

**Observations on Turkey<sup>1</sup>**  
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**Visit of September 13-29, 2010**

This was a program sponsored by the Turkish Cultural Foundation. Most participants were linked to museums or cultural activities. I was the only political scientist. Jane was able to come. The program was intensely organized and was richer and had more depth than I could have imagined. The range of geographic places that we visited were greater than any tourist would have seen, from Istanbul to Edirne in Thrace, to Gallipoli and Çanakkale (Troy) in the south, Izmir (Nicaea), Bursa (an early capital), then across country to Ankara via Bepazari, up to Amasya, Tokat, Sivas, down to Nevsehir (Cappadocia) and Konya. We stayed in elegant hotels and had meetings with the most knowledgeable people who told us about carpets, tiles, music, culture. We also met with diplomatic and foreign policy officials, and business and academic leaders. I came early and made private contacts on my own. The people who organized and ran the program were gracious and helpful beyond words. The participants were congenial and interesting. These are some non-systematic selected observations and impressions, followed by some favorite experiences. As I said on the trip, I reserve the right to revise and reconsider any and all remarks.

**Selected Observations**

**History:** There are 20 civilizations in Turkey. We kept seeing layer upon layer upon layer. In Istanbul, the “old city” is 2700 years old, the “new” city 1600 years old. In Detroit, we are proud of the history of our city that dates to the 1790s. Is there any other country in the world like this?

**Religion and politics.** Mustapha Kemal Ataturk decided to separate religion completely from the political sphere. Religious symbols and rhetoric are not used, and the clergy are not involved. There are no religious weddings (unless after a civil service) and personal status issues (marriage, divorce, inheritance, property) follow civil law. A big symbolic issue is that women cannot cover their heads in public places such as the university. Ironically, the state funds mosques and pays imams. This is a means of monitoring them rather than of empowering them. To Americans, who allow religious figures to perform marriages but fight public funds for religion, this is far from separation of religion and state, but it is their way of working out these issues.

The current prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is from an Islamic party. His wife is covered and he once had a beard. He sent his daughters to the US so they could get an education and stay covered. [“I prefer the American model over the French model,” he said about head scarf policy]. While mayor of Istanbul in 1999, he was imprisoned for four months for quoting a religious poem at a rally (“The mosques are our barracks, the domes are our helmets, and the minarets are our bayonets”). To tourists, Istanbul is a shining city, a touch of the West in the East, but there are poor neighborhoods that have been left out of the boom. This is Erdogan’s base. (Jane and I were walking near the spice market and accidentally crossed the invisible line, into a neighborhood that was not sparkling. She wanted to leave). Many Kamalists are very concerned about him. We arrived just as Turkey passed a referendum amending the constitution. It was very complex with 26 provisions. Erdogan backed it, the opposition opposed. My impression is that while everyone was talking about this issue, no one understood what it contained (apart from adding extra members to the supreme court, allowing parliament to approve appointments rather than letting the court choose its own members, lifting immunity from military officers who led a coup in 1960, and creating a stronger President). Note: Turkey has a French-type system with a

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<sup>1</sup> These notes were sent to all members of the group, to interested friends and colleagues (I mentioned their availability on the university forum), to interested and former students, to friends and family. The two essays at the end were published in the internet outlets identified.

President and (strong) prime minister). People seemed to form views of the referendum based on their opinion of Erdogan. This is how we form opinions in the US so this is no surprise. A young man said to me, "He is strong and clever." We heard a presentation by some top business people, all of whom would be opponents of Erdogan. They said the economy was in the toilet until 2002 when Erdogan took over. Today it is booming. A Turkish colleague in Dearborn says, "People don't care about religious issues. They are making money."

**Data on religious observance:** Mango cites a 1990 study. 92% fast during Ramadan, 46% pray daily, 62% attend Friday prayers, 7% have made Hajj but 71% would like to. 68% have sacrificed a sheep on Feast of Sacrifice. Regarding folk religion, 53% have visited the shrine of a holy man and 12% have amulets. Regarding law, 21% like Sharia law but only about 10% genuinely want it to be implemented. There is clearly a disconnect between elite religious culture and popular religious culture. This appears to overlap with class to an extent and is not sustainable over time.

**Turkish law:** Ataturk created a new legal system. They took commercial law from Switzerland, property law from Germany, trade law from UK, and criminal law from France. They abolished Islamic law in all these cases. It might have been logical to retain Islamic law for personal status matters. Israel and the Arab world retained the Ottoman practice of having different laws for different religio-ethnic communities, but Ataturk wanted to make a clean break.

**Anecdote:** I sat next to a female lawyer in international law. She is blond, pretty, personable. Her heritage is Albanian. She is a fourth generation lawyer. Her husband was French and she lived in Paris. She once met Jacques Chirac when he was president. He was stunned that she was a Turk and a Muslim and not covered. "You must be unique," he said. No comment.

**Conversation about religion:** A woman tells two stories: She and husband live in a waterfront apartment complex. The top apartment was vacant for a year, then sold for over \$2 million to someone whose wife is covered. A religious family this successful would not have happened in the past. The husband is one of the business class previously blocked out but now thriving because of the Islamic-friendly government. The two women are cordial. Also, the person who fixes her hair started covering. She asked why. The stylist said someone offered to pay her transportation costs if she would cover. Clearly, the Islamic movement is opening up opportunities for the rich and the not so rich.

**Division:** There is an Association of Industry and Business and an Association of *Muslim* Industry and Business. Turkey is moving towards a two-track institutional system. This is similar to what happened in the late 1800s in Italy when the Catholic Church created unions, parties, and social organizations to compete. It is hard to tell where this will lead.

**Apprehension:** Turks are apprehensive about the future. They cannot tell which way Turkey is moving, domestically or internationally. In 20 years much will be changed but no one is certain how. Will Turkey be more Islamist? Most certainly, yes. Will Turkey be less linked to the West and more to the East? Who knows? Everyone is nervous. [A colleague asked an Armenian Turk to predict the minority situation in 20 years. "Either it will be better or it will be a massacre"].

**The Turk?** There is no racial type in Turkey. As we were told on the first day, any of you could be a Turk. In two weeks, I saw people who looked as if they could be from Norway and others who looked like an extra in the Mongolian film, "The Weeping Camel." I saw women in Islamic garb, in tribal garb, in western garb, in knee length shorts. Stereotypes and generalizations do not work (although there is said to be localized patterns in the regions).

**Conversation on race:** Our guide was in the US and applied for a Social Security card. One question asked her race. In Turkey this would be an insult, illegal to ask, and she could take the matter to the police. “Fascists ask that question,” she says. The clerk insists that she fill it out. She refuses. The clerk insists. She says she doesn’t know her race. The clerk is irritated and thinks she is evading the question. The clerk asks her country, gets out a large book, and finds Turkey. “You are a white non-Hispanic Caucasian,” she says, and marks it on the form. On my campus she would be a “person of color,” even if she doesn’t want to be. Imposed self-identity.

