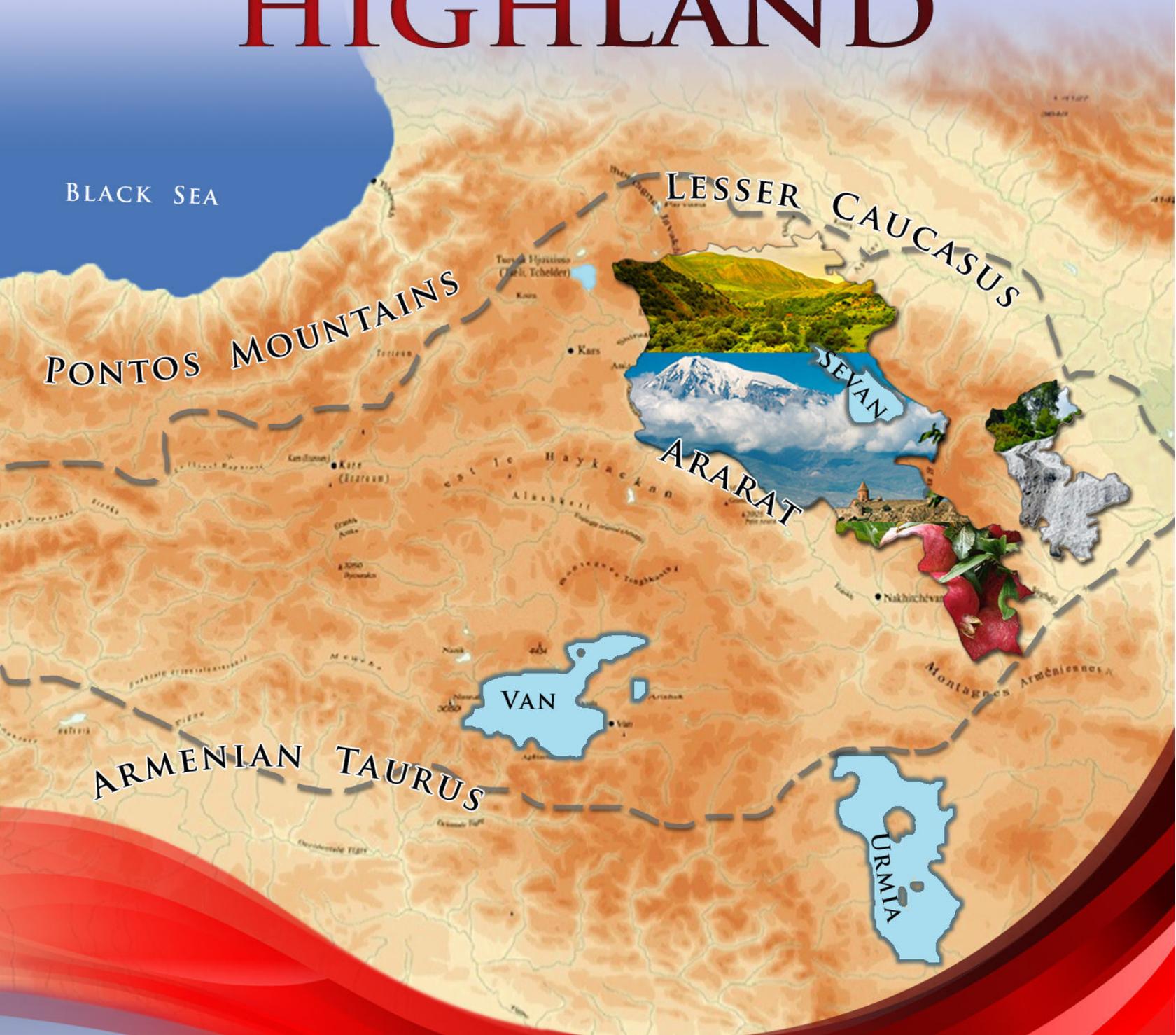
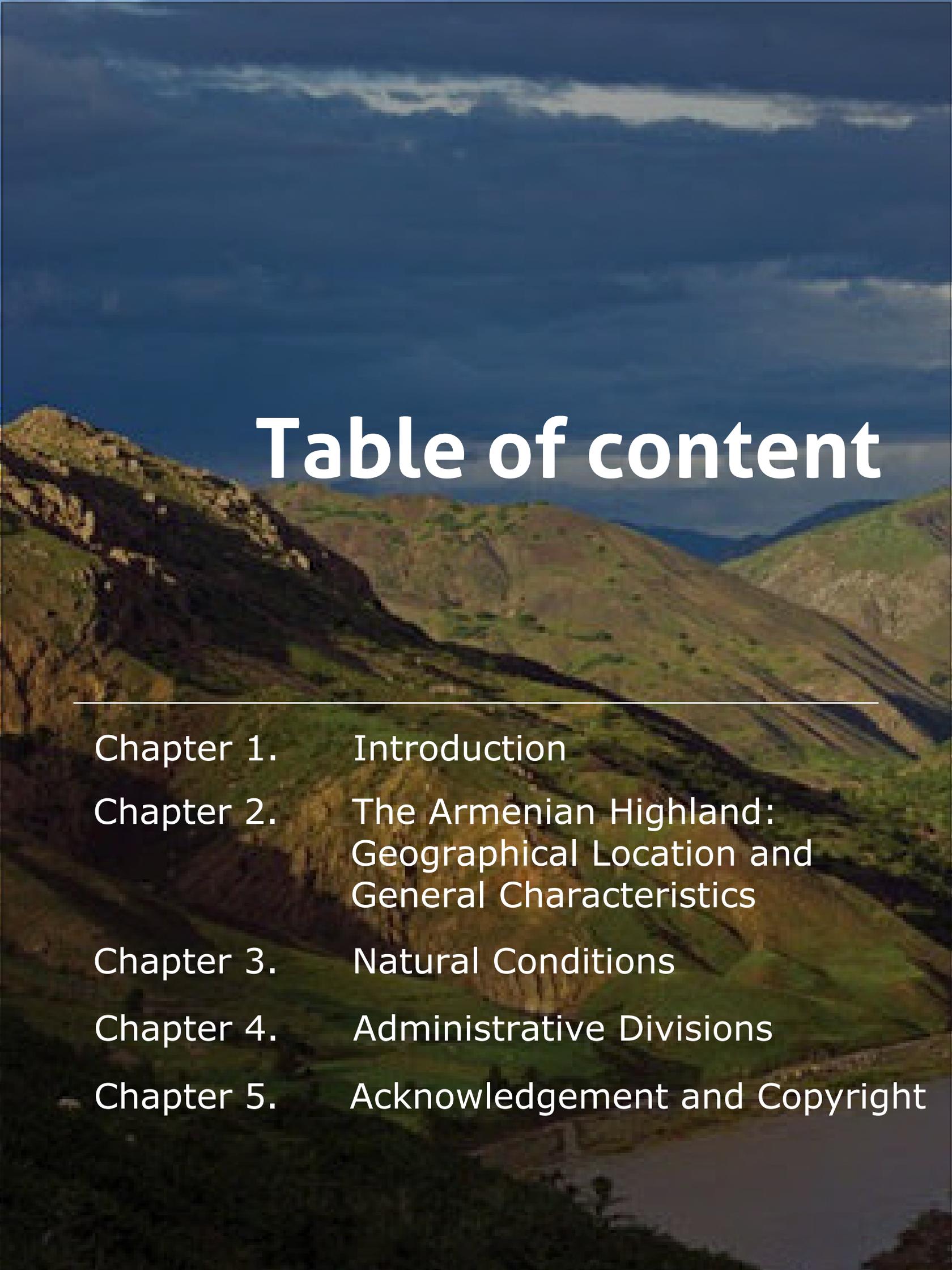


Armenian Virtual College  
Multimedia e-Book Series

# THE ARMENIAN HIGHLAND



BOOK 1

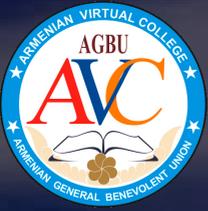


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Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)  
Armenian Virtual College (AVC)

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

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The e-book is an overview of the Armenian Highland, with a particular emphasis on Armenia's geography and history from ancient to modern times. It reviews the physical features, natural life, environment, flora and fauna, climate, and natural resources of the Highland. In addition, it discusses the administrative division of the region and offers interesting historical facts. The e-book concludes with a brief introduction to the significance of the Highland to present day Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.



## Dynamic Map

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The Armenian Highland Timeline (AHT) is a dynamic map that displays the history of the Armenian Highland. Developed by AVC, this timeline spans over the Highland's 4,000 years of history, condensed into four minutes. During this period, the Armenian Highland was ruled by a sequence of 30 states, both Armenian and foreign. The constant shifting of the country's borders demonstrates the significant changes it would experience during this time. The periods where the country is colored in gold symbolize independent Armenia, while the borders of the Armenian Highland constantly appear in yellow dashes. At the bottom of the map, you can see a bar which illustrates the corresponding historical time window, as well as the code to the AVC course that covers the respective historical period.



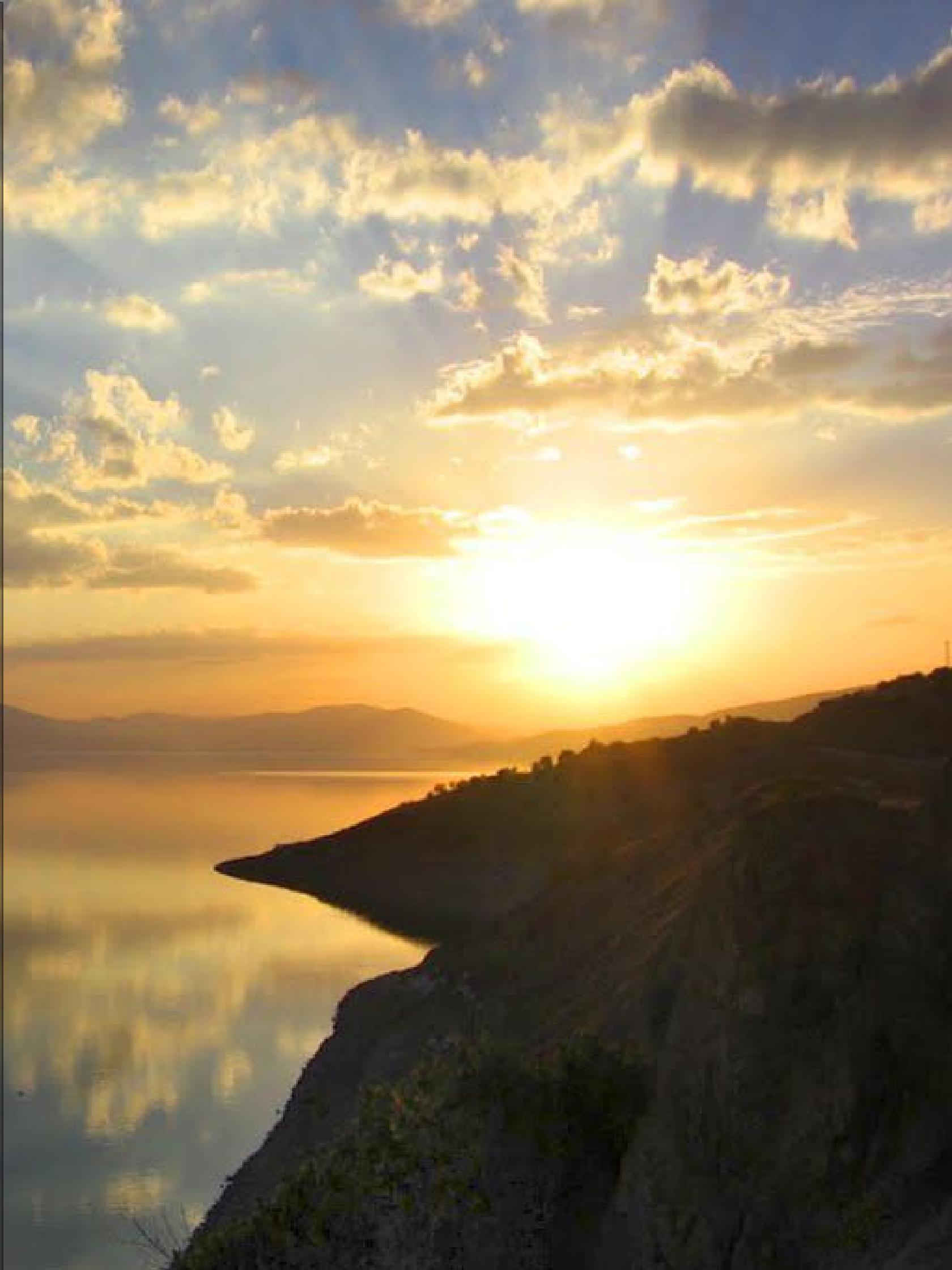


## Chapter 2

# The Armenian Highland: Geographical Location and General Characteristics

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Throughout history, several Armenian kingdoms existed on what is called the [Armenian Highland](#), where Armenian life and culture was also developed. Due to its high altitude, it was also known as The Armenian Plateau, Land of the Mountains, or Mountainous Island.

