

A Dictionary of Turkic Names in Germany and Austria: A Book Project

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Abstract

Today many people of Turkish and Turkic background live in Germany and in Austria, but Turkic names and names systems are not yet well known in Germany. There is a lack of a comprehensive reference work. Turkish history, language and Turkish culture are unknown in Germany. The present study is part of a project of a dictionary of Turkic names. The paper describes the current onomastic situations in Germany and Austria.

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About Turkic and Turkish Names

Around 20% of Germany's population are foreigners or descendants of immigrants. More than 16 million people are of foreign descent (first and second generation, including mixed heritage and ethnic German repatriates and their descendants). The largest ethnic group of non-German origin are the Turkish, many of whom (or their children) acquired German citizenship over time.

In 2011 – 1,607,161 people came from Turkey (25%) and in 2009 about 3 million migrants had a background with Turkish roots (Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2012). In Austria there are around 247,500 people with Turkish roots (Statistica Austria 2010).

Besides Turks, there are also people from Turkic-speaking countries in Germany and Austria. These are, among others Turks from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia (Macedonia), Lebanon, also people from Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tatarstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uyghur Region, Yakutia, Chechnya, Tuvia, Khakassia, Cherkessiya, Dagestan (Kumyks) and others.

Turkic languages are spoken as a native and second language by over 200 million people. Their characteristic features are vowel harmony, agglutination and lack of grammatical gender. The Turkish language, the religion of the Turkish people and other Turkic groups manifests itself in naming traditions. All Turkic peoples have similar ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious origins.

The largest group of Turkic peoples in Germany and Austria are Turks. Today, a Turkish name consists of a given name and a surname. In the beginning the majority of Muslim Turks had no surname. In 1934 the Law on Family Names was introduced in Turkey. The law required all citizens of Turkey to adopt an official surname (a single word according to Turkish law). Most of them chose a father's name with the endings *-oğlu* 'son of', *-zade* 'descendant in the male line' or a nickname of the family: Mustafa-oğlu Mehmet. The Turkish language does not have grammatical gender. That is why there is a selection of

unisex given names such as Deniz, Derya, Evren, Evrim, Özgür and Can. These names could also be used as family names. In addition to Turkish names, numerous Arabic names of important figures in the religion of Islam are chosen, such as Ali, Muhammed, Mehmet and Zeynep.

All Turkish words, if they are suitable as a first name, can also be used as a family name, and vice versa. In principle, any sound sequence could be chosen as a surname.

Therefore, appellatives, adverbs, adjectives, verbs and sentences (declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative sentences) are encountered with the family name. On the one hand this is an advantage: the names are transparent and easy to understand. On the other hand, this can cause difficulties. Turkish names were not fixed in written sources, therefore, there are many different possible reasons for the motivation behind the designation, none of them documented.

The most frequently surnames in Turkey today are: Yılmaz with 1,508,846 bearers, Kaya with 1,038,538 bearers, Demir with 973,133 bearers, Şahin with 875,848 bearers, and Çelik, Yıldız, Yıldırım, Öztürk, Aydın and Özdemir with 841,971 bearers (Istatistik 2010). These are surnames that express the pride of the Turks and patriotic ideals: Öztürk means ‘real, pure Turk’, Özdemir means ‘pure iron’, Demir means ‘iron’, Yılmaz means ‘one, who is not afraid’, Kaya means ‘rock, stone’, Şahin means ‘falcon’, Çelik means ‘steel’, Yıldız means ‘star, lucky star, happiness’, Yıldırım means ‘lightning’ and Aydın means ‘bright, light, happy’.

Table 1 shows the most common surnames in Turkey, Germany and Austria, and the comparison of the name lists shows that there are not many significant differences.

Surname	Order of rank		
	Turkey	Germany	Austria
Yılmaz	1	1	1
Kaya	2	2	5
Demir	3	5	6
Şahin	4	3	3
Çelik	5	4	8
Yıldız	6	10	7
Yıldırım	7	9	4
Öztürk	8	7	2
Aydın	9	6	lower-ranking
Özdemir	10	8	10
Arslan	lower-ranking	12	9

Table 1. The most common surnames in Turkey, Germany and Austria¹

¹ Data was collated from Istatistik (2010), the project of surnames in Austria, Geogen, and the database of the University of Leipzig.

