

## **Historic Roads of Asia Minor and Greenway Potential for Ankara**

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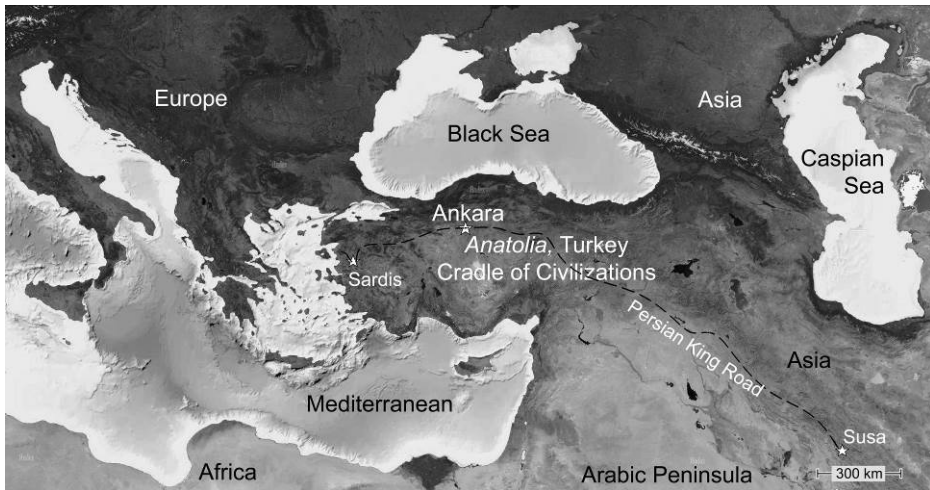
### **Introduction**

Roads of the ancient era universally present valuable cultural and geographical assets on their courses. The routes of historic roads are generally determined by means of connecting settlements and important locations while providing safe, fast, and easy access through challenging geographies. Lush valleys and waterways with provision of food and water, scenic ridgelines, passageways through mountain ranges, and in some cases straight shortcuts in open plains are the usual access paths connecting cultural and economic terminal points. Critical geomorphologic, climatologic, and environmental factors play important role in determining the courses. Year round accessibility in climate dependent harsh conditions and anthropocentric threats are the main causes of safety concerns on the roads. As well as determining a sound course, the roads were developed with various facilities for safety and comfort. While historic roads are found as a single lane they often form a network of alternating routes when connecting people and cultures over the continents. The Silk Road, Persian King Road, Hadrian's Road, and old Native American trails are only a few of the many examples. These threads of civilizations provide access to new lands, new resources and other human experience. Practically, the roads were essential means of interaction for the peoples of different geographies. Although not always paved, roads were developed with vital amenities and safe haven structures by the authorities and governing bodies. The vast examples of historic roads of the world are the heritage of global culture. With the rich natural, geographic and cultural assets they possess on their courses, historic roads present new development opportunities providing excellent match with the principles of Greenway Planning ideology. This study aims to explore characteristic elements of historic, cultural and economic resources of the Metropolitan Ankara region for Greenway potential. Although a modern city, Ankara is situated at a critical hub of the networks of the historic roads of Anatolia.

### **Historic Roads of Anatolia**

Asia Minor, as the most westerly peninsula of Asia, is the geographic and cultural bridge between the East and the West. Historically named Anatolia, Asia Minor has been home to millennia of anthropological activities, hence its unique title 'The Cradle of Civilizations'. Sir William Ramsay who dedicated

his career to Ancient Anatolia and Greece defines Asia Minor as “a bridge with high guard railings” due to its geomorphologic characteristics (in Lloyd, 1989). Even today, the geopolitical location of the peninsula makes Asia Minor one of the busiest cultural bridges of the world. As a result of its long history and geophysical conditions, the land has been weaved with a network of roads over the millennia.



