



Yedi Kardeş tower ⁽¹⁾

DIYARBAKIR

(Amed-Amida-Diyarbekir)

Diyarbakir is the northern gateway to the **Fertile Crescent** of **Mesopotamia** and, as the largest Kurdish city in the southeast of Turkey, is indeed is the place tourists naturally gravitate towards when visiting here. The substantial **city walls** are the most obvious sight along with its **mosques, churches** and distinctively **Kurdish flavour**.



Most tourists are naturally drawn to the **old city**, encircled by huge walls of **black stone**. To get some deeper insight into the region beyond what makes it into the news headlines and to understand its peoples, then this is the **ideal place** to start, particularly if you can be here during the **Kurdish Newroz Festival**.





An old picture of Diyarbakır nargile house/tea house [2]

On the west bank of the Tigris, Diyarbakır has been one of the main settlements of the region throughout history. Stone tools and other artefacts unearthed in the province reveal that the area has continuously been settled since Palaeolithic times. The Hurrians and Mitannis were the first civilisations here, and they were followed by the Hittites, Assyrians, Medes, Achaemenids, Parthians, Romans, Byzantines and so forth. In the early years of Christianity the city was an important religious centre called Amid and produced many theologians, some of whom are buried in the Virgin Mary Church. Muslim did conquest Diyarbakır in 639 by Halid bin Velid, one of the commanders of the army led by İyâz bin Ganm who was given the mission of conquering el-Cezire.

Once Islam gained dominance in the region, Diyarbakır was ruled in the 10th and 11th centuries by Mervanids, a Kurdish dynasty. Persian traveller and literary man Nâsır-ı Hüsrev who visited Diyarbakır in late 1046 during the reign of Mervani Ruler Nasrüddevle (1021-1061) gives some information about the city in his work titled "Sefernâme". According to Hüsrev, the city is on a huge rock, surrounded by black walls; he names eastern, western, northern and south

Provincial population

1,460,714 (2007)

Average altitude

660m

Area

15,162 square kilometres

Districts

Diyarbakır, Bismil, Çermik, Çınar, Çüngüş, Dicle, Eğil, Ergani, Hani, Hazro, Kocaköy, Kulp, Lice, Silvan

Economy

Agriculture, Livestock farming, Light industry, Commerce, Tourism

Neighbouring provinces

Adiyaman, Malatya and Şanlıurfa (west), Bingöl and Elazığ (north), Muş (north-east), Batman (east), Mardin (south)



ern gates as "Tigris", "Rum", "Ermen" and "Tel", respectively. He also mentions the existence of a water right at the middle of the city whose source is unknown and then describes the Grand Mosque and city walls. The battle of Malazgirt in 1071 cemented Muslim control over Anatolia and the decline of the Byzantines, although Diyarbakır was not captured by the Muslims until 7th century. Thereafter Diyarbakır and the rest of the region came under the Seljuks, Artukids, İnaldis, Ayyubids, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus and Ottomans.

The province is not particularly green: the plains which make up much of the province are green in springtime, but otherwise vegetation amounts to patches of oak forest on the hills. Mount Kolubaba (1957m) in the Karacadağ range is as mountainous as Diyarbakır gets. The local economy is dominated by agriculture, including the cultivation of cereals, pulses, cotton and fruits. Diyarbakır is an important point for commerce, served as it is by the railway between Istanbul and Batman; Bismil also north east of Diyarbakır has some oil resources while copper is found in Ergani district, and Kulp is an important sericulture centre.

Diyarbakır is the northern gateway to the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia and, as the largest city in the south-east of Turkey, is indeed the place tourists naturally gravitate towards when visiting here. The substantial city walls are the most obvious sight, but even more rewarding is the introduction that the city offers to the complex religious and cultural make-up of this part of Turkey – evident in its mosques, churches and distinctively Kurdish flavour. If you have come to southeastern Turkey to get some deeper insight into the region beyond what makes it into the news headlines and to understand its peoples, then this is the ideal place to start, particularly if you can be here



during the Kurdish Newroz Festival (see p: 248).

