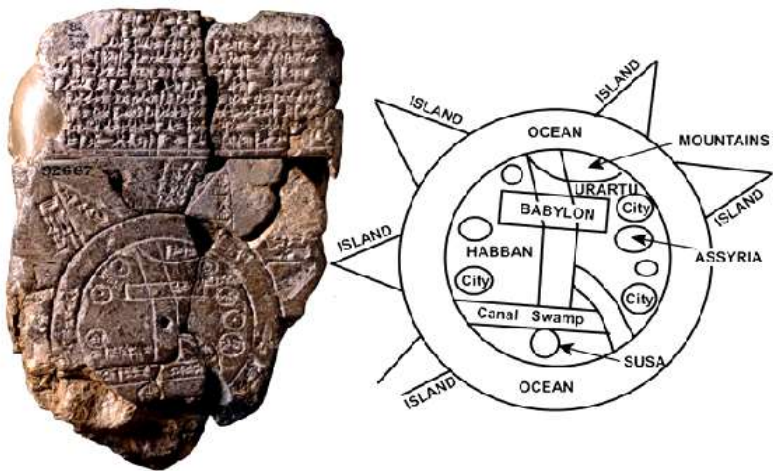


Armenia in the ancient geographical sources

Ed. Baghdasarian

Relatively a lot of findings were discovered during excavations in Babylonia and other countries of Mesopotamia, where clay tiles or tablets served as a material for writing, and acquired incomparable durability after backing.



The oldest finds, dating back to 2400-2200 BC, with a schematic picture of Mesopotamia represent the river, flowing along the valley, between two mountain countries; before emptying into the sea, the river forms a delta, the situation of the countries is indicated by means of circles.

Among engineering **maps** saved, there is a piece plate with plan Nippura city in Mesopotamia, which represents the walls and gates of the city, the most important buildings, canals and other facilities.

There are also isolated images, reproducing speculative presentation of ancient people about structure and boundaries of the world. Among them there is a Babylonian tablet of 6th century BC, accompanied by the text. It depicts the Earth as a flat circle, washed by Ocean, named “Bitter River”. Mountains, which descend to the river Euphrates, are situated in the north. Gulf (Persian) extends deep into the land. Babylon is placed in the center of the Earth. Assyria is represented to the north-east of Babylon, in the north adjoining with the country Urartu (Armenia). In addition to Babylon several other cities are also indicated on the **map** by oval mark. Behind the Ocean lie seven islands, symbolizing the unknown world. The concept of the world in the form of disk, surrounded by ocean, with the public or religious center of the country, was widespread and even appeared on **maps** of the early Middle Ages¹.

¹ - <https://mapstor.com/articles/history-of-cartography.html>

Tabula Peutingeriana (Peutinger map)



Drawn in 1265 by a monk from Colmar and made up of 11 parchment scrolls measuring approximately 34 cm high by 6,74 m. long when assembled, this document was discovered in 1494 by Konrad Meissel, alias Celtes, and given in 1507 to an Antiquarian of Augsburg, Konrad Peutinger. The map is a copy of the Roman original, and covers Europe (without the Iberian Peninsula and the British Isles), North Africa, and parts of Asia (including the Middle East, Persia, and India). The original map which the surviving copy is based on is thought to date to the 4th or 5th century and was itself based on a map prepared by Agrippa during the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 BC – AD 14).

The map was discovered in a library in the city of Worms by German scholar Conrad Celtes in 1494, who was unable to publish his find before his death and bequeathed the map in 1508 to Konrad Peutinger, a German humanist and antiquarian in Augsburg, after whom the map is named. The Peutinger family kept possession of the map for more than two hundred years until it was sold in 1714. It then bounced between several royal and elite families until it was purchased by Prince Eugene of Savoy for 100 ducats; upon his death in 1737, it was purchased for the Habsburg Imperial Court Library in Vienna (Hofbibliothek). It is today conserved at the Austrian National Library at the Hofburg palace in Vienna.

