

NAMING IN TURKEY: THE ALTAIC, OTTOMAN AND KEMALIST INHERITANCE

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ABSTRACT

In the Turkish world and history, the question of naming –personal or local name has not been studied in a global view. At the turn of the 2nd Millenium, the adoption of Islam changed to a considerable extent the ancient Inner Asian traditions. Arab *ism* (personal name), *kunya* (genealogical name), *nisbat* (reference to the place of origin) and *laqab* (nickname) replaced completely or slightly turcized, most of the references to the shamanistic creeds and to the former culture. Though the survival of some peculiarities in the Ottoman age, the situation lasted until the 1930, when the Republican government made the family name an obligation for all Turkish citizens. From the point of view, it would be interesting to examine if the revival of Islam in the last decades had an influence on the names given to the Turkish children.

On the other hand I intend to give some examples of various aspects of the toponymy in medieval and modern Turkey.

Key Words: Turkey, Altaic, Ottoman and Kemalist.

Since the aftermath of WW2, an “encyclopaedic collection” of specialized studies about various scientific topics, “Que sais-je” [What do I know?] is published in Paris. Up to a general pattern, each of them does not exceed 130 pages and the 4.000th title of this collection has been issued some years ago¹. The title of the #235 is *Les noms de personnes en France* [Personal names in France]². From many points of view, this booklet can be a subject of meditation for turcologists. Actually, it permits to observe the spectacular development in France since the middle of the XXth century of the onomastic applied to the field of this country. Being a branch of lexicology devoted to the study of the origin of proper nouns, onomastic consists of both anthroponymy and toponymy. It is closely linked with philology and history, and it leads quickly to extremely

¹ By Paul Fabre, 1998, here: [NPF]. It is a new edition of first version of the same n° 235 by P. Lebel, *Les noms de personnes*, 1946.

² It is known that the etymology of the name of Attila reflects itself a cultural world open to various influences: Turkish *ata*, “père”, + Germanic diminutive *-ila* (we find it in the name of Ulfila or Wulfila, Wisigothic bishop of the IVth century: *wulf*, “wolf” + *-ila*).

interesting sociological prospects. It requires an extreme rigour in analysis and interpretation. Carried out with a solid methodology, it can be the subject of permanent research programs using computerization.

We shall limit this paper to some brief remarks about anthroponymy only, which constitutes in itself a very wide subject. On the other hand, considered as fields of research, France and Turkish world are quite different. On the one hand, two milleniums of a territory with moving borders, with various linguistical substratums, regional particularisms and an anthroponymy early controlled by laws. Widely spread since the XIIIth century, adoption of family names became compulsory under the reign of Francis Ist by the *ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts* (1539), which created in the same time the personal details. On the other hand, two milleniums of endless areas between lake Baikal and the Balkans where nomadized a multiform nation under various linguistical, cultural and religious influences, but easy to indentify everywhere and anytime thanks to its strong personnality.

Apart from the Huns, Turkish aristocracy leading a conglutination of various peoples³; let us go back to the period when the Turkish anthroponyms become both identifiable and numerous, *i. e.* to the Turkish empires of Inner Asia from the Vth to the VIIth century. Available documentation includes only the emperors, their family and the principal statemen. However one may notice that the use of the idionyme, “particular name of a person”, is common, sometimes followed by a title. This model was to survive in the Turkish world until to the late adoption of family names. At the beginning, these idionymes often refer to virtues, especially the wisdom (*Bilge*), or to brilliant accomplishments (*Elteriş*, “gatherer of the country”), but they can also be propitiatory like *İstemi*, “wish”, or reflect any anecdotal event. An exemple of this last case has been brightly explained by our master Louis Bazin: the name of Tonyukuk, famous minister of Elteriş, would be the result of *ton*, “tunic” + *yukuk*, “greasy”. The reason is an habit still attested in Mongolia in the first half of the XXth century: at the end of a banquet, the guests thank the host by wiping their hands full of mutton grease on his tunic. The most the tunic was maculated, the most was conspicuous the munificence of the host towards his many guests...

During the same period, one can see the same person mentioned under two different names. For instance, the *kagan* Elteriş (d. 691) is also named Kutluğ, “who has received a good luck”. Being emperor, his brother and successor Beg Çor, “prince-valiant” (691-716) is named Kapagan Kagan. Is it a reign name up to the Chinese habit?

³ Pattern: *Ahmad* (*ism*, idionyme) + *bin Mustafâ bin 'Alî* (*kunya*, names of the first ascendants) + *ual-Misri* (“Egyptian”, *nisba*, name of the geographical or ethnical origin) + *ad-Dabbâg*, “the Tanner” or *al-Agwar*, “one-eyed” (*lakab*, nickname). These two last elements or only one may refer to a more or less ancient ancestor and be transmitted for several generations as a patronyme, but it is not.

