

# Analysis and exploration of asia minor by horatio southgate research paper exampl...

[Parts of the World, Asia](#)



## **ANALYSIS AND EXPORATION OF ASIA MINOR BY HORATIO SOUTHGATE**

Asia Minor, the area which is located in the north-western part of Asia and includes Anatolic peninsula, Mesopotamia and surrounding areas, has always been a crossroad of civilizations. The history of the region pretty much reflects the history of mankind. From Hettic and Phinician tribes to Egiptians, from Ancient Persians, Greeks and Romans to modern Turks, Kurds and Arabs - hundreds of nations have crossed the land or settled down there. The importance of geopolitical and economical status of the area was understood of leaders of various nations throughout the past three thousand years. Being a bridge from Asia to Europe Asia Minor was also a very fertile area, which was significant for the primarily agricultural societies of that time. The climate changed over the years, however the area remained a valuable asset and changed masters far more offer than the people of peace would otherwise prefer. Within the past 2 thousand years the area was a part of the Roman Empire (later- Eastern Roman Empire), hosted several crusader kingdoms, was then conquered by the Turks who managed to step into Constantinople in 1453. Asia Minor (which is by definition antonymous to Asia Major, of Greater Asia, which includes all other Asian states including those from the Middle East) has remained under the Turkish rule ever since. In the 1920-es due to the democratic reforms of Moustafa Kemal Ataturk the once long-living and powerful Ottoman Empire was disbanded, and currently Turkey is a formally secular and economically advanced nation.

All those changes of power and geopolitical vectors, however, did not pass unnoticed by the population and the culture. First of all it may be noticed

from the ethnical and religious points of view. The region is populated by nations which would hardly co-exist in peace in any other area. The Ottoman empire was created on a very diverse ethnical basis which included Turks, Armenians, Kurds, Greeks and various minorities. This multiethnicity was respectively followed by multiconfessionality and multiculturalism. Sunni and Shia'h Islam was present in the country, as well as the Greek and Armenian Orthodox Churches. Apart from that, several local branches of Christianity preserved, such as Nestorian or Jacobite ones, which were considered herecy by the mainstream churches of the West and of the East. This confessional, cultural and demographical mosaic remains up until now and makes this are a very interesting subject for research.

It is obvious that due to the strategic importance as well as enormous cultural value Asia Minor has always attracted deep interest of scholars from the civilizer world. Research of the area, however, was constrained up until recently due to various factors. First of all, the region has never been particularly stable from the political point of view. Transfers of power, civil unrests, religious demonstrations, protests and even rebellions have been, and sometimes still are, quite natural elements of the political landscape. Besides that, although currently Turkey is an open and generally friendly state, the Ottoman Empire was relatively closed for foreigners. Both the diplomatic and religious missions of the Western states were concentrated in Constantinople, and it was not an easy task to explore the country in general. This leads us to the third category of problems that travelers and reseachers would encounter. The infrastructure of the Empire had been in such a poor state that periods of famine, floods and other natural calamities

might have compromised the intracontinental transportation considerably. It would be much safer and faster to travel by the seas, both the Black and Mediterranean. Finally, it is logical that various tribes and nations within the Empire spoke different languages, although a state language (Turkish) also existed. In distant areas, however, it was a major complication.

Prior to that travel there were three primary sources of information about the region and Ottoman Empire, in general. First of all, there were Medieval and Ancient sources of the general nature. It is needless to say that there was a lack of integrity in such papers, besides that, the situation changed so fast on the peninsula that most of the information became outdated or even obsolete. The second source included the analysis performed by the Turks themselves and shared, directly or indirectly, with the Europeans. Reliability of such information was also doubtful due to the fact that it might be inaccurate or intentionally misleading. Finally, the Europeans collected their own intelligence on the Empire throughout military and trading operations. Although this kind of information was normally of proper quality and value, it might be narrow and somewhat shallow by nature. The wars with the Ottoman Empire in Europe in the late 17th century, or the Egyptian campaign of Napoleon over a hundred years later were handy in this regard, but they helped with obtaining information of specific and regional nature. All this distinguished the work of Horatio Southgate from his predecessors and allows us to assess its historical significance. Southgate not only reached the desired goal, which was in establishing contacts with local Christians, but also provided a lot of important and unique observations on the everyday life of the regions he visited.

Apart from that, considerable attention was paid to physically present religious artifacts. Horatio Southgate left a detailed description of monasteries, churches, tombs, mosques which he encountered during the travel. Each such observation is followed by a brief or even more detailed description of the building, its history and present functions. It would not be an exaggeration to say that even now the book by Southgate may be used as a travel guide for foreign travelers or pilgrims.

Thirdly, the research by Southgate is a valuable source of information concerning daily routines of the Empire. He does not hesitate to depict the natural conditions, the weather, the landscapes, as well as the current extent of development of the infrastructure and the paradigm of existing social relations. The talent of Southgate as a writer and a researcher is in the ability to narrate rather than simply describe. Being a well-educated progressive American, he can afford the luxury of calling things by their proper names (bribery, hostility, diseases) which distinguishes him from other travelers who had to pick more politically correct forms of expression of their thoughts.

The works of Horatio Southgate, although very well written, are not, however, entirely free from drawbacks. This is partially due to the writing standards of that time. The way Southgate describes his thoughts may be considered nowadays somewhat old-fashioned and outdated. Complex lexical constructions, numerous and bulky argumentation, non-linear logical structure – all these factors make Southgate's book difficult to read. Apart from that, the genre is not clearly defined, either. From one point of view, it resembles a traveler's log with detailed description of events of the past and

plans for the future. On the other hand, the author is considering serious, theoretical historical, social and cultural issues. It may be assumed that there was no unified academic style established at that time, or that Southgate didn't bother too much to follow the guidelines. It does not of course diminish the importance of his work and observations, however it should be taken into account while assessing precision and validity of the book.

As a conclusion it may be said that the significance of Southgate's findings cannot be underestimated. He was one of the pioneers of Christian missions in Asia Minor, his book was a valuable source of information of various nature. Although he himself was not a professional Orientalist, Horatio Southgate did a great job extracting up-to-date (at that moment of time) data which might have been used not only by clergyment within his religious organization, but also by researchers, general public and governmental officials (both military and civilian) in the United States of America and overseas. The overall importance of the work and its impact on Oriental studies in general, and Turkology, in particular, allow us to neglect separate flaws and loopholes in it.

## **Bibliography**

Southgate, Horatio. Narrative of a Tour through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia, and Mesopotamia. New York, 1841

Southgate, Horatio. Narrative of a Visit to the Syrian (Jacobite) Church of Mesopotamia. New York 1844

Project Canterbury: Horatio Southgate. Web. Retrieved from <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/hsouthgate/> on December 9, 2013.