In Germany, numerous spelling variations of Turkish surnames have emerged. Thus, we can find the most frequent surnames in Germany with several different spellings: Yılmaz with 4,524 bearers, Yilmas with 16 bearers, Jilmaz (18), Jilmas (1), Yelmaz (12), Jelmaz (1); Kaya with 3,163 bearers and Kaja (133); Şahin with 2,992 bearers and also Schahin (8), Schachin (1), Shahin (54), Shakhin (2); Çelik and Celik with 2,742 bearers; Demir with 2,721 bearers and Dimir (1); Aydın with 2,532 bearers and also Ajdin (10), Ayden (24); Öztürk with 2,509 bearers and also Öztuerk (4), Oeztürk (17), Oeztuerk (40), Östürk (6), Ozturk (4), Özturk (31), Östurk (2); Özdemir with 2,501 bearers and also Oezdemir (70), Oesdemir (1), Ösdemir (1), Ozdemir (27); Yıldırım with 2,460 bearers and also Yeldirim (3), Yelderem (3), Jildirim (9); and finally Yıldız with 2,450 bearers, but also Yeldiz (6), Yeldez (6), Yildiz (3), Jildiz (14). Uncertainties in the adoption of these new names produced a wealth of spellings.

Classification of Turkic Names

Turkish and Turkic surnames can be classified in two different ways: grammatically and lexically.

Grammatical classification

1. noun: *Kılıç, Aslan, Ateş*
2. adjective
 - 2.1. primary adjective: *Uzun, Temiz, Güzel*
 - 2.2. derived adjective: *Soylu, Uslu, Uğurlu*
3. compound
 - 3.1. noun+noun: *Eraslan, Demirbilek, Eroğlu*
 - 3.2. noun+adjective: *Erker*
 - 3.3. noun+verb in participle form: *Türkyılmaz, Cansever*
 - 3.4. noun+verb in imperative form: *Erol, Ünver, Güngör*
 - 3.4. noun+verb in past form: *Gündoğdu, Aydoğdu, Tanrıverdi*
 - 3.5. adjective+noun: *Karakaya, Sarıkaya, Akyıldız*
 - 3.6. verb in imperative form + verb in imperative form: *Doğanay*
 - 3.7. verb in participle form+noun: *Vural*
4. verb
 - 4.1. verb in past form: *Bulduk*
 - 4.2. verb in imperative form: *Sun, Bak, Koş*
5. participle
 - 5.1. active participle: *Duran, Değen, Sezen*
 - 5.2. participle (in German Grammar, but in Turkish grammar abstract form of present): *Uçar, Sever, Solmaz, Sönmez*

Lexical classification

- Given names:
 1. Turkic names: *Eraslan, Çelik, Yıldız*
 2. Islamic names: *Ali, Musa, Mustafa*
 3. names from other languages (Persian, Arabic, Kurdish): *Gül, Polat, Kahraman*
 4. titles: *Usta, Han, Çelebi*
- Origin/Ethnic names
 1. place names: *Tuna*
 2. tribe, nation, root: *Tatar, Türkmen, Karaman*
- Habitation:
 1. geographical term: *Kaya, Dağ, Irmak*
 2. geographical name (toponym): *Akdeniz, Karadeniz, Kızılırmak*
- Occupation, profession, function and dignity:
 1. agriculture: *Dam, Biçer, Koyuncu*
 2. forestry: *Balta, Kozak*
 3. hunting: *Kovar, Avcı*
 4. fisheries
 5. food: *Bal, Balcı*
 6. textile industry: *Tarakçı*
 7. leather
 8. fur
 9. metalworking: *Demirci*
 10. wood processing: *Keser*
 11. pottery
 12. building sector
 13. healthcare, sanitation, body care
 14. trade and traffic
 15. entertainment: minstrels, jongleurs, singers und poets: *Ozan*
 16. other professions: *Deveci, Dür*
 17. secular and islamic charge, function: *Önder, Bilgin, Yazıcı*
 18. legal relationships, property situation and other circumstances
 19. warfare: *Kalkan, Vural, Akın*
 20. authoritative occupation
- Nicknames or personal quality:
 1. physical characteristic: *Sarı, Küçük, Güçlü, Gökçe, Topal, Salak*
 2. character, mental characteristic: *Kaba, Düzgün, Dönmez*
 3. behaviour, conduct: *Görgülü, Gezer, Durmaz*
 4. habits
 5. clothes and accessory: *Kocak, Toman, Kılıç*
 6. special things in the family/in the tribe: *Durmuş, Gündoğdu, Gündüz*
- Nature:
 1. animals: *Böcek, Kuş, Doğan*
 2. plants: *Budak, Çimen, Çiçek*

3. metal and minerals: *Altın, Gümüş, Demir*
 4. meteorological phenomena: *Gök, Tan, Kış*
- Patriotic ideals and symbols:
Turan, Bayrak, Yıldız, Bozkurt, Türker

For the dictionary of Turkic Names to be created, 381 surnames were already assessed as part of the Family Name Project in Austria (Project FamOs). Of these 381 surnames, 309 were Turkish (from Old Turkish: *Kaya, Demir, Çelik, Onmaz, Sönmez, Duran, Güçlü, Biçer, Bala; Kaya, Demir, Çelik* – new popular names), 56 were non-Turkish (Persian: *Can, Gül, Pehlivan, Pak, Polat, Baran* – a popular name with the Turkish Kurds; Arabic: *Ali, Abbas, Metin, Mustafa*; Urumic: *Fidan, Kukla, Biber, Temel, Poyraz*; Hebraic: *Ismail, Ibrahim*; Armenian: *Çap*, French: *Tusch/Tuş*, Italian: *Pala*, Greek: *Piliç*), 13 were mixed (Turkish-Persian: *Bayraktar, Demircan, Ercan, Özcan, Akgül, Ergül*; Persian-Turkish: *Caner, Cansever, Candan, Cankaya, Gültekin, Harmancı*; Arabic-Turkish: *Celepçi*) and three were unexplained (*Sulyok, Kozar, Balan*).