**Istanbul:** Istanbul is one of the most beautiful cities I have ever seen. It straddles the rich blue Bosphorus, with Europe on one side and Asia on the other. The center of the city, which tourists see, reminds me of the imperial rectangle in Vienna, where all the castles and museums are. A street car moves people through the center of the city cheaply and quickly. It is a danger to pedestrians who get off the crowded sidewalks to walk in the street and on the tracks when there is no train. I almost got hit once because I was not paying attention to the trolley bell. A kind, concerned person drew my attention to my pending death. The Istanbul subway/train system, which goes out of the city, is clean, fast, efficient, inexpensive, air conditioned. It cost 1.5 Turkish Lira for a token to go all the way to the end of the line. Of the people on the train I took to Koç university, none of the younger women were covered. Physically, the mix of people ranged from blond to olive skin to Asian. I thought this could be a mix of Americans in any city.



The name Istanbul is a modified Constantinople. The Greek Istanpole means city. The Turks turned p into b, o to u, and dropped the e. I guess you *can* go back. Istanbul has 13-15 million people in a city built for a few million. Long traffic jams freeze up traffic. It took three hours to get out of the city when we headed to Ankara. All across the country, the cities look clean and well designed with broad boulevards and traffic that flows nicely. City centers are alive and thriving. Better off people live in the center in beautiful apartment complexes. People walk brusquely in the streets. They are nicely dressed. There is a sense of prosperity, optimism and success. As someone from Detroit, a city in collapse, this was very noteworthy.

**National independence:** After World War I, the Allied powers decided to break up the Ottoman Empire and to partition Turkey itself. The Arab states were taken by Britain and France (the Turks decided to let them go) but then the Turkish homeland itself was invaded from several directions at once by the British, French, Italians, and the Greeks, their western neighbor. This was done in collaboration with local minority communities and their militias, particularly the Greeks and Armenians. Both communities had been treated very badly during the war and wanted out. Istanbul was occupied. The initial proposal was to put Turkey under several “protectorates,” i.e., they would have foreign troops in their land and lose control of their policies. This was the Treaty of Sevres. The Sultan and his government actually accepted these terms. But like DeGaulle during World War II, when Vichy agreed to let Germany control the north of their country, Ataturk shouted “no” and others rallied behind him. He outlined these events in his famous Six Day Speech--Turks call it *The Great Speech*-- delivered to his followers in 1927 to discuss the history of their national struggle. The speech has extensive inclusion of primary sources: telegrams, memoranda, discussions, and speeches. What is surprising, given the ultimate success of the Turkish forces is how much doubt there was that they could pull it off. The army was weak and demoralized and lacked weaponry or financial support. Some Turks wanted a deal.

One proposal, which the nationalists discussed, was to give the Americans a protectorate over the whole country. Proponents saw the U.S. as fair and respectful of Turkish culture and dignity. In fact, Wilson was the son of a Presbyterian minister who was getting first-hand reports from missionaries taking in Armenian refugees. He was exceptionally sympathetic to the

Armenians, who had died in large numbers during the war under cruel circumstances which they and most scholars call a genocide. Others escaped their fate by converting to Islam. This was especially true of young women. [Those interested in these events can read Leo Kuper's well respected book *Genocide*, which has a concise chapter on 1915]. In the end, Wilson actually proposed an American protectorate over Armenia (Turkish *and* Russian) but the Senate rejected it. One Turkish proposal, which Ataturk discussed, was to move all remaining Armenians (most of the survivors were in Istanbul or today's Syria and Lebanon) into the Armenian provinces in the far east. Ataturk said this was unworkable because most of the populations in those provinces were Turks or Kurds, most Armenians were urban people from the western or central cities who would not want to go, and there were vengeful elements that would not welcome them. (Note: Turkish legislation in the 1920s prohibited reclaiming lost property).

To the Turkish nationalists after the war, the Greek and Armenian communities were security threats. Ataturk reprints telegrams urging local authorities to protect minorities from abuse but also to crush their militias. The Greeks were seen as a particular threat since they were situated in the west near the Greek border. A painting in the National Independence Museum shows the massacre of a Turkish village by Greek soldiers. Prominent in the painting is a Greek Orthodox priest in full black robes, holding high the cross, blessing the Greek soldiers as the Turks die. The caption below says it has been confirmed that the priests were intimately involved in blessing and encouraging the destruction of Turkish villages. This is a familiar way of looking at things, to portray violence in religio-cultural terms rather than political terms. It makes post-conflict reconciliation very difficult. As Ernst Renan said, to unite your country it is sometimes necessary to forget history or even to fabricate it. Emphasizing such events, even when they are true, is not good, especially since the Turks committed their own atrocities. In the end, the League of Nations worked out a plan for what was delicately called a "population exchange" in which Greeks in Turkey (1.5 million) would be sent to Greece and Turks in Greece (half a million) would be sent to Turkey. (The League referred to them as Muslims and Christians) Because many fled in advance, the numbers finally "transferred" were 180,000 Greeks and 354,000 Turks. There was much suffering. A British official (Lord Peel) was so pleased with the result that he wrote a proposal in 1937 to "transfer" the Palestinians out of Palestine to create a homogeneous Jewish state. We still hear this rhetoric, that Jews left the Arab world so pushing out the Palestinians would be even-stein. Some ideas have long legs.

**Conversation:** A Turkish professor from Michigan learns that I am from UM-Dearborn, where there is an Armenian Research Center. His first words were, "You are pounding us and making the situation very difficult, dwelling on things that happened a hundred years ago." We have one professor in that program, someone who lived and studied in Turkey. I have never heard him mention the events of 1915. I am on the ARC advisory committee now organizing the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. I know how Armenians feel about what happened to them but have not heard a single reference to those events. I did not have a chance to talk to him to see what he meant, but feelings are strong and polarized, on both sides.

**National Independence Museum:** The National Independence Museum/Ataturk Mausoleum was to me the most valuable visit since it showed the Turkish view of their history. I could have spent hours there. It was very nice to see groups of well-behaved school children in neat lines, some with flowers, coming to the mausoleum. In the museum, there were exhibits, pictures and paintings of scores of key leaders, dramatic paintings of the battles of Gallipoli and the post-war invasion and resistance. I was reminded of the wrap-around diorama in

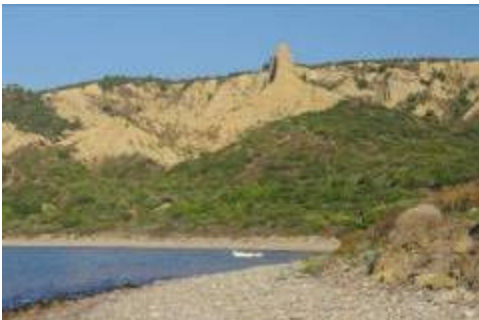


Gettysburg which puts the visitor in the middle of combat. I have always told my students that Ataturk is one of the great leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but after this, my respect for him and what he achieved is even greater. The museum has quotes from Ataturk and the national forces.

- “It is the basic principle to recognize the national forces as the only power, and to rely on the questionable superiority of the national will.” Sivas and Erzurum Congresses
- “All parts of the Homeland constitute the indivisible integrity of the country within its national boundaries.” Erzurum Congress.
- “There is no defense line, there is defense surface and that surface is the whole country. Not one inch of our country can be abandoned unless drenched with the blood of its people.” Ataturk, 1921. He sounds like Churchill, his back to the wall, saying, “we will fight them in the streets...we will never surrender.”

