

# Overview and Comparison to Words of Antiquity Through Homeric Epics

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This study aims to examine the relations between languages of antiquity and some words in Homer's epics, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, that are considered the first written texts and important in terms of the richness of Greek vocabulary. Although the words in Homeric epics carry a value for ancient Anatolia, there are no studies in this field in our country. For this purpose, with the help of words we have, we will focus on: (a) bond of these words with Hittite, partially (b) some archaic qualities for some Latin words, developed later and also continued of some ground and phrases in the everyday life in the same region for centuries on the language of the people depending on the oral transmission. At the end of the study, we will discuss the changes of the words in philological level as well as in terms of the letter, sounds and meaning by used words in Homer's epics as will be explained in this study.

*Keywords:* Homer, words, linguistic bonds, archaic marks, today marks

One of the most attractive topics in classical philology is the detection of the words which are used from the past to the present and their phonetic structure, spelling and periodic traces. Thus, some data can be obtained about the period or even the age of some words.

Middle East, Anatolia, Greek and Roman civilisations have had a lot of accumulation in terms of the settlement and archaeological findings from the earliest times to the present day. Mesopotamia had agriculture, Sumerian civilisation invented the first writing system, Assyria outshined through commerce, Hittites were advanced in politics, Lydia invented money. As well as these civilisations: Medes—Persians, the legendary city of Troy, the Aegean islands, Thrace with Greek and Roman civilisations, have led to higher living standards as they were in a constant and intertwined relationship with Anatolia.

Anatolia is also important because it hosts lots of ancient written documents. Especially, there are some words in Turkish which possibly originated in Anatolia. In this regard, words carry cultural values both in terms of their final form, and the period of usage.

Our study is about some words used in Homer's (who is believed to be from Smyrnaean "Izmir" or Chios Island) *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.<sup>1</sup> These works are dated back to 3000 from today and they are the earliest literary pieces which contain ancient words of Western Anatolia and Greece. Also, when the development of Greek language, which is based on Phoenician alphabet, is taken into consideration, these works are thought to be benchmarks as they show the ties between Greek and ancient languages. Herodotos (V, 58) states that the

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<sup>1</sup> The epics are based on MURRAY's *Homer Iliad* (2001) and *Odyssea* (1998) publications.

Greek letters are Phoenician origin (Godley, 1998, pp. 62-65). While I was studying on Homer's glossary (which I was the first one to try to translate it from Ancient Greek to Turkish), it drew my attention that we might be using some ancient words with similarities in letters, sounds and meanings today. However, the lack of systematic studies on ancient languages and the etymological studies of our country does not allow us to provide new information and compare them. It is observed that in recent years, there are more studies on the subject (Şimşek, 2007, p. 179), (Tokalak, 2006, pp. 394-412). Şimşek states that the word root was taken as Arabic, Greek, Latin. Also he says that there are not enough places in older languages.

It is clear that cultures in Anatolia developed by affecting one another. In fact, the present names of the many geographical parts in Turkey naturally changed a bit, but they also are called with their ancient names. For example; *Izmir (Smyrna)*, *Bursa (Prusa)*, *Sivas (Sebasteia)*, *Gelibolu (Kallipoli)*, etc. (Umar, 1993, pp. 367, 602, 679, 716, 740). Some of the present names may seem different but they actually reflect the ancient name: *Iznik (Nikea)*, *Samsun (Amisos)*, *Antalya (Attaleia)*, *Antakya (Antioch)* etc.

Some words in Homer may be shown as examples of the interactions among ancient cultures: for example, we can argue if there is a relation among the word “**telle**” in Iliad, which means “to say” (*Iliad. XVI, 199*) and “**til**” in Sumerian language, which means “screaming” and if these two words can be the root of the word “**tellendirmek**” in Turkish. The answer perhaps will remain as “a probability” (Aydın, 2001, p. 79).