Numerous mountain chains and plateaus adorn the Armenian Highland, which is located at an average of 1500–1800 m above sea level, between the [Asia Minor](#) and [Iranian Plateau](#), occupying a territory of approximately 400,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

*The Armenian Highland (Google Map)*



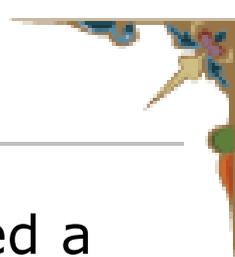
*The Armenian Highland*

# Borders

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*Armenia from ancient to now (Youtube Video)*



Historians and geographers have not reached a consensus on the designation of the territory of the Armenian Highland, given that throughout history, the borders of the Armenian administrative divisions, as well as territories largely occupied by Armenians, have undergone changes, and the original sources of information regarding the ancient times are scarce. According to modern scientists, the Armenian Highland borders the [Lesser Caucasus](#) mountain chain in the north; the [Armenian Taurus](#) mountain chain in the south; the [Anti-Taurus](#) mountain chain in the west; the [Pontus Mountains](#) in the north-west; and the Caspian Sea and Lake Urmia in the east.

Other researchers note the same information, apart from the Eastern border, which is thought to reach the Kura and Araks rivers. The central and most fertile territory within these borders has often been referred to as the Central Land (Mijnashkharkh). The Central Land is isolated by mountains, fields and valleys. From the north-west the Pontus Mountains separate the Armenian Highland from the Black Sea.



# Mountains

The Lesser Caucasus, the **Armenian Par**, and Armenian Taurus mountain chains stretch across the massive territory of the Armenian Highland. The Lesser Caucasus mountain chain begins at the shores of the Black Sea, near Batumi, and continues to the east and the south-east, encompassing the **Javakhk**, Georgian - Armenian (**Virahayots**), **Geghama**, **Pambak**, **Syunik**, and Artsakh mountains.

## Legend

### The Armenian Mountains

*According to legend, the Armenian mountains were once great, sturdy brothers. Every morning, they would put on their belts and greet each other. As time passed, the mountains aged and would wake up later. One day, they awoke and forgot to put on their belts before greeting each other. Seeing this, God became angry and punished the brothers. They hardened and became mountains, their belts green fields, and their tears eternal springs.*





## Mountains

The second mountain chain of the Armenian Highland is the Armenian Par, which starts at the Biblical Mount Ararat, and divides the Highland into two equal parts: north and south. The **Tsaghkants Mountains** lie in the southern part of the mountain chain, while the second mountain chain, Armenian Taurus, is located in the south.

### *Did You Know That ?* **Biblical Ararat**

*Ararat is the sacred mountain of the Armenian people and their national symbol. Throughout history, many legends and myths have been dedicated to this sacred mountain.*

*According to the Bible, Ararat harbored Noah's ark after the Great Flood, and, consequently, became known as Noah's Mountain or the Noah's Ark Mountain. It also refers to Ararat as the land of escape (Genesis, 8:1-4), and Armenia is named "the land of escape" according to ancient Mesopotamian sources and several Ancient Eastern fables, including Berossus, Alexander Novel, Abyudenos, Josheph Flavius, Yevsebos Caesar, Movses Khorenatsi and others. To this day, references to Mount Ararat and Noah's Ark have been preserved in the fables of diverse peoples.*

## *Did You Know That ?*

*Mount Ararat was formally declared a tourist destination in the Turkish Republic in 1982.*

*To climb Mount Ararat, one must receive written permission from the Foreign Office of the Turkish Republic. The applications must then be presented to the Aghrei and Igdir governors, who must verify with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.*



*After receiving permission, one can look into finding a guide for the hike, such as Kurdish locals who live around the mountain and are familiar with the hike.*



One does not have to be an Armenian to know about the Biblical Mount Ararat, which is the highest peak (5165 m) in the Armenian Highland and [Western Asia](#). It is currently located on the territory of the Republic of Turkey.

### *Did You Know That ?*

#### **Architecture in the Armenian Highland Cyclopean Masonry**

*The Armenian fortresses are structures which have not yet been thoroughly investigated. The monuments, known as cyclopean masonries, are good examples of early Armenian fortresses. The entrances and fences of medieval Armenian fortresses were based on the cyclopean fortresses, the most noteworthy of which are the Sarnaghbyur and Shaglama systems. There are several cyclopean fortresses in the vicinity of Sarnaghbyur, in the Ani province, that are not far from each other and attest to the regular occurrence of inter-tribal conflicts. They served not only as a defense, but also as residential structures. Numerous partially abolished cyclopean fortresses are still found on the slopes of the Geghama Mountains and Aragats.*



*Ararat (Google Map)*

*Noah's Ark (Rotating 3D)*

*Cyclopean Fortress*

# Mountains

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*Sis (3925 m)*



*Masis (5165 m)*

# Mountains

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## Mountains

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The lavas of Mount Nemrut (3050 m) join the Armenian Taurus. **Mount Sipan** (4434 m), the second highest peak in the Armenian Highland, is located to the north-east of Mount Nemrut, on the Northern shores of **Lake Van** (previously known as Bznuneats Sea).

Tondurek (also known as Tondrak) is the only active volcano in the Near East and is located in the Armenian Highland. Volcanic masses, warm steam and **geysers** are constantly emitted from its crater.

*Mount Nemrut (Google Map)*

*Mount Sipan (Google Map)*

*Mount Tondurek (Google Map)*

## Mountains

The highest mountain in the Republic of Armenia, which has 4 summits, is **Aragats** (4095 m), and the second highest is **Kaputdjugh** (3906 m), which is the highest peak in the Lesser Caucasus.

### *Did You Know That ?*

*The slopes of Mount Aragats are a favorite place for many Armenians to have khash, a festive traditional meal. The main ingredient in khash is cow feet, which is cooked for many hours until the meat has separated from the bones and the broth has thickened. Salt, garlic and lemon are added for flavor, and dried lavash (Armenian flat bread) is added to the broth for substance. Khash is typically a winter meal, but since the weather is cool around Aragats year round due to its high altitude, those wishing to have the meal in warmer weather choose restaurants in this area.*

*Zangezur mountains: Mount Kaputdjugh (Mher Ishkhanyan on Panoramio)*

# Legend

## Ararat or Masis and Aragats Mountains

*The following is folklore about Mount Masis, which is currently in the territory of the Republic of Turkey, and Mount Aragats.*

*Masis and Aragats were erstwhile sisters. One day they had a quarrel. One of them said "I'm the best, I'm the tallest," and the other said- "I'm taller and more beautiful than you."*

*Mount Maruta attempted to reconcile the two quarreling sisters. Unable to reestablish peace, Mount Maruta gave up and left, cursing the two sisters. The ominous curse states: "Masis and Aragats shall forever remain apart, to never reunite".*

*In her turn, Masis cursed Aragats so that sorrow may never leave her heart and tears always fill her eyes. Aragats cursed Masis so that she would go dry from sorrow and no man on earth shall climb her summit, no oblation be given..*



*A lake was formed on Mount Aragats from her tears of sorrow, thousands of springs flowing from her foothills, while Masis went dry, no man conquered her summit, and no oblation was ever given.*

# Mountains

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*Mount Aragats (Google Map)*



*Armenia, Mount Aragats (Youtube Video)*



# Valleys

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The territory of the Armenian Highland includes the entire territory of the present-day Republic of Armenia, the majority of Eastern Turkey (Western Armenia), the North-Eastern part of Iran, the Western part of Azerbaijan and the Southern part of Georgia. Tvaratsatap, Basen, Kars (Vanand), Shirak, Ararat, Surmalu, Kogovit, Maku, Karmir Get, and Nakhchavan valleys spread out along the Araks River and its streams. In the Aratsan Valley lie the fields of Alashkert, Manazkert, Mush, Balahovit and Kharberd, Karno (Erzrum/Erzurum), Derjan, Yerznka, and Kamakh.

## Valleys

From the south, the Armenian Par mountain chain and from the north Mt. Aragats borders the **Ararat Valley**, which the Araks River flows through. The Ararat Valley has almost always been the political heart of the Armenian Highland.



*Did You Know That ?*

## **Sculpture in the Armenian Highland**

### **Vishapakar (Dragon Stone)**

*Stone statues in the shape of dragons can be found in the vicinity of mountain springs and the canals, water reservoirs, and artificial lakes that arise from them. The majority of the ancient dragon statues date back to the 3rd century B.C. and have the shapes of snakes, bulls, rams, storks, and other animals. It is presumed that the statues were representations of animals who were believed to have godly powers that contributed to fruitful agriculture and irrigation.*

*Two dragon stones were preserved in Sevan Lake (Geghama Mountains), where the largest is 3.5 m high. These stones were also found on the slopes of Aragats and are considered unique sculptural specimens.*

*In the Christian era, numerous dragon stones were transformed into khachkars.*

## Rivers

Due to its high altitude, the Armenian Highland is the distributor of water in Western Asia. This is the source of the **Araks**, **Euphrates**, **Tigris**, **Chorokh** and **Kura** rivers, which flow into the **Persian Gulf**, and the Caspian, Black seas.



The rivers of the Armenian Highland

### *Did You Know That ?*

#### **Araks River**

*In the Old Testament, the Araks River is referred to as Gihon or Gehon and is considered one of the heavenly rivers. It originates from the numerous fresh water springs in the Byurakn Mountains and flows through the territory of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Iran. It is 933 km in length, 200 km of which make up the Armenian-Turkish border.*

*The snow-covered Ararat and the historical land of Armenia can be seen on the other side of the Arax River. In Armenian texts, the Arax River is referred to as Yeraskh and Araks, while in Arabic is called Araz. Since ancient times it has been the cradle of the Armenian civilization. It is often referred to as Mother Araks, as it has irrigated the Greater Hayk, Syunik, Artsakh, Paytakaran, and Vaspurakan provinces.*

*Moses of Chorene writes: "Aramayis built a house on the shores of a river and named the settlement in his honor, Armavir, and the river in honor of his grandson Yerat:*



*Yeraskh." Historian Moses of Chorene associates the name Yeraskh to Yerast, the grandson of Aramayis who was, in turn, the grandson of Hayk Nahapet.*

*Araks is not navigable, but there have been many bridges built on it. The five most prominent of these were located in Basen, Ervandakert, Artashat, Nakhijevan, and Jugha. Alexander of Macedonia is credited with the construction of the bridge in Jugha (356-323 B.C.). The disappearance of the bridges is attributed to the volatile nature of the river's watercourse. As attested by Moses of Chorene (5th century), the river once flowed through the ancient capitals of Armavir, Artashat, and Vagharshapat, but later estranged from the cities, leading to the bridges being abolished. For this very reason, Roman poet Albius Tibullus (54-19 B.C) referred to it as "the Yeraskh that does not tolerate bridges."*

*The Araks River has been praised by both native and foreign historians and writers. The Roman poet Virgil (1st century B.C) has depicted the Araks River as the symbol of the Armenian people's power, as well as their longing for freedom and rebellious nature. "The Tears of Araks," written by Raphael Patkanyan (1830-1892), is one of the most famous pieces written about the river.*

## Rivers

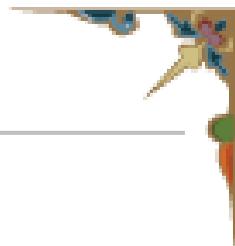
Araks River (Yeraskh) is often referred to as the “mother river”. It starts at the **Byurakn Mountains**, flows east, fuses with the Kura River, and pours into the Caspian Sea. It is approximately 1000 km long and flows entirely in the Armenian Highland.

