

# The “Hanging Gardens” of Göbekli Tepe

Constantinos Ragazas  
[cragaza@Lawrenceville.org](mailto:cragaza@Lawrenceville.org)  
Copyright © 2013



**Abstract:** Based on the *facts on the ground* and on *ancient texts*, I argue *Göbekli Tepe* is the site of *The Hanging Gardens of Babylon*. One of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*. Further, I explain why the current dates of 10,000BC for *Göbekli Tepe* are wrong. Rather, this construction probably dates to 600BC. At a time when Babylonian and Assyrian Civilizations are known to have had the capabilities and organization to have build such wonders.

**Introduction:** Since 1994 a team of archeologists lead by Klaus Schmidt of the German Archaeological Institute have been excavating a site in southeast Turkey called *Göbekli Tepe* ('Potbelly Hill'). Their findings have been spectacular. Leading many archeologists to radically alter long held beliefs of when and how human beings evolved from hunter-gatherers to complex civilizations.

*Before the discovery of Göbekli Tepe, archaeologists believed that societies in the early Neolithic were organized into small bands of hunter-gatherers and that the first complex religious practices were developed by groups that had already mastered agriculture. Scholars thought that the earliest monumental architecture was possible only after agriculture provided Neolithic people with food surpluses, freeing them from a constant focus on day-to-day survival. A site of unbelievable artistry and intricate detail, Göbekli Tepe has turned this theory on its head. [1]*

Quoting from the Wikipedia article,

*Göbekli Tepe ... is a Neolithic hilltop sanctuary erected at the top of a mountain ridge in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, some 15 kilometers (9 mi) northeast of the town of Sanliurfa (formerly Urfa / Edessa). It is the oldest known human-made religious structure. The site was most likely erected in the 10th millennium BCE and has been under excavation since 1994 by German and Turkish archaeologists. Together with Nevalı Çori, it has revolutionized understanding of Eurasian Neolithic history....[2]*

*Until excavations began, a complex on this scale was not thought possible for a community so ancient, and with such primitive quarrying tools. The massive sequence of stratification layers suggests several millennia of activity, perhaps reaching back to the Mesolithic. [2]*

*Göbekli Tepe* is believed to be the oldest religious temple ever built. Different dating methods have produced dates of 12,000 years ago. This is astonishing. As this is before agriculture was developed and some 7,000 years earlier than the Great Pyramids or Stonehenge. Many circular enclosures formed by T-shaped pillars have been found. Many of these have carved etchings of wild animals, birds, snakes and even insects. Massive dry stone walls connect the T-shaped pillars together. At the center of each enclosure sit two larger T-pillars. The entire site was deliberately and completely buried by tons of debris believed to have been carried there from elsewhere.

*The site was deliberately backfilled sometime after 8000 BCE: the buildings are covered with debris, ... that must have been brought from elsewhere. ...*

*...the complex was not simply abandoned and forgotten to be gradually destroyed by the elements. [2]*



Archeologists believe bands of hunter-gatherers some 12,000 years ago built such an elaborate and technically challenging structure. And do this with just primitive stone tools. They argue, religion is in the human DNA. Inspiring people to built *Göbekli Tepe* and setting humans in the path of social evolution. Could nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers coming from afar and occasionally meeting have built *Göbekli Tepe*?



Schmidt believes the people who created these massive and enigmatic structures came from great distances. It seems certain that once pilgrims reached *Göbekli Tepe*, they made animal sacrifices. Schmidt and his team have found the bones of wild animals, including gazelles, red deer, boars, goats, sheep, and oxen, plus a dozen different bird species, such as vultures and ducks, scattered around the site. Most of these animals are depicted in the sculptures and reliefs at the site. [1]

Schmidt's team, however, found none of the telltale signs of a settlement: no cooking hearths, houses or trash pits, and none of the clay fertility figurines that litter nearby sites of about the same age. [7]

The ruins are so early that they predate villages, pottery, domesticated animals, and even agriculture—the first embers of civilization. In fact, Schmidt thinks the temple itself, built after the end of the last Ice Age by hunter-gatherers, became that ember—the spark that launched mankind toward farming, urban life, and all that followed. [3]

Schmidt's thesis is simple and bold: *it was the urge to worship that brought mankind together* in the very first urban conglomerations. The need to build and maintain this temple, he says, drove the builders to seek stable food sources, like grains and animals that could be domesticated, and then to settle down to guard their new way of life. *The temple begat the city.* [3]

"Everybody used to think only complex, hierarchical civilisations could build such monumental sites, and that they only came about with the invention of agriculture", said Ian Hodder, a Stanford University professor of anthropology who has directed digs at Catalhoyuk, Turkey's best known neolithic site, since 1993. "*Gobekli changes everything. It's elaborate, it's complex and it is pre-agricultural.*" [8]

Enthusing over the "*huge great stones and fantastic, highly refined art*" at *Göbekli*, [Ian] Hodder—who has spent decades on rival Neolithic sites—says: "*Many people think that it changes everything...It overturns the whole apple cart. All our theories were wrong.*" [3]

Religion now appears so early in civilized life – earlier than civilized life, if Schmidt is correct – that some think it may be less a product of culture than a cause of it, *less a revelation than a genetic inheritance.* [3]

Biblical prophets and founders of great religions had their religious revelations in *isolation*; alone and away from everyone. But their *temples* were not built until much later by their devoted organized followers. Though having *religious experience* may be in our human DNA, building religious *temples* is not. *It takes a village to built a temple!* And that presupposes settlements and agriculture and civic society. With a common language, common beliefs, common aspirations, and common knowledge. And the economic resources and social organization to harness communal effort towards a common purpose.

Small nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers have none of these characteristics. They could not have done it! The science notwithstanding, the archeologists are simply wrong on this one. *Göbekli Tepe* is not mankind's first religious temple built some 12,000 years ago by hunter-gatherers; many millenniums before settlements and agriculture. Such singular full-blown architectural achievement didn't spontaneously spring forth from the brow of hunters. Were it not for the wrong dates, this would have never been in question.

