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KAES letter to UNESCO

03 June 2005

KurdishMedia.com - By Ardishir Rashidi-Kalhur

Letter of Appeal To: UNESCO, International Council of Museums and the World-Wide Research Institutes of Middle Eastern History.

Ref: Accrediting Kurdistan As the Origin of Discovered Artifacts of Ancient Cultures.

To the above community of curators, historians and custodians of world's cultural heritage:

The Kurdish-American Education Society deeply and sincerely appreciates the diligent efforts by your respective organization to preserve the many ancient and invaluable artifacts found and discovered in the region of Kurdistan (in former times established by the Medes, forefathers of present-day Kurds).

Treasure troves of precious articles from the region of Kurdistan decorate and honor display cases in museums the world over. Unfortunately, the precise dating, cultural identity, historical significance and ownership of many of these ancient relics remain highly controversial. Furthermore, the identity of the permanent, fixed and non-removable archeological sites in Kurdistan continue to be wrongfully claimed by conquering powers, who have throughout history usurped the Kurdish land, culture and their identity.

These practices of omission and denying of Kurdish identity and cultural heritage with nearly 4000 years of history, must no longer be acceptable by UNESCO, the World Council of Museums, international institutes for the study of Middle Eastern History, and other concerned organizations around the world.

As most historian would agree, the presence of the modern Kurdish culture can be traced back to the confluence of several cultures interacting with the pre-existing inhabitants of the region. It was however, during the cultural dominance by the Medes, that the

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linguistic characteristics and cultural identity of the Kurdish people was cast over the Greater Kurdistan, known in antiquity as the Kingdom of the Medes.

According to historical sources, the settlement of Medes, also pronounced Ma-Da, meaning Mother, dates back to the 17th to 14th century B.C, in the region where they called Iran. Their western migration and domination over indigenous cultures continued until 550 B.C. when power was transferred to the newly formed Persian tribe under the leadership of Cyrus the Great, grandson of the last king of the Medes, Astyages.

By 550 B.C., the Kingdom of the Medes encompassed a territory which extended from the Southern Caspian Sea, to a region later known as Atropatene (Azerbaijan) to the north of Mount Ararat and the Black Sea, as far west as Central Anatolia (near modern Ankara), south to the Mediterranean sea, northern Syria and Iraq, to Southwestern Iran and the gulf, later called the Persian Gulf and north to the Caspian sea.

Ironically, in the Western literature both classical and modern, very little has been written or has been referenced about nearly 1200 years of history of the Medes in the Middle East. One can attribute this lack of knowledge in the West, to the fact that it was during the (relatively brief) period of Persian dominance (550-330 B.C.) that this history was recorded for the West, through the Greeks, after the encounters of Alexander the Great with the Iranian people. What the Greek generals and historians recorded, was erroneously credited under the name Persians and not the Medes who were the true founders and progenitors of the Iranian people and culture. Their philosophy, theology, language, art, governmental and organizational skills, arts of warfare, science, culture, and many artifacts that we see today in modern museums around the world that have been discovered in the aforementioned countries, are in parts of Medic origin. This is not to diminish the contribution of the Persians who ruled Iran from 550 B.C. to 330 BC and then demised by Alexander the Great and whose empire was created upon the previously established Kingdom of the Medes, but cultural origin of identity to each should be accurately recorded and credited.

Today, what is left from the Kingdom of the Medes, was depicted by a map published by the National Geographic Society which is referred to by Kurds as the Greater Kurdistan. When the modern map of Kurdistan is superimposed on the map of the ancient kingdom held by the Medes, its outer fringes shows disappearance of Kurdish culture due to encroaching enemies and influence of other cultures through out history. Among them, the Persians in 550 BC, the Greeks in 330 BC, the Romans in 64 BC, Arabic Islam in 640 AD, the Oguz Turks in 1050 AD and afterward, the British in early twentieth century and the Americans in the modern time.

