

# TURKISH REVERSALS AND PALINDROMES

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After reading Dmitri Borgmann's discourse on "Welsh: Reversed English" in the February 1985 *Word Ways* and noting his invitation (or challenge) to replicate his studies in other languages, I decided to determine what a similar examination of the Turkish lexicon would reveal. For my survey, I used *A Turkish-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1957), Second Edition by H.C. Honey with the advice of Fahir İz. It is not the most comprehensive Turkish dictionary available (I have several more comprehensive ones in my bookcase) but it is a very good dictionary by any standards, it is easy to handle and its typeface is easy on the eyes.

Turkish, I found, is not as cooperative, if I may use that word, as Borgmann found Welsh to be. That is to say, I was unable to turn up any seven-letter or even any six-letter Turkish words that read as English words when reversed. However, I did find 14 five-letter words and 52 four-letter words. These totals do not include a number of Turkish words that, when reversed, yield given names or place names. Also, I did not look for, or record, expansions of basic Turkish words. Turkish is an agglutinative language and the variety of suffixes that can be added to almost any word is quite large. For example, I could have included, but did not, the Turkish word *elin* (of the hand) which, when reversed, gives Nile (the basic word *el* means "hand"). I also did not look for, or include, various verb forms or plurals (except irregular ones), even though Borgmann included such words in his Welsh list.

Purists may well take exception to some of the Turkish words that I did include. Since 1928, Turkish has been written in a Latin alphabet that includes some letters not found in that used for English. I have treated as equals Turkish's two g's (g and ğ), two i's (i and ı), two o's (o and ö), and two u's (u and ü). Whether or not this is acceptable I leave to *Word Ways* readers to decide.

acaba (I wonder? Is it so?)	selâm (salutation, salute)
kitab (book)	selim (free from defect, safe)
nisab (level of income)	senin (thine, your)
serab (mirage)	sedir (platform, sofa; cedar)
tarac (pillage, plunder)	demir (iron; anchor)
telif (reconciling, compromise)	setir (a covering, veiling)
sınıf (class, category)	revir (small military hospital)
sala (call to prayer)	pota (crucible)
selâ (bicycle saddle)	reva (lawful, permissible)
koma (apostrophe; act of putting)	haya (testicle; shame, modesty)

seda (echo, sound)  
 ed'ab (dimensions)  
 saib (that hits the mark, right)  
 edib (literary man; polite)  
 darb (blow; multiplication)  
 garb (west; Europe)  
 turb (peat for fuel)  
 adad (numbers)  
 irad (income, revenue)  
 ekid (strong, firm)  
 tard (expulsion, repulsion)  
 amud (pole, column)  
 nale (moan, groan)  
 ense (nape)  
 elif (Arabic letter alif)  
 deri (skin, hide)  
 ipek (silk)  
 enik (whelp, cub, puppy)  
 ekal (lesser, least)  
 amal (actions; desires, hopes)  
 kral (king)  
 aval (half-witted)  
 ecil (cause, reason)

ekil (food)  
 niam (benefits)  
 enam (book of prayers)  
 alem (sign; flag; universe)  
 etem (more or most perfect)  
 ekim (sowing; October)  
 elim (painful, grievous)  
 enin (moan, groan)  
 ekip (team, crew, gang)  
 ayar (degree; fineness of gold)  
 ecir (reward; hireling)  
 amir (commanding)  
 emir (order, command; chief)  
 esir (prisoner, slave)  
 abes (useless and lowdown)  
 dös (flank; breast; withers)  
 enis (sociable)  
 erat (private soldiers)  
 alet (tool, instrument)  
 taht (throne)  
 girt (imitates cutting sound)  
 dört (four)  
 rast (straight, right)

While I was scanning Hony's dictionary to compile the above listing, I kept my eyes open for examples of Turkish palindromes. I was pleasantly surprised to find a good many, although most of them were fairly short ones. Only one, kulluk (slavery), was of six letters, but 29 were of five letters and 4 of four. Again, I did not consider, or include, expansions of basic Turkish words such as eve (to the house). Unless the Turks publish their own Söz Yolları (Word Ways), the following is possibly the first list of Turkish palindromes ever compiled.

damad (son-in-law)  
 elele (part of to shake hands)  
 kabak (pumpkin, marrow)  
 kaçak (fugitive, contraband)  
 kalak (nostril of an animal)  
 kaşak (back-scratcher)  
 kavak (poplar)  
 kayak (ski)  
 kazak (Cossack)  
 kelek (raft)  
 kesek (clod; turf)  
 kılık (shape, appearance)  
 kipik (half-closed eye, winking)  
 kırık (broken, cracked)  
 kapak (cover, lid)

kısık (pinched, squeezed up)  
 kıtik (refuse of flax, tow)  
 kıyık (minced, chopped up)  
 kuruk (sour wine; green grapes)  
 küçük (small, young)  
 kütük (tree stump, log)  
 makam (place, abode, post)  
 nadan (tactless, unmannerly)  
 nalan (moaning, lamenting)  
 niçin (why)  
 sülüs (a third)  
 takat (strength, power)  
 tirit (bread soaked in gravy)  
 velev (even if)

amma (but)  
 emme (act of sucking)

taat (piety)  
 üssü (base, basis)