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Thesis Summary

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Human History and Göbeklitepe

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Abstract:

Şanlıurfa is known as the lands of the dawn of civilization and is located in regions so called as “Fertile Crescent” in archeology literature. From primitive religions to monotheistic religions, all religions emerged in this region. The very first agricultural practices were performed in this region and writing was invented also in this region. The male sculpture, so called as “Urfa Man”, came across during the excavations made within the scope of “Balıklıgöl Landscape Project” in 1992 and sent to Urfa Museum, was dated back to circa 10.000 BC and recorded as the oldest naturalistic life-sized sculpture of a human in archeology literature. This sculpture proved that Balıklıgöl and surroundings in Urfa city center were settled toward the end of Paleolithic age about 12.000 years ago (10.000 BC). At the end of this age, humans left the hunter and nomadic lifestyle and passed into permanent settlements, they established the very first villages and initiated agricultural practices for the first time and became producer societies. This age is also known as the age in which primitive religions emerged for the first time. Therefore, Şanlıurfa has a great place in world culture in terms of history of religions, history of agriculture and faith tourism. In archaeological excavations conducted in Göbeklitepe close to city center under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Klaus Schmidt, the oldest temple of the world belonging to ends of Paleolithic Age dated back to 12.000 years ago (10.000 BC) was explored. Such an exploration proved that Şanlıurfa was the oldest center of the believers in the world. Before Göbekli Tepe, archaeological excavations were conducted in Nevalı Çori of Hilvan Town and a square-planned temple of Neolithic Age dated back to 8.500-8.000 BC was explored. Therefore, Nevalı Çori led up the Göbeklitepe excavations. In several archeological excavations conducted in Şanlıurfa region, schematic idols to which Chalcolithic and Old Bronze Age Societies worshipped were explored. Several violin-type idols depicting homiform gods explored in Titriş Höyük Necropolis of Bozova Town and exhibited in Şanlıurfa Museum.

Key Words:

*Human, History, Şanlıurfa,
Göbeklitepe.*

1. Nevali Çori

Nevali Çori Mound, under the lake basin of Atatürk dam, is located within the boundaries of Kantara (Arğaç) village of Hilvan town of Şanlıurfa. The mound was explored by a team under the chairmanship of H. G. Gebel. Mound explorations were initiated in 1983 by a team under chairmanship of Adnan Mısır, the Director of Şanlıurfa Archeological Museum and scientific advisory of Prof. Dr. Harald Hauptmann from Heidelberg University and lasted for 7 seasons until 1991. In these excavations, settlement layers belonging to Roman, Early Bronze, Chalcolithic and Pre-Pottery Neolithic Ages (8.500 BC) were explored (Schmidt, 2000; 2002; 2007; 2012). In the progressed stages of the explorations, a square-planned building with a terrazzo floor with two T-shaped stone pillars at the center and 11 T-shaped stone pillars in surrounding terraces symbolizing human beings belonging to Neolithic Age was explored. In this building, various animal sculptures including panther, bear, boar, horse, bird, vulture made of calcareous stone, realistic and stylized human head sculptures and human/animal mixture totems were explored. Before the exploration of Nevali Çori, bones, stones or couple centimeter figures made of clay of Neolithic Age were used to be known. The explorations of these sculptures and totems in Nevali Çori excavations caused a consternation in archeological world. Archaeologists arrived a consensus that Nevali Çori mound with for the first time seen -T-shaped stone pillars and sculptures made of calcareous stone was a religious (temple) building. Stones of this religious building were numbered, removed and reconstructed in Urfa Museum. Nevali Çori was then left under the reservoir of Atatürk Dam in 1992. Chipped stone tools made of quartzite and flint stone, wheat, barley and lentil species explored in excavations revealed that Nevali Çori dwellers, besides hunting, passed into permanent settlements through construction of buildings in 8.500 BC, used to deal with agriculture and started to domesticate animals. The skeletons explored in excavations revealed that Nevali Çori dwellers buried their dead into their homes (Schmidt, 2014).

