Chapter 1
Introduction: Anatolia between East and West

Asia Minor and Ancient World History

The part of the ancient world that projects from the continent of Asia to the Mediterranean and is called Asia Minor almost coincides with modern-day Turkey. A history of Turkey has to begin with the Turks. However, for a history of Asia Minor, there is no unifying thread of this kind: it is shot through with a mixture of peoples and cultures, migrations, occupations and retreats, and shifting empires and states. Nonetheless, its location between seas and continents and its nature lend this peninsula a continuity over time in three respects: its “orientation,” its “mixture,” and its function as a “bridge.”

The secularism introduced by Mustafa Kemal—Atatürk—less than a century ago has ultimately resulted in Turkey's being strongly oriented toward the West. Despite Atatürk’s deliberate choice to locate a new capital in Ankara, in the middle of Anatolia, intellectual life, money, and trends are still concentrated in Istanbul—a city whose old center is on the European continent. From this city the sultans ruled a multi-ethnic empire that once stretched from Yemen to Transylvania and from the Atlas mountains to the Caucasus. The Turks had been in Anatolia long before they conquered Constantinople (subsequently known as Istanbul) in 1453 and had established several other empires there in addition to the Ottoman empire. They first encountered an imperial structure that was already decadent in many places; they called it “Rum.” The name is still found in many forms. The Anatolian Greeks who occupied part of the area up until Atatürk’s time were called “Rum” (as opposed to the Greeks of Greece, who were called “Yunan” [Ionians]). Places in both eastern and western Anatolia bore names containing the element “rum,” such as the city Erzurum or the fortress of Rumeli Hisarı on the Bosporus, which Sultan Mehmet II began to build in 1451, before the general attack on the capital (Figure 1). Jalāl ad-Dīn, the master (mevlâna) of Persian Islamic mysticism in the thirteenth century, came from Balkh, but used the name “Rūmî,” alluding to his second homeland, the Sultanate of Rum that had emerged around the ancient city of Ikonion (Konya).

In Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, “rum” is the word for Rome and the Romans. Used in reference to the Greeks of the Christian Byzantine Empire, “rum” implies the continuity of the ancient Roman Empire in the Byzantine millennium, whose new capital Constantinople had been founded on the Bosporus by Constantine the Great around 330 CE.
Constantine's abandonment of “Eternal Rome,” the city built on seven hills along the Tiber, as the capital of this empire had been preceded by a shift in the latter's center of gravity that had begun much earlier, and at the end of the third century had already led the Emperor Diocletian to take up residence in Nikomedia (today İzmit) on the Sea of Marmara. From an Anatolian point of view, the seat of the imperial government was here in Nikomedia, as it was later on the Bosporus on the western periphery. The orientation toward the West that had characterized the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire for more than 300 years continued. When Emperor Jovian made peace with the Persians in 363 CE and ceded to them the city of Nisibis on the Tigris (now Nusaybin on the Turkish-Syrian border), the latter’s inhabitants were gripped by despair; they wanted to remain Romans (Ammianus 25, 8, 13).

An orientation toward political and cultural centers of gravity outside the country reaches far back into Anatolian history. Asia Minor itself became the center of an outwardly expanding empire only under the Hittites, in the second millennium BCE. Seen from the capital Ḫattiša, at the height of its development the Hittite state was oriented toward the southeast. So were the succeeding smaller states. Power, wealth, and splendor were located in Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh. The rise of the Median and Persian empires, along with new kingdoms with their centers in Ekbatana, Susa, and Persepolis, altered this force field only slightly.