Klaus Schmidt, the leading archeologist excavating *Göbekli Tepe*, believes

*... the pillars represent human beings and that the cult practices at this site may initially have focused on some sort of ancestor worship. The T-shaped pillars, he points out, look like human bodies with the upper part of the "T" resembling a head in profile. Once, Schmidt says, they stood on the hillside "like a meeting of stone beings."* [1]

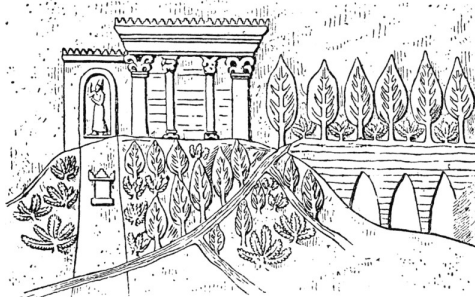
Klaus Schmidt says: "*Our excavations also show it is not a domestic site, it is religious - the world's oldest temple. This site proves that hunter-gatherers were capable of complex art and organised religion, something no-one imagined before.*" [4]

I claim such claims are wrong. *Göbekli Tepe* I argue is the site of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*. Possibly one of several [similar T-shaped pillars are found nearby at [Nevalı Cori](#) [14][15]]. But it simply was not a religious temple. Nor was it built 12,000 years ago. Rather, it was built around 600 BC by either a Babylonian or Assyrian king at a time when the technical means and economic resources were available. Furthermore, I explain why the dates for *Göbekli Tepe* may be wrong. Not the science, but the assumptions.

### The “*Hanging Gardens of Babylon*”

*The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and the only one of the wonders that may have been purely legendary.* [5]

The [gardens](#) were attributed to the [Neo-Babylonian](#) king [Nebuchadnezzar II](#), who ruled *between 605 and 562 BC*. He is reported to have *constructed the gardens to please his homesick wife [Amytis](#) of [Media](#), who longed for the plants of her homeland. The gardens were said to have been destroyed by several earthquakes after the 2nd century BC*. The *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* are documented by ancient [Greek](#) and [Roman](#) writers, including [Strabo](#), [Diodorus Siculus](#), and [Quintus Curtius Rufus](#). ... *no definitive archaeological evidence concerning their whereabouts has been found* [5]



This copy of a bas relief from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal (669–631 BC) at Nineveh shows a luxurious garden watered by an aqueduct.[15]

Full quotes from the *ancient texts*: [5]

[Josephus](#) (ca. 37–100 AD) quoted [Berossus](#) (writing ca. 280 BC), when he described the gardens. *Berossus described the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, the king he credits with the construction of the Hanging Gardens.*

*“In this palace he erected very high walks, supported by stone pillars; and by planting what was called a pensile paradise, and replenishing it with all sorts of trees, he rendered the prospect an exact resemblance of a mountainous country. This he did to gratify his queen, because she had been brought up in Media, and was fond of a mountainous situation.”*

[Diodorus Siculus](#) (active ca. 60–30 BC) seems to have consulted the early 4th century BC texts of [Ctesias of Cnidus](#) for his description of the *Hanging Gardens*:

*“There was also, beside the acropolis, the Hanging Garden, as it is called, which was built, not by Semiramis, but by a later Syrian king to please one of his concubines; for she, they say, being a Persian by race and longing for the meadows of her mountains, asked the king to imitate, through the artifice of a planted garden, the distinctive landscape of Persia. The park extended four plethra on each side, and since the approach to the garden sloped like a hillside and the several parts of the structure rose from one another tier on tier, the appearance of the whole resembled that of a theatre. When the ascending terraces had been built, there had been constructed beneath them galleries which carried the entire weight of the planted garden and rose little by little one above the other along the approach; and the uppermost gallery, which was fifty cubits high, bore the highest surface of the park, which was made level with the circuit wall of the battlements of the city. Furthermore, the walls, which had been constructed at great expense, were twenty-two feet thick, while the passage-way between each two walls was ten feet wide. The roof above these beams had first a layer of reeds laid in great quantities of bitumen, over this two courses of baked brick bonded by cement, and as a third layer of covering of lead, to the end that the moisture from the soil might not penetrate beneath. On all this again earth had been piled to a depth sufficient for the roots of the largest trees; and the ground, when levelled off, was thickly planted with trees of every kind that, by their great size or other charm, could give pleasure to the beholder. And since the galleries, each projecting beyond another, all received the light, they contained many royal lodgings of every description; and there was one gallery which contained openings leading from the topmost surface and machines for supplying the gardens with water, the machines raising the water in great abundance from the river, although no one outside could see it being done. Now this park, as I have said, was a later construction.”*

[Quintus Curtius Rufus](#) (active 1st century AD) referred to the writings of [Cleitarachus](#), a 4th century BC historian of [Alexander the Great](#), when writing his own *History of Alexander the Great*:

*“The Babylonians also have a citadel twenty stades in circumference. The foundations of its turrets are sunk thirty feet into the ground and the fortifications rise eighty feet above it at the highest point. On its*

summit are the hanging gardens, a wonder celebrated by the fables of the Greeks. They are as high as the top of the walls and owe their charm to the shade of many tall trees. The columns supporting the whole edifice are built of rock, and on top of them is a flat surface of squared stones strong enough to bear the deep layer of earth placed upon it and the water used for irrigating it. So stout are the trees the structure supports that their trunks are eight cubits thick and their height as much as fifty feet; they bear fruit as abundantly as if they were growing in their natural environment. And although time with its gradual decaying processes is as destructive to nature's works as to man's, even so this edifice survives undamaged, despite being subjected to the pressure of so many tree-roots and the strain of bearing the weight of such a huge forest. It has a substructure of walls twenty feet thick at eleven foot intervals, so that from a distance one has the impression of woods overhanging their native mountains. Tradition has it that it is the work of a Syrian king who ruled from Babylon. He built it out of love for his wife who missed the woods and forests in this flat country and persuaded her husband to imitate nature's beauty with a structure of this kind."

