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The noble Kardouchoi and the barbarous Mossynoikoi. Remembering and forgetting Anatolian peoples

For several hundred years beginning in the mid-first millennium BC, quite possibly earlier, the Mossynoikoi and the Kardouchoi were dominant peoples in the southeastern Black Sea and south-eastern Anatolian regions respectively. From the historical record we can infer that both were strong militarily and successful at commerce. However, they were apparently not inclined to express their power or wealth in terms of monumental architecture or durable artwork; at least, no evidence of their material cultures has been preserved down to the present day. In the absence of an archaeological record our knowledge of these peoples derives primarily from ancient literary sources. The most important of these is the firsthand account given by the Greek writer Xenophon the Athenian in his *Anabasis*. In 401- 400 BC Xenophon travelled through the lands of both of these peoples, offering detailed descriptions of each. The Kardouchoi, he says, were among the most warlike (πολεμικούς) people whom the Greeks encountered on their journey while the Mossynoikoi were the most barbarous (βαρβαρωτάτους). The inhabitants of the Karduchian ancestral lands today, the modern Kurds, embrace the earlier people as their ancestors, taking Xenophon's descriptions of an independent and proud people as mirroring their own image of themselves. In contrast, the Mossynoikoi, fond of sliced dolphin and outdoor sex, are unclaimed by any of the recent inhabitants of the lands where they once lived, these to include Turks, Laz, Pontic Greeks and Georgians. The aims of this paper are, firstly, to highlight the importance of ancient accounts in so far as they preserve knowledge of peoples who we may otherwise know nothing at all about and, secondly, to explore how these same texts can have a decisive bearing in the process of remembering and forgetting ancient peoples.