In the same way, there is “**ga/ka**” in Hittite for “**gala**” which means “milk” in Homer (Ünal, 2007, Vol. I, p. 121); and “**aş**” for “**eks**” which means “six” (Ünal, 2007, Vol. I, p. 6); “**panku**” for **pan** which means “everyone” (Ünal, 2007, Vol. II, p. 508); “**minu, mien**” for **mono** (Ünal, 2007, Vol. I, p. 449; 2016, p. 353);<sup>2</sup> and “**ginu, genu, kinu or kenu**” for the word “**gonu**” which means “knee” (Ünal, 2007, Vol. I, pp. 335-356)<sup>3</sup>.

The ancient Greek language is centuries ahead of Latin. Even, there are Greek words in the early Latin text “*Twelve Tables*”. Some words from Homer can be found in Latin with a slight change in letters but with the same meaning. Therefore, it is possible to have an idea about the older pronunciations, slippage and changed formats of some words in Latin.

<b>In Homeros:</b>	<b>In Latin:</b>
δάκρυον	lacrima
δίς	bis
ἕξ	sex
φέρετρον, φέρτρον	feretrum
γόνυ	genus
ἴς	vis
κῆρ	cor
κῆτος	cetus
κόρση, κόρρη, κόρρα	corrana
λουτρόν, λοετρόν	loutr-
οἶς	ovis
ὀλολύζω	ululare
τέρετρον	terebra
ύς	süs

<sup>2</sup> ÜNAL 2016: p. 353, in this page he put a question mark on the side of the Hittite word.

<sup>3</sup> In Greek “κνημῖς” means “calf” and “εὐκνημῖς” which means “beautiful knee guard” can also be considered in this context.

We would also like to state the following examples in Latin: “**pūgme, pūks**” which mean “punch” in Homer (*Iliad*, III, 237; XXIII, 621, 669, πύξ); “**pūgmahia**” which means fistfight (*Iliad*, XXIII, 660, 653, πυγμαχία) are referred to as **pugnus** and **pugilatio** in Latin.

These examples show that the change in the letters, tone and meaning in that period can be based on the oral tradition or the word’s formation in the local dialects.

Now, let us compare the changes and similarities that some words undergo over time in Homer, which contains over 9,000 words in Turkish words which are subsequently used in the same geography. In this way, we will see both the changes and have an idea about the roots and the origins of these words. Furthermore, we will present the words with their explanations in the studies over the Turkish language to reveal the outlook on the words. However, when we study Turkish etymological explanation of some words, it is clear that they have ancient Greek origin. But there is no extensive and detailed description in language studies or it is not possible to estimate at least when and which author used them first.

This situation stems from not carrying research about ancient languages out under a system. For example, Homer represents the ancient Anatolian and Aegean world that means three millenium ago. Based on this, the words in Homer are the everyday words of Anatolian and Aegean culture as well as being the main source for language studies.

It is important to compare the words underneath with Kaşgarlı Mahmut’s (Mahmud al-Kashgari) **Divanü Lügat-it Türk**, the earliest Turkish dictionary (11th-century) which is possibly highlighted by Asiatic elements.

Alphabetical order of the words and descriptions are as follows:<sup>4</sup>

“**Devo**” (δέῖω) in Homer: This word means “needs, requirements” (*Odyseia*, VI, 192). In our opinion, it can be seen as the root of the Turkish word “deva” which means “cure”.

“**Deva**” in the Turkish etymological studies: According to Eyüboğlu this word entered in Turkish through the writing, and it is used for all the supplies that help to eliminate the negative effects of distress, pain, sadness, difficulty and such things (Eyüboğlu, 1995, p. 182; Nişanyan, 2012, p. 131), also in Tietze (2002, Vol. I, p. 601) this word is based on “dawa” in Arabic language, means “medicine.”

“**Drepane**” (δρέπανον) in Homer: This is a good example for our study. It means “sickle, scythe” (*Iliad*, XVIII, 8, 551). And it is generally considered as the source of the Turkish word “tirpan.”

