HIJACKING THE HERITAGE OF THE ARMENIAN HIGHLANDS (PART I)

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Category: Opinions

Several concerned "Keghart" readers have requested to recirculate Prof. Demirdjian's article as Turkey continues to spread misinformation and Google accommodates this treachery. Click on Heritage to access Part II.

By Prof. Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian, Los Angeles, 12 January 2022

A highly educated friend of mine, who heads the multicultural department of a university, wanted me to view a TV series about an archeological find in Turkey. The Netflix series ("THE GIFT") was filmed in Turkey around and at Göbekli Tepe. When I found out that my friend was unaware that these discoveries are located on the Armenian Plateau or on the Armenian Highlands (of Western Armenia), I wrote to her and mentioned an article I had read in a book titled *Anatolia: Cauldron of Cultures.c.1995,* one of Time Life Books edited by Roberta Conlan. I further elaborated that along the Euphrates River on the Armenian Highlands, there are a half-a- dozen archeological excavation sites. One of the sites is called Nevali Cori. It is supposed to be the temple of the first-organized religion of the world. For political reasons, the book fails to mention that these sites are located in Western Armenia (Armenian Highlands), the historical homeland of the Armenians.

Incidentally, only once "Armenia" is mentioned parenthetically (p. 159 of "Anatolia: Cauldron of Cultures"): "In the far east, amid the mountain ranges of Armenia, towers Mount Ararat, reputed resting place of Noah's Ark after the Flood". That is all that is mentioned of Armenia or Armenians in a book on different cultures which have inhabited Anatolia and the Armenian Highlands (in present-day Turkey) for the millennia.

Not only Turks but Western writers also tend to exclude any mention of Armenian presence in their ancestral homeland lest they provoke the ire of the Turkish government, which would chastise or boycott those who acknowledge the indigenous Armenians of present-day Turkey. I will demonstrate how Turkey is hijacking all that ancient glory of the proto-Armenian people as being "Turkish Heritage" and offer suggestions as to what Armenians can do about ascertaining and reclaiming their stolen heritage. The contention that the educated world knows about this intellectual piracy by Turkey is questionable. Turkey spends millions of dollars on its "Turkification" policy while Armenia's head is in the sand.

Even after a quick perusal of printed literature, the Internet, and the media, you'd find that Turkey has decided to call all of these outstanding discoveries to be of the "Turkish Heritage" --article after article! To promote its false history, Turkey established in 2000 *The Turkish Cultural Foundation* to promote and preserve Turkish culture and heritage worldwide and has offices in Boston, Istanbul, Sonoma, and Washington, D.C. It mainly serves as propaganda machine with multiple goals to solidify Turks' legitimacy as sole natives of Anatolia and deny Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian existence on their land.

Here is an example of an article which claims the archeological discoveries of ancient Armenian sites to be "Turkish Heritage": "Turkish Heritage Site 'Catalhoyuk' Tells 9000-Year-Old Story". This is

the tip of the iceberg of the proliferation of persuasive communication to advance the Turkification policy of Ankara. Since Mustafa Kamal's campaign of "Turkey for the Turks," the government has decided to erase any trace of the indigenous life that existed on the Armenian Highlands.

This is a highway robbery of the ancient heritage of the indigenous Armenians. The Turks conquered a small section of Western Anatolia in the 11th century A.D., while these archeological sites date millennia B.C. They are the Armenian nation's precious cultural heritage. For the Ottoman Empire, occupation of a conquered country meant total possession of the land's above and underground resources. For centuries, the Ottoman officials would not allow archeologists to excavate any site lest the finds relate to indigenous people.

The excavations in present-day Turkey seem to be focused on two major periods: Starting from the Neolithic (Stone Age) period to the Urartian Kingdom era. Both of these periods have produced exciting discoveries about proto-Armenian ancestors' past, how they lived as nomads and transhumance, how they moved from nomadic to settled life, whether they followed a religion or not, and other exciting information about their life and urban dwellings.

Along the middle of the Euphrates River on the Armenian Highlands there are a number of important excavation sites. Following the course of the river, from north to south, Hallan Cemi, Chayonue, Nevali Cori, Tille Hoyuk, Nemrud Dagh, and Samsat Hoyuk, to cite a few, are located one after another. Across the southeastern Turkey, a network of dams and irrigation canals were being built in the 1990s along the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers as part of a government project to advance agriculture in this region. Due to the wanton construction of the Ataturk Reservoir on the Euphrates River, for example, hundreds of the unexcavated or partially explored sites were given the watery grave to the dismay of international archeologists and historians.

In southeastern part of the Armenian Highlands (present-day Turkey), there are some important sites as well, such as Ashikli Hoyuk, Gobakly Tepe (Portasar in Armenian), and Chatal Hoyuk (forked mound), which has drawn the international community's attention because of the unique housing design that had no streets or foot paths. The houses in Chatal Hoyuk were built right up against one another like town houses and the people who lived in them traveled over the town's rooftops and entered their homes through holes in the roofs by climbing down a ladder. Communal ovens were built on the rooftops (for khorovadz!) and archeologists assume that group activities were taken place there as well.

