

CANADA

Layer by layer, dig exposes deeper truths

History offers perspective on universal questions



JENNIFER GREEN
IN TEL TAYINAT

READ Jennifer Green's blog from the site

OTTAWACITIZEN.COM

/UNEARTHING

Archeology was likely the last thing on anyone's mind when gunmen killed four police officers this week in southern Turkey, and tear gas had to be used to quell subsequent clashes between Turks and Kurds.

But less than 100 kilometres south of the ethnic strife in Dortyol, a handful of Canadian and Turkish archeologists were quietly working away on the questions that drive violence like this: How do we see ourselves as different than others? How are we the same? How does our past determine our future?

For more than a decade, two teams, one Turkish and one Canadian, have been working on two hillocks that overlook a highway just outside Antakya, near the Turkish-Syrian border. Tel Tayinat is on the north, behind a rundown cotton mill, led by the University of Toronto's Tim Harrison. Tel Atchana is to the south, led by Aslihan Yener, a professor at Koç University in Istanbul.

If you could lift up into mid-air a layer of soil, about a kilometre wide and a few metres deep, you would find near the north, signs of an ancient city with temples, palaces, iron-working, and pretty designs on pottery. It would have been the seventh or eighth century BC. The super power of the day, the Assyrians, ruled here as they did elsewhere, and the Assyrian governor built his residence where the cotton mill is now. Its remains are under there still. But a terrible fire had leveled the town. Had it been other invaders? An earthquake? After all, the town was near a fault that would kill 250,000 in AD 526, more than a millennium later.

Lift another layer of soil, and the Orontes River, now well south of the dig, may have changed its course, perhaps running where the highway is now. Or maybe it had spread out to become a lake.

Lift a few more metres, and you would come to another strata. A temple is in the same place, but it seems to be in the style of the Hittites, who were most powerful before 1200 or 1300 BC.

Reach back still further, and it seems most of the population lived to the south, at Atchana, around 2200 BC. At some point, they moved to Tel

homeland, many had disappeared and more were going fast.

Laws that forbade destruction were half-heartedly enforced, if at all. Yener began to campaign, documenting areas where archeological remains were overrun, and bringing in the police. At first, landowners would get, as she describes it, "a laughable fine and then they'd do it again."

Finally, she managed to convince a judge who said later, "we thought they were just piles of dirt."

The next time a landowner ignored the law, he was thrown in jail for three months. The bulldozing stopped.

Now, says Yener: "There's nobody in Turkey that's not interested in archeology. This is our culture."

Tayinat and Atchana are critically important, says Harrison, because they have so much to tell us about such a long and varied period in ancient history, and because they were a crossroads for trade, and immigration.

A strategic dig like this can be a focus of research for generations. "These sites are like laboratories. If we can do it right, this could be a signature site," says Harrison. "Megiddo (in Israel) is a smaller site and it has been operating since 1900."

The directors of the two sites are campaigning to have research centres and tourist facilities built here. The governor of the province has visited the site and seems to look favourably on the project, having a passionate interest in the Hittites. Philanthropists have also visited to look into funding possibilities.

Harrison came to the site in Turkey through his association with Yener at the University of Chicago. He is passionate about its potential, and has launched a group called Friends of Tayinat. Its inaugural bulletin, released earlier this month, outlines the plans for an archaeological park and research centre including visitor interpretation facilities to "help foster greater awareness of its role as an historic crossroads, or bridge, between the cultures and peoples of Turkey, the Middle East, and the West.

As he sees it, the distant history of this region "has an intense bearing on the present. The archeological record could resolve or mediate.

POLESOME GOOD FUN?



HANDOUT PHOTO

Kennedy Benko, 7, has been taking pole lessons at B.C.'s Tantra Fitness studio for two years. Classes kids can sign up for with parents' permission include 'Sexy Flexy,' 'Pussycat Dawls' and 'Promiscuous Girls.'