Strabo (ca. 64 BC – 21 AD) described of the Hanging Gardens as follows, in a passage that was thought to be based on the lost account of Onesicritus from the 4th century BC:

"Babylon, too, lies in a plain; and the circuit of its wall is three hundred and eighty-five stadia. The thickness of its wall is thirty-two feet; the height thereof between the towers is fifty cubits; that of the towers is sixty cubits; and the passage on top of the wall is such that four-horse chariots can easily pass one another; and it is on this account that this and the hanging garden are called one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The garden is quadrangular in shape, and each side is four plethra in length. It consists of arched vaults, which are situated, one after another, on checkered, cube-like foundations. The checkered foundations, which are hollowed out, are covered so deep with earth that they admit of the largest of trees, having been constructed of baked brick and asphalt – the foundations themselves and the vaults and the arches. The ascent to the uppermost terrace-roofs is made by a stairway; and alongside these stairs there were screws, through which the water was continually conducted up into the garden from the Euphrates by those appointed for this purpose, for the river, a stadium in width, flows through the middle of the city; and the garden is on the bank of the river."

Philo of Byzantium (writing ca. 250 BC), whose list of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World we use today, was credited with the following description:

"The Hanging Gardens [is so-called because it] has plants cultivated at a height above ground level, and the roots of the trees are embedded in an upper terrace rather than in the earth. This is the technique of its construction. The whole mass is supported on stone columns, so that the entire underlying space is occupied by carved column bases. The columns carry beams set at very narrow intervals. The beams are palm trunks, for this type of wood – unlike all others – does not rot and, when it is damp and subjected to heavy pressure, it curves upwards. Moreover it does itself give nourishment to the root branches and fibres, since it admits extraneous matter into its folds and crevices. This structure supports an extensive and deep mass of earth, in which are planted broad-leaved trees of the sort that are commonly found in gardens, a wide variety of flowers of all species and, in brief, everything that is most agreeable to the eye and conducive to the enjoyment of pleasure. The whole area is ploughed in just the same way as solid ground, and is just as suitable as other soil for grafting and propagation. Thus it happens that a ploughed field lies above the heads of those who walk between the columns below. Yet while the upper surface of the earth is trampled underfoot, the lower and denser soil closest to the supporting framework remains undisturbed and virgin. Streams of water emerging from elevated sources flow partly in a straight line down sloping channels, and are partly forced upwards through bends and spirals to gush out higher up, being impelled through the twists of these devices by mechanical forces. So, brought together in frequent and plentiful outlets at a high level, these waters irrigate the whole garden, saturating the deep roots of the plants and keeping the whole area of cultivation continually moist. Hence the grass is permanently green, and the leaves of trees grow firmly attached to supple branches, and increasing in size and succulence with the constant humidity. For the root [system] is kept saturated and sucks up the all-pervading supply of water, wandering in interlaced channels beneath the ground, and securely maintaining the well-established and excellent quality of trees. This is a work of art of royal luxury [lit. 'riotous living'], and its most striking feature is that the labor of cultivation is suspended above the heads of the spectators."

### The "Seven Wonders of the Ancient World"

The Greek conquest of much of the known world in the 4th century BC gave Hellenistic travellers access to the civilizations of the Egyptians, Persians, and Babylonians. Impressed and captivated by the landmarks and marvels of the various lands, these travellers began to list what they saw to remember them. [6]

... the ["Seven Wonders of the World"] list was meant to be the Ancient World's counterpart of a travel guidebook. [6]

The • in the map mark where the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World* are located; while \* marks *Göbekli Tepe*. Of these, only the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* have not been found or exactly located by ancient texts. But is presumed these are located at the ancient city of Babylon along the banks of the Euphrates River in southern Iraq [15]. The list of the *Seven Wonders* (by Philo of Byzantium in 250BC) was a travel guide for Hellenistic travelers following land routes along the Eastern Mediterranean coast. Note the red dot in the map depicting the presumed location of the *Hanging Gardens* is an outlier far off southeast of these coastal routes. While the ancient city of Urfa (where Abraham is said to have been born) lies not far off along such coastal routes (see map on p. 1). This being close to the present day Turkish-Syrian border. And *Göbekli Tepe* is just 9 miles northeast of ancient Urfa. Furthermore, Urfa as well as *Göbekli Tepe* are on the eastern side of the Euphrates River and were part of the ancient Babylonian Empire (see map below). It is possible ancient references to Babylon were to any region of the Babylonian Empire lying between the two rivers. And not specifically to the ancient city of Babylon. This would make sense. Why would anyone traveling from Athens to Alexandria along the Asia Minor coast go so far away southeast to Babylon to see the *Hanging Gardens*? And if the *Hanging Gardens* made the “list” why not also include the many other architectural wonders of ancient Babylon, like the *Ishtar Gate*?



Were we to find the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*, what would we find? Massive stone pillars that held up the garden terraces. Other support structures connecting the stone pillars. All this buried in debris of crushed stones and soil that once made up the garden terraces. Royal lodging in the form of distinct rectangular floors. Lots of animal bones from great royal feasts. And not much more. No evidence of settlements or domestication. No evidence of everyday life. No written tablets or other cultural artifacts. And very likely no burials.

And where would we likely find the *Hanging Gardens*? According to *ancient texts* on a hilltop near Syria (since likely these were built by an Assyrian king ruling from Babylonia) and between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers within ancient Babylonia. And not too far from the other *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*.

What we likely not find? Since the fertile soil brought from elsewhere would have agricultural value, we likely wont find anything close to the surface that would have interfered with the later agricultural use of the land. These would be all the tree trunks used to support garden terraces; ground level columns and stones from royal lodging, roots and other debris interfering with the tilling of the land.

