

A Note on the Pronunciation and Transcription of Turkish

TURKISH IS quite easily pronounceable by English speakers. The few phonetic differences are slight and restricted mostly to vowels. Today's Turkish uses a modified Latin alphabet as it has done since the 1920s. Although the Turkish modifications to the alphabet are quite easily learned, we have decided to retain the English orthography in the case of "sh" ("ş" in Turkish) and "ch" ("ç" in Turkish) when representing Ottoman Turkish names and titles in the translations, introduction, and biographies for the convenience of readers who know no Turkish. The only case where this is a problem is when "s" and "h" come together as in the name İshak (pronounced "Iss-hock"). We will mention that this is happening where it occurs. We also use "j" for the sound Turkish represents by "c" (the initial sound in "jam" or "jug").

In the notes and in the analysis of the poem by Zâtî in the introduction, where Turkish words are cited in italics, we will use the Turkish spelling with Turkish characters.

The letters peculiar to Turkish are as follows:

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| â | (either a long "a" or when following "k" or "l" a palatalization of the preceding consonant. Therefore "kâ" is pronounced "k ^y â") |
| c | (the "j" in "jug") |
| ç | ("ch") |
| ğ | (a glide between vowels: "iği" = "ee-ee," "oğu," "oh-woo") |
| ı | (can be formed by saying a long "u" ["oo" in "boot"] and then unrounding the lips [smile!]) |
| j | (the sound "zh" as in the French "je" or "Jacques") |
| ö | (a rounded "eh" sound: like the vowel sound in "her") |

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ü (a rounded “ee” sound: say the vowel in “beet” and pucker)

The transcription of Ottoman Turkish also includes representation of several letters of the Arabic alphabet which Turkish does not distinguish phonetically but which operate as phonemes in Arabic and Persian words. Because “short” vowels generally do not show in the Arabic script these letters are sometimes used in Ottoman Turkish to indicate what kind of vowel follows. This is especially true of the letters “ş” (the velarized Arabic letter *şād*) and “k” (the back letter *kâf*), which represent “s” and “k” when they precede “back” vowels (a, ı, o, u). The other Turkish vowels are pronounced more or less as follows.

a	(the “a” sound in “father” or the vowel in “hot”)
â	(the vowel sound in “ah”)
e	(the vowel sound in “bet”; when final the vowel sound in “hey”)
i	(the vowel sound in “bit”; when final the sound in “key”)
î	(the vowel sound in “key”)
o and ô	(the “o” sound in “hotel”)
u and û	(the vowel sound in “boot”)

The system we use for the romanization of Ottoman Turkish corresponds to a more or less standard Turkish usage and is as follows:

ا â	ب b	پ p	ت t	ث ş	ج c
ح ħ	خ ħ	د d	ذ z	ر r	ز z
س s	ش ş	ص ş	ض z	ط t	ظ z
ع ‘	غ ğ	ف f	ق k	ل l	م m
ن n	ه h, e/a	و u,v	ی î, y	hamze ‘	

The representation of Ottoman Turkish names is especially troublesome. There is no general consensus and no widely accepted rule to follow. We have chosen to apply the following rules.

Although Modern Turkish does not have final voiced consonants—for example, “b” becomes “p” when final—we retain the voiced consonants (Gâlib instead of Gâlip, Ahmed instead of Ahmet, etc.).

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For Arabic compound names—for example, names beginning in *‘abd* (slave of), ending in *dîn* (of the Faith)—we will follow the Modern Turkish convention but retain the long vowels and the signs for *ayin* (‘) and *hamze* (’) (‘Abdûlbâkî, Jelâleddîn, Sa‘deddîn, Sheyhülislâm). Those who do not know Turkish should not be put off by the long vowels or unfamiliar signs; the *ayin* and *hamze* are not pronounced and the long vowels are familiar to English speakers and are pronounced as indicated above.

All other Ottoman names including the names of the poets follow the same rules: retained voiced consonants, marked long vowels, retention of *ayin*.

It is important to note that in the present Turkish convention for Ottoman names no discernible agreed-upon rule obtains. Various authors do different things and are often inconsistent within the same work. We have simply chosen the form that seems to be the most commonly used.

All other transcription of Ottoman Turkish follows the generally (although not universally) accepted method used for the edition of Ottoman poetic texts. Except in the “Ottoman Turkish Texts” section at the end, the diacriticals indicating Arabic letters are not used.