I noted that many of the generals and key leaders were from the outlying provinces, often where there were mixed populations. Ataturk was from Europe, Inono (Ataturk’s close ally and successor) was from a Kurdish region (and was sometimes suspected of having a Kurdish background). As I tell my students, revolutionary leaders are often from the outside of the inside. They are in the power structure but not at its center, and are often ethnic minorities or from ethnically mixed areas. This may be the case here.

**Gallipoli.** For me, this was a unique experience. I lecture on this battle, but seeing the site was something I never thought I would do. In 1915, with the war in Europe stalled in the trenches and all sides taking massive losses, Churchill, the head of the Naval office, decided to land massive forces on the Gallipoli peninsula south of Istanbul, create a presence there, and force the Ottomans to pull back from the Eastern Front, where they were inflicting great damage on the Russians. The British also urged the Arabs to start an uprising, promising them a kingdom at the end of the war if they did. [Three most common lies: I love you, the check’s in the mail, and you can trust me to do what I promise]. The attack started with a naval bombardment but the Turks sank three British ships so that failed. Then came the land invasion. There is a famous story about how the Turkish 57<sup>th</sup> Regiment was being overwhelmed. Ataturk sent them a message: “I am not ordering you to fight. I am ordering you to die. In the time it takes us to die, other commanders and troops can come and take our place.” That unit was virtually obliterated, but



they held their position. There is a monument to their courage at the site. Later he sent a message to the whole of his soldiers: “Every soldier who fights here with me must realize he is honour-bound not to retreat one step. Let me remind you all, that if you want to rest, there will be no rest for our whole nation throughout eternity. I am sure that all our comrades agree on this, and they will show no sign of fatigue until the enemy is finally hurled into the sea.” In these two statements, Ataturk showed the qualities

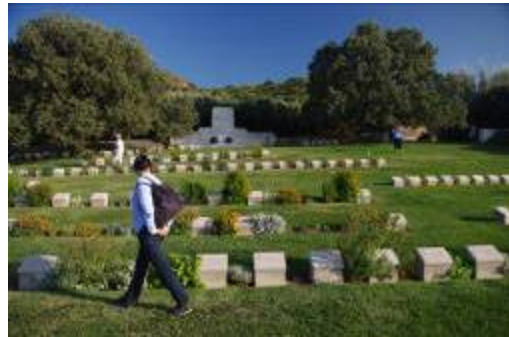
associated with his amazing leadership. He was blunt, candid, honest, to the point, and so logical that his judgment could not be questioned. For the Allies, the attack was a tragedy. With one or two exceptions, they never got off the beaches, and when they rose, they were pushed back. Churchill was driven into political exile for a generation.



Today, the memorials in the 31 cemeteries emphasize the honorable rules of combat, the truces to rescue wounded or dead soldiers, the times one side provided food or water for the other, the time a Turkish soldier carried a wounded British soldier to safety. But at the time, the battle was deadly and without mercy. The stones of the dead speak their identity, and their tragedy. The Turkish stones report the home town: Van, Halep,



Sofya, Baku, Ankara. The allied stones add poetry:



“He died a man and closed his life’s brief day ere it scarce begun” or “God stands within the shadow and watches o’er his own.” One borrowed from

Stevenson’s epitaph: “Gladly did I live, and gladly die, and I laid me down with a will.” One is identified as a mule driver, a “Musselman soldier of the Indian army.” The most moving quotation was what Atatürk wrote in 1934 when told that a ship with relatives of the allied dead had landed at Gallipoli and were mourning. He quickly



had landed at Gallipoli and were mourning. He quickly penned a message to them. His words are now chiseled in Turkish and English on a memorial at the site: “Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives.../You are now



lying in the soil of a friendly country/ Therefore rest in peace/There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments to us where they lie side by side here in this country of ours/ You, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries/ wipe away your tears/your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace/After having lost their lives on this land/they have become our sons as well.” The British version of this battle by A. D. Hope is of a different tone: “Linger not, stranger, shed no tear/Go back to those that sent us here/We are the young they drafted out/ to wars their folly brought about/Go tell those old men safe in bed/we took their orders and are dead.” It is hard to shake the memory of this battlefield, even for someone whose country was not involved. Once a year, the Turks hold a sunrise service in this terrible, beautiful place. Gallipoli Day is the national day of Australia and New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>

**Gallipoli losses.** There are different numbers cited. Some confusion is because of the distinction between fatalities (deaths) and casualties (which includes dead, wounded, missing, disabled because of illness). Fromkin (*A Peace to End All Peace*), says “each side had suffered a quarter million casualties.” Husseyin Uluarslan (*The Gallipoli Campaign*, sold locally) has similar numbers. He says “There is some doubt about the exact number of the Turkish losses” but the “official” figures for casualties are 251,309 for the Turks and 252,000 for the Allies (205,000 British and 47,000 French). These are within a thousand of each other, which sounds much too

<sup>2</sup> In October, 2010 an Australian archeological group was denied a permit because Christian Assyrians in Australia had been allowed to erect a monument to the Assyrian Genocide.

balanced to be hard data. (Note: I used this number once in a publication). Wikipedia reports “fatalities” only: Turkish side: 20,000. Allied side 33,770 (21,000 British, 10,000 French, 8,700 Australian, 2,700 New Zealand, 1,370 Indian). The Turkish number appears too rounded to be an actual count but would give a kill ratio of 1.69 in favor of the Turks. Uluarslan reports for the Turks: 55,127 killed, 100,177 wounded, 10,067 missing, 21,498 died of disease, and 64,251 evacuated sick. He says the Allies lost 36,000, which sounds rounded. With Uluarslan’s numbers we get a kill ratio of 1.57 in favor of the Turks. We know about battles of attrition that attackers take more losses than defenders, and the side holding the high ground takes less losses than those holding the low ground so these ratios make sense. The British withdrawal in the middle of the night with no losses has to be one of the great evacuations on record. The film *Gallipoli* with a young Mel Gibson gives the Australian view. The anti-war song by Eric Bogue, “And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda” is poignant and tragic. It may be the second greatest anti-war song ever written, the first being “No Man’s Land” also by Bogue

**Missing:** Not once do I hear or see any reference to the Tanzimat (reform movement of the 1800s) or the Young Turks. It was as if everything started in 1920 with Ataturk. Maybe it was because the Young Turk leaders wrecked the country and caused Ataturk grief. Some scholars think Ataturk continued the Young Turk movement—similar goals, similar persons-- under a different name. Eric Jan Zurcher says the Young Turk Era ended in 1950.

**Thought:** Ataturk was an authoritarian ruler but a consultative ruler and not a Stalinist figure. In the six-day speech, there is constant reference to consultation and votes. There were a core of leaders that Ataturk treated as a collaborative committee. Legalism was important. Once there was a challenge to his leadership and he submitted it to a secret ballot. This deliberation process meant that successive generations could evolve a more democratic process.

