

RESEARCH PAPER

THE “TARTARIA” CONSPIRACY THEORY

An Evaluation of Claims Regarding a “Lost Tartarian Empire” and North American Architecture

Prepared for Kepha Arcemont — Miqdash Bethel Covenant InstitutionNot assigned a Master Library Index number —
standalone research paperJuly 15, 2026

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

This paper was prepared at Kepha Arcemont’s request to examine the online “Tartaria” theory — the claim that a technologically advanced, globe-spanning civilization called the “Tartarian Empire” built many of the ornate stone buildings found across North America and the world, was destroyed by a catastrophic “mud flood” and subsequent wars, and was then erased from the historical record by a coordinated cover-up. Because this theory makes no scriptural claim and has no basis in the Written Tanakh, it is not being issued as a numbered covenant document within the Master Library Index. It is presented here strictly as a factual, evidentiary research brief, evaluated the way any historical claim should be evaluated — against primary sources, the documented record, and the Devarim 19:15 standard of multiple corroborating witnesses that governs research at this institution.

I. WHAT THE THEORY CLAIMS

Proponents of the Tartaria theory, active mainly on Reddit, TikTok, and YouTube since around 2016, argue that elaborate 19th- and early-20th-century buildings across the world — the original Singer Building and old Penn Station in New York, the U.S. Capitol, world’s fair pavilions such as San Francisco’s 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and even Notre-Dame de Paris, the Great Pyramids, and the Taj Mahal — were not built by the architects and eras credited in the historical record. Instead, believers claim these structures were the remnants of a single advanced empire called Tartaria, sometimes said to have possessed free wireless energy and other lost technologies.

The theory holds that this empire was destroyed by a global “mud flood” that buried building entrances and lower floors (cited as an explanation for windows and doorways now found below street level), and that World War I and World War II were used, in whole or in part, to complete the destruction and cover-up of Tartarian civilization. Some versions add that Tartarians were physically giants, that the Bolshevik Revolution was a deliberate effort to erase evidence of the empire, and that global elites rewrote history afterward in a so-called “Great Reset.” More esoteric strands claim Tartarian buildings functioned as energy-gathering devices using domes, spires, copper, and quartz.

II. THE HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT “TARTARY”

“Tartary” or “Tartaria” is a genuine historical name — but not for a lost empire. It was a European cartographic label applied broadly to Central Asia and Siberia, used by mapmakers to describe territory inhabited by various Turkic, Mongolic, and other nomadic peoples whom Europeans did not distinguish precisely from one another. Historical maps such as Guillaume de L’Isle’s 1757 *Carte de Tartarie* show several distinct “Tartaries” — Independent, Chinese, Muscovite — reflecting a patchwork of regions and peoples, not a unified political empire with its own advanced civilization.

The Russian Geographical Society, a body with direct institutional interest in the historical record of this exact region, has examined the modern conspiracy theory and publicly rejected it as an “extremist fantasy,” even as it continues to share its own archival maps referencing the old name “Tartary.” This is a key distinction the theory’s proponents consistently blur: that a name existed and was used historically does not establish that the fringe claims built on top of that name are true.

III. WHERE THE THEORY ORIGINATED

Historians and researchers tracing the theory’s roots find its earliest form in Russian pseudoscience — specifically Anatoly Fomenko’s “New Chronology,” developed in the 1970s and 1980s, which argued that accepted historical timelines were fabricated, and the later occult, racially-inflected writings of Nikolai Levashov, who portrayed Tartary as a suppressed and hidden Russian empire. In this original Russian nationalist framing, the theory served to argue that the West had deliberately erased Russia’s “true” name and history.

From roughly 2016 onward, this narrative was stripped of its specifically Russian nationalist origins and globalized on image-driven social media platforms, merging with unrelated internet conspiracy culture, including QAnon-adjacent narratives. Researchers who study the theory’s spread describe it as “meme culture” more than a coherent historical claim — it moves through short video clips and image slideshows rather than documented argument, which is part of why its proponents’ claims frequently contradict one another with no shared authority to settle disputes.