In the Persian epoch, for the first time a split between the Aegean and the Euphrates appeared in Anatolia’s orientation. In the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, attractive power still radiated from the eastern palaces. In the world of high cultures, the Greeks lived on a remote coast and looked with admiration toward Asia. Their
tyrants held court on the Lydian and Persian model. They also owed their literary and scientific achievements to the “simple fact” that they were “the most eastern of the westerners,” that is, they were the first receivers among the latter. But in the fifth and fourth centuries, the Anatolians—the most western of the easterners—began to change their orientation, no doubt under the influence of the development of the power of Athens after the repulse of the Persians: Lycian princes spoke Greek, read Greek literature, and were fond of Greek pictorial art. Lycians and Carians built communities (poleis) on the Greek model and settled on the Mediterranean. In the third and second centuries, after Alexander's campaigns, this reorientation became more and more extensive: the Greek language and the culture of the polis spread to middle and eastern Anatolia, Cappadocians contributed to art and rhetoric in Greek cities, and kings bore the title “Friend of the Greeks.” Rome's expansion into the Hellenistic world increased this tendency. The new superpower in the West controlled the Anatolian princes through the medium of Hellenization in the wake of the allied Kingdom of Pergamon. Asia Minor resisted direct Roman rule for only a short time, throwing itself into the arms of a King of Pontos of Iranian descent. However, Pompey's and Octavian's victories over the eastern kingdoms clearly showed what the future would hold. In less than fifty years, the Anatolian land mass became a series of Roman provinces. But the West did not rule it completely. Urban civilization ebbed away as one approached the Euphrates. Armenia, which faced in both directions, provided a latent field of tension between East and West until the end of the ancient world.

Nonetheless, at no point in its history can Anatolian culture be neatly divided up into eastern and western. As far back as we can trace events, there was always a mixture. Imperial structures were preceded or accompanied by new settlements of peoples and ethnic groups who brought with them multiple proximities, overlaps, and fusions with earlier inhabitants: the (Latin) Romans, Celts, Jews, Macedonians, Iranians, Greeks, Arameans, and Assyrians settled the area in large numbers before the Rum and Turkish settlements. The old Anatolian kingdoms, those of the Lydians, the Phrygians, the Urartians, and the Hittites, can also be traced back to immigrants. Traditions brought into the country and those already existent there blended, and neither of them remained what it was. Hittite culture cannot be understood without the synthesis of Hattian, Luwian, Hurrian, and Semitic elements; nor are the Ionian Greeks of Miletus in the sixth century BCE identical in every respect with the Greeks in Athens and on Euboea. Their symbiosis with Asians is evident. Gods like Zeus or Men in the Phrygia of the second century CE are not Greek but Anatolian gods, and despite its origin and widespread dissemination, a religion like the cataephygian heresy, so-called “Montanism”—an apocalyptic Christian movement—is characteristically Anatolian.

The third constant consists of Anatolia's role in transmitting culture (a “bridge”). The ancients made daring sea voyages and followed long caravan routes, on which a few people crossed continents and geographical spaces that were not rediscovered and made permanently accessible until the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, the an-
cient European civilization of the countries around the Mediterranean saw barriers in three directions: to the west, an ocean, not every part of which could be reached by conventional seafaring; to the north, an indeterminate multitude of barbarian peoples living in dark forests, endless steppes, and unbearably cold areas; to the south, deserts, heat, and wild animals. Although it had been circumnavigated by the Phoenicians, Africa remained a closed continent, even if its geographical outpost, Egypt, remained a source of fascination as the oldest cultural center. Only the east differed fundamentally from the other cardinal directions in this respect. Here there was no clear boundary at which the known world stopped. One country followed another like pearls on a string, the homelands of ancient high culture where there were permanent dwellings; writing was practiced; states were constructed and governed; laws were issued; and things produced, exchanged, and built. Only India, to which Alexander marched his armies and which Trajan’s yearning reached, represented an approximate limit. The closure to the north and south, and the openness to the east, must have given commerce to and from the Mediterranean world its enduring longitudinal axis.

Anatolia lay between: “Asia minor as a bridge between East and West.” The metaphor of the bridge, which has become classical, is apt: ideas, craft skills, knowledge, and commodities passed through the peninsula from east to west and from west to east, and not only by land. Between the Levant and the Aegean, seafaring peoples groped their way along the south coast of Asia Minor in both directions. Long-distance relationships go far back into prehistory: we read and understand—on the basis of traces left by a past that antedates writing, when people were becoming sedentary—the migration of key elements of cultural practice from the East to Europe: the oldest writings come from the Orient to the West in the Bronze Age. The alphabet, myths, cosmology, mathematics, “money,” music, and finally even Christianity followed. The polis, technology, architecture, baths, streets, and the theater moved in the opposite direction. The vigorous proliferation of cities is a special mission that finally became, in the Imperial period, the foundation of the “system” itself. In this respect Asia Minor differs from much of the Roman Empire—Gaul, Germany, the lands along the Danube, and Egypt.