“**Tirpan**” in the Turkish etymological studies: It means “scythe.” It was passed from the Greeks of Anatolia (Eyüboğlu, 1995, p. 660; Nişanyan, 2012, p. 626) and Dimasi and Nizam (2004, p. 251) state the word is passed into Turkish from Old Greek.

“**Düsmenes**” (δυσμενής, δυσμενέες) in Homer: This can create a different example for our topic. It is available in Homer; it means “unwanted, unpleasant, bearing malice, wild” (*Iliad*, V, 488; VI, 453, X, 40). According to us, this word is lived in Antolian languages from old times.

“**Düşman**” in the Turkish etymological studies: It is thought to come from Persian, meaning “bad heart” and “someone who wants the evil for another or tries to hurt him” (Eyüboğlu, 1995, p. 211; Tietze, 2002, Vol. I, p. 678; Gülensoy, 2007, Vol. I, p. 315). “Düs” is noted to be “evil, sinister” and “man” means “heart.” It is understood that the word has an Asian origin. Because, “düs” is “down low, bad, unwanted” in Greek/but the word “menes” is not Greek, it is Asian and it means “heart, soul” (so it means “human”).

<sup>4</sup> For the all selected Homeric words mentioned in this study see also Autenrieth (1998): pp. 82, 90-91, 97, 150, 182-183, 190, 226, 245, 250, 275, 278-279, 334-335; Liddell-Scott (2004): pp. 156, 180, 184, 196, 385, 402, 477, 513, 536, 614, 619, 622, 800-801, 818, 887, 890.

**“Eykelos” (ἔϊκελος) in Homer:** In Homer, it means “similar” and it is a striking example for our topic (*Odyseia. XI, 207*). In our opinion, it helps us to explain the word “**heykel**” i.e. “sculpture” in Turkish.

**“Heykel” in the Turkish etymological studies:** It is assumed that the word “heykel” in Turkish is originated from Arabic word “haykal” which means big building, monument, palace, temple. It is also associated with the Akkadian word “ekall” i.e. palace and the Sumer word “e-gal” i.e. “big house” (Nişanyan, 2012, p. 238; Tietze, 2009, Vol. II, p. 302). Thus, with the meaning expansion, it is explained as a reminiscent of an entity created from different materials (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 323), Atalay (2013, Vol. I, p. 426) states that the word “burxan” means “put,” also the word “statue” is called “bedhez burhan.”

**“Kufos” (κοῦφος) in Homer:** It means “empty, useless, foolish or quiet” (*Iliad, XXIV, 54*).

And it is known to be the root of the word 'kof' that means “empty” in Turkish folk culture.

**“Kof” in the Turkish etymological studies:** This word is asserted to originate from the Greek word “kufos” (i.e. “hollow, empty”) and from the old Turkish word “kovi” (Eyuboğlu, 1993, p. 421; Nişanyan, 2012, p. 332), also Atalay (2013, Vol. IV, p. 350) states that the word “kovi” means “rotten inside” and “corrupt.”

**“Kollao” (κολλάω) in Homer:** This word means “to unite, to paste” (*Iliad, XV, 389*). In our opinion, it can be the root of the Turkish word “kollamak.”

**“Kollamak” in the Turkish etymological studies:** It means to observe, to defend, to guard and to help; and it is related to “kol” that means the “arm” (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 423; Nişanyan, 2012, p. 334).

**“Koma” (κόμα) in Homer:** It means “deep sleep” or “blackout” (*Iliad, XIV, 359*). According to us, it still has the same meaning today in Anatolia language from old time.

**“Koma” in the Turkish etymological studies:** This word does not exist in Eyüboğlu, but it is explained as “deep sleep” in Nişanyan (2012, p. 334) and it is known to have an ancient Greek origin (Dimasi & Nizam, 2004, p. 191).

**“Kopros” (κόπρος) in Homer:** It is used as “animal droppings” (*Iliad, XXII, 414; Odyseia. X, 329*). According to us, this word is lived in Antolian languages from old times.

