

**PRECEDENT NAMES AS TRANSMITTERS OF HISTORICAL
AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN THE POEM “THE TIME IN BURSA”
BY A. H. TANPINAR**

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Summary

This article explores the use of precedent names as carriers of historical and collective memory in A. H. Tanpınar's poem “The Time in Bursa.” Precedent names, being culturally significant proper nouns, evoke historical, cultural, and social connotations that resonate deeply within a collective consciousness. The study analyzes how these names serve as linguistic bridges between past and present, shaping a shared understanding of national identity and heritage in Tanpınar's poetry.

The analysis focuses on the poem's ability to transmit cultural memory through names associated with key historical events, figures, and places, thus linking personal memory with collective historical narratives. By exploring the poetic function of these precedent names, the article highlights Tanpınar's contribution to preserving and enriching the cultural identity of Turkish society.

Employing methods such as textual, intertextual, and historical-linguistic analysis, the research uncovers how Tanpınar's use of precedent names fosters a dialogue between individual and national history, allowing readers to engage with the collective memory of their community. The study positions precedent names not merely as literary devices, but as pivotal elements in understanding the dynamics of memory and identity in Turkish poetry.

This research aims to broaden the understanding of how names rooted in cultural and historical significance can function as powerful transmitters of collective memory, contributing to the formation of a cohesive national identity in literary texts.

Key words: Precedent Names, Historical and Collective Memory, Turkish literature, A. H. Tanpınar, The Time in Bursa.

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1. Introduction

The identification and documentation of ethnocultural vocabulary, particularly non-equivalent terms, and the determination of their status and role in a literary text have gained relevance during the period of globalization and the expansion of national language instruction for foreign audiences.

Ethnocultural vocabulary transmits the national color and linguistic worldview of a particular nation, encapsulating and reflecting the unique features of the customs, folklore, literature, history, and culture of a specific ethnic group, as well as aspects of its geography, economy, social structure, science, art, and more. As the renowned Ukrainian linguist O. Potebnya aptly noted, language is “... not only the best, but also the most certain feature by which we

recognize a people, and at the same time, the only, irreplaceable, and undeniable condition of a people's existence is the unity of language" (*Potebnya, 1992*).

Mastery of cultural-linguistic competence identifies an individual as a representative and bearer of a particular language and culture, someone who is capable of distinguishing culturally significant features, cultural codes, and core value orientations in the linguistic units of members of that culture, interpreting them correctly, and redirecting them appropriately. In our view, special attention should be given to precedent phenomena, which occupy a unique place in the speech of Turkish language speakers and are of particular interest in studying the influence of history and culture on Turkish speech.

Precedent phenomena refer to verbalized forms of ethnoculturally specific phenomena that express the national distinctiveness of a language and highlight certain conditions of a people's existence, culture, language, and mentality. In a specific speech culture, these phenomena take on forms of usage characteristic of that culture. The study of precedent phenomena has been addressed by scholars such as D. B. Gudkov, I. V. Zakharenko, Yu. M. Karaulov, V. V. Krasnykh, O. A. Nakhimova, O. O. Selivanova, R. S. Chornovol-Tkachenko, and other prominent researchers. Among Ukrainian Turkologists who have explored the topic of precedent phenomena in their research, O. V. Borukh, E. Kh. Miniakhmetova, and I. L. Pokrovska deserve mention.

The objective of this study is to explore the role of precedent names in conveying historical and collective memory in the poem "The Time in Bursa" by A. H. Tanpınar. By examining how these names function as cultural and historical signifiers, the research aims to uncover their significance in shaping national identity and collective consciousness. **The object** of this study is the use of precedent names in A. H. Tanpınar's poem "The Time in Bursa" and their connection to historical and collective memory. **The subject** of this research is the linguistic and cultural analysis of precedent names as a means of transmitting historical and collective memory in Turkish poetry, with a focus on A. H. Tanpınar's works.

The study employs a range of **methods** including: textual analysis to examine the presence and function of precedent names in the poem; historical-linguistic analysis to trace the historical significance of these names within the Turkish cultural and political context; cognitive-poetic approach to explore how these names contribute to the construction of collective memory and national identity in the poetic framework; intertextual analysis to identify connections with other literary and historical texts, focusing on how the precedent names invoke shared historical knowledge among readers.

2. The Poem "The Time in Bursa" as a Valuable Source for the Analysis of Precedent Names

Z. Gökalp writes that "Nations shape languages into language. And those who love these nations' languages, who understand and master them divinely – these are the great poets" (*Gökalp, 1975*).

"Poetry occupies an important place in the culture of every nation. There is poetry that endows a group of people with national consciousness, guides them, and leads them toward a specific goal. When it is necessary to express sympathy and love in moments of joy or sorrow, near a child's cradle or on the brink of war, in memory of fallen comrades – in other words, in the various facets of every person's life, poetry holds a special place" (*Çakmakçı, 2013*).