The Euphrates River has two branches: Western Euphrates and Eastern Euphrates (Aratsani). The Western Euphrates starts in the Tsaghkavet Mountains north of Erzurum, and the Eastern Euphrates starts at the Tsaghkants Mountains. Both branches flow from east to west and amalgamate near the city of **Akn**.

In the south, the Euphrates joins the Tigris River and pours into the Persian Gulf. The Euphrates River flows for 500 kilometers on the territory of historical Armenia.



*Mount Ararat and Araks River (Youtube Video)*



## Rivers

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The Tigris River, located in the southern part of the Armenian Highland, flows for 380 km in the historical lands of Armenia. It also has two branches, Western and Eastern. Western Tigris starts from Lake Tsavk or Tsovk, and Eastern Tigris, from the Armenian Taurus Mountains. Along with the Euphrates, Tigris pours into the Persian Gulf.

Chorokh is 345 km long. It starts from the Khachapayt Mountains to the north of Erzurum, flows to the west, and then towards the north-east, ultimately pouring into the Black Sea, near the city of Batumi.

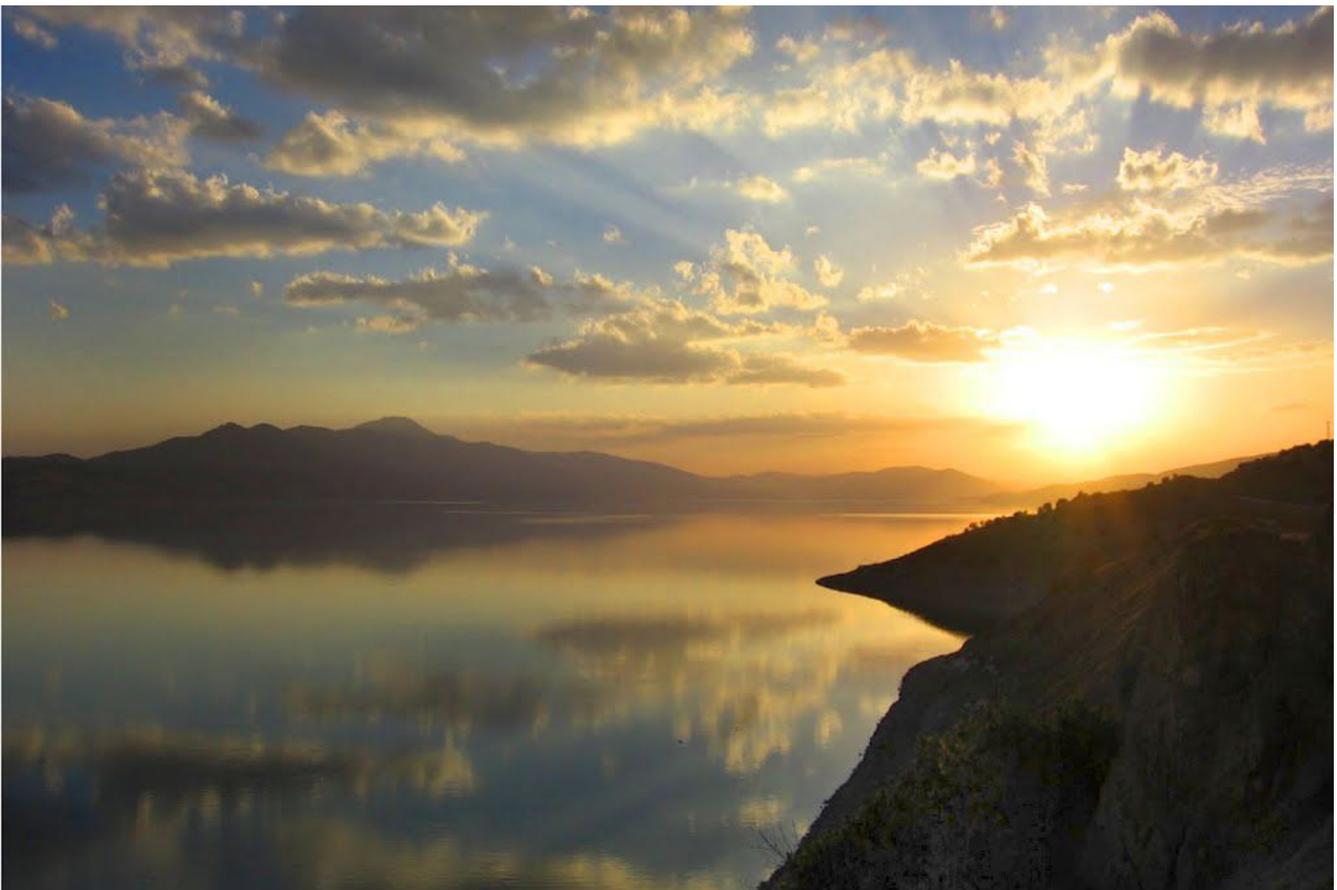
The Kura River (1113 km) starts in the Armenian Highland and, together with the Araks River, pours into the Caspian Sea.

The rivers of the modern-day Republic of Armenia (RA) are Hrazdan, Aghstev, **Debed**, Akhurian, Vorotan, Arpa, and Voghji; Araks passes along the Southern Border of Armenia.



## *Did You Know That ?*

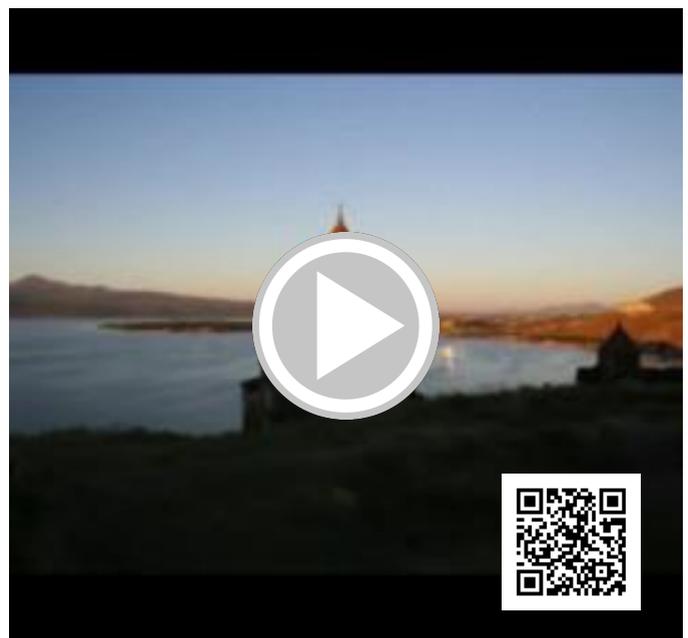
*The Tigris River inspired the American-Armenian novelist Peter Balakian to name his book "The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response." The book presents a narrative of the massacres of the Armenians during the 1890s and the Genocide in 1915 at the hands of the Ottoman government. Using archival documents and first-person accounts, Peter Balakian depicts the involvement of the Young Turks in the Armenian Genocide. The book received the 2005 Raphael Lemkin Prize and was a New York Times Notable Book and New York Times national best seller.*



## Lakes

The Armenian Highland is famous for its three large and numerous medium and smaller lakes. The three large lakes are Sevan, Van, and **Urmia**.

Lake Sevan, also known as Geghama or Ghegharkuni, is the largest lake in the RA. It is one of the largest fresh-water high-altitude lakes in the world. Lake Sevan has a large supply of fish-it is especially famous for its trout, or ishkhani. Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the lake's surface underwent changes. As of July 31st, 2011, the surface of Lake Sevan is located at 1900 m and 42 cm above sea level. The Hrazdan River begins at Lake Sevan, and the famous monastery of Sevan is located on the peninsula.



*Lake Sevan (Google Map)*

*Sevanavank (Rotating Video)*

*Did You Know That ?*

## **Sevan Monastery**

*The famous Sevan Monastery, was founded in the 4th century AD by the first Armenian Catholicos, Gregory the Illuminator. According to a record on the southern wall of the Saint Apostolic (Arakelots) Church, the Sevan Monastery is also called Mariamashen, in association with Princess Mariam, the daughter of King Ashot I Bagratuni. Currently, the Saint Apostolic and Saint Karapet churches remain standing, while the Saint Astvatsatin (Mary) and Saint Harutyun (Resurrection) churches have been destroyed.*

*The famous School of Archimandrites (Vardapetaran) is located in the Sevan Monastery, founded in 1451 by Daniel Vardapet. It followed the Tatev University, which was called the "Vardabedaran of the Eastern House." In Sevan, a seminary was founded in 1990 and named after the then Catholicos of All Armenians, Vazgen I.*



# Lakes





## Lake Van (Google Map)

### *Did You Know That ?*

*The area surrounding Lake Van alone has over 300 Armenian churches and monasteries, most of them ruined or partially destroyed.*



*In September 2010, the SurbKhach (Holy Cross) Church on Aghtamar Island in Lake Van was opened after restoration. It was marked by a holy mass ceremony held by representatives from the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul.*

*However, today the church serves as a museum and belongs to the Ministry of Culture of Turkey.*

*LINK:<http://www.armenianweekly.com/2010/09/30/detailed-report-the-mass-in-akhtamar-and-what's-next/>*

Lake Van or Bznuneats Sea (1720 m above sea level) is one of the most important lakes in the history of Armenia. It occupies an area of 3,755 km<sup>2</sup>. The lake water is alkaline. The only species of fish in the salty waters of Lake Van is the herring, or tarekh, which was salted and exported to neighboring countries. From ancient times, sailing was highly developed and famous ports were located along the shores of the lake.



## *Did You Know That ?*

### **Aghtamar Holy Cross (Surb Khach) Church**

*The Aghtamar Holy Cross Church is an architectural chef-d'oeuvre, a harmonious combination of engravings and frescos. It was constructed by the architect Manuel between 915-921 by the order of King Gagik Artsruni (879/880-936/943).*

*In 1917, the Aghtamar Monastery was abandoned. Currently, only the Holy Cross Church remains standing. It contains biblical and laic themed engravings and frescos. The frescos are fragments of Armenian art from the Middle Ages.*

*Various manuscripts have been reproduced in the writing center founded on the Aghtamar Island.*

*"Aghtamar"  
performed by Adiss Harmandian*

The lake has 4 islands: **Aghtamar**, Ktuts, Lim, and Arter. The largest island is Aghtamar, where the Holy Cross (Surb Khach) Church, built by Gagik Artsruni I in the 10th century, is located.

## *Legend*

### **Aghtamar**

*According to folklore regarding the origin of the name Aghtamar, a love-struck young man made his way every night to the island where his beloved Tamar lived. The fire lit by Tamar lead the boy through the darkness of the night to the island.*

*One day the boy dove into the lake as usual, but did not see the fire. He became lost at sea and drowned. As he suffocated, he kept on repeating: "Akh, Tamar" ("Oh, Tamar"). The island came to be called Akhtamar, and later transformed into Aghtamar.*

*This beautiful story became the plot of the famous "Akhtamar" legend by Hovhannes Tumanyan (1869-1923).*

## Lakes

Lake Urmia (also known as Urmio, Kaputan) is the largest lake in the Armenian Highland. Due to its high alkalinity it does not support any fauna. It is currently located on the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

*Lake Urmia (Google Map)*

There are also other small lakes such as Tsovakn Hyusiso (Tseli, Chyldyr), Archak or Archishak, Nazik, **Parvana**, Gaylatu, etc. There are two other fresh water lakes, Stone Lake on Mt. Aragats, and Lake Nemrut on Nemrut Mountain. There are also several picturesque waterfalls, such as Shaki, **Berkri** and Tortum, to name a few.



