

Why Constantinople renamed to Istanbul?

One of interesting questions I asked myself.

Shortly, quoting an answer from Reddit

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6 yr. ago

ttyyuu12345

Why was Constantinople renamed to Istanbul?

Discussion/Question

I'm curious to why Constantinople was renamed to Istanbul when the nation of Turkey was formed. Was this for some religious reason since Constantine was the one who converted the Roman Empire to Christianity, or was it for a logistical/political reason?

Edit: Thanks for the great answers guys, and I never expected it to blow up like this. It's probably best this thread be locked because most of my notifications were just annoying repetitions of this one song.

u/Anthemius_Augustus avatar

Anthemius_Augustus

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6y ago

• Edited 6y ago •

Ok, so far none of these comments have actually answered OPs question, so I will take a stab at it.

Like other people have already said, Istanbul probably derives from the Greek phrase εἰς τὴν Πόλιν, "Is tim Bolin" (Literally: "To the city"). Due to the fact that Constantinople had since the Middle Ages often been referred to as just "the city", and even today some Greeks still do refer to Istanbul as "the city". When the Turks first entered the area and asked for the direction of Constantinople, the answer they would probably get would be εἰς τὴν Πόλιν.

But like you said, when the Ottomans conquered the city, they did not rename it. Constantinople remained Constantinople (transliterated in Turkish as Konstantiniyye (قسطنطينية)). Istanbul would gradually become a popular local name for the city, but in most official documents and formal occasions the city was still Constantinople.

However when the Turkish Republic was founded, this changed, and the city was renamed to Istanbul. Why is this? It was largely because Mustafa Kemal went through a lot of work reforming to Turkish language. During the late Ottoman Empire, most people living in Anatolia were barely literate, or completely illiterate. For one he changed the alphabet into a variation of the Latin one, and also standardized the pronunciation of several words and phrases.

The standardization of city names also were a part of this program. One of Ataturks major goals in this area was to emphasize what was seen as the local Turkish names over names from other languages. Since modern day Turkey had gone from a multiethnic, cosmopolitan Empire, to a nation state of Turks this was seen as necessary to complete this process. As such Constantinople was changed to Istanbul, and Ataturks government would pressure other countries to start calling the city Istanbul. Although as late as the 1950's many maps would still label it as "Constantinople (Istanbul)".

Istanbul was not the only city that was a part of this program, other cities like Edirne (Adrianople), Izmir (Smyrna), Iznik (Nicaea), Ankara (Ancyra) etc. would also be subject to this standardization.

atrirgn_ (6y ago)

Edirne (Adrianople), Ankara (Ancyra) and Izmir (Smyrna) are not Turkish. The name of those cities remained same, but the pronunciation of them have slightly changes. It's clearly explained even in wikipedia. I am not sure about Iznik, but probably it's the same. There are also several different examples,

Trabzon - Greek Τραπεζοῦς (Trapezoûs). Antakya - Ancient Greek Ἀντιόχεια (Antiókheia) Konya - Ancient Greek Ἰκόνιον (Ikónion). Kayseri - Latin Caesarea

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