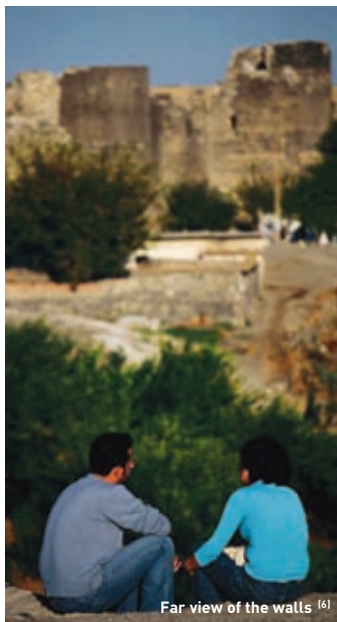
Elsewhere in the province, Silvan town has the large and beautifully decorated Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii, while nearby is the famous Malabadi Bridge, an enormous stone structure and one of the most famous of its kind in Turkey. The province also has a popular spa resort at Çermik, where numerous hotels and guest-houses cluster around a hot-spring complex. If you have a thing for caves, head to Birkleyn, where there are inscriptions and reliefs dating back to the Assyrians, or to



Sevenpınar, where the Hilar caves contain various rock tombs, also with ancient reliefs. There are yet more rock tombs near the Dicle Dam in Eğil district, and reachable by boat.

Besides plenty of Islamic architecture, the province is also home to an old synagogue at Çermik, and several churches including a substantial one at Çüngüş. Finally, if you want to see silk being produced – unusual in Turkey – head to the Kulp district.





Far view of the walls ^[6]

Diyarbakir City

It is the largest city of not just eastern Turkey but the whole Kurdish-speaking world, what is significant about the city's obvious pride in its Kurdish identity is that it has given Diyarbakir the confidence to blend itself into the fabric of modern Turkey, more so than some expect; these days the Diyarbakirians here are just as likely to speak Turkish as Kurdish, and they do so with a unique accent.

And as visitors soon discover, for the most part Diyarbakir (population 592,557) is a likeable and surprisingly progressive city, with some worthwhile monuments, a thriving university, lively restaurants and atmospheric old tea-houses. Walking down the streets of old town, you may find students befriending you in order to practise their English and they will point out the finer points of Kurdish dress, the nuances of the Zaza and Kurmanji, and even which Kurdish cassettes are especially worth hearing.

Most tourists are naturally drawn to the old city, encircled by huge walls of black stone and overlooking the quiet Hevsel Gardens and farmlands of the Tigris Valley to the east. It's possible to ascend various sections of the wall for great views of the surrounding countryside as well as the bustling streets within the old city. Here you will also find a number of attractive old mosques as well as two fully opened churches and some ruined ones, bearing mute witness to the now largely vanished Christian community. Things seemed more multicultural to the traveller Edmund Naumann, visiting in 1890, who described seeing "dervishes in fantastic clothes, religious Keldanimen [Chaldean Christians]... Turks and Christians and still many others... An Armenian shoe shop, with red, yellow and green leathers at the front and a lot of Armenians working inside was beautiful enough to inspire one to point." Today the diversity is less obvious, though it is there in the presence of Kurmanji- and Zazaki-speaking Kurds, ethnic Turkish students and a small Arab minority. Despite a surprising amount of modern architecture, there are still districts of old houses and alleyways. Also visible are the remnants of shantytowns that sprang up after a massive influx of Kurds from the countryside caused by the troubles



Photo taken in 1873. On the right a Kurd from Cizre, Center, a Kurd of Mardin and a shepherd from Diyarbakir ^[7]

Dağkapı tower ⁽⁸⁾

of recent decades, though these are now gradually being removed.

The effects of that influx are also evident in the new city, whose high-rise neighbourhoods sprawl to the west and north of the city walls. Few tourists spend much time here, but it's worth having a look around the bustling *Ofis* area, in particular the restaurants and cafés of *Sanat Sokağı* (Art Street). All in all, Diyarbakır deserves a stay of at least a couple of days, though you'll get a much better appreciation of the place if you can hang around for double that time.

After Newroz (see p.248), organised by Municipality, Diyarbakır's Culture and Art Festival is the city's main festival and attracts some international performers. Over the space of a week in late May/early June events are held at dozens of venues in the city centre – including in the open-air near Dağ Kapı – and in other towns in the province. The programme features concerts, film screenings, folkloric dances, shows involving acrobats and clowns, and so forth, and there also panel discussions and seminars on the art and literature of the region.

Dağ Kapı to Mardin Kapı

Gazi Cad, the main north–south thoroughfare in the old city, connects Dağ Kapı (the north gate in the city walls) with Mardin Kapı (the south gate) over a distance of just under 1500m. This section covers the two gates plus attractions along, or just off, Gazi Cad.

Dağ Kapı (Deriyê Çiyê)

You're bound to pass through Dağ Kapı (called Harput Kapı in the past), the

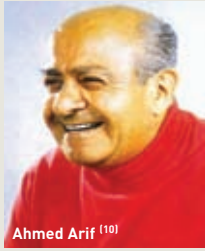
Diyarbakır city centre, Ofis ⁽⁹⁾

Some prominent people from Diyarbakir

Among many figures from the arts to have come from Diyarbakir is the poet

Ahmed Arif, born here in 1927.