2. Göbeklitepe

Göbeklitepe, located over a high limestone reef close to Örencik village 18 km far from Şanlıurfa city center, was first discovered in 1963 with the surficial explorations conducted within the scope of joint project of İstanbul University and Chicago University. With arrow heads, spearheads, sharp objects made of flint stone, large emergent stones, it was reported a pre-pottery Neolithic Mound. Since Nevali Çori explorations haven't been made in those years of that project, the emergent large stones over the earth surface were not thought to be

the head sections of -T- shaped stone pillars as it was in Nevali Çori. Peter Benedict in paper written in 1980, even indicated that these emergent large stones in Göbeklitepe might be tombstones, because Nevali Çori hadn't been explored, yet and archaeologists hadn't seen these T-shaped stone pillars before. Klaus Schmidt, worked as a team member of Nevali Çori explorations, thought that there might be similar places in Urfa with Nevali Çori and came to Göbeklitepe, explored in 1963. He saw flint stone tools and emergent large stones over the surface of Mound. As said by Peter Benedict, he noticed that they were not tombstones and might be the head sections of T-shaped stone pillars as it was in Nevali Çori (Schoch, 2010; Notroff vd. 2015; Kurt ve ark. 2017; Satmış, 2019). He conducted surficial explorations in Göbeklitepe with the permission obtained from The Ministry of Culture and Tourism. At the end of surficial explorations, he thought that this place was similar with Nevali Çori and decided to conduct an excavation. Excavations were initiated in Göbeklitepe in 1995 under the chairmanship of Adnan Mısır, the Director of Şanlıurfa Museum, and scientific advisory of Harald Hauptmann from İstanbul German Archeology Institute and Klaus Schmidt. Then explorations were continued under the chairmanship of Directorate of Şanlıurfa Museum and scientific advisory of Klaus Schmidt. Prof. Dr. Klaus Schmidt became the chairman of Göbeklitepe excavations in 2007 with the relevant decision of Council of Ministers and continued his excavations nonstop until his death in 2014. Between the years 2010 – 2014, Dr. A. Cihat Kürkçüoğlu from Art History Department of Harran University appointed as Vice Chair of Excavations. Following the death of Klaus Schmidt, excavations were continued under the chairmanship of Archaeologist Celal Ulusağ, the Director of Şanlıurfa Museum and scientific advisory of Dr. Lee Clare from German Archeological Institute (Bonney, 2003; Eliade, 2003; Hurowitz, 2003; Insoll, 2004; Schoch, 2010; Mann, 2011; Sidhart, 2012; Gibson, 2013; Magli, 2013; Dietrich vd. 2013; W.Luckert, 2013; Collins, 2014, Okladnikova, 2014).

2.1 The first sculpture explored in Göbeklitepe was brought to Urfa Museum in 1983

It was narrated that Şavak Yıldız, the owner of the land in Göbeklitepe, found a sculpture while plowing his field, took it to Urfa Museum. Harald Hauptmann and Klaus Schmid saw this sculpture with phallic depictions in the museum and then came to Göbeklitepe to see the place where this sculpture was explored.

2.2 Göbeklitepe sheltered the oldest monuments of the world for 10.000 years

Excavations revealed that Göbeklitepe was started to be built 2.000 years before the Nevalı Çori, in other words in 10.000 BC, and constructions continued until 8.000 BC. The 2.000-year lasting constructions were explored in three layers in excavations. Göbeklitepe structures, attracting the attentions of millions of tourists every year, 7000 years older than Pyramids of Egypt and Stonehenge of the Great Britain dated back to 5000 years ago, are now considered as the oldest monuments of the world. Surficial geomagnetic and georadar surveys revealed 20 circular or oval-planned structures in Göbeklitepe and 6 of them so called as A, B, C, D, E and F structures, were explored. The T-shaped stone pillars are the most distinctive characteristics of these structures. Each circular structure (10-20 m in diameter) has at least 10 and maximum 15 T-shaped stone pillars. There are two large stone pillars in the center of each structure surrounded by the other smaller stone pillars. Heights of these stone pillars vary between 3-6 m, the largest one with a height of 5,5 m and a weight of 16 tons is located in the center of D structure.