And if we were to date the 'lithic finds' found at the site, what would we conclude about the age of the site? Since these 'lithic finds' likely were mixed-in with the crushed stone from nearby quarries, these would date to when the quarries were used for making 'projectile points'. Thus, the (wrong) date obtained for the site would be the same as the age of 'lithic finds'.

Were we to radiocarbon the date of the loam plaster used in the supporting pillars and walls, what will such dates tell us? Nothing about the date of the construction. Only the date of the loam used. And since this would have likely come from the same area where the top soil for the gardens was dug up, and since the plastering was done after the garden beds were built, the loam would have been dug last. And so from a deeper level than the top soil. Thus, the loam would be older than the soil or any other datable organic artifacts in the soil.

### Archeological Excavations: 'facts on the ground'

The site, *located on a hilltop*, contains 20 round structures which had been buried, four of which have been excavated. Each round structure has a diameter of between 10 and 30 meters (30 and 100 ft) and all are decorated with *massive, mostly T-shaped, limestone pillars* that are the most striking feature of the site. The limestone slabs were carried from bedrock pits located around 100 meters (330 ft) from the hilltop,... [2]

*Two pillars are at the centre of each circle*, possibly intended to help support a roof, and up to eight pillars are evenly positioned around the walls of the room. *The spaces between the pillars are lined with unworked stone and there are stone benches between each set of pillars around the edges of the wall.* [2]



Many of the pillars are decorated with [carved reliefs](#) of animals ... *The reliefs depict lions, bulls, boars, foxes, gazelles, donkeys, snakes and other reptiles, insects, arachnids, and birds, ...* [2]

The oldest [occupation layer](#) (Layer III) contains [monolithic pillars](#) linked by coarsely built walls to form circular or oval structures. Four such buildings have been uncovered, with diameters between 10–30 meters (33–98 ft). [Geophysical surveys](#) indicate the existence of 16 additional structures. [2]



Layer II, dated to Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) (7500–6000 BCE), has revealed *several adjacent rectangular rooms with floors of polished lime, reminiscent of Roman terrazzo floors. The most recent layer consists of sediment deposited as the result of agricultural activity...* [2]

*... each enclosure was deliberately buried under as much as 300 to 500 cubic meters (390 to 650 cu yd) of debris...*[2]

The excavations lead by Klaus Schmidt have revealed the following enigmatic findings:

- some 20 circular enclosures on a hilltop
- huge T-shaped stone pillars at Level III
- adjacent rectangular rooms with terrazzo floors at Level II
- two taller T-pillars in the center of each circular enclosure
- carvings of wild animals, birds, insects, snakes etc. on many T-pillars
- whole site buried in extensive soil brought from elsewhere
- no evidence of settlements or domestication at the site
- animal bones of wild boar, deer, birds, etc.
- dry stone walls between T-pillars, partly covering these and their carvings
- site just 9 miles away from ancient city of Urfa



### The Reconstruction of Göbekli Tepe

According to archeologists *Göbekli Tepe* is singular. Nothing like it before and nothing like it after. As if *Göbekli Tepe* was dropped out of nowhere upon the annals of prehistory and on the time-line of the *Ascent of Man*. An aberration at best. Or a mistake? Could a miscalculation have placed *Göbekli Tepe* so early in time? And is its purpose and function forced on us by our misreadings of the evidence?

Several *ancient texts* (above) describe the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*. There are some differences between these descriptions. But also many similarities. None of these ancient authors (with the possible exception of Philo of Byzantium) were contemporaneous with the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*; and only recorded earlier descriptions. We shouldn't, therefore, be surprised by some differences between these *ancient texts*. But just as likely, there may have been several *Hanging Gardens*. [Note: similar but smaller T-shaped pillars have been found at nearby [Nevalı Çori](#) [14] not far from *Göbekli Tepe*] This is plausible. Since there is no specific location given in any of the *ancient texts* where these *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* existed. Only that these were in Babylon. But such reference to Babylon may have been broad to include any place between the two rivers. And not the ancient city of Babylon. [15]

It is also likely the *Hanging Gardens* were not within the confines of any city. But rather, these may have been located in the nameless countryside. It is worth noting that the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* is the only one of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World* that has not yet been located. Were we to rely on the intent of the list of *Wonders* by Philo of Byzantium as a travel guide for Hellenistic travelers, we would expect the *Hanging Gardens* to be not far from the routes traveled. And not too far from where all the other *Wonders* are found. *Göbekli Tepe* lies close to such routes. And is just 9 mi northeast from the ancient city of Urfa. A city of biblical importance and where Abraham is said to have been born.

From *ancient texts* [see red passages in the *ancient texts* section above] we know the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* were built by a Babylonian/Assyrian king to please his homesick queen who longed for the *mountainous meadows* of her native land. At least one description of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* places these on a hilltop. The location had to be near enough to the royal palace yet not inside the capital city. As the *Hanging Gardens* probably provided a day-outing and a secure destination for the queen and her royal entourage. During such outings to the *mountain meadows* (as the *Hanging Gardens* were meant to be), prepared food and roasted meat were likely carried to the *Hanging Gardens* for royal feasts. And royal lodgings existed there for the comfort and rest of the royal party. Thus, though evidence of feasting and animal sacrifices would be found at the *Hanging Gardens*, no evidence of settlements and domestication will be found.



Archeologists interpret these *facts on the ground* as evidence *Göbekli Tepe* was a religious temple. Mankind's first. Millenniums before agriculture and settlements. Archeologists argue the many butchered animal bones found at *Göbekli Tepe* is evidence of great feasts there by gatherings of hunger-gatherers; coming from afar to build and worship there. But this view goes counter to all our understanding of the *Ascent of Man*. My explanation, however, is consistent with the *facts on the ground* and *ancient texts*. And has *Man* ascending in *Culture* and not *Nature*.