## *Did You Know That ?*

*The Shaki (also known as Shake) waterfall is located in the Vorotan Canyon north-west of the city Sisian in the Syunik province of the Republic of Armenia. The area has abundant cliffs and caves, where manmade tools and traces of human activity dating back to the Paleolithic period have been discovered. The Shake waterfall is named in honor of the beautiful Shake. According to legend, an invader was captivated by Shake's beauty and fell in love with her. Shake, unwilling to obey the invader, threw herself off a cliff. As she fell, her dress became the waterfall that is now called the Shaki waterfall.*

*There is another interesting legend associated with the Shaki waterfall, which says that 93 girls were sent from the Gegharkunik province to their leader who set up an army in Mughan. When the caravan of abducted girls reached Mughan, the girls wished to escape and asked their kidnapers to let them bathe in the river. The kidnappers agreed and the girls dove into the Vorotan River and disappeared. A single blue-eyed girl named Shake tried to escape by diving into a rivulet that pours into the Vorotan River. The kidnappers tried to catch her, but at the moment they reached her, a cliff magically appeared. The water hid the beautiful girl and from that day forth the waterfall was called the Shaki waterfall.*

## Chapter 3

# Natural Conditions

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### *Did You Know That ?*

*For thousands of years grapes have been used in the Armenian Highland for winemaking. In 2011, archeologists from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) found a grape crusher, remains of grape seeds, wine jars, and plates in the vicinity of the Areni mausoleum located in the Vayots Dzor Region in the Republic of Armenia.*



*According to the archeologists, the wine was made for rituals, and the residents of the territory engaged in winemaking. The wine receptacles and other winemaking tools date back to 4000 B.C. Remains of squashed grapes have also been found in the cave.*

*Grapes have also been used in miniature paintings, frescos, and sculptures. Grape sculptures were found on the walls of ancient churches and can also be seen on Armenian Khachkars.*

*The Armenian Apostolic Church has a holiday dedicated to the blessing of ripe grapes called Khaghoghornek (Blessing of grapes). Khaghoghornek is celebrated on the nearest Sunday around August 12-18, and Armenians believe that grapes sweeten after this blessing.*



The location and complexity of the nature are the key factors that influence the climate in the Armenian Highland. Isolated from the surrounding seas by mountain ranges, the climate in the majority of the Armenian Highland is dry (continental). Summers are torrid, while winters are cold. The penetration of cold air masses in the highland contributes to abundant downfalls in the majority of the territory. The bordering mountain ranges remain covered in snow throughout the entire cold season, and the mountain Masis is covered with an eternal layer of snow. Downfall is rare in the low-laying lands, therefore agriculture is impossible without artificial irrigation. From ancient times, the population has implemented **canals** and ditches for artificial irrigation, the most prominent of which is the **Menua** Canal built in the 9th Century B.C., also known as Shamiram Canal or Shamiram Ditch.

According to climate conditions, the Armenian Highland can be divided into three zones. The low-laying zone (350-1000 m above sea level) is ideal for cultivating grapes, cotton, apricots, pomegranate, peaches, figs, rice, etc.





Armenia has been famous for its fruits-especially apples, pears, apricot, peaches, cherries, and plums. Since early times, the Armenian apricot has been one of the most famous fruits. The pre-mountainous zone (altitude of 1000-1500 m) is known for cereals, barley, cold-resistant fruit gardens, and grapes.

### *Did You Know That ?*

#### **The history of Wine Making in the Armenian Highland**

*According to legend, wine making began when Noah planted the first grapes on the slopes of Ararat. According to philosophers and historians such as Herodotus and Strabo, Armenia has been famous for its wine –making for centuries. These traditions have been preserved up to the present day. Ten wine storage rooms with 200 wine barrels were discovered during excavations in the Erebuni area. It is believed that in 401-400 B.C., when Greek troops led by Xenophon were passing through Armenia, local families treated them to Armenian wine and beer that were stored in underground storage facilities in special clay jars. Such a storage facility with 480 wine jars dating back 2500 years was discovered in the Karmir Blur (Teishebayini) fortress. Various sources cite that wine making was a specialty in the Urartu kingdom and describe elaborate wine and beer brewing technologies in the region. These Armenian wine-making traditions have been preserved throughout the years. The Areni wine festival is still held every year in the Areni village. The festival offers an opportunity to discover Armenian traditions and to taste an assortment of top Armenian wines. The opening of the festival includes an impressive and colorful parade, accompanied by music and dancing.*

# *Did You Know That ?*

## **Armenian apricot**

*The apricot stones, discovered during the excavations near the pagan temple Garni, confirm that apricot was growing in the Armenian Highland 6000 years ago.*



*The 18th century French biologist de Poerderle, states that Alexander of Macedonia transported apricot sprouts from Armenia to Greece, which were then spread throughout Europe and called Armenian plums.*

*It was also discovered that the Roman commander Lucullus, on his journey back from the war against King Tigran the Great, transported apricot sprouts from Armenia to Rome, where they were called the Armenian plum and the Armenian apple (latin: pomum armeniacum).*

*Duduk (tsiranapogh, i.e. wind of apricot), a traditional Armenian wind instrument, is crafted from the apricot tree. To obtain the desired sound, the duduk was traditionally made from seven-year-old dry apricot wood. The works of famous Armenian duduk masters have been used throughout the world in the film-making industry.*

*pomum armeniacum).*

## Agriculture

The mountainous zone is located on an altitude of over 1500 m, where highly cold-resistant types of cereals and barley are cultivated.

The soil of the Armenian Highland is fertile. The land is ideal for the two most important branches of agriculture: farming and cattle-breeding. The Alpine meadows are especially beneficial for livestock farming.



## *Did You Know That ?*

### **Pomegranate**

*In Eastern cultures, the pomegranate is often considered the king of all fruits, not only for its taste and healing properties, but for its crown-shape as well. There is a theory that the king's crown was modeled on the pomegranate "crown."*

*Images of pomegranates can be found in Armenian miniature paintings, frescos, carpentry, and sculptures. Moreover, there are pomegranate sculptures on the majority of the cornices of the Armenian Khachkars.*

*In Sergey Parajanov's (1924-1990) film, "The Color of Pomegranates," the pomegranate symbolizes the blood of the martyred Armenians.*

*The pomegranate grains symbolize the Armenian people that have been scattered all over the globe in the aftermath of the genocide.*

# Earthquakes

Unfortunately, the Armenian Highland is an active earthquake zone where mountain formation processes are still in progress. The magnitude of an earthquake can reach up to 11. The oldest major earthquake that we know of dates back to 341 A.D. Other known earthquakes include 735 Moz district of the Vayots Dzor province, 893 Dvin, 1045 Yerznka city of the Yekeghik province, 1139 **Gandzak** city, 1319 Ani, 1469 Yerznka, 1679 Garni, 1840 Saint Hakob monastery in the Akor district located on the slopes of Mount Ararat, 1926 Leninakan, 1931 Zangezur, 1937 Yerevan, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1988 **Spitak**, 1992 Yerznka, and 2011 Van. In the 20th century alone over 20 major earthquakes have been cited, the most devastating of which was the earthquake of December 1988.

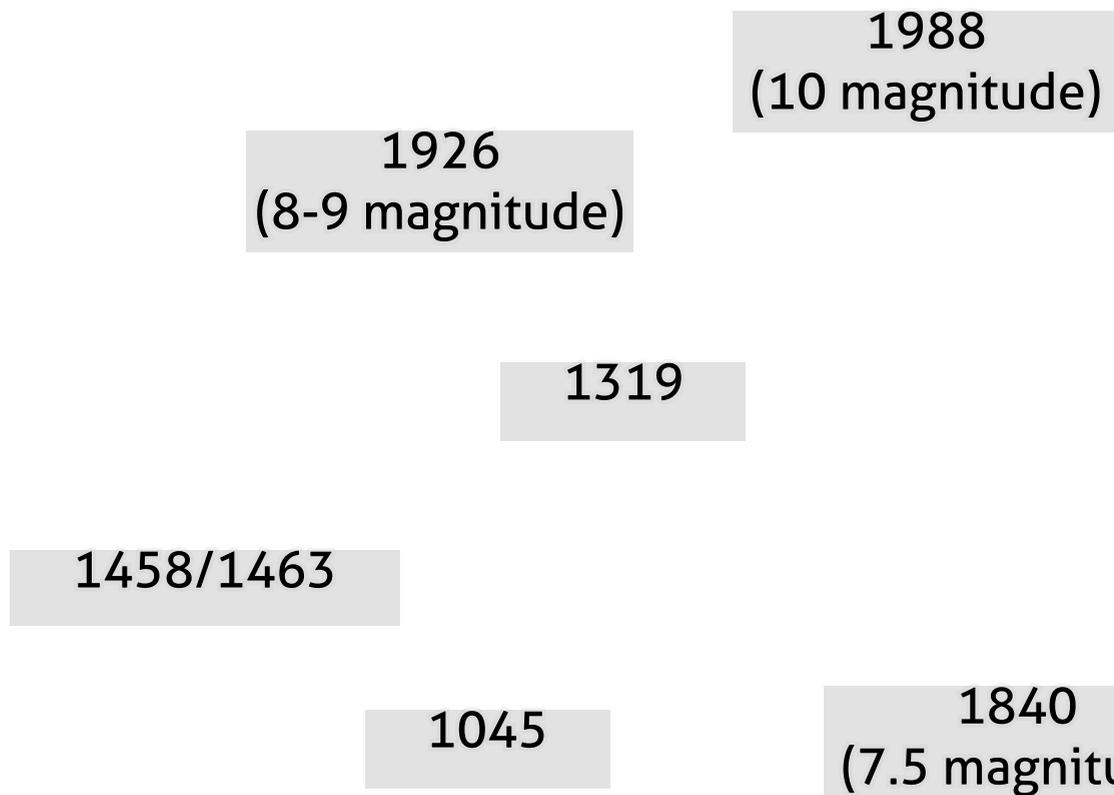


## *Did You Know That ?*

*The Saint Jacob (Hagob) Monastery was founded on the north-eastern slope of Mount Ararat, not far from a fresh water spring. In the past, the water spring was dedicated to the Goddess Anahit and the monastery was called Anahit Monastery (Anahitavank). Armenians believed in the healing properties of the water spring and sprinkled the fields with the water to protect it from locusts. The monastery and the neighboring village of Akor were destroyed during the earthquake of 1840. The rift that formed on the north-eastern slope, called the Masis Abyss, stretches 10 km from peak to base and has a depth of 1000 m at the peak. According to Moses of Chorene (5th century AD), the abyss formed due to a devastating earthquake in 139 AD. Earthquakes have reoccurred in 1319, 1679, 1840, and 1887. According to ancient folklore, the dreadful King Artavazd is trapped in the abyss and with each earthquake attempts to break free and rule the world.*

## Timeline

There are references of earthquakes recorded on scrolls dating back to after the invention of the alphabet. Strabo (64/63 – 23/24 B.C.), Moses of Chorene (410 – 490), Moses Kaghankatvatsi (7th century), Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi (845-850 approximately 929), Thomas Artsruni (9-10th century), Stephan Taronatsi (2nd half of the 10th century and 1st half of the 11th century), Mathew Urhayetsi (2nd half of the 11th century – 12th century) and Kirakos Gandzaketsi (1203 – 1271) have left such references.



Usually the medieval scribes left references to the occurrence of earthquakes at the end of the Testament and the Saghmosagirk, which is a collection of the Saghmos people that portrays the philosophical literature of the Old Testament as a separate book.

Numerous earthquakes have occurred in the Armenian Highland, but we only reference the most devastating ones.

1937  
(7 magnitude)

1139  
(7 magnitude)

735  
(6.5 magnitude)

1931  
(9 magnitude)

893  
(6 magnitude)

## Minerals

---

The Armenian Highland is rich in natural minerals. From ancient times there are three famous salt mines that are known: Nakhijevan (referred to as Nakhchavan on the map), Koghb, and Kaghzvan. The Armenian Highland is also famous for copper (Gugark, Zangezur, Lori), lead (south of Lake Van), zinc, oil (Karin), silver (Tsopk), gold (Sper, Sodk, Armenian Taurus) and mines. Beginning in the 2nd century B. C., it was also known for its iron mines (Aghdznik, Utik). According to the Medieval Armenian illustrated book **"World Map" ("Ashkharhacuyc")**, one could also come across black and white oil.