2.3 Were the circular-planned structures covered with a roof?

It is estimated that stone pillars of these circular structures were attached to each other with wooded poles and these wooden poles also bearded the roof of the structure. It was also thought some of these buildings was entered through a stone door with a rectangular hole placed horizontal over the roof. The holed-stone over the floor of B structure was thought to be the door of the structure and estimated to fall down with the collapse of the roof. As it was in C structure, some buildings were entered through a dromos door in front sections.

2.4 T- shaped stone pillars depict human

In some of stone pillars, sculpture of arms and hands from two sides indicates that these stone pillars were stylized human depictions (figures). Long section of T represents the body and upper section represents the head. However, organs like mouth, nose and eyes were not depicted on head section. In D structure, arms coming from the sides were joined with the arms in front over two stone pillars and fox fur tied to belt on waist were covering the private parts of the body. The fox fur herein indicated that Göbeklitepe dwellers were used to know leather work (tanning) and use processed peltry as dressing. It was understood from unfinished cuttings or broken stones that stone pillars were brought to Göbeklitepe from the rocky places 1 km away through cutting with flint stone tools.

2.5 Stone sculptures and reliefs of Göbeklitepe are the oldest plastic arts of the world

Animal reliefs including bull, lion, fox, wild boar, gazelle, wild ass, crane, stork, duck, vulture, spider, scorpion and lion over the sculptures and about 100 T-shaped stone pillars explored in Göbeklitepe up to now are attracting the attentions of people as the oldest plastic arts of the world. The sculptures explored in excavations indicate that Göbeklitepe was the oldest sculpture workshop of the world. There aren't any mythological or fantastic animal figures over the sculptures and reliefs. Depictions are all belonging to animals living in that age of the region.

The animal species like lion, leopard, boar, crane, duck and etc. over the sculptures and stone pillars indicated that Göbeklitepe and surroundings were covered with a forest and a wetland 12.000 years ago. Besides the sculptures and stone reliefs, the "totem" composed of different figures sculpted one on top of the other on about 2-meter human body is the most interesting sculpture of the Göbeklitepe.

2.6 Was the first maternity hospital in Göbeklitepe?

In archaeological finds of Göbeklitepe, all figures either human or animal, with apparent gender were depicted as male. A naked woman at delivery position scratched over a flagstone placed in between two symmetric stone pillars with lion reliefs in rectangular-planned structure is the only female figure in Göbeklitepe. This figure indicated that this structure might be a holy maternity hospital. Despite realistically depicted animal reliefs and sculptures, careless performance of male human sculptures or stylized depictions of human on T-shaped stone pillars confront us as an issue to be interpreted (Üçlü, 2012).

2.7 How was the death cult in Göbeklitepe?

In archeological excavations conducted in Urfa Nevali Çori, Batman Hasankeyf, Siirt Gusir Höyük, Diyarbakır Körtik Tepe with similar finds with Göbeklitepe, there were tombs with skeletons buried in hocker position and house foundations. The difference of Göbeklitepe from these places is that there were not any tombs or graves in Göbeklitepe. However, hundreds of human bones with miscellaneous dimensions scattered almost every place of Göbeklitepe were found. Among these bones, on skull pieces possible of 3 individuals, there were scrape, cut, carving and penetration marks. It was inferred from these marks that skulls were initially scalped and separated from the meats, then holes and grooves were opened with bone or flint stone drills. It was thought that such holes and grooves were opened to rope and

hang the skull and in this way to commemorate their ancestors. On a stone pillar in D structure, a human eating vulture and a headless human was depicted. Also, a vulture was depicted with a circular figure which can be interpreted as a human head separated from his body. One of the human sculptures found was in a position holding a human head separated from his body in his arms. All these cults indicated that as it was in Çatalhöyük, Göbeklitepe dwellers were used to cut the head of dead keep it as memento and let the body eaten by vulture-like carnivore birds. The custom of fleshing raptors with dead bodies is still practiced by Vajrayana Buddhists living in inner regions of Mongolia, Qinghai and Tibet of China.