This book seeks to provide a historical overview of Anatolia as a bridge and a melting pot, of the changing orientations, mixtures, and transmissions, from prehistory to the heyday of the Roman provinces. No other study has thus far done so. There is only the brief summary Kleinasien in der Antike written by Elmar Schwertheim, a specialist in ancient history at the University of Münster and published in 2005. The Roman period, which is the best documented in the sources, has been described in great detail by two works written in English. In 1993, Stephen Mitchell of the University of Exeter published a two-volume study, Anatolia. Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor. He focuses on the central Anatolian context in the Roman period, giving special attention to the rise of Christianity. A work by David Magie, professor of classics at Princeton University, Roman Rule in Asia Minor (also in two volumes), offers a comprehensive bibliography of sources and literature, but was
published more than four decades earlier. Beginning with the older periods, Magie describes the process of Roman expansion down to the age of the soldier-emperors.

It is true that the history of Asia Minor can hardly be abstracted from the general history of great ancient empires. Nevertheless, wherever possible I have avoided exceeding the geographical limits of our discussion. So far as the temporal boundaries are concerned, I do not continue all the way to the end of the ancient culture of Asia Minor, which survived the Arab expansion of the seventh century and gradually disappeared only in the middle of the Byzantine age. But although I conclude this account before Constantine, that endpoint is not an arbitrary one. With the tetrarchy, the reorganization of the provinces, Christian domination, and the Byzantine Empire, a period begins in Asia Minor whose richness and peculiar tradition cannot be squeezed into a closing chapter, but can be described only as a special historical epoch.

For more than a half century discoveries and research in the area of Asia Minor have increased exponentially. I have striven to take the current state of the field into account. It goes without saying that in view of the dimensions of the body of source material, the subject requires a compromise. Comprehensiveness—including everything, the essential trait of a genuine handbook—cannot be achieved here. Above all, the mass of archaeological and epigraphic sources excludes from the outset the possibility of presenting the material in a form similar to the one Magie attempted; the result would not only exceed the scope of the book but also make it questionable whether the latter could be completed at all. Since modern research on all aspects of life in ancient Asia Minor has long since exceeded the capacity of any single academic discipline, when one ventures to produce a synthesis, here as elsewhere in studies on the ancient world, the individual’s competence encounters its limits.

In the past, scholars far more capable than I hesitated to undertake a “History of Asia Minor,” and for good reasons. Louis Robert, the great Parisian scholar on ancient history, conducted excavations in Klaros and Amyzon; traveled through large parts of Turkey; and presented his phenomenal knowledge of the ancient geography, monuments, and documents of this land in countless articles and books—but never attempted an overall survey of it. He would certainly have disapproved of such a project.

The Name of the Land

In neither the cuneiform languages of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia itself, nor in ancient Egyptian, was there a name for the whole peninsula of Asia Minor. The Greeks originally called the land (according to a scholion on Odyssey 7, 8) simply “the mainland,” and in the fifth century BCE, the Greek historian Herodotus still occasionally used this expression in contrast to the offshore islands (e.g., Herodotus 1, 169.174). Our geographical idea of Asia goes back to a Greek expression that apparently already occurs in the Mycenaean period on a Linear-B tablet from Pylos: a-si-
wi-ja, used here to designate the ancestry of a slave girl from the area on the eastern shore of the Aegean (PY Fr 1206). Concerning the older sources or origin of the word “Asia,” there is presently no general agreement, not even regarding which language it actually comes from. It may be derived from the name of the area in western Asia Minor that in the second millennium BCE the Hittites called “Assuwa.” Thus in a document of a certain King Tudḫaliya (probably Tudḫaliya I), we find: “When I had destroyed the land of Assuwa, I came back to Ḫattusa” (Annals of Tudḫaliya, v. II 33 ff.). Another interpretation connects Assuwa with the place-name Assos in the Troad, and the Indo-Germanist Jakob Wackernagel has already traced the name “Asia” (originally from *Assia chora—“Assian land”) back to this place-name.