## *Did You Know That ?*

*The mineral industry is one of the main sectors of the Armenian economy and as of 2011 has accounted for over half of the country's exports. Armenia is considered a major producer of the mineral molybdenum. In spite of the global economic crisis of 2008, mining production and revenues grew significantly in 2009 due to a rise in the global prices of copper, gold, and other base metals. The Zangezur copper-molybdenum complex possesses large molybdenum reserves that are concentrated in the Kajaran deposit. Besides molybdenum, Armenia has significant deposits of copper and gold, smaller deposits of lead, silver, and zinc, as well as industrial minerals including basalt, diatomite, granite, gypsum, limestone, and perlite.*



## Minerals

The Armenian Highland is rich in a variety of construction materials: sand, clay, and limestone can be found in abundance. The non-metal mines are large and virtually inexhaustible. One can come across tuff, basalt, volcanic clay, granite, marble, and other mines. Multicolor tuff is also widespread. Until today tuff is famous, especially pink Artik tuff. Pink Artik tuff has been a primary stone in the construction of Yerevan, the capital of the Republic of Armenia, earning the city the nickname "rose-colored city."



Copyright 2004 Hayk Bachidjan

## *Did You Know That ?*

*The Ayrarat "world" was particularly famous for its tuff. The large variety of colors makes tuff ideal for interior decoration. Throughout history, Armenians have used tuff to build architectural structures such as churches, castles, and khachkars. Currently, Armenian tuff is exported to many countries and widely used in construction, sculpture, applied arts and a variety of other fields.*



Due to the large number of volcanoes, cold and hot water springs exist in almost all parts of the Armenian Highland. From ancient times, healing mineral waters, as well as sanitariums, which are found in Jermuk, Dilijan, Arzni, and Bjni (located on the territory of the RA), are famous.

### *Did You Know That ?*

#### **Spring in Jermuk**

*There is an interesting legend about the spring in Jermuk: a prince's castle was once perched on the high cliffs in Jermuk. The prince had a daughter whose heart belonged to an audacious and charming young man – the shepherd's son.*

*Every day the girl threw a long rope out of her bedroom window and the shepherd's son climbed into her bedroom. One day, the prince found the rope and cursed his daughter: she would turn into a mermaid and spend the rest of her days in the water if she were to ever see the shepherd again.*

*During their next meeting, the girl threw her long hair out of her window instead of the rope, but the moment she did, her father's curse came true and she turned into a mermaid, and her long hair turned into a waterfall that the people call "hair of the mermaid."*

## *Legend*

### **The mineral waters of Jermuk**

*There is a beautiful legend about the mineral water of Jermuk: one day an experienced hunter shot a deer with an arrow. The injured deer barely made its way to a mineral spring, then dove into the spring and came out completely cured. The hunter was amazed by the healing properties of what seemed to be simple water. From then on, the spring became highly renowned.*

## Flora and Fauna

The Armenian Highland has a rich diversity of flora and fauna. Due to the continental climate, forests occupy a small area. In the forests of Artsakh, Syunik, Gugark, Tayk, Tsopk, Eastern Tigris Basin, Aghdznik, and Korchayk, one can come across oaks, beech, maple, hornbeam, ash, pine, and birch trees. Several park-forests had been planted in Old Armenia, among them Sosyats Forest, Tsundots Forest (on the right bank of the Akhurian River), and the Khosrov Forest, currently an RA National Reserve, planted in the 4th century under the reign of King Khosrov Kotak.





Edgar Marukyan

From ancient times, domestic animals, such as sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes, horses, mules, donkeys and various birds, such as chickens, ducks, geese, etc., and wild animals such as wolves, foxes, bears, boars, lions, hares, deer, buck etc., were widespread. One can come across wild birds such as eagles, vultures, hawks, storks, and partridges. According to cuneiform sources, elephants, ostriches and lions existed in southern Armenia, which are also mentioned in the World Map (Ashkharhatsuyts).

### *Did You Know That ?*

*The world's oldest leather shoe was discovered in Areni in 2008. According to archeologists, it is presumed to be cattle leather that dates back 5500 years. Such shoes were used by the native Irishmen nearly 50 years ago. The shoe was investigated by Armenian, Irish, US, Israeli, and British scientists and the age of the shoe was verified in laboratories in Oxford and California. When the shoe was first discovered, it was filled with dry grass, the purpose of which is not yet clear. The European shoe size of the shoe is 37. It has already been moved to the History Museum of Armenia. 6000 year old wine jars were also discovered in one of the caves in Areni in 2010. The wine jars date back to the same period as the burials. An astoundingly well-preserved grape vine, whose berries had turned to raisins, was discovered in one of the wine jars.*

*One of the world's oldest dresses that dates back 5000 years was discovered on September 13th, 2011 in Areni. The dress is woven from sky-blue thatch and is well-preserved.*



Beekeeping, horse breeding, and the propagation of crimson worms were highly developed. During the **Achaemenid times** (550-331 B.C.), Armenia annually forfeited 20, 000 horses to the Persian royal court as tax. In the mountainous and foothill zones of the country, beekeeping reached a peak in its development. The crimson worms propagated in the Ararat Valley used to fabricate the famous crimson dye that was then exported to various countries, and had high economic significance for Armenia.



*Armenian Alphabet*

## *Did You Know That ?*

### **Crimson (Vordan) Red Dye**

*The crimson red dye is named after the crimson worm that was widespread in the Ararat Valley and has been used in the Armenian Highland for over three millennia in the production of red dye. As described by the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder, Armenian tradesmen exported large volumes of crimson red dye, which was called the "royal dye" as it was used to color the kings' and princes' clothes. The dye was also used in the production of perfumes, food, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and fine arts. Armenian carpets are famous worldwide not only for their unique weft, but also for this very dye which was used in the coloring process. Finally, the dye was also used in the adornment of numerous manuscripts which are now displayed in the Matenadaran in Yerevan.*

## Chapter 4

# Administrative Divisions

4.1	Historical Background	78-79
4.2	The 15 Districts of the Greater Hayk	80-81
4.3	Capitals of Armenia	82-83
4.4	From Ancient to Modern Times	86-87
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## Historical Background

The Armenian Highland was part of the civilized Ancient World. Citations regarding the ancient territory and administrative divisions of Armenia were made by the ancient Greek-Roman historians and geographers [Herodotus](#), [Xenophon](#), [Strabo](#), [Pliny the Elder](#), [Ptolemy](#), and other foreign authors.

In the old times, often two or more Armenian states existed at the same time in the Highland, such as [Greater Hayk](#) (referred to by foreign authors as Major Armenia), and [Lesser Hayk](#) (Minor Armenia). In the 3rd century B.C. the Tsopk–Commagene Kingdom separated from the Mets Hayk Kingdom, which in its turn then separated into Tsopk and Commagene Kingdom.



According to "World Map," Greater Hayk was divided into 15 large provinces, which due to their extensive sizes, were called "ashkharhs" ("worlds"): Gugark, Tayk, Upper Hayk, Tsopk, Aghdznik, Turuberan, Korchayk, Mokka, Vaspurakan, Parskahayk, Paytakaran, Utik, Artsakh, Syunik, and Ayrarat.

*Did You Know That ?*

### **Sacred Land of Armenian Gods**

*The sacred land of the Armenian gods is located in the vicinity of Mount Nemrut (now in the Republic of Turkey, near Lake Van). There stand the statues dedicated to kings and gods: Aramazd - the great god of Ancient Armenia and creator of land and sky, Anahit - the goddess of motherhood, harvest, and fertility, Mihr - the god of light and sun, Tir - the god of knowledge and science, and Vahagn - the god of storms, lightning, and audacity. The sanctuary was constructed over 2 millennia ago and is a classic example of sun-worship. It is thought to have been constructed by a kingdom that thrived in the Armenian or Eastern Taurus mountain chains - by the King of Commagene, Antiochus I Commagene (70-34 B.C.). The sanctuary consists of statues, a coat of arms of the dynasty (lion and eagle) as well as the constellation of the king and a statue of a lion.*

# The 15 districts of the Greater Hayk

---

Tayk

Upper Hayk

Turuberan

Tsopk

Aghdznik

Mokk



Gugark

Utik

Ayrarat

Artsakh

Vaspurakan

Syunik

Paytakaran

Korchayk

Parskahayk

# Capitals of Armenia



*"Cilicia" performed by Lusine Zakaryan*



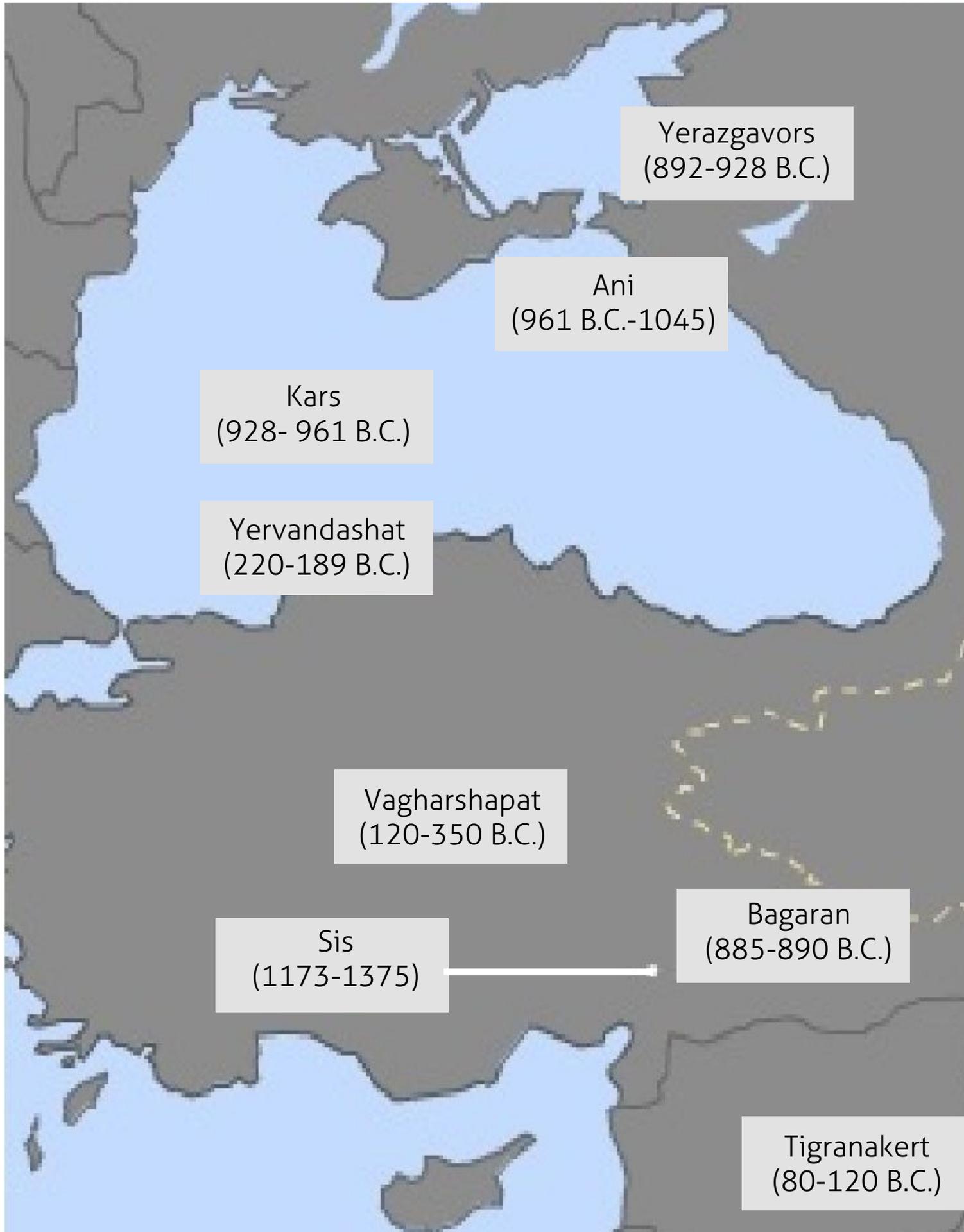
Greater Hayk had an area of 311,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The fifteen provinces of **Greater Armenia** had altogether 191 districts, 37 of which are in Vaspurakan, and 20 in Ayrarat. The largest and most famous province was Ayrarat, where most of the Armenian capitals – including Yerevan, Ani, Artashat, Dvin, Armavir, Kars, Yerazgavors, Vagharshapat, Yervandashat, and Bagaran were located. Upper Hayk, Tsopk, Turuberan, Vaspurakan, Syunik, Artsakh, and Gugark have played an important role in the history of the Armenian people.