**“Gübre” in the Turkish etymological studies:** It is formed as “kopro-kupre-kubre-gübre”. It also can be referred as “kemre or kömre, also göbre” in the local language. In Eastern Anatolia, it is named as “tezek.” According to Eyüboğlu (1993, p. 299), Nişanyan (2012, p. 217) and Tietz (2009, Vol. II, p. 168) it has Greek origin. But there is no available information in Turkish sources about its ancient Greek version (Dimasi & Nizam, 2004, p. 165).

**“Oizüs” (ὀϊζύν/acc. Oizün) in Homer:** It means “pain, sorrow or sadness” (*Iliad, XIII, 1; 14, 480; XV, 365* also, *ὀϊζύω, ὀϊζύνω: crying, moan, mourn*). In our opinion, Turkish words “hüzün and üzüntü” perfectly correspond to this word, it is stayed in Antolian languages from old times.

**“Hüzün” in the Turkish etymological studies:** In Arabic, it is described as “inner sadness and haze,” (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 329), (Nişanyan, 2012, p. 250), (Tietze, 2009, Vol. II, p. 353).

**“Omuz” (ὤμος) in Homer:** It means “shoulder” (*Iliad, VIII, 194; XVI, 289*). In our opinion, this word is lived in Antolian languages from old times.

**“Omuz” in the Turkish etymological studies:** In Eyüboğlu (1995, p. 509), it is based on the Greek word “omos,” but in Nisanyan (2012, p. 458), it is based on the word “om” which means the “capitulum” in old Turkish. Despite the surprising similarity between these words, Nişanyan states that there is no connection with the ancient Greek word “omos.”

**Oteo (ὠθέω/ω):** This word means “to push, push away” (*Iliad*, IV, 535, V, 626). In our opinion, this word corresponds with the Turkish word “öte or ötelemek” and it can be seen as root for the word “öte”, because of living in Antolian languages from old times.

**“Öte” in the Turkish etymological studies:** In old Turkish it refers to a direction (i.e. *beyond*) and means “to push beyond” (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 537; Nişanyan, 2012, p. 469; Atalay, 2013, Vol. IV, p. 469).

**“Palasso” (παλάσσω/ω) in Homer:** It means “to thrive” (*Odysseia*, XIII, 395). And it can be seen as the root of the common word “palazlanmak” in Turkish.

**“Palazlanmak” in the Turkish etymological studies:** It is believed to be produced by adding Turkish suffixes to the Greek word “polos,” and it means “to thrive, to grow, to recovery (or to fledge)” (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 545; Nişanyan, 2012, p. 473).

**“Patasso” (πατάσσω/ω) in Homer:** It means “to hit, to knock” and its present form “pataks- / patag” (*Iliad*, XXIII, 370). According to us, it creates the root of the word “pataklamak” and lived in Anatolia from old time.

**“Pataklamak” in the Turkish etymological studies:** While Eyuboglu (1995, p. 550) grounds it to the Greek word “to patage,” but Nişanyan (2012, p. 481) attributes the word to hitting sound “pata küte” in Turkish.

**“Pron” (πρόν) in Homer:** This word means “nose or cape” (*Iliad*, XII, 282). In our opinion, it creates the root of the word “burun” in Turkish, it is stayed in Anatolia from old time.

**“Burun” in the Turkish etymological studies:** It means overhang, prominent and bump and its root is thought to be the Greek word “preon or pron” or “burun” in Turkish and “birun” in Persian (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 108; Atalay, 2013, Vol. I, p. 398), also Nişanyan (2012, p. 83) states that the “burun /burn” in the old Turkish attributed to the “snoked, snoke” words.<sup>5</sup> Only Tietze (2002, Vol. I, p. 400) states that this word is just old Turkish origin.

**“Purgos” (πύργος) in Homer:** This word means “castle” (*Iliad*, XXI, 525). In our opinion, it may be the root of the Turkish word “burç” which means “tower.”