In Homer’s Iliad there is a passage (2, 459 ff.) where the Achaean army’s invasion of the land of the Trojans is compared with the arrival of a swarm of birds: “And as the many tribes of winged fowl, wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans on the Asian mead (asio en leimoni) by the streams of Caystrius, fly this way” (trans. Murray). However, this is problematic, insofar as readings other than the one adjective asios are conceivable. The word occurs unambiguously as the adjective asis (“Asian”) around 700 BCE in a fragment of Hesiod: en asidi aie, “in Asian earth.” The noun Asie, Asia is also attested in the lyric poetry of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE: Archilochos, who speaks of the sheep-raising Asia (Fr. 226 West), Sappho (Fr. 55, 4 Diehl), and Mimnermos (Fr. 12, 2 Diehl). In each case the context indicates that “Asia” refers only to a very limited area in western Asia Minor.

As used by Herodotus, the term extended to the continent lying across from Europe and Libya (Africa), that is, to the land mass constituted by Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia. People knew that India and Arabia existed, but they had no precise idea of them—not to mention of the true dimensions of the continent. Likewise, the Romans used the term—following Greek tradition—to refer to the whole continent, but they also used it to refer to the province constructed out of the heritage of the Kingdom of Pergamon, which included large parts of western Anatolia. The first writer who clearly distinguished the continent from the peninsula (that is, Asia Minor as corresponding approximately to the borders of modern-day Turkey) was the geographer Strabo, an Anatolian from Amaseia (today Amasya) who had been given a Greek education and wrote in the time of the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius. In the Roman world, the term “Asia” continued to have three meanings: first, a continent opposed to Europe and Libya; second, a peninsula; and third, a province. Thus the province is also mentioned in the Bible (Acts 20:16): “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesos, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia.”

We first encounter the term “Asia Minor” in Claudius Ptolemaios (Ptolemy), a mathematician and geographer of the second century CE whose world-picture dominated the European and Arabic (cf. “Al-Magest”) Middle Ages. In contrast, the name “Anatolia” appears later. Greek anatole means “sunrise” or “east”; Latin has the corresponding word orien. In the late Roman Empire (after Diocletian, end of the third century CE), the provinces were reorganized and the whole of the Orient put under a praefectus praetorio per Orientem, whose title was translated in Greek as epar-
chos Anatolikon praitorion. The term was also used in the narrower field of military administration. In the seventh century CE, when the Byzantine Empire was divided up into military districts or “themes” (themata), one of the latter was named Anatolikon and included a large part of Asia Minor from the coast of the Aegean to Isauria (a mountainous region south of present-day Konya); its capital was Amorion. This district, whose extent was steadily altered, existed at least into the eleventh century, and the terms used by Arab geographers and historians of the ninth and tenth centuries ultimately go back to it: al-natulus, al-natulik.

Geography

Asia Minor is a rectangular peninsula projecting into the eastern Mediterranean whose longer, east-west sides follow an S-curve (Map 1a,b). It extends about 1,500 kilometers from east to west, if we take the borders of modern Turkey as our point of reference. The rectangle’s north-south sides are 500–600 kilometers long, narrowing to 480 kilometers at the place the Greeks called Isthmos. Taking the Asian part of Turkey as our basis, the total surface area is 756,855 square kilometers, the most extensive land mass in the Roman Empire, larger than Spain (about 580,000 square kilometers) or Gaul (about 550,000 square kilometers).

It is a mountainous land, situated in the Alpide belt of fold-mountains that stretches from the Atlas, Pyrenees, and Alps in the west to the Balkans, Zagros, the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Himalayas, and continues as far as Indonesia. On the peninsula, this belt has northern and southern fold zones that surround the central high plateau. On the southeast border, the Arabian plate begins; the rift that runs from the lakes of East Africa north through the Red Sea, Lebanon, and Syria abuts the Taurus Mountains north of Antakya in an arc that swings off to the northeast.