In the map Armenia is located to the north of the Mesopotamia, near Media. The names of Armenian cities that can be recognized are Tigranokerta (Tigranakert), Artaxata (Artashat), Raugona (probably Bagrewan) and Vastauna (Possibly Vostan).

The major roads of Ancient Armenia on Peutingerian map is presented in the next section.



The World Map of Eratosthenes, reconstructed by von Spruner in 1855 is dated around the third century BCE. The three continents are shown named Europe, Asia and Libya. Armenia is placed in the middle of the world, just south of the Caspian and Black Seas.

The name of Armenia appears in many of the Greco-Roman geographical and historical texts and books. The Greek philosopher and geographer Eratosthenes (c. 276–194 BC) accepting the existing theory of the earth being spherical, suggested that it was the center of the universe and all the celestial bodies revolved daily around it. His world map includes the country of Armenia².

Among European travelers, who in 25 BC crossed the Mare Nostrum (Mediterranean Sea) to visit Alexandria, was a young man named Strabo. Born in Amasia, the capital of the former kingdom of Pontus, he was a very important figure in the history of cartography.

Strabo (c. 63 BC – 24 CE) was one of the giants of geography. His Geography volumes were completed in the second decade of our era, containing almost everything known about geography and cartography during his time. Strabo's description of Armenia occupies many pages of description of the land and its people and includes over 60 references to this country.

Almost everything we know about Greek cartography up to Claudius Ptolemy (150 AD), originates in the writings of Strabo.

²- R. Galchian, A Brief History of the Maps of Armenia, Journal of Armenian Studies, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 2013 , pp. 83-107.

Strabo's description of Armenia occupies many pages of description of the land and its people and includes over 60 references to this country.

Some world-famous cartographers have prepared maps of the world according to the descriptions provided by Strabo, which invariably include Armenia, located north of Mesopotamia and south of the Caucasus.



Title page from Isaac Casaubon's 1620 edition of *Geographica*

Strabo takes in history and in this story a strange place. It is doubtful that he has made at least some personal contribution to the treasury of human knowledge; hardly in his life he has made at least one map. But the "Geography" of Strabo - work in 17 books - is the main key to the history of ancient cartography, simply because this manuscript survived and was published, while most other works and maps were lost or destroyed.

Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria, or Ptolemy as he is generally known (c. 90-168 CE) was the most important figure in geography and cartography of the old world, whose books and maps were used extensively well into the sixteenth century. (Source: University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries: Holy Land maps).



1st Map of Asia Bithynia & Pontus, Asia, Lycia, Pamphylia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, & Lesser Armenia (Armenia minor)



[3rd Map of Asia](#) Colchis, Iberia, Albania, Greater Armenia

The name of Armenia is always present on the maps of the Christian era since it was the first and only Christian country east of Asia Minor – Anatolia. In Christian cartography Armenia is frequently identified with Mount Ararat and Noah's Arc, as per the biblical account of the Flood. In some maps the Garden of Eden or Terrestrial Paradise is shown inside or adjacent to Armenia.

The oldest Roman map is the 'Peutinger Map', the archetype of which dates from the middle of the first century CE. This is a road map is some 34 cm wide and 6.4 metres long, a fifth-century copy of which has survived. The map shows various routes radiating from Rome to the four corners of the empire, including Armenia, where the names of Artashat, Bagrewan (misspelled Raugona), Vostan (Van) and Tigranakert are recognizable.

With the coming of Christianity and religious fervour, especially under the influence of the Biblical theory of the Creation, the western science of cartography suffered immensely and there was no advance at all in the field from the second to the fifteenth century CE, except for cosmetic modifications and representations. In the western Christian world during this period all the old theories and scientific works were pushed aside and were replaced with new 'facts' based on the teachings of the scriptures.