He studied philosophy at Ankara University and was arrested on political grounds in 1950, serving two years in prison. His fame derives from just one anthology, *Hasretinden Prangalar Eskittim*, which became highly popular after its publication in 1968. He died in 1991. Also prominent was the writer and poet **Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı** (Huseyin Cahit), born in Diyarbakir in 1910. Educated in Istanbul, he learned French in school and started to read the poems of French poets such as Baudelaire and Verlaine. Eventually he went to study politics in Paris, where he worked as an announcer on a Turkish-language station; returning to Turkey, he did some work for the state as an interpreter. His poems tended to be about death and desolation; his most well-known work is



Ahmed Arif ⁽¹⁰⁾

Yaş 35. He died in 1956 and is buried in Ankara.

Another of the city's literary figures is the Armenian writer **Mıgırdiç Margosyan**, born in the Hançepök quarter of the old city in 1938. He has written

short stories in Armenian, published in the award-winning collection *Mer Ayt Goğmen* ("My Hometown"), and often describes the life of Armenians in Diyarbakir and their relations with other groups. He continues to work as a columnist with national newspapers. Another



Mıgırdiç Margosyan ⁽¹¹⁾

Armenian writer from the city is Jaklin Çelik, born here in 1968, though she went to Istanbul as a child. She was the editor of the well-known Turkish-Armenian newspaper, *Agos*, and in her writing she tries to illustrate that Armenians aren't foreign to this

terrain, and that all tribes and creeds face the same issues and can try to solve their problems in solidarity.

northern gate, at some point: the area around contains numerous hotels and restaurants, and the tourist office is in the square just outside. The gate is placed between two cylindrical towers and consists of an arch with two columns bearing reliefs of various animals as well as several inscriptions including one in Latin from the time of Roman Emperor Valentinianus and one in Greek from the reign of Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II. The upper floor houses a small prayer area of Mervanian provenance, while the ground floor and the basement of this two storey structure are used as an art

gallery and tourist office. On the south side of the gate is a pilgrimage site containing the graves of Sahat Bini Vakkas and Ebulmuhsin.

Nebi Camii

This much-visited mosque is located in northern west of the crossroad where Gazi and İnönü Streets intersect in İnönü Quarter. The minaret, according to the inscription on it, was built by a local butcher named Hacı Hüseyin in 1530. This mosque has a spacious courtyard somehow larger than the mosque itself. The portico is decorated

Some prominent people from Diyarbakır



Ayşe Şan (12)

One famous face you may see in Diyarbakır in photos displayed around town is that of **Ayşe Şan**, born in 1938 into a family where the men were *dengbêjs*. She started to sing at a tea garden in 1963 and quickly made a name for herself, but restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language made it difficult for her to record commercially. A Jewish man from Istanbul, Albert Mesulum, decided to take a risk and got her to record four songs, two in Turkish and two in Kurdish so as not to attract accusations of favouring “separatism”. It was an immediate success and after that she made many records, though these were banned after the military coup of March. Ayşe Şan left for Germany in 1971 where she lived for 3 years; subsequently she went to live in northern Iraq before returning to Turkey to live in İzmir. She died in 1996, but is still fondly remembered as the first female singer in Turkey to record in Kurdish.

Bavê Şukrî **Şukrî's Father**

*Hawer delal,
hawer delal tu delal î kuro
Hawer delal,
hawer delal tu delal î kuro
Come, come to me
you the handsome man
Come, come to me
you the handsome man
Delal qurban migo, çem û çemê Bişêriyê
Wî delal qurban mî dî keleşçiya
kelek vala berda dî gemiyê
Wî delal qurban migo, koloz xweş e
lo li ber kofiyê
Wî delal qurban migo zewac xweş e
li zozanê jorin li koçeriyê
Ax hawer delal, hawer delal,
hawer delal tu delal î kuro*

*I said "May I sacrifice my head for you
my handsome man"
River, the Besiri River
"May I sacrifice my head for you
my handsome man?"
The river drivers' empty rafts are
following a ship
I said " May I sacrifice my head for
you my handsome man"
Conical hat would be good with coif
I said " May I sacrifice my head for
you my handsome man"
Marriage is good at uplands, nomadic life...
Oh Come, come to me you the handsome man*

It is a sad song by a woman in love with a married man. To be with her beloved one, the woman is even ready to be his second wife, but she never accomplishes her wish.

with colourful mosaics. Featuring alternating bands of black and white stone, the mosque also has a hexagonal, elevated roof where you would expect the dome to be. The *mihrab* is decorated with tiles, while the minaret was built in its current spot at the start of the 20th century, partly with material from the original minaret which was demolished. The importance of the minaret is that it represents a bridge between Akkoyunlu and Ottoman styles.