It is also interesting to note that the sultans who ruled the Ottoman Empire, founded in 1299, surrounded themselves with poets and personally composed exquisite poetry in their

spare time from governing the empire. Specifically, the Turkish professor Coşkun Ak even dedicated a book to this, *Poet Sultans* (Turk. “Şair Padişahlar”), where he collected examples of refined poetry from many members of the imperial bloodline (*Pyshnokha*, 2020).

Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) was a Turkish writer, poet, literary historian, professor of Turkish literature at the Faculty of Humanities at Istanbul University, and a member of the Turkish parliament.

According to contemporary Turkish critics, A. H. Tanpınar is considered one of the leading Turkish writers and poets of the 20th century (*Kaplan*, 2007). Talat Said Halman, in his book *A Millennium of Turkish Literature*, notes: “An impressive and important contribution [to the development of Turkish literature] was made by the renowned Turkish literati, the eloquent representative of the generation of intellectuals, Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, who combined classical Turkish culture, French literature, and modern artistic perception. He was a first-class poet and prose writer, as well as an inspiring professor of literature” (*Halman T.S.*, 2011).

Among A. H. Tanpınar’s poems, the most famous is *The Time in Bursa* (*Bursa’da Zaman*), which simultaneously serves as valuable material for the analysis of precedent names.

In contemporary understanding, the city of Bursa symbolizes relationships without depth, infidelity, selfishness, hypocrisy – all those negative qualities from which humanity has sought to escape for centuries. However, from Tanpınar’s perspective, the city is perceived as a symbol of the history and culture of the Turkish people. The poet, establishing a spiritual dialogue with all the places he encounters in Bursa, transcends historical time. Thus, the poem *The Time in Bursa* becomes a valuable source that must be examined in the context of city-culture-civilization-humanity (*Çakmakçı*, 2013).

***Bursa'da bir eski cami avlusu,
Küçük şadırvanda şakırdıyan su;
Orhan zamanından kalma bir duvar...
Onunla bir yaşta ihtiyar çınar***

*The courtyard of the old mosque in Bursa,
Water boils in a small shadyrvan,
The wall that remains from the time of Orhan...
And an old chinara of her own age.*

Bursa – The First Capital of the Ottomans, a City Where Cultures Intertwined, Reflecting the Spirit of the Turks

Bursa, the first capital of the Ottomans, is a city where various cultures converged, best embodying the spirit of the Turks at the time of its founding and continuing to preserve the Ottoman mosaic of events and figures. From the perspective of historical developments, Bursa represents the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, the brightest period in Turkish history on the path to becoming a global power. It was in Bursa that the Ottomans rose to a qualitatively new material and spiritual level, evolving from a beylik to an empire.

For A. H. Tanpınar, the city is perceived as a symbol of the history and culture of the Turkish people. The poet, who establishes a spiritual dialogue with all the places he encounters in Bursa, transcends the boundaries of historical time. Therefore, the poem *The Time in Bursa* is valuable material that should be examined from the perspective of city-culture-civilization-human (*Çakmakçı*, 2013).

Such material cultural objects as the courtyard of the old mosque and the şadırvan (a small fountain in the mosque courtyard used for ablution before prayer) are used, in our opinion, as precedent phenomena, directing the recipient to the religious aspect of the city, to the spiritual world of individuals revealed through these symbols. Moreover, they guide the reader to the heroic past of the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire, transmitting historical memory to future generations of Turks.

In A. H. Tanpınar's poem *The Time in Bursa*, we encounter precedent names of Turkish rulers: **Orhan Gazi** (1288-1359) – a Turkish bey from the Ottoman dynasty, the second ruler of the Ottoman state, who reigned from 1326 to 1359. During Orhan's reign, many conditions were established for the transformation of the small Ottoman beylik into a powerful state. Ottoman power in Anatolia greatly increased, state organization became more structured, and the Ottoman army, previously consisting solely of regular cavalry, was reorganized and supplemented by an infantry corps of janissaries. Orhan also led the first Turkish conquests in Europe.

The times of Orhan represent heroic times in the history of the Turkish people. Thus, “the wall of Orhan's times” is not just a pile of stones but an invaluable history of the nation. The expression “*the wall from Orhan's times*” emphasizes that the state rose and became powerful, transforming into an empire under Orhan Gazi.

The phytonym *chinara* – “*plane tree*” (tr. *çınar*) also holds special significance – this tree was considered sacred by the Turks, a “great tree,” around which various religious rites and sacrifices were performed. As a precedent phenomenon, the plane tree symbolizes time and, in this context, represents the Ottoman past. Just as the plane tree's strong roots penetrate deep into the ground, holding the tree firmly, so too is history not merely a segment of time but what holds a nation together (the old plane tree may also suggest that the heroic past is far behind and that the grandeur of the Ottomans is no longer present) (*Pyshnokha*, 2020).

