

Turkey In Transition

Aim: To Examine Heritage, Identity, and the role of archaeology in Social Politics

“Third World Nations resent those in the West who would deny them their past while claiming history as their own”

– M. Özdoğan¹

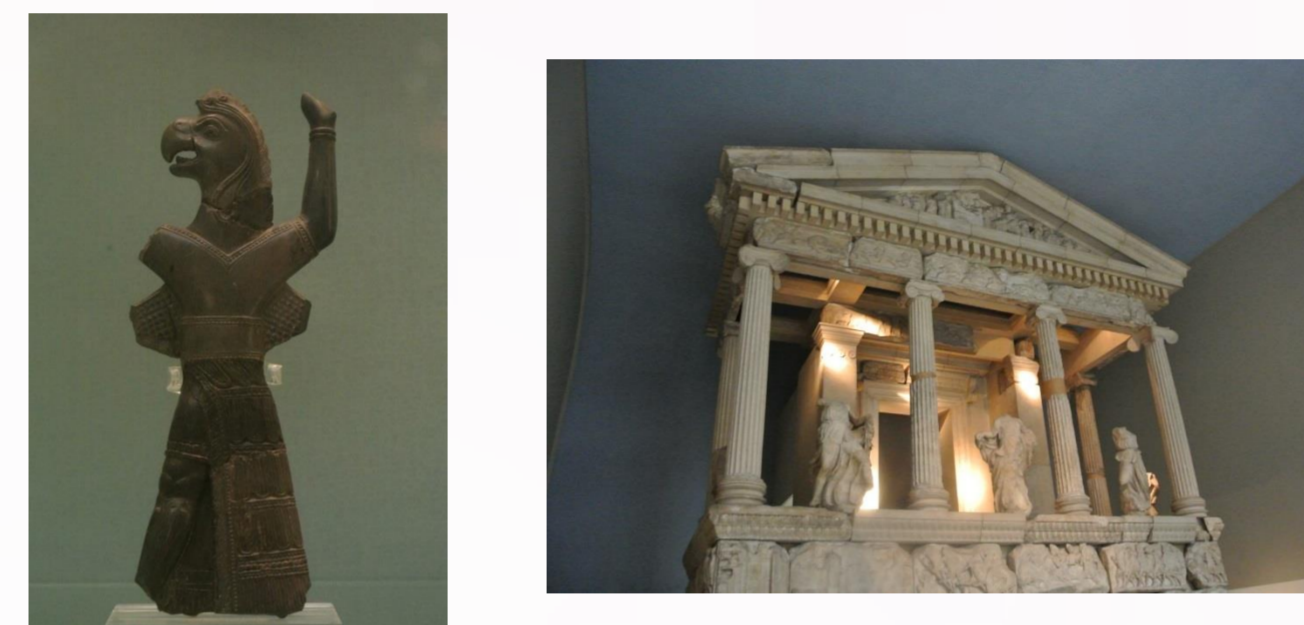
- Objective: to analyse how Western perceptions of Turkish history can be examined through the presentation of Western artefacts in museums.

Dumbarton Oaks Washington, DC



Dumbarton Oaks is a museum dedicated to Byzantine Art. Many of its items were collected by 19th century Antiquarians.

The British Museum London



Room 54 of the museum is dedicated to Ancient Anatolia and Uratu. There are also numerous classical finds from Turkey throughout.

- Objective : To examine the emphasis placed upon heritage in Turkish politics today.
- Objective To examine how ancient and modern sites and symbols affect national ideologies.

The Directorate for Religious Foundation has plans to convert the Hagia Sophia in Trabzon into a Mosque, meaning that its historic Christian architecture and iconography will be covered. Mazhar Yıldırımhan, head of the directorate, says that any building that was once a mosque can not be used for any other purpose⁷

The Hittite Sun, a prehistoric symbol, has been the emblem for Ankara despite objections from more conservative Islamic groups. This prehistoric symbol has now come to represent the ideologies of the nation more than the prehistoric civilisation from which it originated.⁸

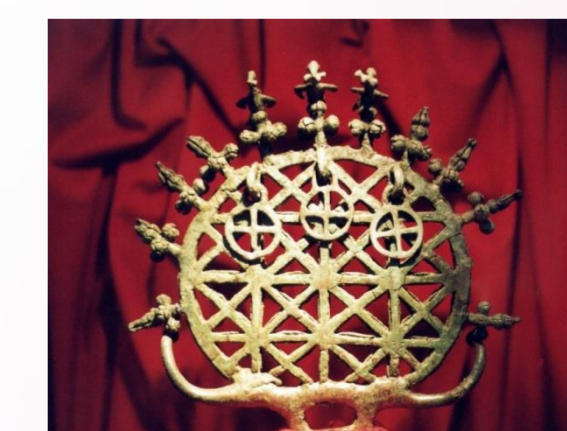
Arguments have also been made to include the prehistoric sites of Çatalhöyük and Göbekli Tepe in the national Constitution as the start of Turkish history.⁹ This is despite the Ministry of Tourism and Culture's website acknowledging that the *Turkish Period* began following the conquests of 1453.