By the south wall of the mosque is a tomb built by governor Köprülüzade

Abdullah Paşa in 1718 for his wife Zübeyde Hanım and daughter Leyla Hanım; one Hacı Abdullah Bey is also buried here. Built of black stone, the tomb is square in plan and has arches screened by iron grilles on all four sides.

Opposite the mosque on the east side of Gazi Cad is a street which leads east to the İckale (see p: 228).

Vahap Ağa Hamamı

In Telgrafhane Sok. a little way south of the Nebi Mosque, this disused 16th- or 17th-century hamam is on the west



Vahap Ağa Hamam ⁽¹³⁾

side of Gazi Cad opposite the police station. It's said that in the past, all new visitors to the city were required to take a bath in one of the hamams, and for this purpose hamams were placed close to all the four main city gates. These days, however, most of the hamams are disused, though some are due for restoration.

Stone blocks have been used for the areas close to entrance and uncut stones for the other parts. The changing room is divided into three

sections, the side areas being covered with barrel vaults while there is a dome over the central section. The warm room is likewise domed. An area of private cubicles has a marble pool in its centre and a couple of iwans.

Hasan Pasha Han

You can't miss this han, with its alternating black and white stone stripes; it's the most well known of several hans in the city which were basically caravanserais, and is located on the east side of Gazi Cad about 100m south of the Nebi Mosque. The han was built between 1572 and 1575 by Hasan Pasha, the son of provincial governor Sokullu Mehmet Paşa. Simeon of Poland, a traveller who visited in 1612, wrote that the han "had two stables for 500 horses, a gorgeous

fountain and several stone chambers on three floors". He also described the upper floor as having many sleeping quarters, while adjacent to han was a bazaar for jewellers, knife-



Hasan Paşa Han ⁽¹⁴⁾



A view from Hasan Paşa Han ⁽¹⁵⁾

makers, shoemakers and other craftsmen.

The *han* was recently restored and is now basically a collection of souvenir shops and galleries, open till late, tucked into the various small rooms lining the aisles around the spacious courtyard. Even if you don't want to buy anything, it's worth a visit just to admire the all-pervading striped stonework and to pace up and down the numerous narrow flights of steps that give access to the upper floor. From above you get a good view over the atmospheric courtyard with its central fountain, covered with a cupola.



Gold Bazaar⁽¹⁶⁾

The Gold Bazaar

Just south of Hasan Paşa Hanı is the gold bazaar (*Kuyumcular Çarşısı* in Turkish or *Bazara zêfiroşan* in Kurdish), perhaps unsurprisingly the smartest bazaar in Diyarbakır. Until 1987 this was an area where meat was sold; now you'll find a number of stores selling beautiful gold and silver jewellery. The silversmiths are peerless masters in making silver jugs and goldsmiths are just as skilful at making traditional women's jewellery. Further in are more bazaars, covered on p:210.

Çifte Han (Bursa Hanı)

Another *han* is located 50m south of Hasan Paşa Han and opposite the Ulu Cami; look for it on the east side of Gazi Cad in the Dabanoğlu quarter, specifically Çiftehan Sok, which is packed with restaurants and shops. Said to date back to the 16th century, this was once two *hans* built of basalt blocks; İnciciyan, an Armenian writer who visited Diyarbakır in the 18th century, wrote in 1804 that this was

the largest *han* in the city. One *han* was demolished in 1940 for a road to be built, while the ground floor of the remaining building was converted into shops, though today it is occupied by a teahouse. The floor above comprises porticos behind which the sleeping quarters were located; now it is in state of disrepair awaiting restoration.

Ulu Cami (Mizgefta Mezin)

On the west side of Gazi Cad opposite the two *hans* is Diyarbakır's Ulu Cami, which introduces itself with an entrance portal on which appears a depiction of a lion attacking a bull. The mosque is said to have been converted from the Mar Toma Church after the city was conquered by the Arabs in 639, in fact it was first constructed as a pagan temple. The geographer al-Muqqadasi mentioned a Great Mosque in the city at the end of the 10th century. Also the Persian traveller Nasir-i Khusraw wrote about this mosque which he saw in 1046, though his description does not match the mosque standing now. The earliest inscriptions on the mosque make clear



Ulu Cami sun clock⁽¹⁷⁾



A view from Ulu Cami, courtyard ⁽¹⁸⁾

that it began to be rebuilt in 1091/92 during the reign of the Seljuk Melikşah. Earlier on in his reign, some additions were made to the Great Mosque of Damascus, which may be why the plan of Diyarbakir's Ulu Cami bears a striking similarity to the Great Mosque in Damascus.