We know the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon* were supported by massive stone pillars. And we know these pillars were

carved with animal reliefs. The pillars [at *Level III*] formed vaults and chambers supporting tiered garden terraces; with soil beds deep enough to root mature trees and other plants. And we know above these supporting pillars were royal lodgings [at *Level II*]. All these structural and architectural elements can also be seen in the *bas relief* at the North Palace of Ashurbanipal (669-631 BC) in ancient Nineveh (see p. 3). We see the same elements in the archeological excavations at *Göbekli Tepe*. We have at *Level III* massive T-shaped pillars forming circular enclosures. While at *Level II* smaller adjacent rectangular rooms existed. All consistent with our reasoning *Göbekli Tepe* is the site for *The Hanging Gardens of Babylon*.



The most spectacular finds at *Göbekli Tepe* are the massive T-shaped stone pillars. Klaus Schmidt and others believe these are anthropomorphic religious idols. Yet nothing like these are found before or after *Göbekli Tepe*. One has to wonder. What became of such fervent religious passions that lead hunter-gatherers to built the temples of *Göbekli Tepe*? Only to bury them soon after by carrying massive amounts of soil and debris from elsewhere at great effort?



There is a simpler explanation. The massive T-shaped stone pillars were purposely designed to hold up great weight distributed over a wide span of area. We see this in similar T-shaped pillars holding up our highway ramps. And were these T-shaped pillars at *Göbekli Tepe* linearly arranged, we would conclude these likely held up boardwalks in ancient times. But instead, these T-shaped pillars are arranged circularly. So what could these have been holding up? With no evidence of massive heavy roof structures at *Göbekli Tepe* the only logical conclusion is these T-shaped pillars held up garden terraces. We know these existed. And these were constructed over massive stone pillars with palm tree trunks forming the under structure of the soil beds (according to *ancient texts*). Very likely, there was a thick layer of crushed stone with a deep layer of top soil over this. Deep enough to root mature trees, according to the *ancient texts*.

This explanation for the function and purpose of the T-shaped pillars also explains why in the center of each enclosure at *Göbekli Tepe* are two similar but taller T-shaped pillars. As these pillars in the center helped to complete the supporting structure for the *Hanging Gardens*. These being taller, a gentle incline was created for the irrigation of the gardens and for rendering the *mountainous meadows* appearance to the *Hanging Gardens*. The circular enclosures also help create that desired look. We see this in the aerial photo of the excavation site at *Göbekli Tepe*. And we see this also depicted in the wall *bas-relief* of ancient Niveneh. And we have similar descriptions of the *Hanging Gardens* in *ancient texts*.



The T-shaped pillars have carvings of great variety of wild animals, birds, snakes, and various insects. Why? Archeologists don't know. But can only speculate. Adding patch of narrative after patch to saw together a story. What makes their task so difficult is their main underlying story is wrong. *Göbekli Tepe* was not a religious temple. The T-pillars were not idols of

worship. The many carvings had nothing to do with religious devotion. Rather, and very simply, all the very realistic depictions of wild life sought to complete the intended decor of a *mountainous meadow*. Up to very minute detail of ants and scorpions and birds caught in nets. All these to please the queen longing for her native land. Nothing to do with worship. Except for the worship and devotion the king must have felt for his queen.



But why bury and cover the T-shaped pillars and artwork? Archeologists are at a loss to explain. Some human impulse to destroy. Similar to the impulse to create, they argue. These explanations are erudite excuses for not knowing. We need sensible explanations. The massive stone walls connecting the T-shaped pillars and often covering these and the carvings on these were likely added later. As further structural support to the aging and sagging garden terraces became necessary. The emphasis had by then shifted from aesthetics to maintenance. Schmidt argues the crude craftsmanship of latter constructions shows a civilization in decline. I disagree. Rather, this was a deliberate attempt to keep the *Hanging Gardens* hanging a bid longer. When all the signs were the structure was collapsing. And the structure did collapse. *Ancient texts* tell us the *Hanging Gardens* were destroyed by a series of earthquakes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

**How a *Date* can go wrong:** Were *Göbekli Tepe* built 600BC by Babylonians/Assyrians, no one would flinch a thought. It is the *Date* that makes *Göbekli Tepe* an enigma. The great dilemma for archeologists is reconciling the *date* with the *people* that built *Göbekli Tepe*. Either the *date* is wrong or our theories of prehistoric *people* are wrong. And prehistoric *people* were more capable 12,000 years ago than all our other evidence tell us. Archeologists trust their *date* over their understanding of prehistoric *people*. I argue the *date* is wrong. And prehistoric *people* were as we have always thought.

*The oldest Layer III, which contains the well-known circular enclosures formed by T-shaped pillars gathered around a pair of bigger central pillars can be dated to the PPNA [ca 12,000BP] through lithic finds comprising projectile points [9]*

At *Göbekli Tepe* we have 'arrowheads' and 'carved pillars'. The archeologists chose the 'arrowheads' to date *Göbekli Tepe*. But are at a loss to explain the 'carved pillars'. Why not use the 'carved pillars' to date *Göbekli Tepe*? The 'arrowheads' could then be explained as “*older material ... used for burying the structure*”. This would place *Göbekli Tepe* at a more recent time. At 600BC, the date given for the *Hanging Gardens* according to the *ancient texts*. We have no mystery!

*The possibility that older material was used for burying the structure cannot be excluded completely. [12]*

Stone rubble may have made up the sub-bedding for the *Hanging Gardens*. A practice still used today. It is likely such crushed stone came from the same area used in Mesolithic/Neolithic times to make arrowheads. The presence of such *lithic finds* in *Göbekli Tepe* should be of no surprise. The detailed carvings and T-pillars should be taken as clear evidence *Göbekli Tepe* came much latter.