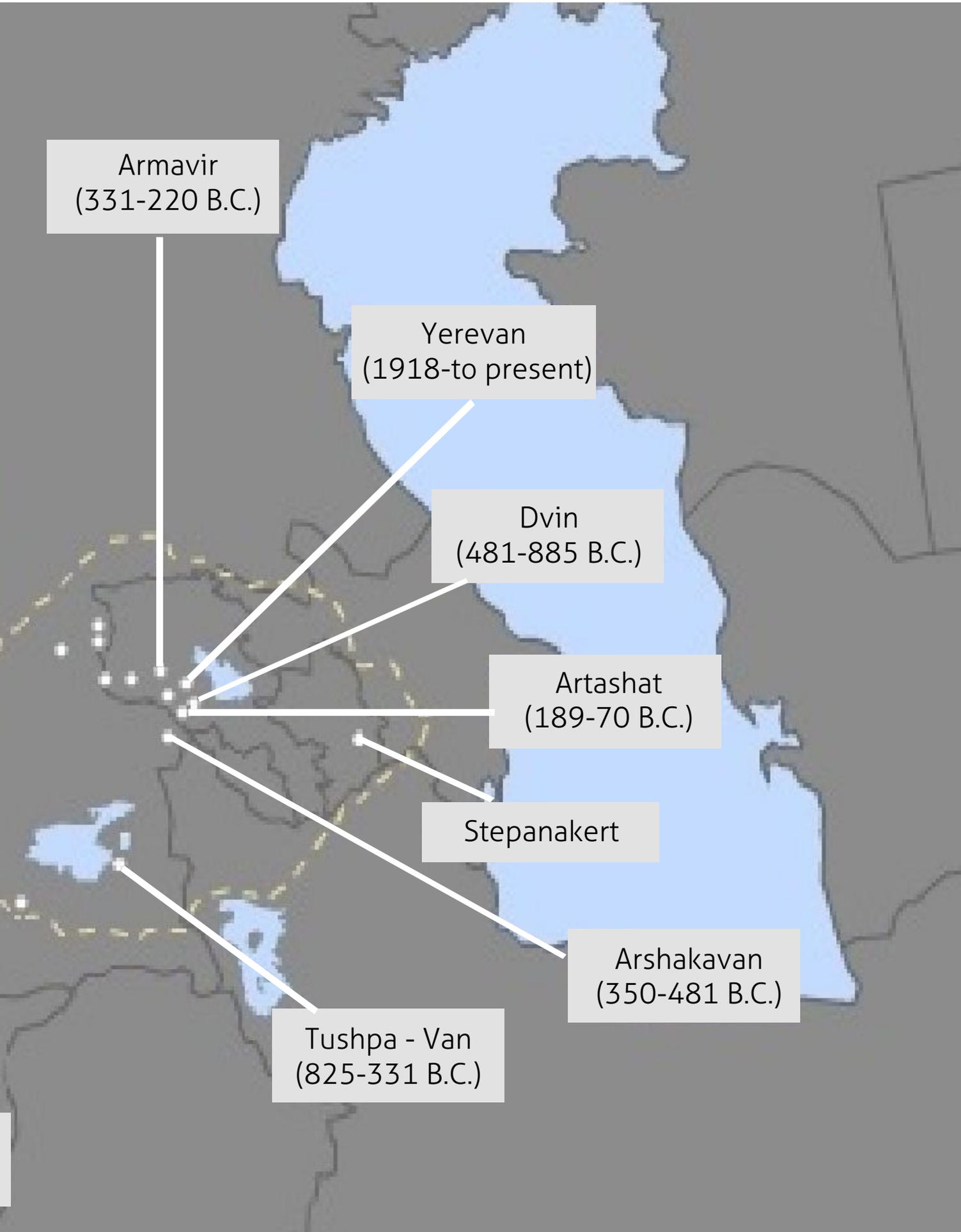
Aside from Greater Hayk, the Armenian people formed a significant majority in Lesser Hayk (80, 000 km<sup>2</sup>). In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Armenians created a powerful state in **Cilicia** located on the north-eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.



*Arthur Meschian "Cilicia" (Video)*

# Capitals of Armenia





Armavir  
(331-220 B.C.)

Yerevan  
(1918-to present)

Dvin  
(481-885 B.C.)

Artashat  
(189-70 B.C.)

Stepanakert

Arshakavan  
(350-481 B.C.)

Tushpa - Van  
(825-331 B.C.)

Armenia has experienced vast economic prosperity throughout its history due to its location at the crossroads of international transit and commercial roads (such as the illustrious Silk Road, which connected the East and West), serving as a link between the Mediterranean basin, Mesopotamia, the Iranian Plateau and Caucasus lands. This peculiarity has caught the attention of various conquerors such as the Assyrians, Scythians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, Turks, Mongolians, and Russians. Hence the Armenian land has often been caught in the cross-fires of the battles of enemy nations.





*The border Countries of the Armenian Republic*



*The Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh*

## From Ancient to Modern Times

Starting in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Armenian people confined the preservation of their identity in the independent church, unique alphabet, and culture.

The present-day Republic of Armenia occupies 1/13 of its historical land, about 30, 000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is bordered by Georgia from the north, Azerbaijan from the east, Iran and Nakhijevan from the south, and Turkey from the west.

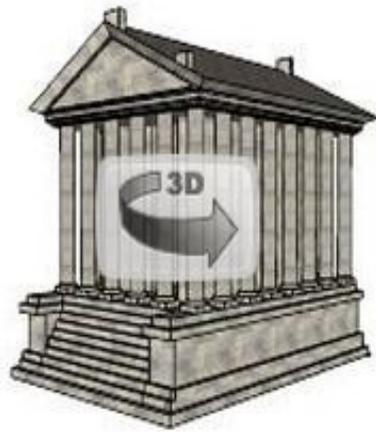




## From Ancient to Modern Times

The units of administrative division of contemporary Armenia are called marz. These are Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Lori, Kotayk, Shirak, Syunik, Vayots Dzor, and Tavush; **Yerevan** is the capital of the RA.





Garni Temple  
(Rotating 3D)

## Garni Canyon and the Stone Symphony

*The Garni Canyon is located in the Garni village in the Kotayk Province of the Republic of Armenia. It stretches along the Azat River. The canyon is famous for its marvelous cliffs and was named the "Stone Symphony" (Kareri Simfonia). The Garni pagan temple and the Havuts Tar Monastic Complex are located on the peak of the Canyon. The peninsula, resembling a guitar that forms at the crossing of the Azat and Goght rivers, can be seen from the Garni Temple. The Stone Symphony is considered to be unique for its rare rectangular and symmetrical rock alignment. In 2011 the Garni historical and cultural museum was bestowed with the UNESCO–Greece Preservation and Management of Historical Land Shafts "Melina Mercury" international prize. The Garni Canyon was recognized as one of the most visited touristic sites.*

97% of the country's population is Armenian by origin, according to the census of 2011. The vast majority of the population belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

*Did You Know That ?*

### **The Silver Goblet of Karashamb**

*The silver goblet found in 1987 in Karashamb is a rare discovery in the Armenian Highland. The goblet, depicting the scene of a royal hunt ritual, was displayed as an ancient epos during the exposition "The Treasures of Ancient Armenia" in Nantes (France). The goblet illustrates a scene honoring the heroic life of a tribal leader or king.*



*The Silver Goblet of  
Karashamb*



## *Legend*

### **Mother Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin**

*The Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin is located in the Armavir province of the Republic of Armenia. It is the seat of the All Armenian Catholicos, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It was built near the royal palace by St. Gregory the Illuminator in 301-303 in Vagharshapat, the capital of Armenia at the time. According to a legend, Gregory the Illuminator chose the location of the first Armenian Church based on a vision, in which Jesus descended on the very spot where the Church was later built and hit the ground with a golden hammer, indicating the location of the monastery. As a result, the monastery received its name Etchmiadzin (from Ijav Miadziny, i.e. the one and only born descended).*

# From Ancient to Modern Times



*Holy Etchmiadzin (Rotating Video)*

The mother church is located in the city of Etchmiadzin and is called the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.



*Holy Etchmiadzin (Rotating 3D)*

The Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh (NKR) borders Armenia from the west, Iran from the south, and Azerbaijan from the east and north. Districts from the historical provinces of Artsakh, Syunik, and Utik are now part of NKR. The capital of the country is Stepanakert. NKR is divided into seven administrative districts, including Shahoumian, Martakert, Kashatagh, Askeran, Shushi, Martuni, and Hadrout.

### *Did You Know That ?* **Cave Paintings in the Armenian Highland**



*The Armenian Highland has a rich collection of unique and multi-faceted cave paintings, many of which depict various wild animals and birds. There are also illustrations of numerous astrological symbols on the walls of caves discovered in the Armenian Highland, such as in Ukhtasar and Ishkhanasar. The earth, the sun, the moon, planets, stars, comets, and constellations (even the Milky Way) are portrayed in the cave paintings preserved in the mountains surrounding Lake Sevan and other locations in Armenia. The cave paintings were believed to have magical features and were involved in worship rituals. Moreover, the symbols found in the cave paintings are believed to have served as a writing system and had spiritual and ritual value.*

## *Did You Know That ?* *Karahunj or Zorats Karer*

*Karahunj (also known as Zorats Karer), discovered in the city of Sisian in the Syunik province of the Republic of Armenia, is a unique specimen of megalith monuments composed of hundreds of stones. Beginning with the 1980 excavations, Karahunj has been the center of attention of numerous investigations. However, no consensus has been reached on the purpose of the rocks. According to a theory proposed by the eminent Armenian scientist Paris Heruni (1933 – 2008), the Karahunj observatory was founded 7500 years ago. A mausoleum and a settlement that dates back to the 3rd-2nd century B.C. were discovered during the excavations. The presumed time periods range from 7500 years ago to the beginning of the Bronze Era (2nd century B.C.). Ancient astrological stone tools were discovered here as well, and most of the stones have openings at their tops which are believed to have been used to observe the stars. Research has shown that Karahunj is the world's oldest observatory and its rocks have provided important information to astronomers. Finally, Karahunj was also a learning center. Thus, according to Paris Heruni, Karahunj served three purposes. First, it was the temple of the great god of the sun Ar and his secretary, the god of science, writing, and art, Tir. Second, it was a large and developed observatory. Third, it also served as a university. In the beginning of the Christian era, crosses were engraved on the majority of the rocks in Zorats Karer. Some of the rocks were transformed into engraved khachkars, and only the round opening at the tops of these rocks now hint at their original purpose.*

# Republic of Nagorno Karabakh

The official language of the two countries is Armenian. Armenian is an Indo-European language. The Armenian alphabet was created in the year 405 by [Mesrop Mashtots](#).