Lion and bull figure, over entrance door ⁽¹⁹⁾

Marble columns with reliefs and lavish decorations, most probably from the Roman period, the fountain with octagonal pillars and the sundial are the most striking parts of the complex, but everything is in complete harmony despite being a blend of the work of different civilisations over time (an American traveller from New York who stayed in Diyarbakir in the 1850s described the mosque as "more European than oriental"). Many Kufic inscriptions record in detail the rebuilding and various additions made to the complex throughout its long history.

The complex includes the Mesudiye and Zinciriye Madrasas and once had sections intended for followers of each of the four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence to perform their worships separately. Once upon the time the mosque had separate prayers halls for all the four main school of Sunni Islam; these days there is a small section for the Shafi'i's while a larger section is set aside for Hanafis. Next to the two main fountains is a square space with wooden benches where local men come to seek advice from the imams. Look out also for the square marble sundial in the courtyard, which is of Roman origin.

On the square opposite the mosque's main door are number of popular teahouses, where large groups of men gather to chat and street pedlars hawk perfumes and religious booklets – an especially photogenic scene. Just northwest of the mosque is the Cahit

Mesudiye madrasah^[20]

Sitki Tarancı Museum (see p: 230), but having seen the mosque it makes sense to continue with the two adjacent madrasahs before you visit the museum.

South of the Ulu Cami is the “Burnt Bazaar” (see p: 210).

Mesudiye Madrasah

The construction of this two-storey stone madrasah, by the northwest corner of the mosque, started in 1194 and was completed in 1223 by the Artukid Ruler Melik Mesut; it is open in the afternoon and can be entered from the mosque courtyard or via a separate entrance, though you may need to knock. This is one of the contenders for the oldest university in Anatolia, teaching subjects including medicine, astronomy, science, literature and philosophy. The stone columns placed on either side of

the mihrab can jiggle in the event of any slight tremor, giving warning of earthquakes. The columns offer a different view of the *mihrab* located in the South of the courtyard.

In the north of the structure is the gate leading to a cross-vaulted courtyard with an iwan that is different from the rest of the building in that it is built of limestone. The courtyard has two-storey porticos separated with friezes, but unusually the porticos do not have rooms behind them.

Rolling Stone columns^[21]

Zinciriyé Madrasah

By the southwest corner of the mosque is the Zinciriyé madrasah, which can be reached via the back door of the mosque; you will find the madrasah with its large iron grilles on your left. It is a 12th-century construction, built by either a king named Salih Necmettin or by one



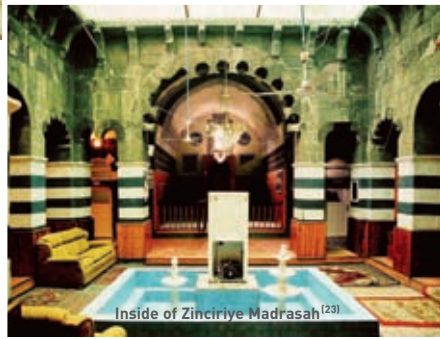
Zirciriye Madrasah⁽²²⁾

Ebu İsa Dirhem, depending on which source you believe, and was used as a madrasah right up until World War I, when it served as a shelter for the poor. Later it was for a time the home of the Archaeology Museum; today it is a place where female students take Koranic classes, and men cannot enter the building.

Built of stone blocks, it is distinguished from other Anatolian madrasahs in that its facade is relatively plain. The courtyard has been covered with a glass dome and converted into a salon with a small pool while the yard is surrounded with student rooms. There is a domed room in the left corner of the courtyard and two barrel-vaulted rooms on either side of main *iwan*, which is the most prominent part of the structure. In front of the madrasah is a stone fountain of the same age as the building.