Since the sixth century the spherical earth was replaced by a flat disc-shaped one, divided into three continents and surrounded by the oceans. This was adopted by Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636), who included the T-O map of the world (see below) in his *Etymologiae*. This type of maps appeared in hundreds of manuscripts and, with some modifications, formed the backbone of the Christian cartography for almost 1000 years.

The maps developed according to this doctrine were simple ones called T-O maps, which came into being in the Middle Ages. These maps, if they could be called that, showed the earth in the shape of a circle, or letter O, with the letter T inserted into it, in order to divide it into three known continents, hence the name, which could also be short for 'Orbis Terrarum'. In these maps east was invariably at the top, where Paradise was also located. The vertical line forming the stem of the letter T represented the Mediterranean Sea and the two parts of the cross bar were the Rivers Nile and Don, thus dividing the world into the three known continents, the largest being Asia and the smaller two Europe and Africa. Many of these maps have survived in various manuscripts and in varying sizes from 10 cm to a few metres in diameter. The later versions of T-O maps contained details of counties and towns, with many descriptions. On these maps Armenia was always represented as the country where Mount Ararat could be found and Noah's Ark had landed.

During the eighth century, the Spanish Benedictine monk Beatus of Liebana created his own more decorative version of a T-O map (see Fig. 5). This style was adopted by others, giving rise to a number of similar maps, called Beatus maps. In most Beatus maps Armenia is featured prominently, located next to Paradise and south of the Caucasus Mountains.



This is a world map prepared for Beatus's *Commentarium in Apocalipsin*, dating from the eighth century. This is an elaborate T-O map with east at the top, where Paradise is shown. Left of the map the name "Armenia" is inscribed below the Caucasian Mountains (green). The vertical blue mass is the Mediterranean Sea with its abundant islands. The heads represent the ten Apostles placed where they preached.

The small and simple T-O maps gradually gave way to more elaborate ones, depicting towns, cities or even some fauna and flora. Two of the most important and large scale maps of this type are the Ebstorf Map, which had a diameter of

about 3.6 metres (destroyed during the Second World War) and the ‘Mappa Mundi’ (World Map), dating from the thirteenth century, kept in the Hereford Cathedral, England. Both these maps show Armenia in the relatively correct geographical position, with particular attention being paid to Noah’s Ark and Mount Ararat. The third similar map is kept in Vercelli, Italy but was heavily damaged during careless restoration work³.

One of Islamic cartography’s most important foundations is the Balkhi School of geography and maps, which generally described the Islamic countries located in the Persian Gulf, Caspian, Arabian and Red Seas, the eastern Mediterranean and the Indian subcontinent. However, Armenia, together with Russia and Bulgaria, does appear on most Islamic world maps, some of which also include the names of other European countries such as Spain, France and Germany.

There are a number of important cartographers in the Islamic world including the Persian geographer and scientist Abu Reihān al-Birunī (973–1048 CE), who travelled extensively and wrote books on geography, other Persians such as Ibrahim Ibn Mohammad al-Farsi, known as al-Istakhri (died c. 957 CE), al Muqaddasi (945-1000CE), Sadiq Isfahani and Abu Zakariya Ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini (1203–83), Arabs Ibn Hauqal (d. 934 CE) and Idrissi (1099–1166 CE).

All of the above geographers have produced books describing the world, countries and peoples. As mentioned above, all Balkhi school books contain a world map, as well as 16-20 regional maps, depicting mainly the Islamic world. The only exception being the Christian country of Armenia, which is included on the regional map dedicated to the South Caucasus. This regional map is entitled “The map of Azerbaijan, Arran and Armenia”, where Azerbaijan is placed south of the Arax River as one of the Iranian provinces and Arran (Caucasian Albania), always placed north of the Arax. Armenia is shown straddling the Arax and extending westward⁴.

The most famous of Arab geographers of the era was Ibn al-Sharif al-Idrisi or Edrisi (who was born in Ceuta, Morocco, and studied in Cordoba, 1100-1165). After his extensive travels to many parts of the world he was invited to work for the Norman king Roger II of Sicily, for whom he produced a silver globe of the world inscribed with the contemporary map of the known world. In his maps Idrisi includes the countries of Greater Armenia and Lesser Armenia. His atlas of the world known as The Book of Roger also includes much detail about Armenia and names many Armenian cities.