Northern Asia Minor

The north is traversed by the broad band of parallel rifts and faults of the Pontic Mountains. Elevations around the Sea of Marmara are relatively low, rarely over 1,500 meters. Beyond the Bosporus, the Istranca (Strandzha) Mountains in eastern Thrace stretch from the rugged plateau of the Bithynia peninsula as far as the lower Sakarya (Sangarios) River. Between the southern shore of the Sea of Marmara and the Valley of Bakır Çay (Kaikos) is a volcanic rock plateau that rises as high as 1,300 meters and drains into the Aegean, through the Bakır Çay, Gediz, and Menderes rivers, as well as into the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea, through the Simav and Sakarya rivers. Northeast of the Sakarya plain a small strip of land along the coast separates the zone of the western Pontic Mountains, which are 200 kilometers wide in places and very steep, from the central Anatolian massif. Three main mountain ranges can be distinguished: the coast range (north of Kastamonu, rising to more than 2,000 meters); behind it, and separated by the valleys of the Filyos and
Gökırmak rivers, are the Bolu and Ilgaz Dağları ranges (as high as 2,588 meters); to the south, separated by the valleys of Gerede Çay and Devrez Çay, the Köröglu Dağları range. From approximately the middle of the southern range, a ridge runs south almost as far as the basin of Lake Tuz, with a few higher points, such as Elma Dağ on the east, Ayas Dağ on the west, and the Karaca and Paşa Dağları in the south; Ankara lies in a depression on this ridge.

Farther east, the Pontic range is more clearly articulated by narrow valleys and broader lowlands; especially notable are the valleys of the Kelkit and Çoruh, the Suluova (Merzifon), and the basins of Erbaa, Zile, Turhal, Tokat, and Niksar. The East Pontos coastal range rises almost 4,000 meters above Yusufeli. The prevailing cliff coast in the north is interrupted for long stretches only by the alluvial plains in the Sinop peninsula, Bafra and Çarşamba Ovaları, which project into the Black Sea. Travel along the Black Sea coast and between it and the high plateau is difficult: for a long time, ancient harbors were connected only by sea; no continuous coastal road has been proven before the period of the Roman Empire. The relief offers favorable routes from the interior to the coasts only on the western and eastern edges of the middle Pontos arc, from the Bolu Ovası through the valleys of the Mengen Çay and Devrek Çay into the alluvial plains of the Filyos delta and in the east through the basin system between the Kızılırmak and Yeşilırmak rivers down toward Samsun. In antiquity, the rivers played a limited role in transportation; they are navigable with boats and small ships upstream from their mouths for only a short distance, as far as the gorges, and beyond them, on the high plateau.12 The Sakarya (Sangarios) River, the second-longest in Asia Minor, is already mentioned in Homer; it may be the river called Sahiriya in Hittite sources. It begins in the central massif, first curves around to the east, then west of Ankara it turns abruptly to the west, and finally, after a further curve to the north, breaks through the Pontos range and flows into the Black Sea. The Filyos (Billaios) River, the longest river in northern Anatolia after the Sakarya, follows a similar looping course. The climatic differences between the coastline and the plateau are very great. On the coast, a subtropical climate with luxuriant vegetation prevails. The heaviest annual precipitation in Turkey, 4,045.3 millimeters, was registered in 1931, east of Rize, in the legendary Colchis of antiquity. A continental climate prevails on the south side of the main mountain range, with cold, dry winters and humid, cool summers.