The “Burnt Bazaar” (Çarşıya Şewitî)

South of the Ulu Cami is the *Yanık Çarşı* (Çarşıya Şewitî in Kurdish) or “Burnt Bazaar”, which acquired this name after a fire some years ago, though it used to be called *Espahî Çarşısı* or “Soldier Bazaar”. Here you will find shoes and slippers on sale,



Inside of Zirciriye Madrasah⁽²³⁾

and there are also small stores selling traditional clothes, spices, tea, henna, scarves, carpets and *kilims*; at the end of the bazaar is a small section selling good quality local tobacco. You will also find people selling secondhand clothes, and some stores sell old electronic goods as well. By the wall of Ulu Mosque are some larger stores where you can find different kind of household goods and gift shops popular with tourists. Located in the square is the old Wheat Bazaar, now turned into furniture and carpet stores. Visiting in 1881, the traveller Amand Von Schwieger-Lerchenfeld mentioned that the bazaars featured plenty of European products imported from Aleppo in Syria, adding that “the best leather comes from Hamedan [in Iran], cotton from Azerbaijan, shawls from Kerman and Mashhad [in Iran],

The Burnt Bazaar (Çarşıya Şewitî)^[24]Saddler^[25]

Deve Hamamı and the Cheese Bazaar

Beyond the major junction of Gazi Cad with Melik Ahmet Cad is the disused *Deve Hamamı*, on the south side of Gazi Cad about 300m from the junction with Melik Ahmet Cad. Said to have been built between 1520 and 1540, it was referred to as the “large hamam” on account of its size; a tale relates that a lost camel from a caravan was found here after a search of several days, causing people to name this the *deve hamamı* (deve means “camel”), now amended to *deva* (“remedy”).

The hamam has four *iwans* and is accessed through a cross-vaulted gate

and world-famous beautiful carpets from Kermanshah [in Iran]”. Today many goods you’ll find are, unsurprisingly perhaps, from China, though there are still textiles and carpets from Iran, as well as clothes from İstanbul.

If you leave the bazaar by heading out to Melik Ahmet Cad (the main west-east street in the old city) you will come across some saddler’s workshops. Traditionally saddle-making has been an important local industry, and the consumers are people in nearby villages. The saddles are stuffed with a material known locally as *cil*. Soft layers of felt and haircloth are then placed on top of the stuffing material so that the saddle does not hurt the animal’s back.

Spice Shops^[26]

as the one on the main street is closed. On the right side of the landing is the entrance into the changing rooms plus the warm and hot rooms. The changing room contains a stone pool and is covered by a dome 14m



across resting on an octagonal drum with eight windows. A chimney between the changing room and warm room used to vent steam. In the middle of the structure is the massage platform, which used to be made of marble though what you see now is concrete from a renovation.

Just south of the hamam is the *Peynirciler Çarşısı*, Diyarbakır's Cheese Bazaar, to which villagers bring all kinds of cheese and yogurt in the early hours. The smell of fresh cheese and yogurt is amazing, and other items suitable for breakfast, such as honey and butter, are also sold.

Deliller Han

On the east side of the road close to Mardin gate is Deliller Han, built by the Ottoman governor Hüsref Paşa in 1527 (and also called Hüsref Paşa Han). Occupying a large area, the complex is where the *deliller*, people who led groups of pilgrims to Mecca, used to assemble. It is built of black and white stone and once comprised a one-storey building housing the stables, and a two-storey main building, whose upper floor housed the

sleeping quarters. Barrel-vaulted shops lined the street, including the front part of stable, down to Mardin Gate.

Having been thoroughly refurbished, the complex is now home to the five-star *Hotel Grand Kervansaray*, with rooms on both floors. The courtyard is an open-air restaurant; the stable is a restaurant too.

The Tomb and Fountain of Sultan Suça

Facing the *Hotel Grand Kervansaray* is the *Sultan Şuca Türbesi*, built of stone and with a pyramidal roof. There is not an inscription on the tomb itself, but there is one on the fountain in front of the tomb, bearing his name and the date 1208–1209. The tomb has undergone several renovations and no longer contains a sarcophagus.

Opposite is a fountain made up of black basalt with three small decorative niches above the tap and some Kufic inscriptions. The cemetery just outside the Mardin Gate gets crowded on Thursday and Friday evenings, and the fountain comes in handy not only for people to quench their thirst but also to collect water for watering the plants around the tombs of their loved ones.

Ömer Şeddad Camii

Unusually, this mosque is built inside the city walls right next to Mardin Kapı.



The tomb of Sultan Şuca^[28]



Although this mosque is called Hazreti Ömer Camii by locals, there is no connection between the building and the Caliph Omar.

It is said that there were once several gates at this spot, but one of them was closed by Muslim armies when they conquered the city, and converted into a mosque. If you look at the back wall from the interior of the mosque, you can still see the arches of a gate. The mosque has a small green courtyard and boasts beautiful Kûfic calligraphy on its main door and right-hand-side.

Mardin Kapı (Deriyê Mêrdînê)

This was the most strategically important of the city's gates as most attacks tended to come from the south. The section of walls in which it sits was partly destroyed after the conquest of the city by Caliph Murtezyd Billah on the grounds that this area was hideout for rebels. The gate was restored by one Ahmed El Amidi, a local engineer, in 909-910 according to the inscription.