When the garden terraces collapsed, their tree trunk flooring caved in. Releasing the crushed stone bedding into the supporting galleries below. And on top of this debris the deep and fertile top soil covered the site completely. Thus, the '*fill strata*' would match the garden '*bed strata*'. Since these would have come from nearby quarries, the classification of the 'lithic finds' would match the same chronology as the stone quarries from where these came.

Using pedogenic carbonates also presents problems dating *Göbekli Tepe*. In *high soil moisture* pedogenic carbonate coatings grow more rapidly. If, as I claim, *Göbekli Tepe* is the site of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon (HGB)* it is very likely “*lower soil respiration rates at Göbekli Tepe were caused by high soil moisture*”. The semi-arid conditions assumed for *Göbekli Tepe* may simply be wrong. From *ancient texts* we know the *Gardens* were continuously irrigated by an abundance of water. Such water would clearly enter the substructure grounds of the T-pillars and the circular enclosures. Dates based on pedogenic carbonate coatings, therefore, may be wrong.

*Taking into account the landscape position of the site, it is unlikely that lower soil respiration rates at Göbekli Tepe were caused by high soil moisture. [10]*

*It is evident that the [pedogenic carbonate] coatings grow more rapidly in semiarid to humid than in arid climates. [11]*

Radiocarbon dating of organic material has been the most accurate and reliable method used extensively in science. With



bone samples, collagen (the organic fraction of bone) or apatite (the inorganic fraction of bone) can be used. In the bone samples tested for *Göbekli Tepe*, collagen (most reliable) has not recorded any results while apatite has produced mixed results. Oliver Dietrich (the lead scientist doing the *Göbekli Tepe* dating) in a recent summary of the scientific results writes,

*But can we trust this [dating] picture completely? Unfortunately, we have a lot of aberrant data, there among nearly all [bone] samples for the younger Layer II. As there is no evidence for post-Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B activities at Göbekli Tepe, the whole group of 8<sup>th</sup> millennium samples must be dismissed. Bones embedded in sediments are subject to multiple chemical and physical processes, which can interfere with a <sup>14</sup>C dating. There is the possibility that during recrystallization processes carbonates are lost to the surrounding soil and also that carbon from the soil is deposited on or in the bones. Due to these possibilities, dates that are too old or too young may appear. As a recent study shows, the intensity of these exchange processes is dependent on the surrounding medium. As dissolved carbon in the surface and ground waters is the main source of isotopes that can accumulate in bones (resulting in dates that are too young), the dating of apatite fractions is a precise method only for samples from arid environments. Göbekli Tepe lies in a semi-arid region and isotope exchange could be enhanced further by the big accumulations of carbonates in the soil and the water, which form naturally as the tell is situated on a limestone plateau....*

*... a lot of the dates obtained from [bone] apatite fractions lie fairly outside of the expected and archaeologically determined age-range for Gobekli Tepe” [13]*

Certain assumptions are made producing these scientific dates for *Göbekli Tepe*. These assumptions help set the parameters in the formulas and the dials in the instruments used. These assumptions reflect expectations of what the outcome will be. And when the outcome is different, the dates produced are 'aberrant' and are dismissed. Explained away as due to unknown and uncontrollable processes; and simply not 'fitting in' with what is expected and already known.

The archeological dates are assumed to be true. While assumptions are made regarding the environment and natural processes. In dating *Göbekli Tepe* a semi-arid environment similar to today is assumed. But this may be wrong. As certainly is wrong under the *HGB Hypothesis*. The constant and abundant irrigation of the *Gardens* would have resulted in a very moist and fertile *Garden* soil. Using pedogenic carbonates to date *Göbekli Tepe* samples taken from certain places (assuming semi-arid conditions) would produce wrong dates.

It is also assumed the date of the loam plaster is the same as the date of the construction. I argue it wasn't. The plastering of the walls was done after the laying of the *Garden* beds. And the soil for the loam used in the plaster likely came from the same area but at a deeper level than the soil used for the *Garden* beds. It would have been much older than the top soil and the construction date. Yet radiocarbon dating of the loam plaster is now taken as the most reliable and certain method for dating *Göbekli Tepe*.

*As charcoal seems to be the sample material of choice at Göbekli, an attempt to date the big Enclosures of layer III directly was made by sampling the wall plaster of Enclosure D (Area L9-68, Loc. 782.3,29.10.2010). This plaster is formed of loam, which fortunately contains also small amounts of charcoal. ... With this date [9314 calBC ] there is for the first time undisputable evidence for the absolute construction time of the big enclosures in the early PPNA. ... In addition, a successful sampling strategy for Göbekli Tepe has been lined out, which will be pursued further in the future. [9]*

The *HGB Hypothesis* not only enables detailed explanations for all the archeological *facts on the ground* consistent with the *ancient texts*, but also provides sensible reasons why the scientific dates produced for *Göbekli Tepe* may be wrong. The burden of proof, therefore, shifts to the archeologists to disprove this *Hypothesis*.

### **'Squaring the Circles': Q&A summary on GT**

The current accepted hypothesis is *Göbekli Tepe* was the *First Religious Temple of Mankind (FRTM)*. In stark contrast to this hypothesis, I claim *Göbekli Tepe* is the site of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon (HGB)*. In the form of *Q&A* I compare how well each of these hypotheses can measure up and answer the following questions.

*Why was Göbekli Tepe built?* The archeologists believe *Göbekli Tepe* was a religious temple. They come to this conclusion because there is no archeological evidence of settlements or domestication found at the site. Yet there is evidence of animal sacrifices and great festive gatherings. I argue *Göbekli Tepe* is the site of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*. No settlements and domestication would be found. While animal bones found are from royal feasts. We know from *ancient texts* the *Hanging Gardens* existed but have not yet been found.

