

WESTERN ARMENIA VS. EASTERN ANATOLIA

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Unfortunately, the problem with the terms Anatolia and eastern Anatolia is not adequately recognized in the Diaspora, especially in the USA. I discuss this problem in my book *“History of Armenia as Presented in American Historiography”*, pp. 37-40, 42 (note 64), 43 (note 65), 64-65, 223. You may find this book at http://www.hayq.org/upload/files/Armenian_Rebellion_ENG.pdf (the pages of the printed edition do not coincide, however)

I would try to briefly present the problem and then offer some ways of solution.

SOME FACTS FROM HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Turkish historiography’s stated objective in regard to the term Armenia was summarized by the Turkish secret service former agent Esat Uras, the “Father of Turkish Armenology,” in his book *“The Armenians and the Armenian question.”* Esat Uras’ book was first published in Turkey in 1950, where the following sentence appears in foreword (önsöz) in capital letters:

«I REGARD IT AS NECESSARY, AND IMPORTANT ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE, TO POINT OUT THAT ARMENIA CANNOT BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN SIMPLE MEMORY BASED ON GEOGRAPHY, A REGION WITHOUT POLITICAL BOUNDARIES.»

In the English edition of the same book (Ankara, 1988), this sentence was omitted.¹

In line with this imperative, Uras incorrectly employs the terms Anatolia and eastern Anatolia and subsumes Armenia under them. The index to Uras’ vast volume does not include the item Armenia even once! Whereas, actually, Armenia, rather than a simple geographical term, has been dignifying, first and foremost, a territory where Armenian statehood and civilization were born and developed through ancient to medieval times and where the Armenians continued to constitute a majority or, at some places, a plurality, up to their Genocide in the beginning of

the 20th century.

The Western academics and media employ this relatively recent and inaccurate Turkish geographical terminology with great encouragement. As a result, the term Armenia has been reduced to an extremely rare use by major Western encyclopedic and reference publications, such as “Cambridge History of Iran” and others.

Some Diasporan Armenian “scholars” (who are BTW honored by the Armenian community) went farther than the Turks. Let us examine, for example, Ronald Suny’s claim that “the proto-Armenians migrated into eastern Anatolia, the Armenian Plateau, in the mid-sixth century B.C.” [*Looking Toward Ararat*, p. 7]. This is a flawed phrase, because:

First, the identification of eastern Anatolia with the entire Armenian Plateau, especially, when talking about ancient times, is historically and geographically incorrect. From the ancient period through the Middle Ages to modern times, the geographical term Anatolia has been synonymous with the peninsula of Asia Minor, which is to the west of the Armenian Plateau/historic Armenia. Only since the 1920s has Anatolia and the newly-coined designation «eastern Anatolia» come to be increasingly applied — at first in Turkey — to the whole eastern part of the Turkish Republic, including Western Armenia and Kurdistan. However, even in its latter, largely artificial, usage it never signified the whole Armenian plateau, failing to include its eastern one-third, that is, the territories of Eastern [Persian/Russian/Soviet/independent] Armenia. Like Uras, Suny subsumes Armenia under Anatolia and eastern Anatolia throughout his book [*Looking Toward Ararat*, pp. 55, 56, 67, 95, 98, 104, 111, etc.]. Suny’s index [pp. 283-289] presents even more vivid evidence for this ahistorical replacement of Armenia. The term Armenia is effectively emptied and limited to temporary political formations such as The Republic of Armenia [1918-1920] and Soviet Armenia [1920-1991] or stripped of its independent existence as in Turkish

Armenia. Suny’s index does not recognize ARMENIA — either ancient, medieval, modern, or even Russian — before 1918, although “[ancient] Armenia” [p. 7], “[medieval and late medieval] Armenia,” “eastern Armenia,” “[Western] Armenia,” [p. 18] and “historical” and “historic Armenia” [pp. 19, 104] occasionally creep into the narration. Furthermore, the text and index incorrectly substitutes Anatolian Armenians, for the traditional term Western/Turkish Armenians to all Armenians living in Turkey. The term Anatolian Armenians should designate only those living outside of historical Armenia, in Asia Minor only.

THE CONVENIENCE FACTOR

There’s an argument that “the western press usually mentions southeastern Anatolia with respect to Kurdish issues. This may also be a Turkish initiative, but it is something that is recognised today.”

The fact that eastern Anatolia is often mentioned and recognized today in the Western media is itself a product of our negligence, passivity, and compliance. Had we voiced our concerns about these terms 50 years ago and had we been as consistent as the Turks, the situation would have been significantly different. We can find many other expressions for saying the same by skirting both Anatolia and Turkey and simultaneously somehow recalling Armenia and Western Armenia.

The «eastern Anatolia» is generally understood as something inherently Turkish. Most importantly, this term effectively eliminates the name of our historic homeland.

Once, I encountered the term “The INDIGENOUS Armenian people of eastern Anatolia” made by an Armenian activist. Such usages also have unfavorable connotations to a Westerner’s ear, reminding him of the Australian, Brazilian, American or Canadian indigenous peoples, whose plight is absolutely irreversible forever! What should we expect, for example, from a Western diplomat who, while being acquainted to the Armenian Question,

reads that the indigenous Armenians have suffered a Genocide somewhere in eastern Anatolia? Taking into account that he would never have enough time and disposition to read sufficient amount of good literature (which itself is lacking in English), I can maintain that he would assume that these “indigenous” Armenians, before suffering this genocide, for ages had been kind of stateless, powerless, less civilized, and in extreme minority in eastern Anatolia. So their descendants should never ever claim their rights to the territories of Turkey’s eastern Anatolia, which historically has been homeland for myriad of currently vanished peoples and ethnies (More so, since Turkey is a cherished ally).