**Jews and Israel** Turkey has a long relationship with Jews. In 1492 when Jews and Muslims were expelled from Spain, they were welcomed to the Ottoman Empire and played a positive role in the country. During the 1930s, Ataturk welcomed Jewish professors who had lost their jobs in German universities. There are still synagogues in the city, but the Jews are very secular so these are more museums than places of worship. Turkey and Israel have a good relationship, politically and strategically, stronger after the 1960s. Turkey has played a very positive role in facilitating negotiations and trying to work out issues between Israel and Syria and Hamas and Iran. The relationship “is going through a rough spot,” as someone said. In 2008, the Turks hosted indirect talks between Israel and Syria but two days after Olmert stayed in the Prime Minister’s residence, the Israelis attacked Gaza. Erdogan felt used and blindsided. The situation got worse after the election of Netanyahu with his hard-line foreign minister Lieberman. The Deputy Israeli Foreign Minister insulted the Turkish ambassador over a Turkish television program that the Israelis considered anti-Semitic. The Israeli attack on the Gaza Flotilla this year, which killed 9 Turks on Mavi Marmara, was even more damaging. “We have never before had Turks killed by a friendly country, and in international waters,” said a Turkish official to our group. I tell students that many confrontations are pre-planned to send diplomatic messages, but I also tell students not to underestimate the role of human stupidity in historical outcomes. I think the Israelis are behaving very stupidly but maybe there are rational-actor elements that want to disrupt negotiations.



**Tomb of Suleiman the Magnificent** (Turks say Suleiman the Lawgiver). Jane and I arrived a few days before the group and went to the Suleymaniya mosque. The spectacular tomb of Suleiman was there plus the tomb of his ruthless wife Roxelana. The mosque was closed for renovation but the

tombs were open and there were scores of gravestones. The stones were of the most prominent personalities of the day and were very elaborate. I particularly noted the representations of anchors, bouquets, bells, and fruit, items you might find on American stones, but consistent with the Islamic prohibition of human representations. I loved it.

**Sinan the Architect:** Sinan built 360 buildings, many being mosques. Each one is a masterpiece. He was a Christian, probably Armenian, maybe Albanian, who converted to Islam. I had never heard of him before this trip. He is a part of universal culture, on the level of Leonardo, and deserves to be known by every educated person.

**Rustem Pasha mosque:** This small mosque is in Istanbul near the bridge. It was built by Sinan when he was an older man and is considered one of his most beautiful. It is filled with blue Iznik tiles. What a treat. One of our favorites.

**Foods:** I kept reminding myself that this was a culture program. It could easily have been a culinary tour. The food was fantastic, and at each point we were given a briefing on what the food was and why it was unique and why it reflected local specialties.

**Holy relics:** In the Holy Relics room at Topkapi Palace I saw the Sword of the Prophet Moses and the Sword of the Prophet David, the Turban of Joseph, and the armor of John (for his forearm). I also saw the Bow of the prophet (about 4 feet long. Now I know how close the prophet got to God since the *hadith*--an authenticated story from the life of Mohammed--says he was within two bow lengths during his famous Night Journey or *'isra* to Jerusalem, Surah 17:1). There was also the Sword of Ali and the Sword of the Prophet. (The Sword of the Prophet had many expensive jewels. I assumed Mohammed was a modest ruler and the vast wealth of the Muslim regime came the generation after his death as they expanded into Syria. This shows him a wealthy ruler). There is also the cloak of Hussein, very stylish with seven buttons down the front, like a Nehru jacket. It was in perfect shape. They should reproduce this and sell it. The Shia would buy it in droves. The shroud of Fatima is torn and decayed. There was great congestion around the chest that held the cloak of Mohammed. They have a ceremony once a year (called *destinal*, which means "hand" in Kurdish) to open this so that religious people can experience the presence of this cloak. Officials touch the cloak with handkerchiefs and distribute them. During Ramadan, when children go door-to-door, they are given candy or coins or handkerchiefs, an echo of this ceremony. This reminded me of a small "sacred heart" I had as a child. It supposedly had been blessed Pope Pius XII (which didn't do me, a Protestant, much good, but I was pleased to have it. In fact, I still have it). One man with a green turban with a red rose, a white robe, and two wives (the Turks are monogamous but some cheat) with kids stood in front of the display, palms up, having an epiphany. He was disrupting an already congested area. People kept telling him to move on but he was impervious. Another congested place was the display of three hairs of the prophet's beard. They were under magnifying glasses inside a glass case. To see them, you had to get very close, which meant one at a time, bending over. More congestion. I don't believe in relics, but the people there did.

**Surprise:** In the National Independence Museum, there is a beautiful miniature Koran in a metal case (2-3 inches) that Ataturk gave his daughter. This gave me a new insight into the man and his relationship with Islam. He was obviously more anti-clerical than anti-religion.



**Historic sites:** I will not comment on the amazing buildings in Istanbul. The Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia are beyond words (also crowded beyond words). The Hagia Sophia was a Greek



Orthodox cathedral, then turned into a mosque, then turned into a museum by Ataturk.<sup>3</sup> There are palaces, mosques, museums, as befitting a great civilization.

**Factoid:** We are told that the Gypsies run the flower business in Istanbul. My student is doing research on the Pakistanis who run the flower business in Paris. Given that the Gypsy language is Punjabi, I wonder about the connection.

**Royal hajj:** No sultan every made the hajj. They sent sultan's caravans each year for the poor (we see a painting) but never went themselves. The Saudi king goes every year.

**Dolmabaçe Palace:** This is an amazing place. It is truly grand and elegant and spectacular. The architects were Armenian, something we were told at the time, something I confirmed later. It was designed on a western style to impress the west with the power of the regime. (The Prussians did something similar in the 1700s, but not as grand). As I walked through it, I was dazzled with the beauty but had a sense that the Ottomans were like the Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanovs in that they were living in a fantasy world of elegant delusion. It was finished in 1856, the last gasp of a dying regime. They were on the verge of historical extinction (in 1920) but seemed not to realize it. As Lenin said, the masses perceive changes in the objective conditions before the elites. How appropriate that they modeled this on Versailles, a monument to a dynasty that lost touch with reality and was swept from the pages of history. I remembered that Lord Rothchild in England built his own mansion at about the same time, creating an ersatz heritage palace equipped with the most magnificent exhibits. His was a monument to wealth and power. This is a glorious monument to historic irrelevance.

**Painting:** There is a dramatic painting in the Modern Art Museum of the Ashura ceremony commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein, grandson of the prophet. In this ceremony, devoted men chant and strike themselves in the forehead to bleed to show they are willing to sacrifice for their faith. The Italian Zonaro (1909) painted himself in the middle of the ceremony. This ceremony is rare today. Our local Shia imam just criticized it in his column, saying it is not Islamic and makes Islam look bad. In Nabatieh in southern Lebanon an annual celebration of this ceremony brings observers from all over the country. In 1983, an Israeli military vehicle drove through the town square during the ceremony. One of my students was a young girl there with her parents. There was chaos and violence, with several Lebanese killed. The next day, an imam issued a ruling that every Muslim was obligated to resist the occupation of their country and the assault on Islam. Within weeks, the Marine barracks in Beirut was blown up and the Americans quickly withdrew. The Hezbollah "resistance" emerged to fight the Israelis, a fight that ended May, 2000 when the Israeli army withdrew from Lebanon under cover of night.