*"Erebuni-Yerevan" performed by "Kohar" national assembly*





*St. Ghazanchetsots Amenaprkich  
Church of Shushi (Rotating Video)*



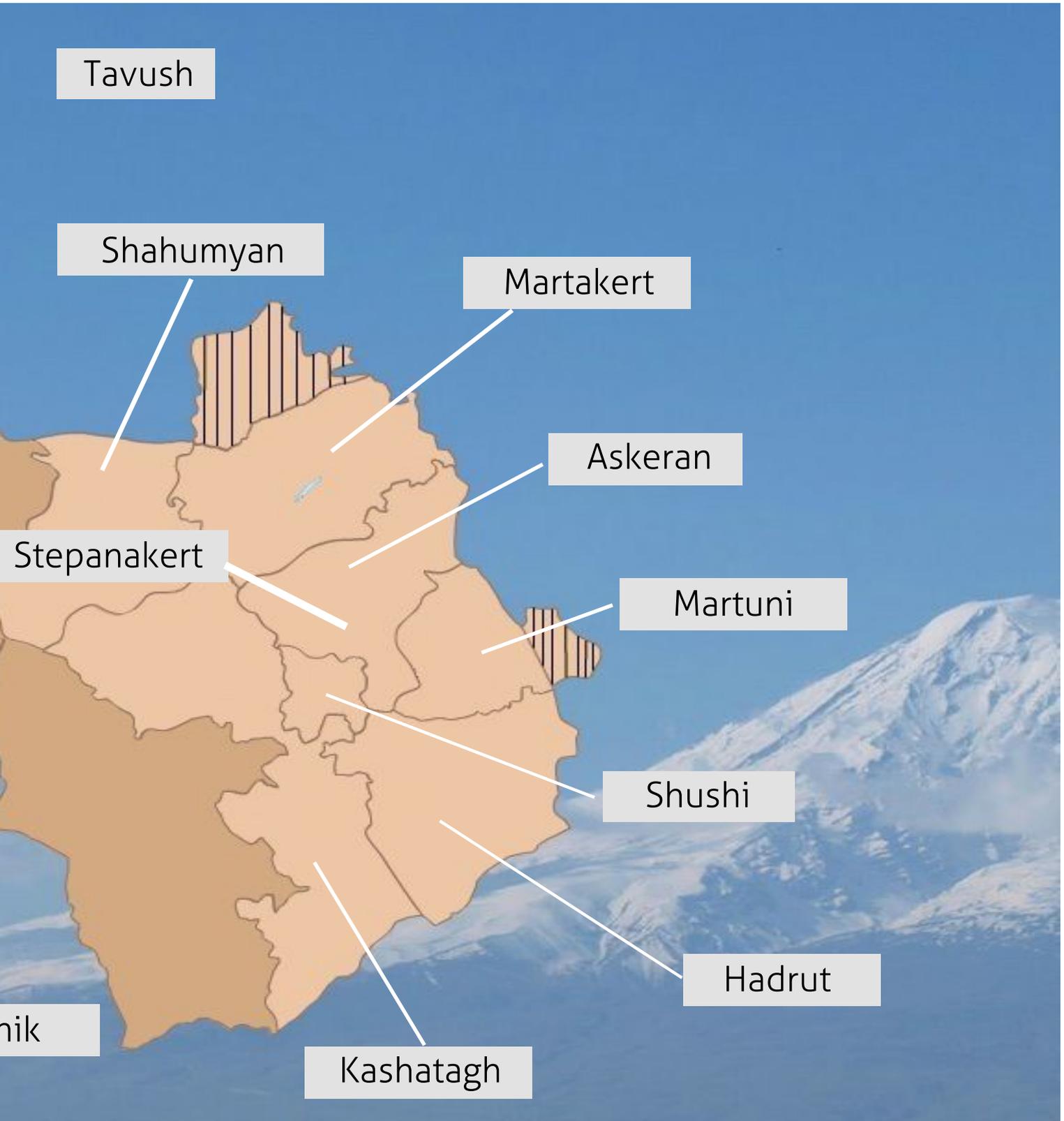
*Yerevan (Video)*

## Administrative Divisions

The territory of the Republic of Armenia is divided into 10 districts and the capital, Yerevan, which has the status of a district.



The territory of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Mountainous Karabakh), is composed of seven administrative districts. The capital, Stepanakert, has the status of a district.



## National Anthem

The Armenian flag is tricolored: red, blue and orange. The anthem is called "Mer Hayrenik" ("Our Motherland"). The coat of arms of the four Armenian royal families – Artashid, Arshakid, Bagratid, and Rubinid, are located on the shield in the middle of the coat of arms, in the middle of which is the Biblical Mount Ararat, with Noah's Ark residing on its peak.

There are over 10 million Armenians in the world; 3.2 million live in the RA, while the rest make up the Armenian Diaspora.



*"Artsakh" by Ara Gevorgyan*



*Armenian Diaspora*



*Our F*

*Our Fatherland,  
That has for  
Is now summ  
To the free, inde*

*Here is a flag fo  
That I h  
Over the sle  
And bathe*

*Look at it  
A valuable s  
Let it shine ag*

*Let you, Armenia,*

*Death is the so  
A man die  
Blessed is th  
For the freedo*



*Fatherland*

*free, independent,  
centuries lived,  
honoring its sons  
independent Armenia.*

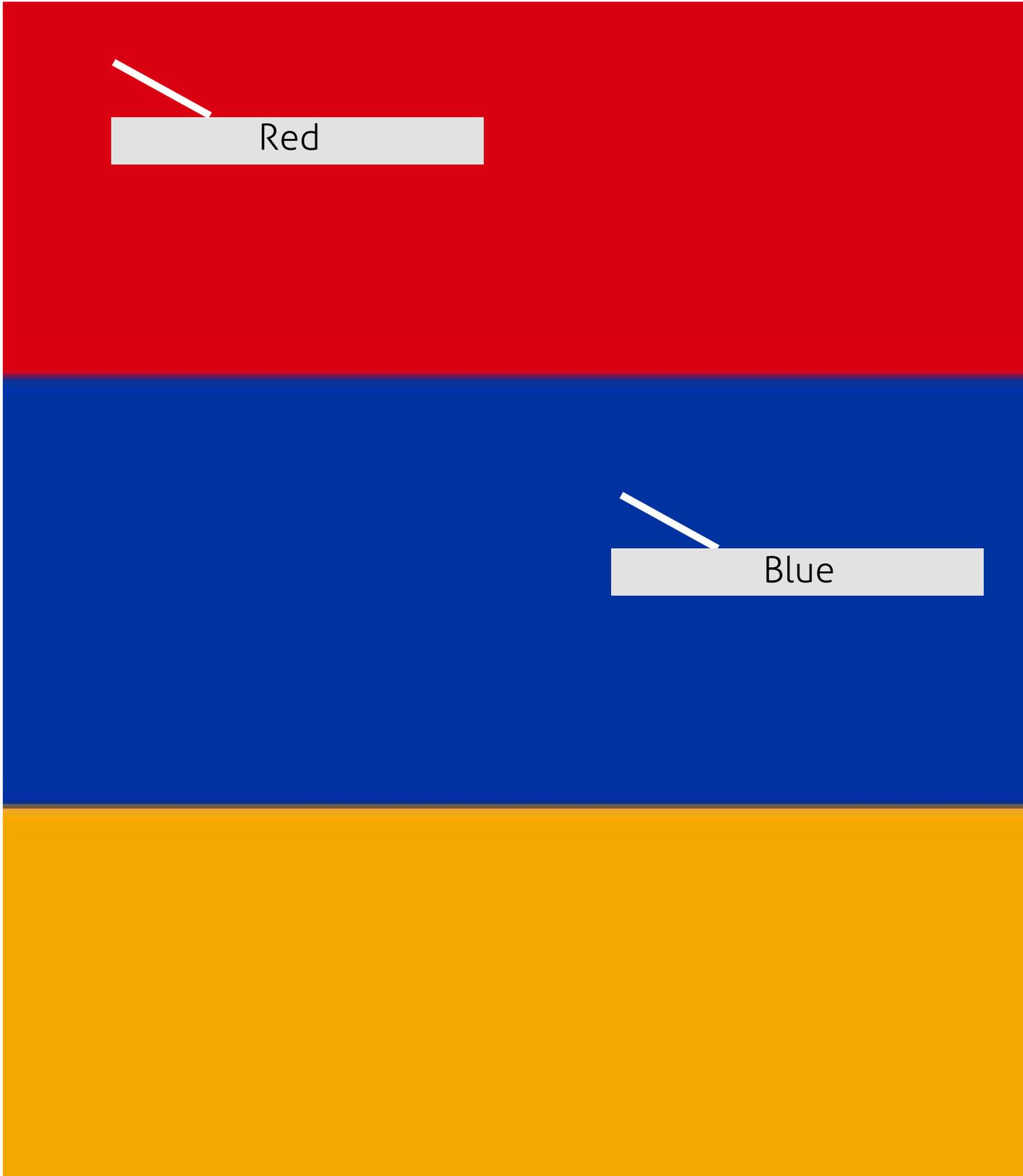
*For you, my brother,  
I have sewn  
sleepless nights,  
and in my tears.*

*Tricolor, tricolored,  
symbol for us.  
Against the enemy,  
be glorious forever.*

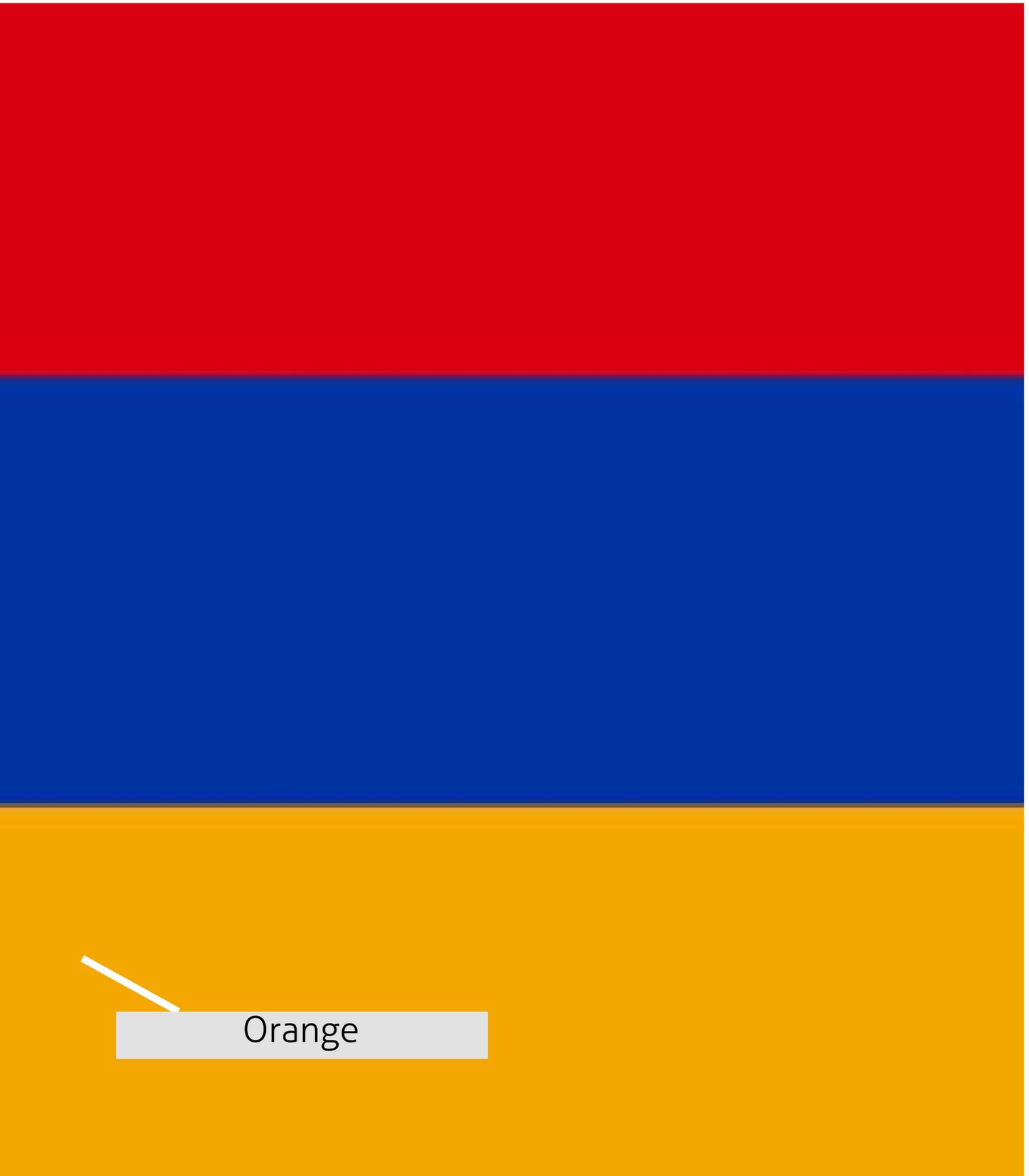
*It came everywhere,  
it comes but once,  
it is the one that dies  
with the death of his nation.*

## National Flag

The flag of the Republic of Armenia is tricolored. The horizontal layers from top to bottom.