In the Portasar (Mountain Naval in Armenian and Gobakly Tepe in Turkish), archeologists have determined that ancient people did not live at the site. They would come from the surrounding areas for collective worship, rituals or feasts. Perhaps it is because at that time the people were not totally nomadic, but transhumance. Unlike herders who had permanent homes, typically in valleys, transhumances are semi-nomadic pastoralist or nomadic, a seasonal movement of livestock between fixed summer and winter pastures. In the mountain regions, it implies movement between

higher pastures in summer and lower valleys in winter.

The Gobakly Tepe so-called temple, a pre-pottery Neolithic A period (9500 B.C.-8500 B.C.) complex of Portasar (in Armenian) is excavated by the German archeologist Dr. Klaus Schmidt. The site is claimed to be about 12,000 years old, which is (5,500 years older than the first cities of Mesopotamia and 7,000 years older than the Stonehenge in England. During a span of 25 years, Schmidt unearthed giant stone monoliths, covered in intricate carvings of mostly animals, some weighing as much as 20 tons. What a challenge for Stone Age people to carry the two kilometer away from the quarry and to carve them with stone tools, and then have them erected as imposing tee-shaped pillars. It is a feat of engineering that boggle the mind.

Of the 20 enclosures, only eight have been excavated. Although the size of the complex is smaller than that of the Stonehenge, scientists consider it a crucial find for the people who built these structures did not have the knowledge of making pottery and did not engage in farming, metallurgy or writing. Nevertheless, we cannot deny them the attributes of immense planning and cooperation in building such monumental history-changing structures. Now, the left brain question: will we ever find out the secrets of Portasar? Only when we get another Dr. Schmidt to continue with the excavations of this Armenian "Sphinx"!

Also important Urartian archeological work is being done at Toprak Kale near Lake Van. All these findings attest to the fact that the birthplace of civilization is the Armenian Highlands. We cannot afford to stand by and let Turkey steal Armenia's ancient heritage when in the 21st century the pen may prove to be sharper than the sword.

Let us not forget that there are also many archeological sites in Eastern Armenia (Republic of Armenia) which ignite our imagination humankind for their unique finds, such as the oldest leather shoe (5,500 years old), an old skirt (5,900 years old), the oldest wine-producing facility (6,000 years old), and the skeleton of an Amazon warrior woman (3,000 years old), to mention just a few exciting finds.

In the Republic of Armenia, there is ample evidence of Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Bronze Age cultures in lands historically and presently inhabited by Armenian people, dating to about 4,000 B.C. Archaeological surveys in 2010 and in 2011 at the Areni-1 cave complex have resulted in the discovery of the world's earliest known leather shoe, skirt, and wine-making facility mentioned above. However, the lion's share of the Armenian ancient heritage lies in Western Armenia in the present-day Turkey.

Turkey must be held guilty of "cultural appropriation," which refers to the use of objects or elements of a non-dominant culture in a way that does not respect their original meaning, give credit to their source, or to destroy them contributes to oppression. Cultural appropriating is, therefore, a cultural heritage crime. And so, the international community must enact laws for giving the credit to the rightful owners of the cultural heritage found in the land of the indigenous people, such as the

people of the Armenians Highlands.

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Picture: ***The most important archeological site in present-day Turkey is Gobakly Tepe (Portasar in Armenian) near Urfa and the second important one is Chatal Hoyuk near Konya. Unlike the people of Chatal Hoyuk who lived in a beehive type of mud housing structures, the people of Gobakly Tepe lived in settlements around their temple-like center and probably were still hunter-gatherers. This indicates that the need for religion or rituals started long before humankind became farmers out of fear of the elements in their environment.***

Comments



David Phillips – 2026-04-10 15:17:17
After reading this, I have a better understanding of the locations of these important archaeological sites. Thank you for bringing to light a lot of missing information concerning these amazing pre-historic sites where the details you wrote about are typically skimmed over, or not mentioned at all.

Vahakn – 2024-10-25 17:42:43
Bobby, It must come as nonsensical news to many people that Armenians descend from Sumerians, as you claim. It's Sumerians who considered Armenia their heartland. They called Armenia "the House of the Gods" in reference to the Armenian mountains. The Sumerian gods lived in the Armenian mountains, they believed. Because the Armenia-originated Euphrates and Tigris Rivers flowed into Sumer, Armenian merchants traveled down the river to sell (particularly) wine to the Sumerians. Sumerians were Semites and their language belongs to the Semitic language tree. The Armenians are members of the Indo-European ur-race and this fact is reflected in Armenian root words and in grammar. Since we were neighbors, we must have borrowed words from each other. Perhaps you believe that our national patriarch Haig Nahabed was Babylonian who left Babylon for Armenia after having a quarrel with "Pel"(Baal). But historically, Baal was the main god of many Semitic nations (consider Baalbek in Lebanon.) I don't see mythical Haig fighting with a god. I suggest that you read Martiros Kavoukjian's "Armenia, Subartu and Sumer" (1987)