#### **Conversation with a Political Scientist at Koç University (with my elaboration)**

Minorities: My impression is that minorities are museum pieces rather than vibrant communities. Like the Christians in Jerusalem, they are trotted out for tourists but not functioning as real thriving communities. The professor says there are only pockets of Jews (30,000+), Greeks (2500), and Armenians (70,000), most in Istanbul. In time, their numbers will become so small that it will be impossible for young people to find spouses. The professor says he married at 25 but his Jewish colleague just got married at 40. I ask if matchmaking with Israelis is possible but

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<sup>3</sup>While we are there some Greek-Americans arrived and announced they were going into Hagia Sophia to pray. The government said this was "provocative" and prohibited the action. It reminded me of the militant Jews in Jerusalem who periodically march towards the Al Aqsa mosque to pray, hoping to reclaim it for Judaism. The government stops them.

since the Jews are very secular they would not accept such a thing. Implosion is what happened to the Jews in Aleppo and Damascus. Their last numbers were not driven out in the 1990s but simply faded away, not with a bang but a whimper. This will happen to the Turkish minorities. Istanbul was once one of those fabled places like Alexandria where the world came together to live and create a great civilization, but like Alexandria, Istanbul is losing its minorities.

More than one person we met said that the condition of minorities had improved considerably but there was still a way to go. Their honesty was admirable. The past had not been good. Minorities were once 15% of the population of Istanbul. During World War II, the government imposed a wealth tax that everyone agrees was administered in an arbitrary way, hostile to Jews and Armenians and Greeks. Some who could not pay were sent to work camps. The tax was revoked after 8 months. Then in 1954 there were riots against the Greeks, instigated by the government. Many left. Even today, with compulsory military service, minorities are put in separate, non-armed units. ("They get the bad military food but not the guns," says the professor). Minorities are heavily involved in business, professions, academics, but not law. Thoughts from a colleague: There are no minority officers in the military. Also, the Ottoman legacy is that only Muslims can be in the ruling class, which explains their absence from the law.

Before World War I, the minorities had separate (*millet*) legal systems headed by their Patriarchs and Rabbis. This covered personal status law (marriage, divorce, inheritance, property). A Christian could have one wife, a Muslim four. Unfortunately, these communities became political bodies, "protected" by and aligned with foreign powers, who used them as leverage against the Ottomans in the name of human rights. During and after the chaos of World War I, the Patriarchs (and their communities) became involved in domestic, that is to say, foreign, conflict. After Ataturk defeated the invasion of Turkey and the plan to partition it, the Turks created a single legal system and abolished the religious authorities. This created a similar situation to what we have in the US, one law for all. He also separated religious authorities from the legal and political system, for example, prohibiting them from performing marriages. Many ceremonies are religious but cannot be done unless there is a certificate of a civil ceremony.

The Kurds: The Kurdish heartland is in the southeast, next to Iraq. About half live there and half are dispersed. Istanbul is the largest Kurdish city. It is not clear how many Kurds there are since one cannot ask and some conceal their identity. Some even fail to teach their children Kurdish and Kurdish language is not taught in the schools. A published study says they are 13-16% of the population. The PKK (Kurdish Worker's Party, an extremist nationalist group) boycotted the referendum (over 2/3 of Kurds did not vote) but of those who voted over 2/3 supported it. The government spends more in the Kurdish regions than the amount of tax revenues but it is still the poorest area. The PKK has been very violent over the years with many thousands killed. A decade ago their leader Ocalan was expelled from Syria after Turkish threats and was captured in Nairobi (thank you, Israel and CIA). [During our program, the PKK killed nine soldiers with a mine]. The electoral system (which guarantees one seat for each of 81 provinces and proportional representation for the rest, with a 10% threshold) over-represents Kurds. [A colleague says the Kurdish parties get 5-6% and this serves to block them]. It takes 250,000 people to get a seat in Istanbul, 30,000 in some small provinces. PKK is illegal but is represented in parliament through front groups (think IRA and Sinn Fein. In 2007 they ran as independents, not subject to the threshold, then formed a bloc). PKK gets weapons from the Dutch, UK, and France, funded by the sale of drugs (out of Afghanistan) and human trafficking.

A strategic assessment: Turkey looks west. No one thinks of the East as a strategic option. It has nothing to offer us. The US is now weak. When threats emerge it will not be able to stabilize them. Europe is not strong. Russia will push as soon as it recovers, which will be soon. The Iranian regime is weak. Turkey must keep trade and diplomatic ties with it after it falls. The US-Turkish relationship will never be as close as it was a decade ago. The Iraq war harmed Turkey's

strategic interests.<sup>4</sup> “We must deal with the situation as it is, but it is not the same and never will be.” Turkey is an energy dependent country, “The Japan of the region.” We get oil from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Russia. We have to keep close ties with those states. *End of conversation*

**Meeting with Faruk Lo goglu, former Ambassador to the US.** He has a Ph. D. from Princeton. He is retired and is a public intellectual. He starts with a common Turkish point of pride: “This land is the land of all civilizations, except perhaps the Chinese, that have been created by man.” He says that the foundational structure of the state is being undermined by the government of eight years. The government has built roads, improved the economy, created a second layer of the middle class, and banned smoking in public places but they are “expanding the space of Islam at the expense of secularism.” Individuals are free to practice their religion, but not in the public domain. They are trying to change that. There are now restaurants that close for lunch during Ramadan, often under pressure. An art gallery was attacked last week because they served alcohol at the opening of a new exhibit. Drivers are forced to stop busses so that individuals can pray. The Prime Minister went to Sudan and said, “There is no genocide here. Muslims do not commit genocide.” Head cover has become politicized. Village people support this government because they believe that the more Islam they have the more freedom they have. This is having wider implications. “The growing influence of Islam has narrowed the space for minorities in addition to the space for secularists.” He favors allowing the headscarf in universities, but why do people consider the headscarf more important than getting an education? At the current time the Ministry of Religion has a bigger budget than the Ministry of Education.

Turkey and the US are going through a “difficult time” in their relationship. Polls show high levels of anti-American sentiment. Iraq is the big issue, as is Iran. “One of our greatest friends at the moment is Iran. Turkey must have good relations with Iran.” We are trying to mediate the issue of an Iranian bomb. We say we oppose but our actions say “but we don’t care too much.” Some Turks feel that an Iranian bomb would be another Islamic bomb and this would be good. During the recent election in Iran, “the civil society was silenced...Iran will break at some point.” Turkey can play a strong role with Syria and Palestine, but we are being marginalized. The US has been “most helpful” over the years regarding the PKK. But the PKK headquarters are now in northern Iraq and the Americans are not sufficiently responsive.

Until a few years ago, we had good relations with Israel. The flotilla incident changed this. Turkey wants an apology but Israel refuses. The Israeli lobby in the US always helped us (he refers to the genocide resolution) but no longer.<sup>5</sup> The genocide issue is “like a time bomb.” It has passed at committee level several times but never a chamber vote. “If ever an Armenian resolution passed the Senate or House it would be a great blow to our relations.” [Note: There is a political game here. Members vote for the resolution in committee, but it dies on the floor. Their Armenian constituents are happy, but the resolution never advances.]