**Figure 1. Cradle of Civilizations – Bridge of the World. (Yandex)**

The historic roads of Anatolia, such as the Silk Road, Persian King Road, other regional trade roads, caravan roads, pilgrimage roads, and military roads diversely stretched all along the peninsula. Starting with the Hittites and Assyrians until the Ottomans, for all the governing authorities of the Cradle of Civilizations, the roads constituted the best assets of the land. The roads played an essential role in maintaining a regional dominance through strategic military deployment and the sustaining of peace by way of ensuring a vital economy. The flow of tax revenue was only possible by a vital trade which was only possible by roads (Eskikurt, 2014). Although, the roads were inherited from one civilization to another they were always improved, well maintained and protected by the ruling class of said civilizations. The roads are not only essential elements of vital economy and tax revenue but also of social and political integrity. The roads were equipped by various structural elements such as milestones (*miliare*), bridges, inns, caravansaries, garrisons, range *külliyes*, wells, fountains, harbor structures at their terminal points, and naturally many forms of karums, bazaars and market places throughout civilizations in Anatolia.

The Hittites, Assyrians, Phrygians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Seljuk Turks and Ottomans have made notable impacts on the development of the historic roads of Anatolia. The strong commercial relationship between the Hittites and the Assyrians gifted one of the first known and most established roads to the history of Anatolia. Direct references to the Hittite and Assyrian roads in literature are limited. However the commercial epigraphs indicate the existence of a highly developed and well maintained road system between the Hatti and Assyrians (Jasink, 1991).

Phrygians were also busy with building roads along the plains of central Anatolia especially for their carts. As said, some of the tracks are still visible cut by the Phrygian cart wheels on the soft limestone rocks of the Phrygian Valley – located in the Central West of Anatolia.

Persian King Road is the most noteworthy of Anatolian roads although it is dated as old as circa 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. It was built by the Persian king Darius mainly for communication. An approximate distance of 2,800 km, this road was travelled by couriers in seven to nine days from Susa in today's Iran to Sardes in the West coast of Anatolia passing through *Ancyra*. As said, it was the inspiration for the Pony Express of the United States. Herodotus has highly appraised about the Persian King Road. This road was utilized by the Romans within their military roads network and later Byzantium network of trade and military roads and finally as the Silk Road by intercontinental travelers. ([http://www. historyofinformation.com](http://www.historyofinformation.com)).

For the Romans, the roads were essential for prosperously ruling their dominion. The Roman realm is where the roads extended. Romans paved their roads and developed them with many elements i.e. milestones, garrisons, and inns. The Roman roads were ingeniously engineered as though monumental structures. The roads in Roman era were built in various sizes and for different purposes but mainly for the military. During the Roman dominion 7 different roads from all four directions were meeting at the crossroads of Ankara (Erdoğan, 2007).

The Seljuk Turks built commerce roads connecting the seagates of the land from North to South which were continuously accessible and safe by the caravanserais built along the roads. Security and a form of insurance were also provided by the authority. Large number of caravansaries was built particularly during the 13th century of the reign of Seljuk. During that period the caravansaries were most prosperous and active (Günel,2010; Tuncer,2007).

The Ottomans used the roads that they inherited to a large extent and further improved them with various organizations and structures such as *derbent*, and *menzils*. Safe and rapid movement on the Ottoman road network was a critical concern for the distribution of imperial edicts. Commerce and the military expedition were the other two main activities to utilize the roads in the Ottoman era. *Derbent* is a highly organized system to safeguard the roads developed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. These were essentially fort-like small structures built both on critical junctions and at dire-strights on the roads. Members of the local communities would serve as security personnel and be responsible to keep the facility running to provide service to travelers. In return, they would be permitted to use neighboring fields for cultivating and be exempt from taxes. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ottomans have developed quite an advanced postal system called *menzil*. With the establishment of the *menzil* system they built many facilities on the roads such as *menzil külliye* and *menzil* caravansaries (Halaçoğlu, 1981). *Menzil* etymologically, also defines a range that can be travelled in one day which can vary between 20 to 40 km depending on the climate and geographic conditions.

In short, Ottomans carried the historic convention of the Cradle of Civilizations in maintaining and safeguarding roads as the essential element of a vibrant state. Today the land has been woven with the memories of an immense network of historic roads all adorned with abundant historic monuments, cultural elements, and geographical assets. Although, some of these historic roads deteriorated, ultimately losing their importance today and some of them were paved over and developed to serve as modern highways, all are excellent examples of ‘Greenways of the Global Ancient World’ due to their politically and geographically strategic courses and locations.