The Uyghur empire (744-840) followed the second Turk empire. No important changes can be observed in the onomastic of the sovereigns although they quickly abandoned the old religion of Tenri, “God-heaven”, for the manicheism. However, in the first half of the VIIIth century appear phraseological names going more and more developed and still referring to Tenri: *Tenride bulmuş küllüg bilge*, “Illustrious wisdom received from Tenri” (789-790); *Tenride bulmuş alp kutlug ulug bilge*, “Great wisdom who received from Tenri the good luck of the valiant” (795-805); *Tenri Bilge*, “Tenri-Wisdom” (805-808); *Ay Tenride kut bulmuş alp bilge*, “Valiant-Wisdom who has received the good luck from Tenri-Moon” (808-821).

In the middle of the Xth century appear the first Moslem Turkish dynasties: first the Karakhanids in Kashgharia and, some years after, the Ghaznavids who, from the East of to-day Afghanistan, founded a wide empire from Transoxiana to the Gangetic plain. The Ghaznavids adopted usual names conform to the Islamic pattern⁴. But the Karakhanids showed in this field a long resistance. The name of the founder of this empire was Satuk Bugra Khan, “[Already] sold – Camel stallion”. As an emblem of the dynasty, this name was adopted by several successors until the XIIth century⁵. *Satuk*, is one on the apotropaic names used in the Altaic world, the purpose of it being to move away the “evil eye” from the new-born child, . The “navel name”, could be any object seen at this very moment by the person who had to cut the navel-string, especially inside or around the *yurt* in a nomadic society: piece of harness or any other usual object, without any relation with the definitive anthroponyme given much later.

In the middle of the XIth century, a second Turkish invasion shook not only these new States, but also the Abbassid Caliphate and the Asiatic provinces of the Byzantine empire: in 1055, the Seljukid chief Tugrul, “bird of prey” Beg conquered Baghdad and placed the Caliph under his protection. Like himself, his seven first successors conformed themselves to the onomastic usage in the Moslem countries⁶ but they are commonly known under their Turkish names : Alp Arslan, “Valiant-lion”; Bark Yaruk, “Possession-Light”; Sancar (from the root *sanc-*, “to drive into”). However, the name of the son and successor of Tugrul Beg was an pleonastic Arabo-Persian compound: Malik Şâh, “King-king”, which was later reused by several other sovereigns. .

The most-lasting branch of the dynasty was the Seljuks of Rum, established in Konya and which lasted till the end of the XIIIth century. These Turkish sovereigns were so iranized and urbanized that they become stranger to their own subjects, always nomadic and fiercely revolting from time to time. Their

⁴ In the XIth century, we remark among them one Arslan (lion) İlek Nasr and one Böri (wolf) Tegin, also called Tamğaç (tribal mark) Khan.

⁵ So, Tugrul Beg chose to call himself *Rukn-ıddin Abû Tâlib Muhammad Tugrul Beg bin Mikâ'il, i. e. “Pilaster of Religion Abû Tâlib Muhammad Tugrul Beg son of Mikâ'il”*. Muhammad refers to the Prophet and Abû Tâlib to his cousin, son-in-law and successor ‘Alî.

⁶ Quoted by NPF, p. 65.

names reflect this strong acculturation to another cultural world. Among the names of the 32 principal members of the dynasty – sovereigns and relatives –, we find three groups equal in number: 11 bear Moslem names without any particularity, 11 have purely Turkish names and 10 are borrowed from the *Şâhnâme*, “Book of the Kings”, national Iranian epos composed around the year 1000 by Ferdowsî. Moreover, the Seljuks did not chose names of the Turkish heroes of this century-long dual between Iran and Turan, but the names of their enemies...

During the downfall of the Seljuk empire and the beylicates period which followed in the XIVth century, nothing particular is to be mentioned. A hundred and fifty years later, after the conquest of Constantinople and especially the end of the reign of Mehmed II (1451-1481), the Ottoman empire acquired its definitive appearance. Excepted Orhan (*circa* 1324-1362), the sultans bear Moslem names: Osmân, Murâd, Bâyezîd, Mehmed. This will go on until the collapse of the dynasty in 1922. Among their subjects, the habit is also to bear a Moslem name (*isim*) with a title which may change up to the period, but which can give an indication about the rank. However, the number of the usual *isim* is so limited that, even in adding the name of the father, the identity is difficult to clarify: Mehmed son of Ahmed, ‘Alî son of Mustafâ may point out several thousands homonyms, even completed by a title. Probably for this reason, at the end of the XVIth century, the frequency of the *lakab*, “nickname”, or the *nisba*, “mention of the geographical or the ethnic origin”, increases spectacularly.

In the Ottoman administration, at least since the XVIth century, we remark the permanency of some usages concerning titles. For instance, the *cursus honorum* of a statesman begins with a function at the Imperial palace which gives him the title of *aga*; then with the administration of a *sanjak* and the title of *beg*; then again with the governorship of a great province (*beylerbeylik*) and the title of *pasha* which he will keep afterwards, even if he becomes vizier and great vizier. In the judicature, *efendî* was used from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy. As a courtesy title, *efendî* has survived till to-day, but is very devaluated if joined to an *isim* : even to a Mehmet of modest condition, one says *Mehmet Bey* and not *Mehmet Efendi*. However, *efendî* was formerly the title of the *sheykhⁱⁱ-l-İslâm*, third person of the Ottoman hierarchy...