Regarding the EU, there is resistance to Turkey’s membership. We are too big, too poor, and live in a “problematic neighborhood.” Once there was 75% support in Turkey for membership but now it is in the low 30s. Without Turkey, the EU is a private club of countries with similar cultures and a similar religion. Half of all Europeans do not want Turkey in the EU but majorities believe it will someday be in the EU. There are 36 chapters to join the EU. We have nine or ten to go. “There is a long way to go.”

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<sup>4</sup> Turkey feared that Iraq would fall into chaos, that Iran would be empowered, that the PKK would have a base in Iraqi Kurdistan, and that their large, profitable trade with Iraq would be disrupted. All came true.

<sup>5</sup> Last semester I showed my students two headlines from the Jewish press. One from a year ago said, “Genocide? What Genocide?” The one from this year (after the Gaza flotilla incident) said “Lobby discovers a Genocide.” Like the Communist Party in the 1930s, this lobby can turn on a dime. An individual once involved in the Armenian Assembly says the resolution passed both chambers in 1975.

Question (RS): If you are blocked in the EU and the East has little to offer, would Russia be a strategic option for Turkey? A: Some people think this is an opportunity. Trade is rising. Russian tourists are #1 in Turkey. Our energy needs are met by Russia. Investments are rising. But it is turning into a relationship of dependency and is going out of balance. We have fought the Russians dozens of times in history. Russian instincts will not change. Turkey must be wary of dependence. Russia can be a good partner but not a dependable one. *End of conversation.*

**Meeting with Serhat Aksent, Foreign Ministry official in charge of North American Affairs, and Dan O'Grady, American Deputy Chief of Mission.**

SA: Turkey and the US are close allies. They cooperate on Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, terrorism, global financial crisis. President Obama called this a "model partnership." It is unique and broad, combining a global power and a regional power. Obama's first official overseas bilateral trip (after Canada and Mexico) was to Turkey.

DO: We have disagreements but not tension with "our great ally." "The notion of Turkey going anywhere but West is out of the question." We support their EU membership 100% (endorse?) but with their muscular foreign policy, vibrant economy, and ties with so many countries, they may decide it is not in their interest. (I sensed a hint here). Ambassador Holbrook (Pakistan-Afghanistan portfolio) says Turkey is "the key ally." Since 2007 we have given them real time intelligence on PKK in Northern Iraq. Regarding Israel, Turkey has "a serious grievance."

SA: Our relationship with Israel has always been "very special." We share common values, are both working democracies, have strategic interests, a security relationship. We want to normalize our relationship. We hosted indirect talks between Syria and Israel. Olmert stayed in PM's residence. Two days later was the attack on Gaza. When the Gaza flotilla was attacked, our people were killed by a friendly country in international waters. "We were shocked by what happened to the flotilla. This was a friendly country. We helped Jews during the Nazi era. We ask two things of Israel: that they apologize and pay compensation. The ball is in their court."

The government has a policy of "zero conflict" with neighbors. We signed two protocols with Armenia. Regarding what they call a genocide and we call the events of 1915, we propose a commission to study the facts. Genocide is a serious legal term. These issues were addressed in the protocols but Armenia suspended them. We see the relationship with Armenia as a regional issue. There are "frozen conflicts" that need address, problems in Armenia, southern Caucasus, Azeri. After Russia attacked Georgia, we came up with a proposal. The Armenian diaspora in the US means the US has a role to play. We experienced "bitter events." The vote in the House was broadcast live in Turkey and the chair of our foreign policy was present. (Note: That which is a local ethnic politics issue in California is seen quite differently in Turkey).

The current negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians affect Syria and Lebanon. All the actors must be involved in the process. (Regarding Hamas) "If the process is incomplete the result will not be sustainable." *End of conversation*

**Insight brought home:** Turkey is a critical and central ally to the US, something I realized intellectually but which was brought home more powerfully. They are central players in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Syria, with Hamas, and in Israel. If the EU has vital interests in their relationships with Turkey, so do we. But US interests are different. The Israeli confrontations with Turkey have weakened the ability of Turkey to play a positive role, and has harmed US security interests in the area.

**EU:** There is no common view on the EU, which is dragging its feet in admitting Turkey. I heard the following range of views: We have no strategic option other than looking west. The East has

nothing to offer us; our economy is thriving. In ten years we will not need them, they will need us; the Europeans have an aging population and we have a young population. They have to work with us; We will never be accepted and must look elsewhere for allies; We must join the EU to check the drift to Islam; The EU is unstable and may not survive.

**The Alawites:** I asked several times along the way about the Alawites. This religious minority admires Ali, cousin of Mohammed, husband of his daughter Fatima, and a revered person in the Shia tradition. (The term Shia refers to the political supporters of Ali in the succession struggle). Every person I asked insisted that the Alawites were not Shia (of course they are, by definition), and were not connected to the Alawi in Syria [They have different ways of expressing Islam. The Asad family is of that community]. They were oppressed under the Ottomans and survived because they stayed in the mountains. They became very progressive with men and women nearly equal. They are politically leftist because the left supported and protected them. They are theologically heterodox, do not observe the rules to fast or pray, are 20% of the population

**Selimiye mosque in Edirne.** This is on the Greek border. It is the last mosque of Sinan, considered his masterpiece. It has four minarets (indicating patronage by the Sultan) and is quite spectacular inside and out. Nearby is a garden with Janissary gravestones. When the Janissaries were crushed in 1826, their graveyards were destroyed. Few stones survived. This is a unique display. The manager of our restaurant showed me around. I loved it.



**Regime Islam:** Ottoman Islam was regime Islam. The names of Hassan and Hussein and Ali were featured prominently in Hagia Sophia and elsewhere. The Ottomans did not acknowledge the distinction between Sunni and Shia Islam. Also, the Sultans wore silk, and often whole departments of government, even though the prophet taught against this.

**Mental hospitals.** In Aleppo in northern Syria, I once saw a mental hospital where patients were kept under subdued light and walked around a circle as a means of relaxing them. It was a very humane way to treat mental illness. We saw several such hospitals (Darussufa) which used a variety of very creative techniques. These included music therapy, warm and cool rooms, sweat therapy, dream analysis. One that we saw was opened in 1488. We had a performance by musicians of typical music. Jane noted how the feel of the music changed within a piece, from cheerful, to relaxed, to soothing.

**Ataturk:** Everyone in Turkey honors Ataturk. His picture is everywhere. It is like respecting the flag in the US. But Ataturk was anti-clerical and wanted to expel religion from the public square. Islamists show him in uniform to honor his military achievements but not his domestic policy.

**Founders and patrons:** Many museums or cultural institutions have a driven founder behind them. Later they get government endorsement and support. The folk dress museum is made up of objects collected by an individual over the decades. After he retired, he turned his objects into an exhibit in an old building. There are





also the super wealthy who create institutions. Koç University and Sabanci University in Istanbul, among the best in Turkey, were created by and named after those super rich families. These are the Bill Gates types whose wealth is beyond anything we can imagine.