Pre-teens clamber for pole dance classes: 'They're such naturals'

Has hitting the exercise mainstream really stripped pole-dancing of its erotic baggage? So say some parents, who are signing up kids as young as five, **MISTY HARRIS** reports.

Summer school for some Canadian girls means Pole 101.

The class is being offered by B.C.'s Tantra Fitness, one of a small but growing number of pole-dancing studios quietly extending their services to underage girls. The Canadian company, which operates in Vancouver and Langley, has taught students age nine and up in regular classes, and has gone as young as five years old in private lessons.

There's even talk of introducing a mommy-and-me pole class.

"I just had a baby six months ago and I'm hoping she'll start to learn pole-dancing as soon as she can," says Tammy Morris, owner of Tantra Fitness. "Kids love the pole. If anything, it's hard to get them off it because they're such naturals."

Morris, a former exotic dance champion, says she's worked hard to

activity is steeped in sexual history, but nonetheless, thinks any moral panic around its instruction to young people is misplaced.

"Children have no (erotic) association with the pole whatsoever," says Morris, arguing that kids would see the same apparatus at a firehall, playground or circus. "Unless you teach someone how to grind and make reference to taking off your clothing, there's nothing wrong with it."

Notably, the only Tantra classes on which there are firm age restrictions are Exotic Dance and Lap Dance, leaving open those with names such as Bellylicious, Sexy Flexy, Pussycat Dawls and Promiscuous Girls. But for anyone underage to participate, Morris says a waiver must be signed by the youth's parents.

In the case of seven-year-old Kennedy Benko, who's been taking lessons for two years — and had Morris at her last birthday party, to teach her friends some pole tricks of their own — this isn't a problem. Her mother is a fellow student at Tantra.

"It's just another form of exercise, and an awesome core workout ... You should see (Kennedy's) little abs — they're rockin'," says Randi Mosco, a fitness in-

structor who says she's worked hard to

up on the pole and try to pull their legs over their head."

Recent history, of course, has proven people have plenty to say on the subject, which has been rolled into public debate over pornified young women.

Disney star Miley Cyrus sparked international uproar at the 2009 Teen Choice Awards after sidling up to a pole during a musical performance. The Australian Family Association has spoken out against tween dance classes that incorporate a pole, derided by a spokeswoman as a "classic phallic symbol."

And studios in both the U.K. and Scotland have come under fire this year for their youth pole lessons, which the owner of the latter company defends as "gymnastics classes" in which "it just so happens, there's a pole."

Feminist writer Jessica Wakeman calls out the exercise explanation as disingenuous.

"I clearly understand that we're not talking about a pole-dancing class for kids; it's an exercise class on a pole," says Wakeman, who writes for pop-culture site The Frisky. "But there are cultural messages here that people need to be honest about."

Mainstream acceptance of the practice has cited to support a re-

week in southern Turkey, and tear gas had to be used to quell subsequent clashes between Turks and Kurds.

But less than 100 kilometres south of the ethnic strife in Dortyol, a handful of Canadian and Turkish archeologists were quietly working away on the questions that drive violence like this: How do we see ourselves as different than others? How are we the same? How does our past determine our future?

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Sadly, to the north you will not see the footings of a truly monumental structure, 28 by 35 metres. Turkish farmers bulldozed it to accommodate more cotton crops just 40 years ago.

All over the world, development of one sort or another is plowing under critical archeological sites. Turkey is in a particular dilemma because it has so many rich sites. But the country is pushing to grow more prosperous, and embrace modernity. That means development.

In the 1930s, the legendary archeologist Robert Braidwood identified 178 significant sites here on the Amuq Plain alone. By the time Yener returned from the University of Chicago to work in her

where archeological remains were overrun, and bringing in the police. At first, landowners would get, as she describes it, "a laughable fine and then they'd do it again."

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As he sees it, the distant history of this region "has an intense bearing on the present. The archeological record could resolve or mediate, even transcend cultural differences."