Modern Turkey, today, is being administered by a government that is not any different than its ancient counterparts in terms of appraising roads. The current government has been in power both on the national level and in the majority of local municipalities for 13 years. It has been a nationwide consensus that building roads is among the greatest public services of this government, eventually ensuring a perpetuating authority of administration. It has been proven that newly built roads provide quick and positive political return during elections in a developing nation whose voters are relatively less educated, thus easily manipulated by visible and practical public facilities.

### **From Historic *Angora* to Modern Capital Ankara**

Emerged from the ancient settlements of Ancyra and Angora, Ankara, the capital of modern Turkey, is the second largest city in the nation with an

estimated population of 5.2 million today. It is situated on a rugged terrain in the middle of Anatolia. The ancient city center resides at the junction of valleys and waterways whereas the modern city sprawls along the valleys and banks. Ankara is a central hub situated in the middle of the central plateau of Anatolia with roads stretching out at every direction just like a star (Taeschler, 1924). Regionally, Ankara has always been an important hub thanks to its strategic importance as the crossroads of ancient roads. Its strategic location and being the crossroads of major roads, Ankara was one of the most important cities, especially during the Roman and Byzantine periods (Sülüner, 2014).

Atatürk the founding father of the Modern Turkey has designated Ankara as the new capital in 1923. The city quickly leaped into massive development. To date, four major plans were developed for Ankara in order to regulate its rapid growth. However none of these plans had realistic projections to foresee the population explosion; they were not flexible enough to absorb the inevitable in-migration that the new capital was attracting from the entire nation (Altaban, 1990). The revolution and mechanization in agricultural production, the social and political unrest in the rural Eastern Region along with better education and employment opportunities instigated in-migration from rural regions to the new capital. The result was a rapid and unplanned development around the outskirts of the historic city. Today, the city has become densely populated on its surrounding hills and valleys. The historic city center and the new centers of the contemporary metropolitan regions are suffocated in a geographic bowl by the new developments.

In 93 years, the fast paced and short-lived governments of the Metropolitan Region of Ankara have collaboratively created many problems due to the plans which were lacking broad visions. Insufficient zoning regulations gave rise to market driven trendy developments. Populist administrations gave way to land speculations, which led to the emergence of large neighborhoods of squatter homes. Phenomenal air pollution has become one of the biggest planning related problems. The lack of open space, unplanned and unregulated density, inefficient traffic and the lack of effective public transportation means were among the most common causes of air pollution. (Yuksel and Kuntay, 2009).

As a recent trend, Ankara has been providing ground for many contemporary large scale commercial and residential development projects which all are systematically encroaching upon the valleys and open spaces. Although the spread of illegal squatter homes is largely under control the threat to the last remaining resources of land and open spaces still exists in Ankara. The pressure has a new form; the rapid and unplanned development projects implemented within the metropolitan region are only planned with narrow

visions for strictly profit oriented goals. Despite its 5.2 million current population the Greater City of Ankara Metropolitan Region still does not have a satisfactorily rational comprehensive plan. The region lacks a solid plan to regulate future developments and to manage its short and long term physical, ecological, environmental, social, cultural and economic development strategies both in city and regional scales. The traffic and the public transportation systems are massively chaotic and outdated. Open spaces are far from being enough for not only the current population but also the projected population increase. The lack of recreational open space and public parks are alarming.

### **Ankara's Geography and Greenway Corridors**

The topography of the Ankara region varies between 790 to 1200 meters above sea level. The city is situated in a geographic basin where three valleys converge. The valleys present themselves as natural greenway corridors within the Metropolitan Region of Ankara with their ecological, historical, cultural, economic and recreational potentials. Unfortunately the streams are either severely polluted now or/and submerged under the city especially in the most densely developed central sections. Four major arteries of the current regional transportation network are also situated in these valleys. The valleys emerge as critical environmental assets not only as the natural air corridors but also for mediating the threats of climate change projections.

The valleys are crucially important for the Ankara region because of the prevailing winds and the topographic conditions particularly considering the populist and market driven, unplanned dense developments with insufficient infrastructures. The valleys serve as air corridors for natural ventilation both during the winter and summer. The unplanned physical development pattern entirely disregards the environmental conditions, and has severely intensified the air pollution problem in the city.