**Bursa.** This was an early capital of the Ottoman empire, the center of the silk industry with a great historic silk bazaar (Koza Han). The wonderful mosque (*Ulu Camii*) has elaborate calligraphy (often mirror image writing) and the names of early imams. Inside, we met the imam, who was not covered. He put his arm around Çimen. I asked about these things (which would be unheard of in Detroit). He said he covers when he leads prayers but not otherwise. Since Çimen's



husband is his “honorary” son, she is his honorary daughter. He is humble, friendly, open. I later saw him sweeping the carpets with a cleaner. After walking around the han, I went back to the mosque. I wrote in my notes: “Several times I have said, this is the



best yet. The Ulu Camii is going to be hard to beat. The design and the calligraphy and the imam were tops. Bursa is a wonderful place.”

**Amasya:** If I lived in Amasya I would wake up every morning and thank God for letting me live in the most beautiful city in the world.

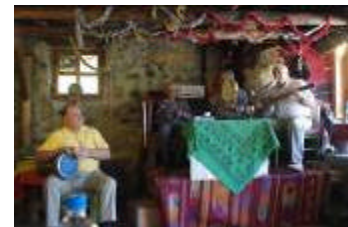


**Bepazari:** Fun. We had music and dancing with lunch and saw a world class mosque. Nabi joined the performance.

**Troy:** I expected some *kitch*, but this was a very well excavated site, and an informative visit, enhanced by the fact that we had a famous expert, Mustapha Askin, walk around with us. When I was an undergraduate I learned about



Heinrich Schliemann who “discovered” Troy. I learned that he was a deranged genius. This impression of a 19-year-old was confirmed. The city had been lost for almost three millennia. Many people believed it was a myth, like Noah’s Ark. But Schliemann located it. He believed the stories of the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* were based on fact. Unfortunately, he chopped and hacked his way through layers of history



searching for the artifacts of King Priam and evidence of the Trojan horse. He also stole much of what he found. He changed our understanding of archeology and history, but did much damage. I bought a Troia baseball cap, one of my few souvenirs.

**Rumi's Masoleum in Konya:** This was our last major stop. On the day we visited, the Masoleum was crowded, which is not surprising because it draws two million visitors a year. I had only a general acquaintance with Rumi and his poetry, but I have visited Sufi services in Egypt and Syria. The mausoleum is an impressive structure with a dramatic green dome dominating the clear blue sky. There are gardens all around and tombstones of prominent followers, often featuring turban and rose designs. The inside is exceptionally beautiful. There are coffins of Rumi's family and key followers. His own tomb is under a striking green dome with ornate designs and full-color scenes from nature. It is covered with a brocade cloth featuring Koranic passages in gold letters. It is as spectacular as the tomb of Suleiman the Magnificent. The mausoleum was filled but Rumi's followers were quiet and unobtrusive. They paused to say a prayer, palms up, lips moving in silence. Then they moved on. I thought back to the more frenetic Holy Relics room in the Topkapi Palace where an already-crowded site became congested as individuals stopped to remain in the presence of venerated objects.

The Mevlana Museum was attached to Rumi's Masoleum ("mevlana" means "teacher," his title. A local university has that name). It has an ancient book with a drawing of the prophet Mohammed on Buraq, the flying creature that took him to Jerusalem for his famous "Night Journey" when he rose towards heaven and approached the throne of God (*isra*, mentioned in the Koran 17:1). Off in the distance was the Holy City, beams of light radiating from it. It was quite beautiful. Except for reproductions, this is the first image I have seen of the Prophet.



Rumi's branch is Sufism is associated with the whirling dervishes. The dervishes spin endlessly in a trance-like manner, their white skirts spreading forth like the wings of angels. This ritual is to bring people closer to God. Their hats are shaped like a traditional tombstone to remind followers that they will someday face God and should live righteous lives. We visited one of these services and came away humbled and inspired. It was therefore a bit of a shock to see that the nearby four-star hotel had in the middle of its revolving door a full-sized whirling dervish, his dramatic white skirt in full flight. Everyone took a photograph, but it was a case of faith put to the service of corporate need. If Rumi were alive, he would spin in his grave.

**Request:** Only denied request: I asked the student folk group to sing the national anthem. At the National Independence Museum I had heard a stirring song and presumed it was the anthem. I was curious about the music and the words. They very politely declined. They said they would have to get approval of the whole group. In my own country, people sing the national anthem at the drop of a hat (always off key). It is obvious there is something I did not understand. Excerpt from the anthem: "Know this is not just earth you walk on, Think about the thousands buried here without a shroud, You are the son of a martyr, Don't make your ancestors grieve, Don't relinquish this heavenly land, Even if offered the entire world." Nice. I would sing that.

### Thoughts

**Reassessment:** In the 1990s I flew over Anatolia on my way to Syria. It was July. I saw a land that was dry and desolate. Anatolia is anything but dry and desolate. It is a rich, thriving land. It has amazing agriculture, prosperous towns, good roads. Note to Ron: When you reach conclusions from a distance, be cautious. You might be wrong. Remember that an expert is someone who has been in a country more than three years or less than three weeks. Keep in mind your rules for students: "Two key characteristics of effective students are the ability to *maintain intellectual humility* and the ability to *keep an open mind*. The following rules will help keep you on track. **RULE ONE: Learn to understand, not to persuade:** Keep repeating to yourself, "I

cannot learn with my mouth open." *RULE TWO: Until you can defend, you cannot critique.* Your task as a student is to study arguments and models until you can explain them to others and answer questions or criticisms of them. Until you can do that you do not truly understand them. Always assume a writer is a brilliant person who has insights that you can only grasp if you think about them a long time. (This is, indeed, true). *RULE THREE: Assume that you do not understand:* Keep repeating to yourself, "Everything I thought I knew about this subject before I began this semester is flawed and incomplete and I have to start from scratch." *RULE FOUR: Don't disagree. It deteriorates into argumentation.* Anytime you find yourself disagreeing with a writer or thinking the writer has overlooked some important counter-argument, say to yourself ten times, "There I go again." *RULE FIVE: Beware of the unforgivable sin of No New Learning.* Before you allow a thought to bubble to the surface as a comment, always ask yourself how that thought is different from what you would have said before the semester began and you read the assigned readings. If there is no difference, then you are guilty of the sin of "no new learning."

**Comparison:** As someone who has visited the Arab world frequently (Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain) I have come to appreciate the depth and richness of that great civilization and its potential. However, there is nothing in the Arab world that can compare with Turkey. They are in a different league. In spite of their problems, the Turks have their act together. The cities are well managed, the streets handle traffic, the economy is thriving, people walk brusquely, are well dressed. I was particularly impressed that the streets were clean. This can be a function of government efficiency, but it also seems to reflect a culture of cleanliness. The political system is secure and the country has a sense of its identity. It also is freed from the constraints of the clergy, which is a real asset. Like us, they fight over the role of religion in the political system, but so far the political system has maintained its integrity.