The combatants at Dortyol might not be in a mood to listen right now, but in time, they might gain a different perspective. After all, the city's name means "crossroads" and it was here that Alexander the Great fought Darius in 333 BC.

Perspective in time: The modern reason for ancient history.

Citizen reporter **Jennifer Green** is in Tel Tayinat on the Amuq Plain in Turkey, where Ottawa's Stephen Batiuk is part of a group of 30 archeologists uncovering and sifting through 3,000-year-old artifacts. The team is hoping to piece together the mystery of how this once-powerful kingdom, possibly tied to the biblical Philistines, rose and inexplicably collapsed.

Rabbit cull at University of Victoria blocked

The University of Victoria has been told it can't start trapping and killing the hundreds of rabbits that are overrunning its campus. The B.C. Supreme Court in Vancouver issued an injunction against the university Friday. Animal-rights activist Roslyn Cassells had gone to the court seeking time to allow her and others to pre-

vent a cull. Environmental groups are hoping to relocate many of the 1,400 rabbits to animal sanctuaries, including one in Texas. While the sanctuaries are ready, the permits — which have to be approved by the province's Ministry of Environment — are not. The injunction is now in effect until Aug. 27, said Cassells.



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Morris, a former exotic dance champion, says she's worked hard to separate the art of stripping from the art of pole-dancing, with the focus of the latter being fitness and technique. She acknowledges that the ac-

tivity is steeped in sexual history, but nonetheless, thinks any moral panic around its instruction to young people is misplaced.

"Children have no (erotic) association with the pole whatsoever," says Morris, arguing that kids would see the same apparatus at a firehall, playground or circus. "Unless you teach someone how to grind and make reference to taking off your clothing, there's nothing wrong with it."

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up on the pole and try to pull their legs over their head."

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Mainstream acceptance of the practice has cited to support a recent bid for pole-dancing's recognition as an Olympic event.

POSTMEDIA NEWS

Doe-eyed and dangerous: deer attacks spike in B.C.

BY CASSIDY OLIVIER

VANCOUVER

It began with the daylight mauling of a dog and has grown to include the bludgeoning of a newspaper carrier and the last-minute escape of a woman and her terrified canine from a charging red-eyed doe.

As the summer rolls on, the stories surrounding deer in urban areas of British Columbia continue to push the boundaries of the surreal. Seemingly bloodthirsty and ruthless, their antics are single-handedly challenging the commonly held perception of deer as doe-eyed Bambis.

Most of the reports have come from Cranbrook, in southeastern British Columbia. There was also an attack in Saanich, near Victoria. Alberta and Oregon State have reportedly been experiencing similar situations.

But what's really happening? Valerius Geist, a profes-



CHRIS MIKULA, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

The popular image of deer as harmless Bambis is taking a beating after a spate of attacks on humans and their pets.

sor emeritus at the University of Calgary, has studied and written extensively about deer. He said the incidents are the culmination of a variety of factors.

"Most deer are, in fact, very docile and tame," he said. "Most of the time, they don't bother us and we don't both-

er them."

The problems start, he said, when does start fawning, usually around June and July.

That's when their "motherly instincts" kick in and they react aggressively toward perceived threats, such as dogs, which resemble their natural predators: Coyotes

and wolves.

The prolonged attack on Star the dog in Cranbrook, which became a YouTube sensation, was in the presence of a fawn. In that same video, the doe is seen chasing away a cat who'd licked the fawn.

Geist said deer often arrive in populated areas seeking refuge from predators that patrol urban boundaries.

Once they become habituated to the easy pickings they find — lawns, gardens and shrubbery — the deer become near impossible to get rid of and eventually reach pest status.

This is further exacerbated when humans feed deer on the assumption they are the harmless, aw-shucks Disney character from our childhood. Geist said this further habituates them to cities, and can also result in surprise attacks.

POSTMEDIA NEWS