The Aegean Coast

The west coast is sharply divided, even cut up, as a result of folds and rifts running toward the west. The sea penetrates deeply into the rift zones and forms nine large bays that cut from 30 to 100 kilometers into the land. Between Edremit and Aydın (that is, in the largest part of the coastal region), rivers broaden into alluvial plains that are as wide as 12 kilometers and reach far into the interior; they are suitable for transportation and agriculture (Bakır Çay, Gediz, Küçük, and Büyük Menderes). In contrast, the southern section is characterized by craggy promontories extending
into the sea, such as the Bodrum peninsula and especially the Reşadiye peninsula south of the bay of Gököva. Further north, in the interior the mountains run east and west. South of Aydın the relief becomes more uneven, with folds running northwest to southwest and north to south.

Central and Eastern Anatolia

The northwestern and western boundaries of the central Anatolian massif along the basin of the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean are hard to determine precisely; the plateau as a whole slopes slowly down to the west, although on both sides of the great river valleys there are ridges as high as 2,000 meters. The northeastern and eastern part of the central plateau, around Çankırı, Çorum, Amasya, and Tokat, is more clearly divided up and more humid than the southern half and offers fertile land for agriculture and livestock raising.

Central Anatolia is not a unified whole; it consists of high plains, mountain ranges, and peaks of various kinds of stone and origin; however, geological folds are rarer. The rises on the broad plains constitute no obstacles to transportation. A large part of this area lies inside the bend of the Kızılırmak ("Red River"), the longest river in Asia Minor. Fed by smaller tributaries east of Sivas, it first flows south in a broad curve through Cappadocia. Then, to the east of Lake Tuz ("Salt Lake"), it turns north and breaks through the Pontos Mountains and empties into the Black Sea. Its Greek name, *Halys* ("salt") was connected in antiquity with the salt deposits in the Cappadocian region of Ximene; the first mention of it by the Greeks is in Aeschylus’s tragedy *The Persians* (866). The Hittites called it the Marassantiya.13

West and south of the Kızılırmak, in the parallelogram between Eskişehir, Konya, Niğde, and Ankara, hilly land and flat plains prevail. Everyone familiar with Anatolia understands the metaphor of “rolling hills” and loves the “apparent gentleness of the terrain, the rounding of the ridges and crests and the widespread areas that are still strikingly flat even in their relative high position above the valleys.”14 Low rises divide this plateau into three flat parts: the Sakarya valley, the Lake Tuz basin, and the Konya plains, which extend the farthest to the south, as far as the inner side of the arc of the Taurus Mountains.

East of a line running from Niğde through Nevşehir to Tokat, the central massif rises toward the east Anatolian high plateau. The latter is fissured by deep river valleys and divided by high mountain ranges and large volcanic peaks. The plains themselves are partly a product of the volcanoes in the middle of them, and the tuff landscape west of Kayseri is particularly bizarre (Figure 2).

These formations are the result of the erosion of lava and ash deposits proceeding from eruptions of Erciyas Dağ and Hasan Dağ. In the north, broader valleys divide up the parallel ranges along the east Pontos coast; for example, the Aşkale plain between Erzincan and Erzurum, and, farther east, the valleys of the upper Euphrates and upper Aras. North of the Aras valley rises the volcanic plateau of Kars, with a group of smaller volcanoes. At the eastern end and south of this mountain axis are
the volcanoes of Mt. Ararat, Little Ararat, Süphan Dağ, Nemrud Dağ, and the Bingöl Dağları range. At 5,156 meters, the majestic Mt. Ararat is the highest peak in Asia Minor (Figure 3). In Armenian, it is called Masis; in Greek, Baris; and in Turkish, Ağrı Dağ. The name “Ararat,” which is used only in the European tradition, comes from the Old Testament (Gen. 8:4), where it designates the place where Noah’s Ark landed. The reference is to the Armenian upland (Jerome translates it as super montes Armeniae—“on the mountains of Armenia”); the name comes from the Assyrian name for the region, Urartu (p. 99 f.). It is not entirely clear when this name came into use; the earliest attested uses appear to go back to the fourteenth century CE. Even today, attempts are repeatedly made, on foot and by air, to locate the Ark. In a book describing his travels in the Orient (partly copied from other authors, partly imagined), the fourteenth-century author who wrote under the name John Mandeville says that with God’s help, a monk had managed to take with him a splinter of wood from the Ark. The first known attempt to climb the mountain was made in 1707 by a professor of botany from Aix-en-Provence, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (p. 20), but the summit was first reached by a German, Friedrich Parrot, in 1829. The volcano last erupted in 1840.