Bobby – 2024-10-23 23:29:21
The question should be "who built these sites?" not "does it belong in Armenian ancestral territory?" Anyone who does cursory historical research knows the Turkish government, with help of NATO / US, UK, and Israel, is a sham, full of hubris and deceit. They are taking their last gasp trying to secure cultural conquest. But the WEF and UNICEF / UNESCO actually own / control these sites, which is why their excavations are being "delayed." Maybe they're investigating without releasing information to the public. Either way, with all of the treasures of Armenian civilization, they have much too much to falsify in their own histories in order to bridge the enormous gaps that are evident. The Ottoman language itself borrows Arabic, Turkic, Persian, Armenian, etc., it is eclectic and shows layers which betrays different waves of influence and power. I also can't imagine a Christian country or an Islamic country trying to parade their pre-Abrahamic religious monuments. This is a big no-no for nationalism of any flavor. They will try, I'm sure, but their land is being invaded with Syrians, Africans, and others, many of whom believe radical Islam. Others yet are increasingly westernized and secular, I understand, and are using English in the Turkish language. So that's a natural betrayal of their "culture" and language. The problem is that if that trend continues, none of these sites will be safe just like in Iraq and the other adjacent countries. The sites in Iraq are from a similar time period, but they barely have a country. What I find more interesting is the question of who early Armenians and Urartians were? How did they descend from the Sumerians? Were there carpets made in Sumerian times and do any of these survive? I don't believe Armenians created these sites, so it's no more truthful trying to take credit than Turkey trying to take credit. Now, more recent archeology, carpet-making, architecture, etc. is obvious and that is also egregious.



Jake Merzoian – 2023-04-07 18:55:15
They finally did publish in may of last year the archeological findings of the renaissance project by gfoeller. They found 2 million years of continuous habitation on the Armenian highland , not highlands . “A new golden era of archaeology, findings in armenia”



Joseph Murad Pars – 2022-08-12 13:46:10
Ne ilginçtir ki Ermeniler dışında Türkler de Kürtler de burayı sahipleniyor. Gerçekte farklı bir toplumdu buralarda yaşayanlar. Ulus-devlet saçmalığının bizi getirdiği yer... It is interesting that apart from the Armenians, both Turks and Kurds own this place. In reality, they were a different society. Where the nation-state BS has brought us... Balkêş e ku ji bilî Ermeniyan hem Tirk û hem jî Kurd xwediyê vê derê ne. Di rastiyê de, ew civakek cûda bûn. Çiqlê netew-dewletê me anîye kû derê...



Nora Der-Bedrossian – 2022-03-13 00:40:39
Can Armenians complain to the UNESCO World Heritage about Turkey reversing historical facts and Turkyfying what was not their history?



Mesrob – 2022-01-28 21:26:02
Prof. Andrew Demirdjian's articles are always informative, interesting, and bring a new perspective. Thank you, Mr. Demirdjian. Looking forward to your next article.



H – 2022-01-27 20:08:23
Thank you Prof. Demirdjian for your article in Keghart. For decades Turkey has been turkifying the Armenian Highland, Armenian history, archeological sites, and culture. What they are unable to turkify, like Churches and monuments, they destroy. It is their uncivilized nature to dispossess civilizations and reverse history. They even replaced their own Arabic alphabet pretending what they are not. Unfortunately as they perpetrated the Genocide of the Armenians, they robbed the Armenian wealth. From the proceeds they have been hiring professors of history in American and European higher institutions of learning to reverse the Armenian history, paying for lobbyists, and entertaining media people with trips and bribes. In the face of all that what can and should Armenians do? Side note: I took the liberty of sharing your very informative article on Face Book.



Pat – 2022-01-27 18:18:38
Thank you, Prof. Demirdjian, for drawing our attention to Portasar, renamed Gobekli Tepe. It garners a lot of attention from archaeology buffs as a likely cradle of civilization but none of the researchers will reveal the Armenian identity of the area. Yet another stab at the contributions made by Armenians that go unsung, unacknowledged and unattributed. The list of injustices is very long on the eve of what may turn out to be the loss of Armenian statehood in 2022.



Berj Chekijian – 2022-01-26 10:11:21

I have seen in many articles by keghart.org the use of the term “Armenian Highlands” rather than “Armenian Highland “ I believe the correct translation of Հայկական Լեռնաշխարհ (Armenian Plateau) is “Armenian Highland”. See how the editors of encyclopedia Britannia describes the region. By The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica | View Edit History "Armenian Highland, mountainous region of western Asia. It lies mainly in Turkey, occupies all of Armenia, and includes southern Georgia, western Azerbaijan, and northwestern Iran. The highland covers almost 154,400 square miles (400,000 square km). The average elevation of the Armenian Highland is 5,000 to 6,500 feet (1,500 to 2,000 metres), but several peaks exceed 14,000 feet (4,000 metres). The highland is a segment of the Mediterranean alpine volcanic zone of folding and has a subtropical continental climate. It is rich in minerals including chromite, gold, and iron."