The Turkish name stock in Germany is still under investigation. We expect similar results.

There are also similarities in Turkish and German names and it is important to consider them. The surnames *Türk, Türker; Bayer; Kaplan, Ender; Dür; Denk; Berk* and *Kurt* may be both German and Turkish names.

The spelling and pronunciation of Turkish names cause problems for German people, particularly difficulties arise for the graphemes *Şş, Çç, Ğğ, İı, Cc, Jj, Zz, Ss, Yy* and *Hh*. Unknown graphemes can be adapted to the German language or mispronounced: *Şahin - Sahin; Şenay - Senay; Şengül - Sengül, Şentürk - Sentürk; Ekşi - Eksi; Metintaş - Metintas; Çiçek - Cicek; Dağ - Dag; Doğan - Dogan; Yıldız - Yildiz, Yıldırım - Yildirim, Pınar - Pinar; Can - Can [Kan]; Cem - Cem [Kem]*.

In the dictionary, we will also include first names. The most frequent Turkish first names in Germany 2013 were, for boys: *Can, Ali, Mehmet, Kaan, Arda, Efe, Emre, Ahmet, Enes, Enis, Mert, Kerem, Malek, Yusuf, Cem, Deniz, Mustafa, Emirhan, Emir, Bilal, Yasin, Yassin, Ibrahim, Furkan*; and for girls: *Nur, Aylin, Elif, Samira, Aleyna, Ela, Elanur, Tuana, Zeynep, Dilara, İlayda, Nisa, Nisanur, Amina, Amine, Amne, Emine, Esmâ, Esmanur, Meryem, Azra, Ezra, Esra, Yas(e)min, Jasemin, İrem, Leyla, Eda, Edanur, Melek, Selin, Sude, Sudenaz* (Datenbank der Namenberatung der Universität Leipzig).

Here are some examples of entries from the planned dictionary. The structure of the entry is: Name, origin, kind of name, frequency and distribution, part of speech, etymology, signification, history of name, compounds and sources.

Arslan, turk.+ mong., first name (m), surname, turk., Kazakh, Azerbaijani, Chechen, Ingush, Turkmen. noun.: *arslan* – ‘lion’.

History of first name and surname, etym. *ars* (Kaz., Kir.) + *-lan*

1) Given name, 2) Nickname

Religious belief: *Arslan* – a name for *Ali*

Lexical variants: *Aslan, Arsalan*

Compounds: *Arslanali, Arslanbaş, Arslanbay (Arslanbiy), Arslanbek, Arslangerey (Arslangeray), Arslanhan, Alparslan (Alpaslan), Karaarslan (Karaaslan)*

Frequency and distribution in Germany (2,060/5,488 *Arslan* (1526.), 1,367/3,640 *Aslan*, 18/48 *Arsalan*) and Austria (3,700: 2,432 *Arslan*, 1,268 *Aslan*)

BTS, GTS, KAS, LW (2001: 48), Gafurov (1987: 126-127), Kohlheim (2008: 83), Oktay (2007: 30), Schimmel (1992: 37), Sakaoglu (1979: 386), Zengin (2007: 770-771).

Demir, turk., first name (m), surname. noun.: *demir* – ‘iron’.

History of name

1) Given name

2) Nickname

Akdemir, Aydemir (Aydemir) and Demirci

Lexical variants: *Damir, Tamir, Temir, Temur.*

Compounds: *Aldemir, Akdemir, Alpdemir, Aydemir, Demiraslan, Demirbaş, Demirbilek, Demircan, Demirel, Demirci, Demirkol, Demirtaş, Kandemir*

Frequency and distribution

GTS, KAS, LW (2001: 117), Kohlheim (2008: 162), Oktay (2007: 69), Schimmel (1992: 7, 34, 51, 65-66).

Yılmaz (Yılmaz), turk., first name (m), surname. Participle – abstract past, negation: *yılmaz* ‘undaunted’.

History of name

1) Turkish Given name

2) Nickname

Compound: *Türkyılmaz.*

Frequency and distribution

KAS, LW (2001: 495), Ersen-Rasch (2004: 214-215), Hengirmen (2001: 153-154), Kohlheim (2008: 674), Oktay (2007: 203), Schimmel (1992: 6, 13, 61).

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