*Ömrünün timsali beyaz Nilüfer,
Türebeler, camiler, eski bahçeler,
Şanlı hikâyesi binlerce erin
Sesi nabzım olmuş hengâmelerin
Nakleder yâdını gelen geçene.*

*The white Lily, the epitome of life,
Tombs, mosques, old gardens,
The glorious story of thousands of soldiers
The sound of turmoil has become my pulse
He conveys his memory to those who pass by.*

A. H. Tanpınar also highlights another symbol of Bursa – the *Nilüfer*, *the Lily*. By referring to it as white, he once again transports us to the time of Orhan and reminds readers of the ruler's wife, Nilüfer Hatun. Through this precedent phenomenon, the author not only places the reader in a specific historical period but also emphasizes significant cultural and historical details, particularly the role of women during the formative stage of the state.

*Muradiye sabrın acı meyvası,
Ömrünün timsali beyaz Nilüfer,
Türebeler, camiler, eski bahçeler,
Şanlı hikâyesi binlerce erin*

*Sesi nabzım olmuş hengâmelerin
Nakleder yâdını gelen geçene.*

Muradiye is *the bitter fruit of patience,*
The white Lily, the epitome of life,
Tombs, mosques, old gardens,
The glorious story of thousands of soldiers
The sound of turmoil has become my pulse
He conveys his memory to those who pass by.

Muradiye is a city and district in the Van Province (Turkey) that initially belonged to the Armenians, later passed to the Seljuk Turks, and eventually to the Ottoman Turks. According to legend, this city was renowned for its abundance of fruit trees and bountiful harvests. Locals would greet each other with the word “rejoice,” reminding one another of the plentiful fruit harvest. In the line “Muradiye, the bitter fruit of patience,” the poet describes the rise during the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, associated with the hardships overcome for future success. The author chooses to highlight the idea that alongside triumphs – the “sweet fruits” – one must also endure difficult periods, appropriately noting that “patience is a bitter fruit” (*Pyshnokha, 2020*).

Tombs and mosques are architectural features characteristic of the Turkish worldview, imbued with religious connotations.

Through the synthesis of historical figures and realities, the concepts of homeland, and architecture, the author directs the reader's imagination towards national history, instilling a sense of belonging, pride in great ancestors, and a feeling of national identity.

Yeşil türbesini *gezdik dün akşam,*
Duyduk bir musikî gibi zamandan
Çinilere sinmiş Kur'an sesini.
Fetih günlerinin *saf neşesini*
Aydınlanmış buldum tebessümünle.

We visited the Green Tomb last night,
We heard from time like a music
The sound of the Qur'an on the tiles.
The pure joy of the days of conquest
I found it enlightened by your smile.

Yeşil Türbesi – The Green Tomb, the mausoleum of the fifth Ottoman Sultan Mehmed I in Bursa, was built by Mehmed's son, Murad II, in 1421. The architect, Hacı İvaz Pasha, designed both the tomb and the Yeşil Mosque directly opposite it. The Green Mosque is the most elaborately decorated mosque in Bursa. The façade is made of white marble, and the prayer hall is lined with beautiful green tiles. The marble carvings that adorn the central portal and windows are considered masterpieces of Ottoman art. In the room preceding the main hall, which is crowned by two domes, there is a pool with a marble fountain. The walls of the mosque's interior are decorated with tiles in shades of blue, green, turquoise, and sky blue, interspersed with white letters in Arabic script.

Fetih – Sultan Mehmed II Fatih (the Conqueror) (1432–1481) was an Ottoman Sultan and the greatest military commander of his time, who conquered Constantinople, bringing

an end to the independent existence of the Byzantine Empire, the Crimean Khanate, Serbia, Morea, the Empire of Trebizond, Bosnia, and Albania. He is regarded as a national hero in Turkey. The days of Fatih (**Fetih günleri**) are remembered as days of great conquests and victories.

*Bir zafer müjdesi burda her isim:
Sanki tek bir anda gün, saat, mevsim
Yaşıyor sihrini geçmiş zamanın
Hâlâ bu taşlarda gülen rüyanın.*

*Every name here is a herald of victory:
As if in a single moment day, hour, season
Living the magic of time past
The dream that still laughs on these stones.*

3. Conclusions

In the poem “The Time in Bursa” A. H. Tanpınar by utilizing precedent names, appeals to the historical past of the Turkish people, awakening the memory and cultural-historical consciousness of the nation. He reminds readers of their great ancestors and the connection of modern Turks to them, as well as the continuation of their nation and culture.

A. H. Tanpınar employs precedent names such as *Yeşil Türbe (Green Tomb)*, *Muradiye*, *Nilüfer*, and *Gümüşlü* to evoke the legendary past of the Turkish people, their historical and cultural continuity, and to express his joy and pride in the achievements of his ancestors.

The poem, like the city of Bursa itself, continues to preserve the Ottoman mosaic of events and figures. From the perspective of historical developments, Bursa represents the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, the most vibrant period of Turkish history on the path to becoming a global power. It was in Bursa that the Ottomans rose to a qualitatively new material and spiritual level, evolving from a *beylik* to an empire. Precedent names in this poem direct the reader toward the heroic past of the Ottoman Empire.

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