Conclusions and Discussion

The application of ideologies to blank symbols such as the Hittite Sun can also be observed in a contemporary context: that of Taksim Square. Established in 1936 as a prestige project, building on Taksim Square has been a focus of many governments; the square was created to affirm the existence of the Turkish Republic and subsequent projects would reinforce political dominance¹⁰ The recent protests can therefore be seen as the people rejecting the imposed ideology, and reclaiming a popular national sentiment

Archaeological symbols and artefacts have different meanings when presented by different cultures in a variety of contexts. Such meanings can be appropriated to alter perceptions and bolster national sentiment. There is a clear notion of pride in and its relevance in the remains.

archaeology within Turkey, question of identity still



Hittite Sun photograph by Klaus Peter-Simon (1992)



The Taksim Square Monument during the protests. Photograph taken by Yâsemîn Özarslan



The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Photograph taken from Bridgmaneducation.com

26.07.1937: 'the post-war reforms have been so rapid...the Anatolian peasantry have been left gasping'²

The creation of a national identity became crucial for the survival of a multi-ethnic nation in the Near East, and archaeology was one of the strongest tools at Atatürk's disposal. Papers such as the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory heralded Turkey as the cradle of civilisation; the product of many empires.² Excavation and the growth of museums such as the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (1935) and the Museum of Anatolian Civilisation (1921) meant that archaeology not only furthered the creation of a national identity but also became a source of national pride.

20.09.1980: 'The true divide in Turkish national life has been the schism in it's soul...the fundamental question: "Who are the Turks?"'⁴

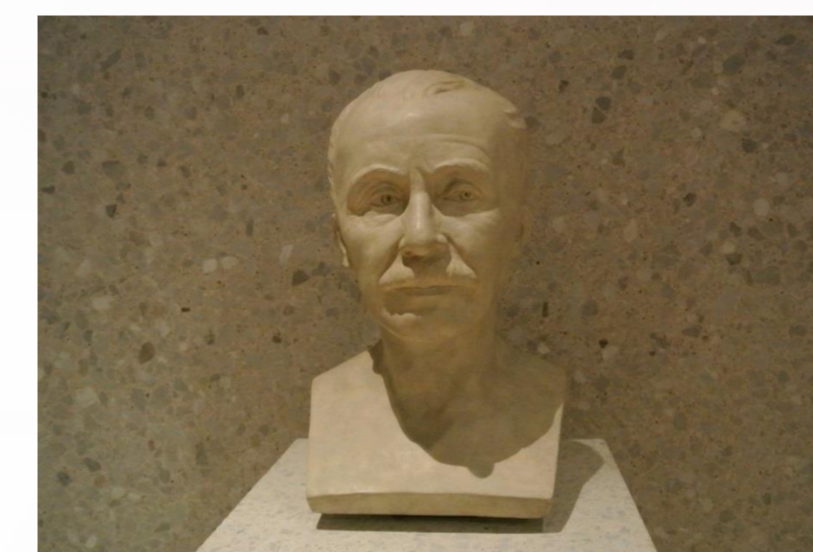
The Question of national identity has remained central to the development of the Turkish Republic during times of upheaval.

Archaeology has also retained its high status. Turkey is one of the only nations where a local tradition of archaeology has developed.⁵

Der Museuminsel Berlin



The museums of the Museum Island house many classical finds from Turkey including the Pergamon Altar. There is also a section for Byzantine Art.



The 'treasures of Troy' are displayed permanently here. Heinrich Schliemann is celebrated, though they admit that in the eagerness to get to Troy, much later archaeology was lost during the excavation.

Many Western museums continue the trend of displaying Turkish artefacts through classical and Christian filters. Little floor space is allocated to Anatolian prehistory or the history of the later Islamic and Ottoman Empires.

Antalya Museum



Sign photographed by Dr. Mark Jackson

The Antalya museum guide introduces Turkey as an 'unbridged mosaic' from East to West. The museum draws heavy attention to western smuggling; the sign pictured on the left, below a sarcophagus reads: *This fragment was smuggled abroad after illicit excavations*⁶

Permits for foreign archaeologists fell from 48–39 between 2009–12. Smuggling has instilled distrust and the government is making increasing demands for the return of artefacts to the country.⁶