**Persistence of memory:** There is something pre-Ottoman, pre-Islamic that still persists. For example, the five-sided star and the crescent in the flag are not Islamic but Turkish from the era of shamanist religion. (Or did Islam adopt shamanistic symbols as its critics say, so the Turkish symbols and the Islamic symbols really *are* the same).

**Films to see:** My friend Turknur recommended a recent trilogy: *Yumurta* (egg), *Sut* (milk) and *Bal* (honey). *Bal* was nominated for an Oscar.

### Most Favorites

**Favorite mosque.** How can we choose? Of course Rustem Pasha but I especially liked Bursa's Ulu Camii (great mosque), built in 1399, with its amazing calligraphy and multiple egg carton domes. Meeting the imam was a bonus.

**Geographic feature:** The fairy chimneys are everyone's favorite, but seeing the steppe was unique. That plateau with rolling hills and rich farmland made me realize why the Turks considered it worth conquering. I could image the Mongol Horde rumbling west.

**Greatest surprise:** Seeing names Hasan and Hussein in mosques. These are distinctly Shia heroes, not honored this way in the Sunni tradition, and yet here they were. These Turks are disrupting my categories.

**Favorite foods:** Spinach soup and thin grape leaves, mini-raviolis, and mini-okras.

**Favorite personal purchases:** Red baseball cap at Troy, Turkish flag, post card of a painting with Adam and Eve in Ottoman garb. (The snake was undressed), necktie with signature of Suleiman the Magnificent. Total cost: under \$25.00.

**Most surprising, obvious insight:** the Seljuks were Turks before they were Muslims, and some of their pre-Islamic culture survived (such as the five-sided star in their flag). Someone on the group who has studied occult beliefs says the pentagram is *always* filled with mystical significance. And by the way, where did Christians get that five-sided star?

**Most fun photo:** The Trojan horse, alas, a replica. The original is probably in national museum.

**Best unplanned experience:** Climbing with Mark up towards the rock tombs in Amasya, and up towards the citadel in Tokat.

**Turkish custom I like best:** Anatolian practice of planting poplars when a son is born so he will have an investment when he is an adult. Rows of poplars dot the landscape.

**Best visual experience:** Looking at the Bosphorus with its deep blue water and its bridges and boats. Better than expected (and that says a lot).

**Story to tell others:** We crossed the Hellespont on a ferry. There were armies of Portuguese Men of War. I saw a piece of wood that I would like to believe was left over from the pontoon bridge the Persians built as they marched towards ancient Greece.

**Best single visitation:** National Independence Museum and Ataturk's tomb and Masoleum. In 1920, the whole world has amassed its armies on the borders of Turkey, sometimes inside, and were preparing to dismantle it. I could not help but paraphrase Lenin: Everyone was against us but the army, and the army was the people.

**Most fun personal project:** Counting points on designs in mosques. Seljuks preferred 5s, Ottomans 8. I saw a couple of Seljuk mosques combining five and seven. The dome in Hagia Sophia has 64 points, 4x4x4x4. It has 40 column designs coming down. Nothing is unplanned. Note: Peter Lu, an American mathematician who works for NASA, discovered patterns in Islamic design. His website has his publications, which are fascinating and reader friendly. Peterlu.org.

**Books I was glad I read before I came:** *Snow* by Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk, *The Istanbul Bastard* by Elif Shafak, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* by Bernard Lewis (the last great book of this flawed scholar), and *Mohammed* by Karen Armstrong.

**Books I wish I had read:** The Lord Kinross biography, *Ataturk*, and Kinzer's *Crescent and Star: Religion and Politics in Turkey*.

**Books read on the trip:** *The Turks Today* by Mango (very helpful), *The Great Speech* (which we call the Six-day Speech and which I now call the Six Pound Speech. I got through 450 pages of a 700 page book). *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo (read on the plane over and in the first few days). *202 Jokes of Nasreddin Hodja* (traditional stories).

**Favorite depiction of a vegetable:** The giant carrot in Bepazari.





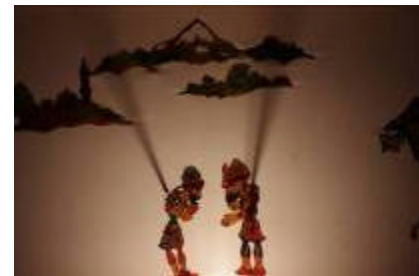
**Favorite hotel:** Argos Hotel in Cappadocia and the small cottages near Troy.

**Best religious experience:** Imam sings blessing for us at Mehmet Pasha mosque. Nice.

**Most fun cultural experience:** Ebru painting demonstration by Hikmet Barutçugil. Three hours with the Picasso of Ebru. And we all got to do our own masterpieces.



**Most fun ‘kid again’ moment:** Karagoz shadow theater in Bursa. It was Punch and Judy in Turkish. Sometime during each story, a belly dancer appears for no other reason than to do a belly dance. We laughed with honest laughter. And to think that Karagoz, a cartoon character, was a real person and is buried just across the street.



**Favorite action scene:** Four Uzbek men in the Cappadocia carpet factory, breathing hard as they rushed to throw those fantastic carpets out as fast as they could. It was a blur of beauty and color and design, flash, flash, flash.

**Favorite conversation with a salesperson.** The beautiful Russian girl at the carpet factory trying to sell me a rug and when she realized she would not succeed talking to me about Russia and the Czech Republic and Turkey and why she was so happy in Turkey she could not imagine ever returning to Russia except for visits.

**Painting that captures a moment in time:** In Dolmabaçe palace a painting shows the engineers of Mehmet the Conqueror lifting his ships onto the land around a chain the Byzantines put across the Bosphorus to prevent such an invasion. What determination. (Funny. No one mentioned that a majority of the soldiers in the Muslim army were Christians).

**Tombs:** How amazing to see the mausoleums and tombs of historic figures. Osman Gazi (founder of the dynasty in 1299), Orhan Gazi; Chelebi Mehmet I, re-founder of the dynasty in 1421. There was a mehrab in his mausoleum to show how to align the body.

**Most under-stated significant moment:** In Sivas, being in the room where the Turks declared their independence, wrote a 9-point resolution, and created their new nation. It was like standing in Independence Hall. “We hang together or we hang separately.”



**Disturbingly familiar connection with the distant past.** Seeing the damage the (Christian) iconoclasts did to the murals in the Apple church in Goreme. Like the Puritans and Taliban and Wahabis, they self-righteously destroyed beauty in the name of God. Blah!

**Most fantastic image of colors:** The spice market in Istanbul.



**Surprisingly touching moment:** Seeing the mummy of a child in Amasya. Its sad empty eyes seemed to be trying to communicate, almost pleading.



**Most perplexing unanswered question:** When Ataturk was redesigning Turkey and adapting Turkish customs to the international standard, why did he not change the salt and pepper shakers so they conformed to expectations: three holes salt, six holes pepper?

**Thing I will discuss most often with students:** Gallipoli, those steep cliffs, the spectacular views that were the last images so many young men had before they died. I think of a young man lying on the beach bleeding to death and thinking, "This must be one of the most beautiful places in the world. I wish I could have told my sweetheart about it." As one of the survivors said, "Why do they call them beaches?"