*When was Göbekli Tepe built?* The dates given by archeologists are ca. 12,000 BP. These are based on several dating methods. 1) Through 'lithic finds'. 2) Radiocarbon dating of charcoal in the loam plaster. 3) Pedogenic carbonate coating. Using the *HGB Hypothesis*, I have argued these dates are wrong. According to this *Hypothesis* and the *ancient texts*, *Göbekli Tepe* was built around 600 BC. This date makes sense. The Babylonian and Assyrian Civilizations at that time had the skills, resources and reasons to construct such a project.

*Who built Göbekli Tepe?* According to the dates of 12,000BP for *Göbekli Tepe*, archeologists argue this had to be the work of nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers. Many millenniums before agriculture and settlements. This turns our understanding of the rise of civilization on its head. According to the *ancient texts* and the *HGB Hypothesis*, *Göbekli Tepe* was built by a Babylonian or Assyrian king to please his homesick queen. No major revision to our understanding is necessary.

*What was the function of the stone T-pillars?* Archeologists have no idea. They believe these had religious significance. Perhaps anthropomorphic religious idols. This is nonsense. The tops of these T-pillars show these held something up. Possibly a roof. But no evidence of any ruins of a roof are found. And columns holding up roofs are normally round and not flat. Clearly, these T-pillars were designed to hold up a massive amount of weight spread over a wide span of space. According to the *HGB Hypothesis*, these T-pillars help up the terraces of the *Hanging Gardens*. These, according to *ancient texts*, were massive and capable of holding mature trees.

*What was the function of the thick stone walls connecting the T-pillars?* Once again, the current view that *Göbekli Tepe* was a religious temple fails to answer such questions. There is no reason why the pillars of a temple should be half buried in connecting dry stone walls. There is absolutely no aesthetic value to such walls. Especially since these dry stone walls often cover some of the fine stone carvings in the T-pillars. The *HGB Hypothesis*, however, can explain this in great detail. These connecting dry stone walls had a structural function. They aimed to give added structural support to the T-pillars that held up the massive weight of the *Garden* terraces. Concentric circles of similar T-pillars may have also been added to provide more support to the structure.

*Why was the entire site deliberately buried?* Archeologists have no idea. Some irrational iconoclastic impulse, they argue. Why not topple the T-pillars into pieces? Why suddenly and deliberately bury these in stone rubble? Carrying immense debris from elsewhere and at great effort? The truth is much simpler. We know from *ancient texts* the *Hanging Gardens* were destroyed by earthquakes after the second century BC. When the *Garden* beds collapsed and caved-in, all the soil and stone rubble from above filled and buried the supporting T-pillars and galleries below.

*Why were the T-pillars arranged in circles, sometimes concentric?* Archeologists simply do not know. The T-pillars were arranged in circles in order to provide the greatest possible support to the *Garden* terraces designed to simulate *mountainous meadows*.

*Why the skills and workmanship of Göbekli Tepe builders declined over the years?* Archeologists argue this indicates a civilization in decline. But offer no explanation. I argue the purpose and function of later construction shifted from aesthetics to maintenance. As the *Hanging Garden* began to sag new pillars and supporting walls were added.

*Why was that particular location chosen?* Some archeologists argue *Göbekli Tepe* was the Biblical *Garden of Eden*. Why there? They have no answers. We know the *Hanging Gardens* were built on a hilltop to please a homesick Assyrian queen. The location had to be near an ancient city and between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. *Göbekli Tepe* is just east of Euphrates River and only 9 mi. from the Biblical ancient city of Urfa.

*How could hunter-gatherers built Göbekli Tepe some 12,000 BP?* Archeologists argue humans 12,000 years ago were as capable as humans are today. It was in their DNA. No previous knowledge and experience needed for this monumental task. Culture and organized society is not needed. *They built it themselves!* Individuals using their innate DNA-given abilities could come together and built wonders. In my view, hunter-gatherers 12,000 years ago could not have built *Göbekli Tepe*. Rather, the Babylonian/Assyrian Civilization built this around 600BC.

*Why were the stone carved-reliefs of wild animals, birds, snakes, insects?* Archeologists just make up stories. These carved reliefs of wild animals, birds, insects, snakes, etc. were to complete the necessary decor of *mountainous meadows* the *Hanging Gardens* were to emulate.

*Why were the T-pillars covered by stone walls?* Archeologists don't know. The answer is simple. The stone walls added reinforcement to the T-pillars that held up the *Garden* terraces. They were probably added later, as the need became apparent.

*Why were the carvings in some T-pillars partially covered?* Again, no sensible explanations coming from archeologists. But the *Hanging Gardens Hypothesis* explains this. As the T-pillar infrastructure of the *Hanging Gardens* began to show signs of shifting, stone walls were built to support the structure. Since this occurred after the fine carvings were made on the T-pillars, many of the carvings were covered along with the T-pillars.

*Why is Göbekli Tepe such a round 'potbelly' hilltop?* Do archeologists know? No! The *Hanging Gardens* were build on the hilltop to mimic a mountain terrain. When the *Hanging Gardens* collapsed burying the T-pillars and supporting galleries, the topography consequently became round. And with the clearing of the top soil for agriculture, the whole hilltop took a "potbelly" appearance.

*Why were adjacent rectangular rooms at Level II while at Level III are the T-pillars?* The archeologists take these levels as archaeologically different events. One destroyed and the other built at a latter time. But according to my *Hanging Gardens Hypothesis*, the entire site at *Göbekli Tepe* was one structure built more or less the same time and having the same clear purpose: man-made *mountainous meadows* to please the queen. The T-pillars circular enclosures at *Level III* were the supporting structures. While the smaller adjacent rectangular rooms at *Level II* were the royal day dwellings.

*Why was the site abruptly abandoned?* No idea, from archeologists. But we know the *Hanging Gardens* were destroyed by a series of earthquakes sometimes after the second century BC. This was an abrupt event forcing the abandonment of the site.

