. The Seljuks brought with them new artistic elements from Asia. The outstanding characteristics of Seljuk architecture were tall gateways with ornamental stalactites, archways and ceramic tiling. The exteriors of Seljuk mosques are impressive, although not as decorative as Ottoman mosques. The Alaeddin Mosque in Konya is perfect example of the Seljuk mosque and rivaled only by the Ulu Mosque in the same city, which boasts an elaborately patterned and ornamented interior. The medreses (universities of that time), mosques, inns, bridges, roads and many other artifacts of the daily life of the Seljuks can be observed in any part of the country.

After the Seljuks, came the world famous Ottoman Empire, which contributed, immeasurably to Turkish art and architecture. The Ottomans built mosques with rich, decorated interiors. The Green Mosque in Bursa carries all the characteristics of Ottoman art and architecture, and its tiles are unique to the age and Ottoman artistic style. After the Ottomans took over İstanbul, they contributed the great architect Mimar Sinan to the architectural world. His mosques, among them Süleymaniye in İstanbul and Selimiye in Edirne, are masterpieces. The Ottomans also did intricate and beautiful work in interior decoration, weapons and helmets. Precious examples of Ottoman arts and crafts, such as carpet weaving, tile making, miniatures and many other arts, are exhibited in the Turkish Islamic Arts Museum and in Topkapı Palace in İstanbul.