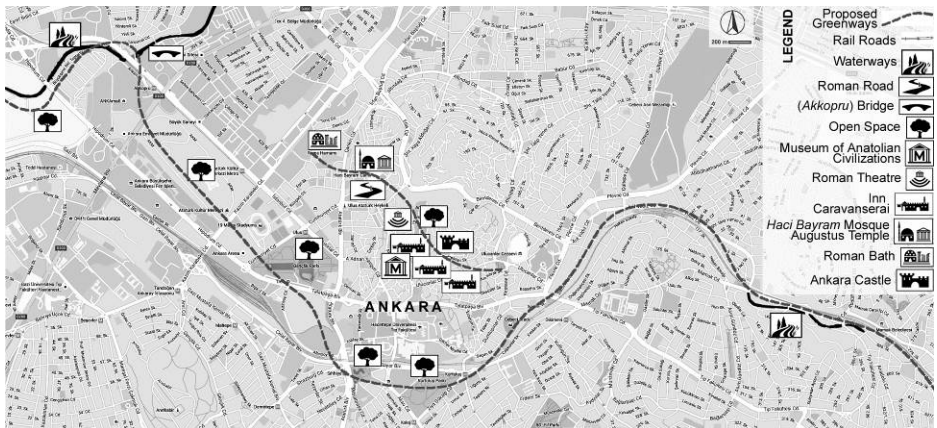
### **Historic Wealth of Ankara**

Ankara is adorned with various historic monuments due its long history of settlements and being a crossroads i.e. the Citadel of Ankara, Augustus Temple, Akköprü Bridge, Suluhan Inn, Çengelhan Inn, Pirinçhan Inn, Zağfiran (Safran) Inn, Taşhan Inn, Julian's Column, Roman Bath, Roman Theatre, Ottoman Baths, *Bedesten* – The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Haci bayram Mosque and many other old historic mosques. Most importantly, segment of a Roman Road called as *Cardo Maximus* is residing as sunken below the old city center. There are also many ancient village settlements, historic monumental ruins in the surrounding environment of the city such as the Gordian the Phrygian capital.

## Greenway Potential of Ankara

Greenways are linear structures, linking and protecting, while serving human societies and natural systems. Greenways run through the cities and rural environments, in urban and/or regional scales essentially connecting the lateral elements from temporal (cultural) and spatial (natural - physical) domains. While greenways seem to serve specifically in rural regional scales by fragmenting the natural and ecological systems, the benefits urban environments gain from greenways are multidimensional: cultural, recreational, ecological, and physical. (Ahern, 1995; Fabos, 1995)

The Hittite, The Romans, The Seljuk Turks, Ottomans all had important braches of their roads pass through (*Ancyra, Angora*) Ankara. Once, the capital of Galatia, the *Ancyra* - now Ankara the capital of modern Turkey was connected to surrounding important places and settlements in its history. It was connected to Cappadocia in the East, to Gordian – the Phrygian capital in the West, to Konya the Seljuk capital in the South and to Hattusha the Hittite Capital in the North at associative ages.



**Figure 2. Potential Greenways for Ankara**

Majority of the natural corridors of Ankara with many assets for greenway potential have been heavily built and developed as dense urban quarters. However Ankara still offers unique opportunities for greenway planning applications on both local and regional scales. The corridors present natural, cultural, historic, and ecological opportunities for multiple greenway planning projects. The road building policy of the current government can be improved and be better facilitated by greenway planning principles in order to utilize their full potential. Meanwhile, extension of the historic routes of Asia Minor through the city would provide strong motivation in preserving the last remaining corridors of the greater Ankara region.

## Conclusion

Visible or invisible, sporadic memoires of rich history are waiting to be incorporated in a Greenway planning in Ankara and its region today. Some are protected in situ or in museums, some reburied and some are still in use as adapted to current needs of the city. Subsequently, it is the universal responsibility to conserve and present such rich history to humanity. Considering the congested structure of the city today a conceptual network of Greenway Planning for Ankara and its region would be the most viable approach. The plan can have two dimensions one at the core and the other is in the region. The core would be concentrating onto the ruins and monuments within the city and connecting them to the surrounding historic points at the regional scale. Such a holistic spanning across both temporal and geo-physical dimensions of the Cradle of Civilizations would reenact two and a half millennia of historic human experience in one program. Such a plan policy adaptation would also serve for the improvement of urban quality in many aspects alleviating air pollution problems, traffic congestions, and public open space demand etc.

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