

The Ancient Armenians

Armenians have “always” been in Armenia. By “always” I mean the earliest possible historical records, and the latest genetic studies agree they were the first and only peoples to occupy their homeland, which today is a fraction of its earlier size.

PREHISTORY - Stone tools from 325,000 years ago have been found in Armenia which indicate the presence of early humans. The Armenian Highland shows traces of settlement from the Neolithic era. Archaeological surveys in 2010 and 2011 have resulted in the discovery of the world's earliest known leather shoe (3,500 BCE), straw skirt (3,900 BCE), and wine-making facility (4,000 BCE). Genetic studies show that Armenian people are indigenous to historical Armenia, showing little to no signs of admixture since around the 13th century BCE.



HISTORY – The map below shows the fluctuations of Armenia’s borders throughout its history. Dark brown is the limit of the kingdoms of Urartu and Armenia, which lasted from ca 830 -714 BCE and 585-190 BCE respectively. The blue line delineates the “Armenian highlands” their traditional homeland.

The diagonal brown lines show the Kingdom of Cilicia, AD 1060-1375, where Armenians, fleeing the marauding Seljuk Turks, were given shelter by the Byzantine governor of Tarsus

in exchange for fortifying and defending the mountain passes that led into it. There European Crusaders met Armenians before venturing into Muslim territory. In 1828, After the fall of Cilicia to the Mamelukes of Egypt in 1375, Armenians suffered under Moslem rule for 450 years.



In 1828, the Russians conquered and absorbed Persian territory, including parts of historical Armenia, calling it the “Province of Yerevan”. Meanwhile in Turkey, from 1894-1921 Turks and many Kurds began the systematic slaughtering of Armenians – 1.5 million - the Armenian Genocide. In the chaos after WWI, Armenians briefly captured land from both Russians and Turks, creating the Armenian Republic (previous map), but when Russians and Turks regained control over their countries, Armenians were left with land in Russia only. On Dec 25, 1991, Armenia became an independent country. For the first time in 616 years.



Language - Armenian is a distinct member of the Indo-European language family. It also has an alphabet unique in the world, created by Mesrop Mashtots in 405 AD, who created it to translate the Bible. It reads from left to right.



Religion – Early Armenians called themselves “children of the sun” and are believed to worship the sun. Also, among the most ancient types of Indo-European-derived worship are the cults of eagles and lions, and of the sky. After the establishment of Iranian dominance in Armenia in the 1st millennium BCE, Zoroastrianism had a major influence on Armenian religion. In the Hellenistic age (3rd to 1st centuries BCE), ancient Armenian deities were identified with ancient Greek deities. Armenia was the first country in the world to officially adopt Christianity, in 305 AD. The **Armenian Apostolic Church** (Armenian: Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցի, is the autocephalous national church of Armenia. Part of Oriental Orthodoxy, it is one of the most ancient Christian churches. The Armenian Apostolic Church uses the Armenian Rite.



Calendar - New Year - Jan 1-2, Christmas – Jan 6, Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day – Apr 24, Independence from the Soviet Union – Sep 21.

Flag - Armenia proclaimed its independence on May 28, 1918. On August 1 of that year the new constitution gave a red-blue-orange striped flag official sanction, and it continued to fly until April 2, 1921. The flag was revived on August 24, 1990, when the nation’s intention to again proclaim independence was announced. One interpretation of its symbolism is that red stands for the blood shed by Armenians in the past, blue is for the unchanging Armenian land, and orange is for courage and work.