Lake Van, which Strabo calls Thospitis, lies at an altitude of 1,720 meters above sea level and is the largest lake in Turkey. It is remarkable for its depth (more than 250 meters near its shores) and its high soda ash content. Strabo (11, 14, 8) described it as “containing soda.” The fertile land along its shores already attracted settlers even in prehistoric times. South of the Van basin the Cilo and Sat Moun-
Mountains rise as high as 4,000 meters and form a dividing wall between it and the steppe in northern Iraq.

The Euphrates and Tigris, which were, along with the Nile, the original life-giving rivers of the most ancient cultures, on the eastern plateau are not the broad, slow-moving waterways of Mesopotamia, but instead are torrents that cut deeply through the terrain, flowing rapidly through curves and canyons, and are dangerous for navigation. Particularly in the middle stretches of the Euphrates, gorges (sometimes with vertical rock walls) alternate with broader, intermontane basins, such as those around Erzincan, Elazığ, and Malatya, or, on the Murat, a large Euphrates tributary, around Bingöl.

**Southern Asia Minor**

As in the north, along the steep cliffs of the S-shaped coast south of the Taurus massif there are large alluvial plains in only a few places: on the Gulf of Antalya and between Mersin and the Bay of İskenderun.

The name “Taurus” (Turkish Toros) is first mentioned in Greek by Aristotle; the Greeks connected it with the homophonous word for “bull” (Dionysios Periegetes 641 Müller; Stephanos of Byzantion p. 608, 16–19 Meineke s. v.), associating its form with the humped back or its nature with the wildness of the bull. Libanios (or. 9, 92), a rhetorician and writer of the fourth century CE, gives another etymology:
the mountain range is supposed to have been the first to emerge from the flood-waters and dry out, and for that reason was given the name Tersia, from tersātino ("dry out"). The Taurus Mountains can be divided into two segments: the western segment (Lycian Taurus) forms a barrier between the Aegean and the Mediterranean coasts. Its topography is complex. Above Antalya, axes running southwest to northeast and axes running north to south intersect; extensive basins (the Elmalı plateau) are imbedded in the high ranges; in the high ridges that continue toward the north and intersect the Cilician Taurus Mountains that swing northwest, broad corridors form the basins of Lake Eğridir, Lake Beyşehir, and Lake Suğla. East of these lakes and before the Taurus range, the Ala-Dağ and Alaca-Dağ massifs rise out of the plateau to form the western boundary of the Konya plain.

The Cilician Taurus range consists of rugged limestone and karst formations that tower over the coast. Behind them rise still higher massifs of granite that in the north decline into hills and finally into the plains of the southern part of the central massif. This folded zone is broken up by the Göksu (Kalykadnos) and, at the “Cilician Gates” (see Figure 69), by the Pozantzı Çay, which cuts a thousand meters deep into the terrain. Above the Cilician alluvial plain the mountains divide into two main ranges, the Taurus and the Anti-Taurus, running southwest to northeast.

### The Arabian Plate

The Arabian plate has a gentle topography. A series of broad, hilly plateaus level out to form the Euphrates basin in the southwest, the Harran plains in the middle, and the Tigris basin in the northeast. The plain is divided by the heights of the Karaca Dağ volcano (1,957 meters) that precede the plateau and the lower, lengthy ridge of the “Tur Abdin” north of Mardin.

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Taken as a whole, Anatolia has an extremely varied topography with sharp climatic contrasts. The broad “bridge” of the central massif is easily crossed but does not offer good conditions for settlement, at least in its dry southern part. Intense seismic activity is highly characteristic of Anatolia. Since the time of the Roman Empire, more than 800 earthquakes have been noted and reported. Antiquity has handed down to us harrowing testimonies to the regularly recurring suffering of the people—for instance, in Libaniōs’s plaintive monody (or. 61) on Nikomedia or on the tombstones of children who were killed (see Figure 92).