**“Burgaz/burc/burç” in the Turkish etymological studies:** It is based on the ancient Greek word “purgos” (Eyuboğlu, 1995, p. 108), but in Nişanyan (2012, p. 83) and also in Tietze (2002, Vol. I, p. 397) it is related to Aramaic word “burgū” and “burc.”

**“Rapto” (ράπτω/ω) in Homer:** It means “to stitch” (*Iliad*, XII, 296). And there is a word in Turkish with the same meaning, as “raptiye”. So, in our opinion, the word “rapto” clearly serves as the root of the Turkish word.

**“Raptiye” in the Turkish etymological studies:** This word doesn’t exist in Eyuboğlu. In Nişanyan (2012, p. 513) it is related to the Arabic word “rab” which means “linking.”

**“Telgo” (θέλω/ω) in Homer:** It means “to bedazzle, impress and influence” (*Odysseia*, X, 291). In our opinion, this word can be clarified to the root of the Turkish word “telkin” as the same meaning.

**“Telkin” in the Turkish etymological studies:** This word does not exist in Eyuboğlu. In Nişanyan (2012, p. 615), explains as teaching and guidance in Arabic language, and it is based on the word “talkin” which means “influencing the witnesses” in the Islamic law.

Except for these words, there are some idioms in Homer that we still use today: for example: **(due to shame) wish the ground would swallow you up** (*Iliad*, XVII, 415-417) is a saying that we still use in Turkish

<sup>5</sup> It is still expressed in the form of “purun” (not “burun”) due to the shady in the Black Sea culture.

with the same meaning; but the saying which means “**wish gods take the bad words from your mouth**” continues in the form of “**heaven forbid**”. Also, to nod head is still considered as the biggest sign of confidence today (*Iliad*, 2, 524); and lamenting after deaths still continues in our tradition (*Iliad*, XVIII, 50-64). Some expressions like “**crying like a girl**” (*Iliad*, XVI, 8), “**keep in mind, memorise**” (*Iliad*, X, 268; XVI, 444; *Odysseia*, XVI, 281) are still available in Anatolian life.

**In conclusion:** with taking the words in Homer as a criterion, we examined the words dated back to Anatolia’s ancient cultures and are still present in today’s Turkish. They have probably reached today particularly due to local usage from generation to generation in the same geography. Therefore, it can be said that in spite of the changing, mixed, broken, religious and political human profile, these words we use in colloquial language haven’t entered to our language by chance. In fact, they are based on a solid-standing history and are still in use in Anatolia about at least three thousand years.

We can make the following observations:

(1) The exchange between the letters “a/e; b/p; k/g; t/d; f/v” grounds to the ancient times and continued until quite recently.

(2) The letters, sounds and meanings of the selected sample Greek words have many similarities with today’s Turkish.

(3) These words, with considering Homer, have three thousand years old Anatolian roots (at least in the west).

(4) These words had Greek roots or stems, but formed with Turkish suffixes.

(5) In modern studies about the origin of the Turkish words, when calling the words Greek, it is referred to the Greek of Greece, and calling them Romanic refers to the Anatolian Greek. But the words we examine date back to ancient Greek.

(6) When the old Greek is in question during Turkish etymology research, ancient texts are not scanned as there is uncertainty caused by failure to give the author’s name.

(7) When we compare these words to the earliest Turkish dictionary (Kaşgarlı Mahmud - *Düvanü Lügat-it Türk*) the words **kufos**, **oteo** and **pron** coincide with the Turkish ones.

(8) Turkish words may show some contradictions in the explanation of the origin (but it is natural).

Of course, if there weren’t Greek and Latin elements, keeping today’s etymological studies would be impossible. Furthermore, the relationship between Greek and Anatolian Turkish is as similar as the both cultures and even without research the interesting interactions between the words stand out. Therefore, the glossary of Homer is also important for exploring the Turkish word marks. These details will be found by ancient language, culture and etymological studies and they will create new possibilities about the roots of words and will remind us the ancient cultures of our geography.

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