*Why is Göbekli Tepe singular with no other structures like it before or after?* Clearly this is a real dilemma for archeologists. Their explanations are devoid of any evidence. They are no different than claiming *extraterrestrials* built *Göbekli Tepe*. But according to the *Hanging Gardens Hypothesis*, *Göbekli Tepe* is not singular in degree of sophistication and technical skill. The Babylonian/Assyrian Civilization had the capabilities at 600BC to have built it.

### **Conclusion:**

*Göbekli Tepe* is the site of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*. One of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World* and the only one not yet found. All the archeological *facts on the ground* and *ancient texts* fit this *Hypothesis*. And if it wasn't for the Date of 10,000BC attributed to *Göbekli Tepe*, this *Hypothesis* would readily be recognized.

The Dates given for *Göbekli Tepe* are plainly wrong. Archeologist used 'lithic finds' to date *Göbekli*. They could have and should have used the art and architecture found at *Göbekli Tepe* to determine the Date. And that Date would have been around 600BC. When the *Hanging Gardens* are known to have been built. At a time when the Babylonian and Assyrian Civilization had the capabilities, affluence and organization to have built *Göbekli Tepe*. The 'lithic finds' found at *Göbekli Tepe* were carried there in the stone gravel used in the construction of the *Garden* beds.

Though the Date 10,000BC is claimed to be confirmed by other methods, these results are biased and may have other explanations. The assumptions used in these Dates may not be correct. The 'lithic finds' could have been carried to *Göbekli Tepe* in the *Garden* beds gravel/fill that buried the site. The loam plaster used at *Göbekli Tepe* could have come from deeper soil layers. After the soil for the *Garden* beds had first been dug up. And the assumption of semi-arid conditions in the formation of pedogenic carbonate coating may be wrong. Resulting in Dates that are incorrect.

None of the science actively questions the 'archeological date'. The assumptions made were selective at best. There have been many aberrant dates produced as attested by the researchers themselves doing the dating. Yet these were dismissed as being due to '*methodological problems*'. Results not falling within the expected archeological dates were dismissed with no further consideration.

Instead of questioning the Dates, archeologists questioned current understanding of the capabilities of people 12,000 years ago. How could bands of hunter-gatherers with no other demonstrated capabilities built such a complex architectural wonder? The explanation offered is: "*they built it themselves*" independently of prior knowledge, culture and organized society. It was in their DNA to do such great things. No need for civilization and cultural contributions. No need for accumulated knowledge and progression from a nomadic lifestyle to cities and agriculture. Prehistoric people had all the capabilities we have today. Because such capabilities are encoded and inherited in DNA. This is a dangerous and corrupting view, in my view.

The *Göbekli Tepe* controversy is more than over this particular archeological site. It goes into the very understanding we have of ourselves. Are the capabilities of human beings innate? Endowed to them by their DNA? The same for all times? Or are human capabilities emergent in Culture and Organized Society. It's a distinction that divides even our politics. As it defines our attitudes and responsibilities for one another.

## References:

- [1] **Sandra Scham**, November- December 2008, <http://www.archaeology.org/>
- [2] [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6bekli\\_Tepe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G%C3%B6bekli_Tepe) ]
- [3] [**Patrick Symmes**, February 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com>]
- [4] [**Sean Thomas**, October 2006, <http://www.thefirstpost.co.uk>]
- [5] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanging\\_Gardens\\_of\\_Babylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon)
- [6] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven\\_Wonders\\_of\\_the\\_Ancient\\_World](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Wonders_of_the_Ancient_World)
- [7] **Jesse Rhodes** , November 2008, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com>
- [8] **Nicholas Birch** , April 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk>
- [9] **“A Radiocarbon Date from the Wall Plaster of Enclosure D of Göbekli Tepe”**, Oliver Dietrich, Klaus Schmidt, **NEO-LITHICS 2/10** p. 82  
[http://www.academia.edu/1035267/A\\_Radiocarbon\\_Date\\_from\\_the\\_Wall\\_Plaster\\_of\\_Enclosure\\_D\\_of\\_Gobekli\\_Tepe](http://www.academia.edu/1035267/A_Radiocarbon_Date_from_the_Wall_Plaster_of_Enclosure_D_of_Gobekli_Tepe)
- [10] **“Stable Carbon and Oxygen Isotope Composition of Pedogenic Carbonate at Göbekli Tepe (Southeastern Turkey) and Its Potential for Reconstructing Late Quaternary Paleoenvironments in Upper Mesopotamia”**, Konstantin Pustovoytov and Heinrich Taubald **NEO-LITHICS 2/03** p.28
- [11] **“Growth rates of pedogenic carbonate coatings on coarse clasts”**, Konstantin Pustovoytov, **Quaternary International** 106–107 (2003) 131–140 [http://sos-veleial.wdfiles.com/local--files/start/growth\\_rates.pdf](http://sos-veleial.wdfiles.com/local--files/start/growth_rates.pdf)
- [12] **“Radiocarbon Dating the First Temples of Mankind. Comments on 14C-Dates from Gobekli Tepe”**, Oliver Dietrich, **Sonderdruck aus Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie Band 4** 2011 p. 17
- [13] **“Radiocarbon Dating the First Temples of Mankind. Comments on 14C-Dates from Gobekli Tepe”**, Oliver Dietrich, **Sonderdruck aus Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie Band 4** 2011 p. 19
- [14] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevali\\_Cori](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevali_Cori)
- [15] *“The engineering marvel known as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon wasn't in Babylon at all -- but several hundred miles north, in Assyria, according to Dr. Stephanie M. Dalley of the University of Oxford's Oriental studies department.”* **The Huffington Post** | By [Meredith Bennett-Smith](#) Posted: 05/10/2013 8:50 am EDT | Updated: 05/10/2013 5:08 pm EDT [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/10/hanging-gardens-babylon-mislabeled-assyrian\\_n\\_3246891.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=world&ir=World](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/10/hanging-gardens-babylon-mislabeled-assyrian_n_3246891.html?utm_hp_ref=world&ir=World)

May 1, 2013