2.8 Was the Göbeklitepe a tool production center of hunters?

Millions of arrow heads, spear heads and sharp tools made of flintstone, explored over the surface and in excavations within the archeological site, brings into mind that this place might be a tool production center. Flintstone, allowing to set a fire by clashing to each other, is a local material and they exist in nodular forms in limestones of the region. There are also some other tools made of obsidian (volcanic glass) in Göbeklitepe. Analyses revealed that origin of these tools were Göllüdağ (Niğde/Cappadocia) 500 km away, Bingöl 320 km away and surroundings of Van Lake 400 km away from the site. Such a case indicated that Göbeklitepe was visited by people coming from further regions. Apart from flintstone and obsidian tools, among the finds of Göbeklitepe, there were stoneware, stone axes, stone beads, grounding stones and stone plates with snake, bird, gazelle and tree branch motifs on.

2.9 Göbeklitepe dwellers did not know farming

Göbeklitepe was a place of hunters and collectors of the ends of Paleolithic Age – Beginning of Neolithic Age, not passed into wheat production, in other words not actualized agricultural revolution, fed with einkorn wheat abundant in the region and wild animal meats, and not able to make pottery. Such a case was also proved by anticoincidence of human cultivated plants (wheat and etc.) and domesticated animal species in excavations. Several animal bones, all belonging to hunted wild species, einkorn wheat and the other cereal remains and grounding stones to convert these cereals into flour indicated that Göbeklitepe dwellers were used to know bread making and arranged dining festivals in this place. Greater coincidence of gazelle and wild boar bones indicated that humans of that age mostly nourished with the meats of these animals.

Limestone cups with volumes of reaching up to 160 liters were explored in excavations and analyses of gray-black slicky substance in the cups revealed calcium oxalate released while wetting, grounding and fermentation of wild cereals. Such a case was considered as the indicator of alcoholic beverage production and consumption in Göbeklitepe.

2.10 Were the Göbeklitepe structures only the temple?

Göbeklitepe structures were considered to be built as religious structures, “temple”, not dwelling houses. It was thought that a religious ceremony was held in center of circular-planned structure with two stone pillars and the small stone pillars over the terraces represented the audiences of the religious ceremony. However, exploration of traces of homes in excavations and test borings for roof poles revealed that Göbeklitepe was not composed solely of structures so called as “temple”. Exploration of dweller homes are expected to be explored with the progress of excavations. Non-construction of dwellings was a surprising issue for a society manifesting such monuments. It was thought that Göbeklitepe should not solely rely on temple concept, it should be considered as a center in which hunter societies organized ceremonies for letting raptors to eat dead bodies, as a place in which leatherworks and flintstone tools were marketed or bartered, a center of gathering for dining festivals.

2.11 Are the animal symbols on stone pillars hieroglyph writings?

What the symbols and various animal figures on stone pillars of Göbeklitepe represented haven't been resolved, yet. It was thought that animal reliefs were not made solely for art and decorative purposes, but they were symbols with meanings and stories narrating symbolic world, memory and messages of 12.000 years ago. Certain things were supposed to be narrated with these figures and symbols. These symbols and drawings may be hieroglyph-like written language. In case such an issue was proven, it will be understood that writing was not invented by Sumerians in 3.000 BC, but by Göbeklitepe dwellers in 10.000 BC.