³ - R. Galchian, A Brief History of the Maps of Armenia, Journal of Armenian Studies, Armenian National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 2013 , pp. 83-107.

⁴ - Ibid



In Ottoman Turkey the most important geographers of the seventeenth century were Mehmet Zilli Ibn-Dervish (1611-1684) better known as Evliya Chelebi, who was a traveler and wrote books about his travels in the neighbouring countries, and Mustafa Ibn- Abdullah (1609–1657) known as Katib Chelebi or Haji Khalifah, who also travelled widely and produced the first important geography book called *Jehān Numā*, describing various parts of the world. In addition to detailed descriptions, their manuscripts refer extensively to Ottoman and Persian-occupied Armenian territories and cities, accompanied by some map sketches.

Portolans are marine charts and maps prepared for the seafaring peoples, generally depicting the shorelines and ports of the Mediterranean. Portolans of the Mediterranean include much information about the coastline of Asia Minor in the Black Sea as well as all the Mediterranean shores. The Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, located in the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean, features prominently in many Mediterranean portolans of that period, sometimes surrounded by a green arch. This was predominantly due to the fact that the ports of Cilician Armenia were Christian ports, and the mapmakers wanted to show them as friendly to the European seafarers. Greater Armenia, being landlocked, would normally not be expected to appear on portolans, since it was out of their useful range. However, this appears not to be true.

In the Italian and Catalan portolans of the Mediterranean area details of the coastlines are shown amazingly accurate and consistent, generally being very advanced for their time. The curious fact is that on majority of the portolans of the East Mediterranean area Armenia also appears. Armenia Maior (Greater Armenia) is generally depicted with a range of mountains, which are shown as the source of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris, sometimes as well as a third river, the Arax, flowing from these mountains north and west towards the Caspian Sea. These maps also show Mount Ararat placed in Armenia, with Noah's Ark perched on top (usually shown sideways) and many include the Armenian populated cities of Arzena (Erzinjan) and Malatia.

Some of the well-known European geographers and cartographers of the period who have produced maps and atlases of great importance are the following:

- Martin Waldseemüller (1470-1520)
- Sebastian Münster (1489-1552)
- Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594)
- Abraham Ortelius (1528-1598)
- Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638) and his son Johannes (1596-1673)
- Christopher Saxton (1542-1610)
- John Speed (1552-1629)
- Henricus Hondius (1587-1638)
- Jan Jansson (1588-1664)
- Nicolas Sanson (1600-1667) and others

Most atlases of the above cartographers include a map of the Turkish Empire, which shows Armenia divided between the Ottoman and Persian Empires. Although not having an independent country, the name of Armenia appears on the territory surrounding Lake Van, Lake Sevan and Mount Ararat, since here were the lands where the Armenians were autochthonous⁵.



Above detail of the area between the Black and the Caspian Seas is from Kohler's 1718 map *Historic Orient*. Armenia is divided between the Ottoman and Persian empires and is shown extending from Amid (Tigranakert) to the confluence of Kura and Arax Rivers. Aderbigana or Atropatena (Azerbaijan) is the north-western province of Iran, south of the Arax River, while the territory of the present-day Republic of Azerbaijan is named Albania, placed north of the River Kura and east of Iberia (Kartli).

Guillaume Delisle (1675-1726) produced many atlases such as the "Atlas de Géographie" in 1707 as well as the "Atlas Russicus", the first large-scale atlas of Russia, in 1745. This atlas includes maps of the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, Persia and Turkey. On these detailed maps one could see that Armenia was shown over an area extending from Mush to Artsakh. Azerbaijan is shown as the

⁵ -Ibid.

north-western Province of Iran, south of the River Arax and, the territory north of the river is named Shirvan, Shaki etc. It could be clearly seen on all maps that until 1918 there was no Azerbaijan existing north of the Arax, while Atropaten-Azerbaijan did exist as an Iranian province, always situated on the southern shores of the River Arax.