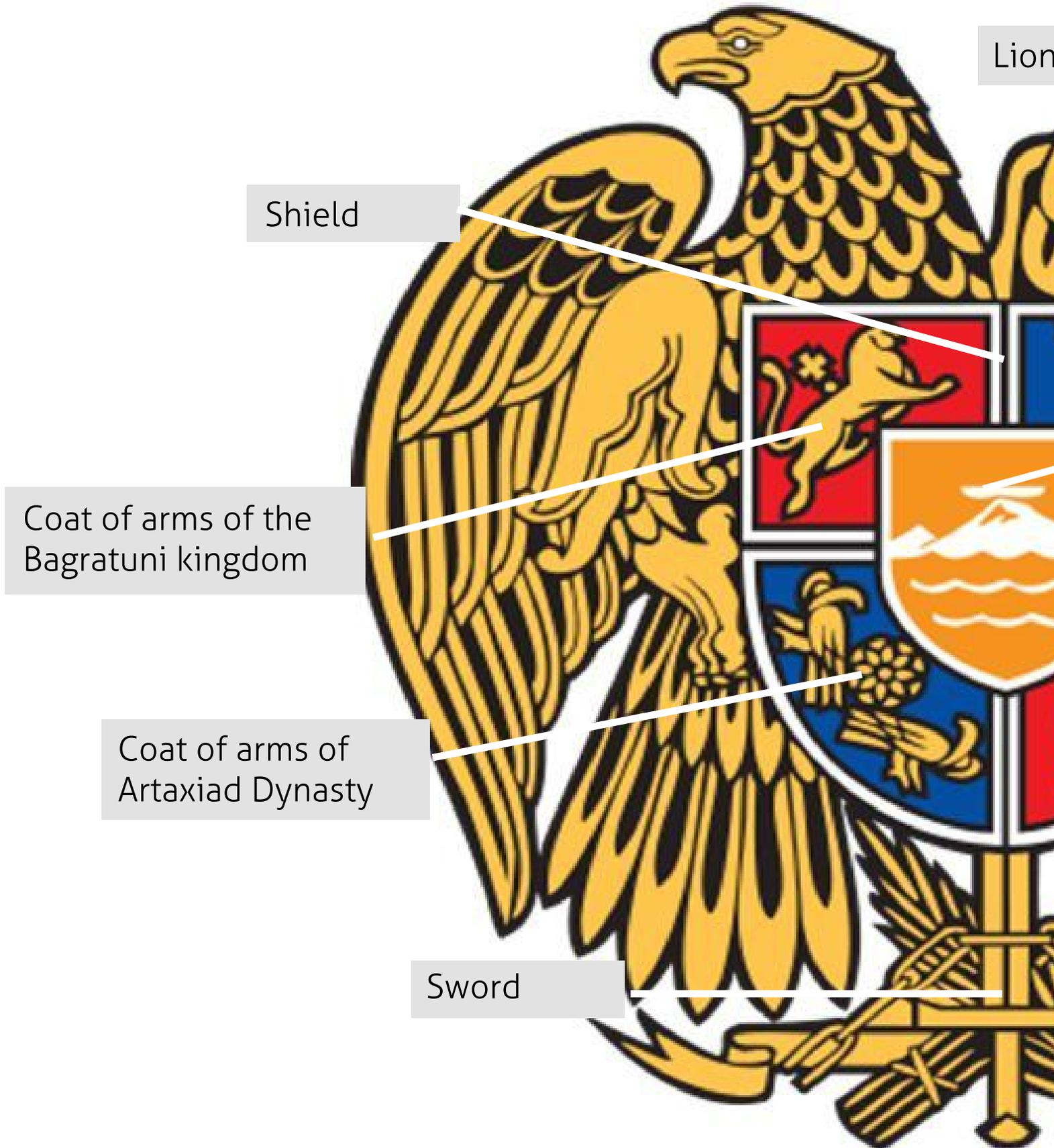


e colors red, blue, and orange stretch in even

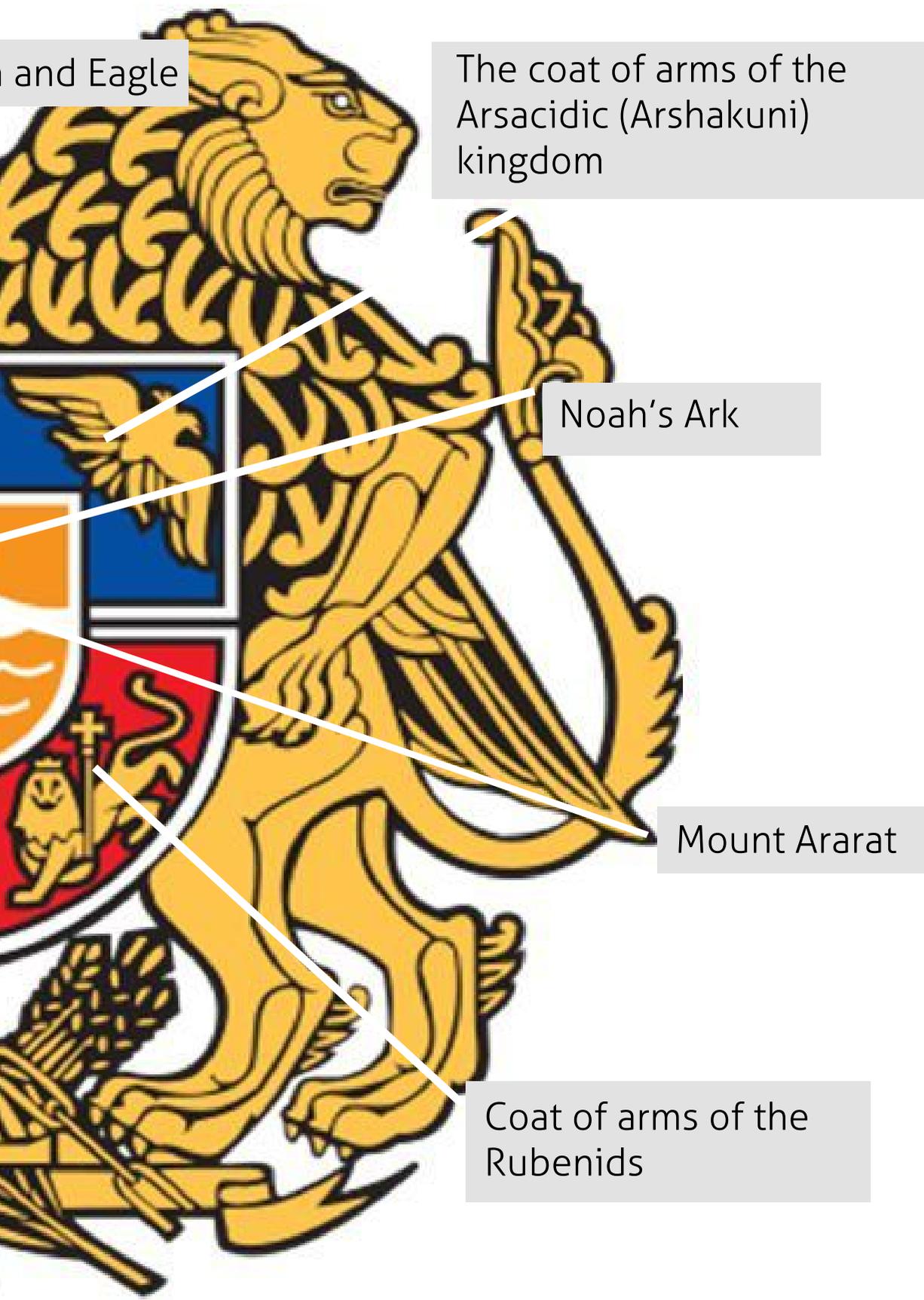


# Coat of Arms

Gold is the primary color of the coat of arms of the Republic of Armenia, which symbolizes the colors of the Armenian kingdoms, which symbolize the colors of the Armenian kingdoms.



of Armenia; red, blue and orange are the colors of the historical  
an flag.

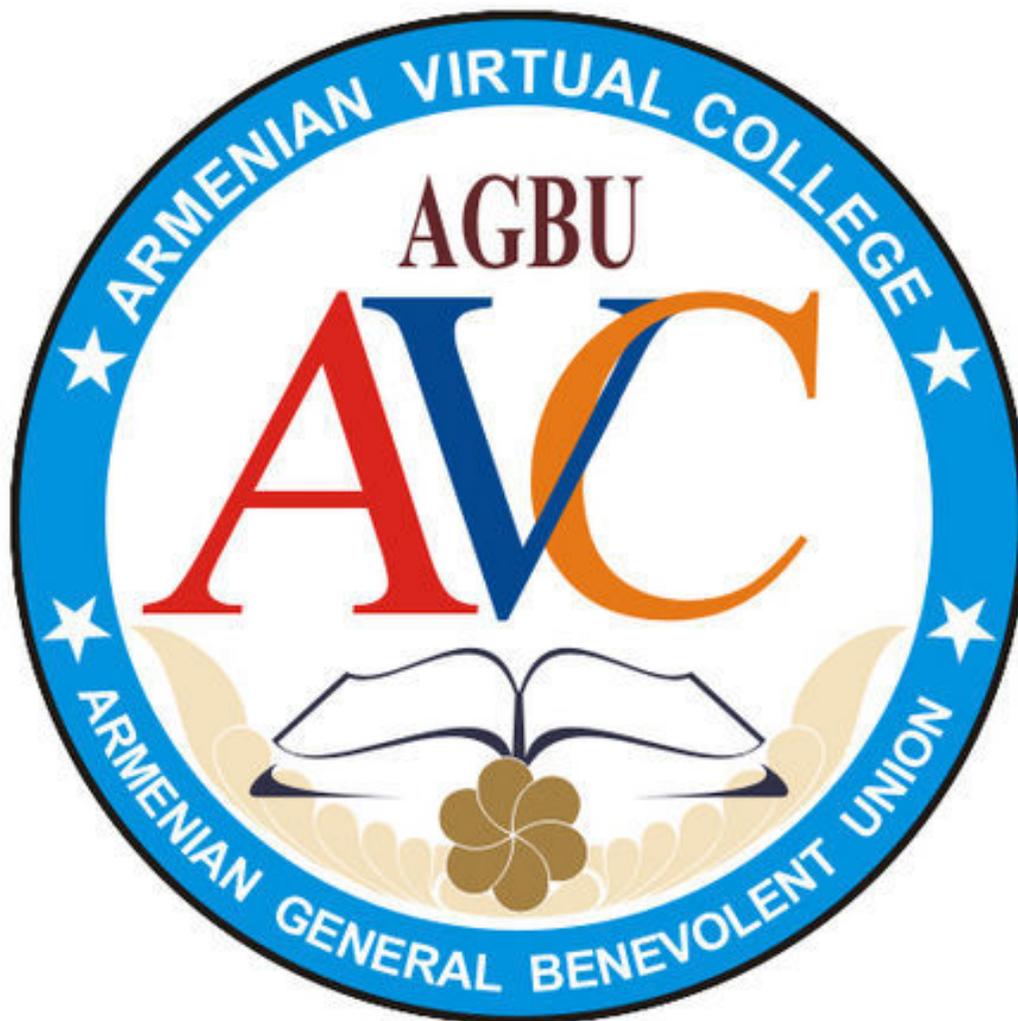


## Chapter 5

# Acknowledgement and Copyright

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The AVC Multimedia e-Book series is a recent innovative undertaking by the AGBU Armenian Virtual College.

With the objective to extend knowledge from students in its virtual classrooms to a wider audience, AVC presents a new multiplatform media product series accessed from web browsers and tablets. The Series presents a wide variety themes about Armenia: history, culture, tourism, and covers contemporary topics in economy, politics, popular culture, and more.

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This reader-friendly series is presented in a language and style that serve the interests of a general audience. Additionally, the multimedia e-books have been prepared with academic rigor and thoroughness to serve as a scholarly resource. The comparative approach used in the series makes the e-books attractive both to those interested in acquiring knowledge about Armenia, and to those interested in our shared global histories and cultures. Narrations are enhanced by captivating visual effects, images and videos. Readers are able to assess their own progress through self-assessment quizzes throughout the text, follow the timelines, and use the rich glossary to augment the learning process.

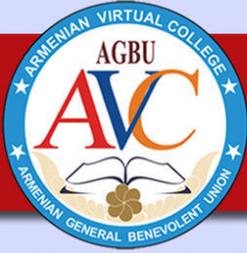
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The first in a series of Armenian multimedia e-books by the AGBU Armenian Virtual College, Book 1 is the first comprehensive electronic resource on The Armenian Highland. In this volume you will learn about:

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- its natural life, environment, flora and fauna;
- its climate and natural resources;
- the administrative division of the region;
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Armenian Virtual College  
Multimedia e-Book Series

# THE ARMENIAN HIGHLAND



BOOK 1

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# Armenian History Interactive Timeline

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