With the construction of new orbital roads, Mardin Gate no longer receives





Diyarbakir city walls ^[31]



Praying in Sarı Saltık ^[32]

a lot of traffic, though many villagers enter this way to sell their produce in the city. It's worth taking some time to view the enormous metal doors still kept in good condition. Note there are animal figures, stars and Kufic calligraphy on the right hand side of the gate.

Placed just outside Mardin Gate, near the cemetery, is the Hatun Fountain (sometimes called Hatun Kastalı), built of square stone blocks. The fountain is no longer used, but you can still see slots through which water once flowed. Also just outside is the gate is the *Yıldız* Tea Garden, a good spot for a refreshing cup of tea. For some sights further south from here, see the "South of the city walls" section on p: 239.

Urfa Kapı to Yeni Kapı

The first part of the walk east from Urfa Kapı, the main west gate in the city walls, is straightforward, taking you along the main Melik Ahmet Cad to the intersection with Gazi Cad. However, the route further east to Yeni Kapı, the old city's eastern gate, involves following a narrow lane that bends slightly on its way to the old city's far wall. This section covers attractions along, or just off, this west-east route across the old city.

Urfa Kapı (Derîyê Ruhayê)

Urfa Kapı is one of the busiest gates, as it is traversed by a busy road into the old city. Considered the best preserved of the gates, it has three portals, one of which is for pedestrians to pass through. According to the inscription on the northern portal, it was renovated by the Artukid Ruler Sultan Mehmet in 1183 and an iron gate with double doors on which human and animal figures are depicted was added. This portal is said to have been used only by imperial military expeditions only, and was otherwise closed.



Urfa Kapı (Urfa gate) (33)

The street on the right (south) of the gate as you enter from outside the walls is the so-called Turistik Cad, which curves past a park area beneath the city walls on the way to Mardin Kapı.

The Tomb of Sarı Saltık

At the western end of Melik Ahmet Cad opposite Urfa Kapı is this octagonal tomb built of stone blocks, with a pyramidal roof. Though it doesn't contain a sarcophagus, it is a popular pilgrimage site for both men and women, and old men holding the Koran nearby may offer to read a prayer on your behalf for a small consideration. Adjacent is the lodge of the Gülşeniler Dervishes.

Melik Ahmet Paşa Camii

A short walk east along Melik Ahmet Cad from the gate will bring you to this two-storey mosque on the left, which was built in the late sixteenth century and was designed by the master architect Mimar Sinan, famous for the Blue Mosque in



The iron gate of Urfa Kapı (34)

İstanbul. The mosque is accessed via an abbara, an arched passageway. The ground-level areas facing Melik Ahmet Cad are used as shops, while the facade facing the courtyard is used as a place of prayer in winter. The balcony inside the second floor is used by women and partitioned with wooden screens called *şahnîşin* in Turkish. Walls throughout the mosque have been covered with a band of blue tiles about one



A detail from Melik ahmed Paşa Camii (35)



Dicle Firat culture and art centre^[36]

metre in height. Another feature of the mosque is its minaret with double staircases inside.

Safa (İpartlı /Palo) Camii and Muslihiddin Lari Madrasah

This black basalt mosque is located more or less halfway down Melik Ahmet Cad and just north of the street in the İskender Paşa quarter.

The mosque is thought to have been built in the second half of the 14th century by the Akkoyunlu Ruler Uzun Hasan. The women's section is decorated with tiles making a water-wave pattern and different designs and in East and south located a small cemetery. The minaret is nicely decorated with inscriptions and stonework from the base to the tip.

In the courtyard is the 14th-century Muslihiddin Lari Madrasah (*Mizgefta Palo u Medresa Muslihiddin in Kurdish*), which doesn't look so very different to other buildings of this type from the outside, though the interior turns out to be highly decorated: the walls are partly covered with blue tiles, while the *minbar* and *mihrab* are made of black marble. The ornate ceiling is supported by four huge columns of

cubical basalt blocks. The octagonal tomb in the back belongs to Muslihiddin Lari, who taught in a madrasah and was the author of several books.

Dicle Firat Culture and Arts Centre

This centre, *Navenda Çand û Hunerê ya Dicle Firatê in Kurdish* (0412 229 0926, www.diclefirat.org), was opened with support of municipalities and NGOs several years ago in a traditional house in the Ziya Gökalp quarter, north of Melik Ahmet Cad and opposite the sign for the Mala Dengbêj (see p: 235). The house, which was used as a place where salt was stored and sold and named *Mehmetoğlu İshani*, is more than 400 years old and typifies the old residences of Diyarbakır, with its big inner courtyard, pool and areas for summer and winter use. Besides playing host to theatre, music and dance workshops and courses, the centre is a great place to have tea in its open courtyard and chat with young locals.