Guillaume Delisle's 1730 Map of the Caspian Sea and its Neighbouring Territories clearly shows that Azerbaijan (yellow) is the province south of the Arax and is part of Iran. To its north, across the river are the lands called Chirvan, Chamaki, Derbent and Tabassaran, presently occupied by the Republic of Azerbaijan. Armenia (green) covers all of Eastern Armenia as well as most of the Western Armenia⁶.

Falsification of the Armenian geographical names

Turkish policies of Turkification and Kurdification of original Armenian toponyms is not a new phenomenon. Geographical name changes in Turkey have been undertaken, periodically, in bulk from 1913 to the present by successive Turkish governments. Thousands of names within the Turkish Republic or the Ottoman Empire have lost or departed from their popular or historic alternatives in favour of recognizably Turkish names, as part of the Turkification policy. The governments have argued that such names are foreign and/or divisive against Turkish unity. Names changed were usually of Armenian, Greek, Georgian (including Laz), Bulgarian, Kurdish, Assyrian or Arabic origin. Turkification of the original Armenian names has been continuously practiced in a condition that even one millimeter of the lands that today is called Turkey does not belong to the Turks, Turks are invaders, who have fabricated "Turkey" by murdering and assimilating local peoples and extorted their lands, resources, lives, dignity, everything. The same has happened in a fake country called Republic of Azerbaijan, by the same type of murderers, plunderers, robbers.

⁶ -Ibid

The policy commenced during the final years of the Ottoman Empire and continued into the Turkish Republic. Under the Kemalist oriented government, specialized governmental commissions were created for the purpose of changing names. Approximately 28,000 topographic names were changed, which included 12,211 village and town names and 4,000 mountain, river, and other topographic names. Most name changes occurred in the eastern regions of the country where minority ethnicities form a large part or a majority of the population. Policies at times included banning the use of foreign names that were considered divisive and inappropriate.

The Committee of Union and Progress took the reins of the Ottoman government through a coup d'état in 1913. At the height of World War I and during the final years of the Ottoman Empire, when the ethnic cleansing policies of non-Muslim Greek, Armenian, and Assyrian minorities were underway, Minister of War Enver Pasha issued an edict (ferman) on October 6, 1916, declaring:

It has been decided that provinces, districts, towns, villages, mountains, and rivers, which are named in languages belonging to non-Muslim nations such as Armenian, Greek or Bulgarian, will be renamed into Turkish. In order to benefit from this suitable moment, this aim should be achieved in due course.

General Directorate of State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, İstanbul Vilayet Mektupçuluğu, no. 000955, 23 Kânunuevvel 1331 (October 6, 1916) Ordinance of Enver Paşa

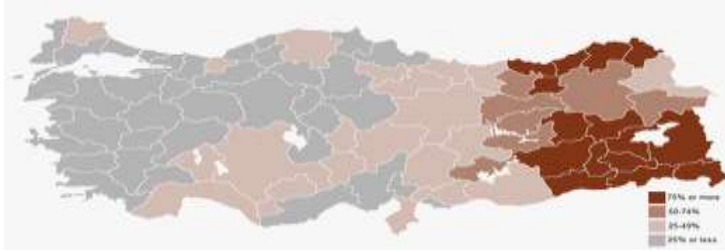
Turkish nationalism and secularism were two of the six founding principles of the Turkish Republic. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the early decades of the Republic, aimed to create a nation state (Turkish: Ulus) from the Turkish remnants of the Ottoman Empire. During the first three decades of the Republic, efforts to Turkify geographical names were a recurring theme. Imported maps containing references to historical regions such as Armenia, Kurdistan, or Lazistan (the official name of the province of Rize until 1921) were prohibited⁷.