For the purpose of this article, we the Kurds, not only appreciate

the efforts of various institutions and powers in preserving the existence of the pre-Medic cultures found in the Greater Kurdistan, but also, we ask for the recognition of the Medic and post-Medic heritage of the people who have come to be known as the modern Kurdish people and their culture.

Furthermore, for the purpose of giving due credit to the pre-Medic cultures which may have produced many of these exquisite artifacts of beauty and purpose, it is fair and just that their existence is recognized. These cultures compounded by the arrival of the Medes, are those who have lived and shaped the present day Kurdish culture since antiquity. Among them history mentions the following cultures:

In West, Northwest and Southwestern Iran 3000:

The Elamites 3000 B.C.

The Gutium 2200 B.C.

The Assyrians 1400 B.C.

The Medes 1700 BC to the establishment of their capital in Ecbatana (Western Iran) in 728 B.C.

Post Medic (Eastern Kurdistan in Iran) 550 B.C.-Present

In Mesopotamia:

The Sumerian 3-4 millennium B.C.

Akkadian 2 millennium B.C.

Hurrians 2 millennium B.C.

Assyrians 1400 B.C.

The Medes 612 B.C

Post Medic 550-Present

In Anatolia

The Mitani, 1500 B.C.

The Luwian 1500 B.C.

The Urartu 9th and 8th B.C.

The Lydian 7th c. B.C.

The Medes 609 B.C.

Post Medic 550- Present

All the above considered, today the Kurds speak a common language with various dialects and have maintained a strong sense of independent identity. Culturally, philosophically and linguistically they are different than the Arabic and Turkish speaking peoples, yet they maintain a distant kinship with ancient Persians. Kurds are not above or below their neighbors, but have the rights to preserve their historical legitimacy and contribution to the enrichment of the world's cultural heritage.

Therefore, we, members of the Kurdish American Education Society, legitimately request from the world's community of

Historians, and particularly, from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Council of Museums and the Academic and Scientific Research Institutions world wide, that no longer should they omit references to Kurdistan as being the place where many invaluable cultural artifacts have been found and discovered. Furthermore, we legitimately request that if any of the existing artifacts currently in the possession of museums around the world, which have been found within the following geographical regions, be re-identified and due credit be given to their original place of discovery as being in Kurdistan, and those of Medic origin be identified as such. These regions include:

- 1) Any artifact found and discovered in Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern Iran including Luristan and as far east as the Shari-Kurd in Southern Iran.
- 2) Any artifact found and discovered in Southeastern Turkey including as far west as Adiyaman, Malatya and Elazig and to the eastern region of the present city of Ankara.
- 3) Any artifact found and discovered in the Kurdish inhabited region in northern Syria and as far west as the Mediterranean sea.
- 4) Any artifact found and discovered in the North and Northeastern Iraq, including Kirkuk, Kahne-Qin and Mandali, and Fahli-Kurd (Pahli) inhabited region of southeastern Iraq.

Toward this goal, we further ask for cooperation of all Kurdish Historians, Scholars for Study of Antiquity, Archeologists, and Research Scientists in the field within these regions, to exert every effort to maintain detailed records of the places and origin of new findings they discover in Kurdistan. Their cooperation with the international team of researchers is encouraged as long as the Kurdish identity of such findings and discoveries are respected and not compromised on the bases of political pressure or cultural assimilation policies of their encroaching neighbors.

Finally, Greater Kurdistan is in the making, and we must make every legitimate effort to restore credit to our land, our history, our people and our culture, while we maintain respect for the same of others. In due time, our effort must include cataloguing all existing items with origin tracing back to Kurdistan that are in the possession of many museums around the world. This way, we can restore legitimate credit where it duly belong so that the future generation of Kurdish people among others, once more, be inspired by the spiritual views and artistic creativity of our noble predecessors.

For the Kurdish-American Education Society,
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