2.12 When and why the Göbeklitepe abandoned?

After about 2000 years of use, Göbeklitepe was abandoned by latest hunters with changing lifestyles in 8.000 BC through burying consciously with millions of cubic meter stone and earth material without disrupting beliefs, sculpture and stone relief-like symbol world. In this way, the unique monuments and artworks of the gathering center of the latest hunters reached to today in good health. Abandonment of Göbeklitepe was mostly attributed to passage into

permanent settlements through initiation of agricultural practices or change in belief systems. The artefacts explored in archeological excavations, which have been conducted in Göbeklitepe since 1995, are exhibited in Urfa Archeological Museum, one of the largest museums of Turkey. In the museum, there is also a 1/1 model of a circular-planned structure of Göbekli Tepe.

2.13 Importance of Göbeklitepe

Göbeklitepe is now well-known by the world. Klaus Schmidt published the book of Göbeklitepe in 6 different languages. World's most popular TV channels broadcasted documentaries about Göbeklitepe. World's most popular magazines put Göbeklitepe to their cover pages. Novels were published about Göbeklitepe. Surprising finds of ongoing archaeological excavations will keep Göbeklitepe and Şanlıurfa in world's agenda for year (Dietrich vd. 2013). So far, similar with Göbeklitepe and Nevali Çori, 7 different places (Karahan Tepe, Taşlı Tepe, Harbetsuvan Tepesi, Sefer Tepe, Ayanlar Höyük, Hamzan Tepe and Kurt Tepesi) were also identified in the region. Archaeological excavations to be conducted in these places will contribute new information into history of humanity and Şanlıurfa will continue to be the focus of the science of archeology. Göbeklitepe was taken into UNESCO's temporary list of Heritage in 2011 and then placed into "UNESCO Permanent List of World Heritage" in UNESCO 42nd World Heritage Meeting held in Manama, the capital of Bahrain in 2018. In this way, number of Cultural and Natural Assets of Turkey in UNESCO Permanent List of World Heritage reached to 18. The year 2019 was declared as the "YEAR OF GÖBEKLİ TEPE" by the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

3. Conclusion

All these findings revealed that Göbeklitepe dwellers, living toward the ends of Paleolithic age, were used to pursue their hunts, were not leading a primitive life, had a hierarchical order, had the capabilities of architecture, engineering, art and organization. Achievement of such characteristics by a hunter – collector society, which was not assumed to be have, breaks all the routines. Such a case enforce scientist to re-think the development stages of civilizations.

Considering the facts that ore haven't been invented and people had only flintstone as a tool in their hands, superior abilities of people manifesting monuments in Göbeklitepe could better be understood. This is the case surprising today's human being. Prof. Dr. Klaus Schmidt once

indicated that Göbeklitepe structures were more important than Egyptian Pyramids. When the Egyptian Pyramids were built in 3000 BC, technology was developed and human beings were used to use various tools made of ores and used to have technology and hierarchical state structure. Considered the age in which they were built, Göbeklitepe monuments were considered to be equivalents of Süleymaniye, Selimiye-like structures. These people used to have an artistry able to do stone sculptures and reliefs so nice that today's sculptures are jealous of. With a diamond motif generated by two crossing snakes or giving an impression of water wave by overlapping curling snakes, they were putting their signatures under so interesting designs that today's graphic designers could hardly think of.

Without any written documents in hand, the things told about partially rely on archeological finds and laboratory analyses, the rest on estimations. Apart from the things told above; order of stone pillars in Göbeklitepe structures was attributed by some people to order of stars in sky, the origin of animal reliefs on stone pillars were attributed by some people to 12-Animal Turkic Calendar of Central Asia, some symbols on stone pillars were attributed to motifs used by Australian Aborigines living on the other end of the world. The German weekly news and business magazine, Der Spiegel, announced the world that Göbekli Tepe was the "Garden of Eden" (Paradise) in which Adam and Eve lived. It appears that number of such interesting interpretations will continuously increase with the progress of excavations and exploration of new finds (Satmıř, 2019).

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