Montaigne tells us that, during a banquet of gentlemen, the guests were sitting according to their Christian names. Several tables, he says, were necessary for the *Guillaume*⁷. A century earlier or later, the result of the experience would have certainly been different. With or without a computer, the

⁷ In our study “Remarques sur quelques types de carrières et de fonctions dans l’administration ottomanes au XVI^e siècle”, *Archivum ottomanicum*, 17, 1999, p. 236, we have picked up among 336 members of the middle and high military administration between 1512 and 1579: 67 Mehmed, 40 Ahmed, 38 Sinân, 34 Alî, 31 Mustafa, 30 Hasan, 30 Hüseyin, 26 Mahmûd, 20 Süleymân, 19 Kâsım, 16 Murâd and 15 İskender. We remark the important proportion of Sinan, name which gets less frequent in the second half of the XVIIth century.

same could be attempted about the *isim* of the members of the Ottoman administration at different periods⁸.

Regarding the secondary elements of the name, we have tried to apply the categories defined by *NPF* to the 87 secular or religious *Ahmed* mentioned from the XVth to the XVIth century in the *Sicill-i osmânî* [Ottoman Register]⁹, Ottoman register of biographical notices, always useful notwithstanding its mistakes and insufficiencies. . For the XVth century, we find 32 names, 18 of them being accompanied by a secondary element other than a title, *i. e.* approximately 56%. We pick up 3 names of origin (*Bedevî*, *Rûmî*, and *Bikâ'î*, the last referring probably to the Bik'â İlyâs, grave of the Prophet Elias, in the vicinity of Damascus), 1 "name of condition" (*dâ'î*), 5 names of relationship (*Khorôs oğlu*, *Veliyyⁱⁱ-ddîn-zâde*, *Fenârî-zâde* and 2 *Sultân-zâde*, *i. e.* sons of daughters of sultans) and 10 nicknames (*Ebû-l-'âlemeyn Rufâ'î*, *Kebîr Rufâ'î*, *Alagöz*, *Kızıl*, *İlâhî*, *Gedik*, *Karaca*, *Toz Koparan*, *Göde*). Regarding the Ahmed of the XVIth century, we find 55 names, 34 of which are accompanied by a secondary element, *i. e.* 61%. We find only 3 names of origin (*Kastalânî*, *Freng*, *Arab*), 5 of profession (*Kemânkeş*, *Nâkhudâ*, *Sârbân*, *Kalburci*, *Dogancı*), 9 nicknames (*Emîr Bukhârî*, *Khâ'in*, *Kara*, *Khayâlî*, *el-'Aynî*, *Yekçesm*, *Semiz*, *Kara*, *Şeytân*) and 17 names of relationship (*Dukakîn-zâde*, *Hersek-zâde*, *Khızır Beg-zâde*, *İbn Kemâl*, *Leys-zâde*, *'Acem-zâde*, *Sultân-zâde*, *Pâre-pâre-zâde*, *Sâmsûnî-zâde*, *Mü'ellim-zâde*, *Ramazân-zâde*, *Bukhârî-zâde*, *Mazlûm Melik-zâde*, *Kaytas-zâde*, *Hâcî Beg-zâde*, *Mûy-tâb-zâde*, *La'zâr-zâde*), *i. e.* almost 31% against 15, 6% in the previous century. We do not want to give to this figures more importance than they have, but the increasing frequency of the names of relationship is obvious. During this period, there are not really genuine family names, however we can observe among the ulemas a tendency to keep such names of relationship from a generation to another during several centuries (*Dürrî-zâde*, *Paşmakçı-zâde*). Of course, the reference to a famous ancestor is not rare (*Sokollu-zâde*), but the transmission may be interrupted if the family gets divided into several branches. The most remarkable continuity can be observed among the descendants of the beylical dynasties of the XIVth and XVth centuries (*İsfendiyâr oğlu*, *Candar oğlu*, *Ramazan oğlu*) or of the companions of the first Ottoman sultans (*Evrenos oğlu*, *Mikhal oğlu*).

In the XIXth century, double *isim* gets more and more frequent: *Mehmed Râfî*, *Mehmed Reşîd*, *Mustafâ 'Âsım*, *'Alî Rızâ*, etc. But neither the *Tanzîmât* in 1839 nor the Young Turks Revolution in 1908 gave any law about patronymic names. It was only in 1934 that Mustafâ Kemal decided that every Turkish citizen would have to bear a family name and gave example in choosing for himself Atatürk. The way this innovation was welcomed or not, the fashion of new names and patronymes, laical and republican or not, and the coming back

⁸ Mehmed Süreyyâ, *Sicill-i 'osmânî*, I, Istanbul, 1308/1890-1891, p. 189-205.

of Islamic *isim* during the last quarter of century offer many fields of research. Such studies invite philologists, historians and sociologists to unit their efforts in the most useful manner.