IV. EXAMINING THE PHYSICAL “EVIDENCE”

A. Ornate buildings in “young” cities

The central visual argument is that elaborate Beaux-Arts, Second Empire, and Classical Revival buildings in American cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Philadelphia look too advanced and ornamented for a frontier nation to have produced. This argument does not reckon with the well-documented Gilded Age building boom, in which American architects trained in and

consciously imitating European classical styles produced large numbers of elaborately ornamented civic and commercial buildings using widely available cut stone, cast iron, and terra cotta — a matter of architectural fashion and available capital, not lost technology. Named, documented architects (such as Ernest Flagg, credited with New York’s 1908 Singer Building) exist for the great majority of buildings claimed as “Tartarian.”

B. World’s fair architecture

Believers frequently point to temporary fairgrounds, such as San Francisco’s 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, as former Tartarian capitals. These structures are, in fact, extensively documented as temporary exposition architecture, deliberately built from staff (a plaster-like material) rather than permanent stone, and intentionally demolished after their fairs concluded — which is precisely why photographs show them appearing suddenly and then vanishing, a pattern the theory misreads as evidence of concealment rather than of ordinary temporary construction.

C. Buried windows and “mud flood”

Partially below-grade windows and doorways, cited as proof of a global flood, have a conventional engineering explanation: many cities, particularly in the 19th century, deliberately raised street grade over time for drainage, sewer installation, and flood management, leaving older ground-floor levels below the new street level. No geological survey has found evidence of a sudden, global 19th-century mud deluge; the phenomenon is well explained, city by city, through documented municipal grading projects.

D. Deserted-looking historical photographs

Early photographic technology required long exposure times, which meant moving figures such as pedestrians and horse-drawn traffic often did not register on film, producing images of grand buildings that appear empty of people. This is a well-understood limitation of period photographic equipment, not evidence of depopulation.

V. WHY HISTORIANS CLASSIFY THIS AS PSEUDOHISTORY

Scholars who study the theory—including architectural critics and religious-studies researchers—describe it as “the QAnon of architecture.” It is classified as pseudohistory: a narrative presented as recovered fact but built without reference to the standards of historical proof, corroborating primary sources, or falsifiable claims. Under this institution’s own Devarim 19:15 standard — that a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses — the Tartaria theory fails at the first test: its proponents cannot agree among themselves on basic claims (the empire’s

extent, its downfall, even whether Tartarians were physically ordinary or giants), and no primary document, artifact, or corroborated eyewitness account has ever been produced in support of it.

Research organizations tracking online radicalization have additionally flagged the theory as more than a harmless architectural curiosity. It has been identified as one of several pseudohistorical narratives that contributed to the broader climate of institutional distrust surrounding the January 6, 2021 events in Washington, D.C., and it shares structural features — a hidden golden age, a shadowy erasing elite, an in-group of the “awakened” — with more explicitly extremist narratives such as Hyperborean mythology.

VI. SUMMARY FINDINGS

- “Tartary” was a real, documented European geographic label for Central Asia and Siberia — not a lost global empire.
- No primary historical source, artifact, or corroborated account supports the existence of a unified, technologically advanced “Tartarian Empire.”
- The buildings cited as “Tartarian” in North America have documented architects, construction dates, and materials records.
- The “mud flood” has no geological support and is fully explained by known municipal street-grading history.
- The theory’s modern form descends from 1970s–80s Russian pseudoscience (Fomenko, Levashov), later stripped of context and globalized online after 2016.
- Historians and religious-studies scholars classify it as pseudohistory, comparable in structure and spread to other unfounded conspiracy narratives.
- Under the Devarim 19:15 two-or-three-witness standard, the theory does not meet the evidentiary bar this institution applies to any claim of fact.

VII. CLOSING NOTE

This paper does not address any scriptural question and takes no position on architectural taste or the merits of classical versus modern design — that discontent, which several researchers note is part of the theory’s emotional appeal, is a separate and legitimate conversation. What this paper establishes is narrower: the specific historical claim that a lost empire called Tartaria built these structures and was erased by flood, war, and cover-up is not supported by primary evidence and is properly classified as pseudohistory rather than history.