We should strive to reach the point, when no Armenian Diasporan politician, scholar or newspaper uses the terms Eastern Anatolia instead of saying Western Armenia.

In short, “eastern Anatolia” or Anatolia eliminates the basic terms of Armenia, Western Armenia and Armenian Plateau.

GEOGRAPHY

This question is simple. In strict geographical terms, the Armenian Plateau (or Armenian Highlands) does not correspond to Anatolian Plateau. The Anatolian Plateau is the central part of Asia Minor, between the mountains of Pontos and Tavros, to the west of Armenian Plateau. If now there are attempts by the Turkish or Western academic and media outlets to confuse the things, we need to confront them rather than conform to them. See also an Addendum below.

SOLUTIONS

There are three levels where we must confront these terms.

1) ARMENIA: Luckily, there is sufficient awareness here about this problem: no serious scholar or politician in Armenia uses the term eastern Anatolia to designate the territory of Western Armenia. My book on US Armenology also played some role in emphasizing this problem. Though such awareness comes from the Soviet times, even the Armenian encyclopedia spoke about it. However, even in Armenia one should not be complacent, because now increasingly more young students read English-written literature without having a critical approach or guidance;

2) DIASPORA: We should strive to reach the point, when no Armenian Diasporan politician, scholar or newspaper uses the terms Eastern Anatolia instead of saying Western Armenia. I

understand that given today’s circumstances this could prove to be difficult or unworkable, because of the increased number of assimilated and acculturated “Armenians” and “Armenian scholars”. In Suny’s, Nina Garsoyan’s and Co.’ cases, it is a deliberate misuse of the terms Anatolia, eastern Anatolia, Anatolian Armenians at the expense of Armenia, Western Armenia, Western/Turkish Armenians.

How effective could the Armenian position be if we say that we have suffered a genocide in our homeland of... Anatolia or, even worse, eastern Anatolia?! So we need to find ways to combat these currently widely used terms on every front, at least by refraining from using them.

3) INTERNATIONAL ARENA:

we should gradually try to increase the frequency of using the terms historical Armenia, Western Armenia and Armenian Highlands/Plateau at the expense of Anatolia and eastern Anatolia. The ways could be elaborated further by all of us. Though hard, the work in these directions should be started without delay, otherwise the tide would go the other way: the Diasporan Armenians would forget that they had some time in the past the homeland with the name Armenia and the term “eastern Anatolia” would become common usage in Armenia, which currently lacks any state structures that can understand and subvert such ideological diversions.

In sum, ARMENIA is a fundamental term!

The homeland - Armenia - is one:

- Western Armenia
- Eastern Armenia
- Artsakh
- Javakhk
- Nakhijevan

each one and all together constitute Armenia.

If someone with an Armenian origin doesn’t feel his/her attachment to the **territory** of all Armenia to the extent of complying to the usage of term (eastern) Anatolia instead of Western Armenia, it simply means that his/her process of assimilation has taken its toll and he/she is not Armenian any more (having Armenian origin is not sufficient for being considered an Armenian). It’s the same as discussing the issue of whether the Genocide took place or no.

May I also quote from my “Strategic Gaps in Armenian Political Consciousness”:

“Armenian patriotism is a politically realistic feeling of loyalty to the Armenian nation and the physical territory, namely, to Armenia, in three time dimensions: in her historic, present and aspirational boundaries (in the first and last cases these boundaries coincide with the Armenian Highland). True Armenian patriotism is, first and foremost, a feeling of an attachment to the territory itself.”

Addendum:

The Anatolian Plateau

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1999, CD version

The central massif.

The central massif is located in the western half of the country, between the Pontic and Taurus systems. This elevated zone is often referred to as the Anatolian Plateau, although its relief is much more varied than this term suggests. At least four subdivisions of the central massif can be identified. Inland from the Aegean as far as a line from Bursa to Denizli, a series of faulted blocks gives a north-south alternation of steep-sided plateaus rising 5,000-6,500 feet and low-lying valley floors. Alluvial plains along the larger rivers, such as the Gediz, Kizilirmenderes, and Buyukmenderes, are among the largest in Turkey and are of special agricultural value. East of this section, roughly to a line from Eskisehir to Burdur, is a complex upland zone. The general surface level rises to the east from 1,500 to 3,000 feet; set into the upland are several downfaulted basins, and above it short mountain ranges rise to 6,500 feet.

The most distinctive part of the central massif is the area bounded on the south by the Taurus Mountains and on the northeast by a line from Ankara through Lake Tuz to Nigde. There the term plateau is most applicable, with large expanses of flat or gently sloping land at elevations of about 3,000 feet separated by low upswellings in the surface. Measuring some 150 by 200 miles, these are by far the most extensive plains in Turkey, but their agricultural value is reduced by the effects of altitude and location on their climate.

The remainder of the central massif, a roughly triangular area with its eastern apex near Sivas, forms a mountainous zone that bounds the plains on their eastern side. Much of this section rises above 5,000 feet, and there are numerous peaks with elevations of about 6,500 feet. A noteworthy feature is the extensive area of geologically recent volcanic activity in Nigde, Nevsehir, and Kayseri provinces, including the volcanic peaks of Erciyes (12,844 feet) and Hasan (10,686 feet).

I took the English translation of this sentence from Christopher Walker’s excellent review of Uras’ English edition. The review was published in the «Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,» 1990, No. 1, pp. 165-170; this particular sentence is quoted on p. 166. My translation of this review into Armenian appeared in «Pyunik» Semi-Monthly, Yerevan, March 31, 1992.