In an article, titled “28,000 toponyms were changed. Nobody knows which one comes from which language”, Ş. Türker has included among Kurdish names such indisputably Armenian toponyms as Van, Antep (Aintap), Kharpet (Kharberd), Erzincan (Erzinjan<Erznka), Chermig (Jermuk), Kaghzman (Kaghzvan), Dersim, Tekor, Gerchanis (Kerchanitz, Kirchanitz), Palin (Balı), Jolemerk (Joulamerk), Gogsin (Koksi), Kers (Kars), Poulour (Blour), Bertak (Bertak), Ghoghi (Keghi), Chermen (Jerme), Qop (Kop), Chemishgezek (Chemeskatsag), Terjan (Derjan), Kemah (Kamakh), Ispir (Sper), Zaroushat (Zarishat), Artemetan (Artamed), Erdish (Arjesh), Zedkan (Zatkan), Tatos, Egin (Akn), Toukh, Keban (Kapan), Siverek (Sev Averak), Jirmik (Jermik), Sert (Sghert), Erkhvan-Argouvan (Argavan), and even Erzeroum (Erzroum<Erzen-el-Rum<Artsen-el roum), Kilis (which is a distorted version of the word “Yekeghetsi”, meaning Church), etc.²⁹ It remains a mystery why and how the Muslim Kurds came to name their settlements Church (Kilis)?.

A special article devoted to the changes of toponyms was included in the 1949 Provincial administrative law (II İdaresi Kanunu). Furthermore, a “Specialized Organization for Renaming Toponyms” (“Ad Değiştirme İhtisas Kurulu”) was

7 - Wikipedia: *Geographical name changes in Turkey.*

initiated in 1957. This organization renamed 653 settlements in Erzurum, 169 in Adana, 366 in Erzinjan (Yerznka), 224 in Adyaman, 70 in Moughla, 88 in Afion, 70 in Eskişehir, 297 in Moush, 374 in Aghre (Ararat), 279 in Gaziantep (Aintap), 24 in Nevşehir, 99 in Amasia, 167 in Giresoun (Kirasoun), 647 in Nighdeh, 193 in Ankara, 343 in Gyumushkhaneh, 134 in Ordou, 168 in Antalya, 128 in Hakkari, 105 in Rize, 101 in Ardvin, 117 in Hatay (Alexandretta/Iskenderun), 117 in Sakaria, 69 in Ayden, 185 in Sparta, 110 in Balekesir, 112 in Ichel, 392 in Siirt (Sghert), 32 in Bilejik, 21 in Istanbul, 59 in Sinop, 247 in Bingyol (Byurakn), 68 in Izmir (Smyrna), 406 in Sivas (Sebastia), 236 in Bitlis, 398 in Kars, 19 in Tekirdagh, 182 in Bolou, 295 in Kastamonu, 245 in Tokat (Eudokia), 49 in Bourdour, 86 in Kayseri (Cesaria), 390 in Trebizond, 136 in Boursa, 35 in Krklareli, 273 in Dersim, 53 in Chanakkaleh, 39 in Kershehir, 389 in Shanli Ourfa (Ourha), 76 in Chankere, 26 in Kojayeli, 47 in Oushal, 555 in Chorum, 217 in Malatia, 156 in Zongouldak, 20 in Edirne, 647 in Mardin, 555 in Diarbekir, 83 in Manisa, 383 in Elazegh (Kharberd), and 105 in Kahraman Marsh.



After research work on 75.000 toponyms, the “Specialized Organization” changed 28.000 names, among which 12.000 were village names. According to H. Tunçel’s estimates, 12,211 villages were renamed during the period of 1940-2000, which constitutes approximately 35 per cent of the villages⁸.



Armenian geographical names renamed in Turkey

In the main body of the encyclopedia when presenting a geographical name, the original geographical names are also given.

⁸ - Lusine Sahakian, *Turkification of the toponyms in the ottoman empire and the republic of Turkey*, Montreal, 2010, pp.17-19.