A detail from Dicle Firat culture and art center^[37]

Ziya Gökalp Museum

Behind the Dicle Firat Arts Centre is the Ziya Gökalp Museum (0412 221 27 55), another traditional house built in 1806 of basalt. The two-storey building



Ziya Gökalp Museum^[38]

is where the sociologist and writer Ziya Gökalp was born in 1876, and was converted into a museum in 1956, housing a collection of the writer's personal belongings and documents. Access is through a wooden gate into the courtyard surrounded by iwans and with a pool and a black statue of Ziya Gökalp himself. Labels in Arabic and old Ottoman Turkish above the doors give some of the history behind the house. The museum is open daily (except Monday) from 7.30am until noon and from 1.30pm to 5pm.

Aşefçiler Çarşısı (Çarşıya Eşefçiyân)

On the south side of Melik Ahmet Cad a little closer to the intersection with Gazi Cad is another bazaar called Aşefçiler Çarşısı, in narrow Ocak Sok. Popular with villagers from the surrounding area, this sells a mixture of spices, dried foods and clothes.

Melik Ahmet Hamam

Opposite the arcade called Avrupa Pasajı is this disused stone hamam, built between 1564 and 1567 on the south side of Melik Ahmet Cad. The main portal, of white stone, leads into the structure through a cusped vault. At the corners of the portal are pillars

with geometric motifs and beautiful masonry work. The octagonal dome, whose windows and lantern illuminate the place, is enhanced by the addition of several smaller domes. The other portal leads into the changing room. The massage platform, which used to be marble, has been replaced with a concrete version.

Four-legged Minaret and Şeyh Mutahhar Camii

Cross the busy intersection of Melik Ahmet Cad and Gazi Cad and you find yourself in a narrow street which will eventually take you to Yeni Kapı. Close to the start of this street, on the right, is this square-planned mosque in the Şavaş quarter. It was built by the Akkoyunlu Sultan Kasım in 1500, as mentioned in the inscription. The lead-coated single dome is unusual among Anatolian mosques.

The curious Four-legged Minaret (*Dört Ayaklı Minare* in Turkish, *Minara Çarling* in Kurdish) is quite separate



The Kırks of Diyarbakır (Kırıklar/ Qirixên Amedê)

Kırks used to be a common feature of Diyarbakır's street life. These men –ranging from youths to middle-aged– were once like vigilantes, enforcing law and order and in some cases managing to extort money from the rich to donate to the poor. They were regarded as trustworthy and were looked upon by locals with a mixture of fear and admiration. Their stronghold was the Hançepak (Xançepêk) area of the old town (around the Four-legged Minaret), but these days they are on the wane, though a few can still be seen about. The classic image of *Kırık* is of men strutting about with their jackets over their left shoulder as though aping characters from a 1970s movie, and wearing shoes whose heels are deliberately folded down so that the shoes act almost like clogs and pro-

duce a loud clomp with every step. Among other stereotypical characteristics of *kırks* are that they greet one another by putting their hands on the left side of their chest and love fiddling with rosary beads as well as keeping pigeons; liver *kebab* is meant to be their favourite food, and they use slang terms such as *anqût* (foolish), *gûndî* (illiterate/ villager – used jokingly as an insult) and *kene* (money).



from the Şeyh Mutahhar Camii, the minaret was built by the Akkoyunlu Sultan Kasım in 1500 and is square in plan. The alternating bands of black and white stones are not surprising, but what is unusual is that the base of the minaret consists of four slender pillars in between which a person can easily walk – and it is believed that anyone who walks through the base seven times will have his or her wishes granted. The pillars are said to represent the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence, while the body of the minaret represents the unity of Islam.

The Mar Petyun Chaldean Catholic Church (Keldani Kilisesi)

A little further east from the Four-legged Minaret, this 17th-century church in Şeftali Sok (Savaş quarter) is one of only two functioning churches in Diyarbakır (the date 1834 in an inscrip-



A view of Surp Giragos Armenian Church ⁽⁴⁴⁾

tion represents a date when restoration took place). Built of black basalt, with columns painted white, it has three naves and five apses decorated with plant motifs. Some masses are held in this church by a handful of Chaldean Christians. The church is open daily from 9am to 6pm.

Surp Giragos Armenian Church

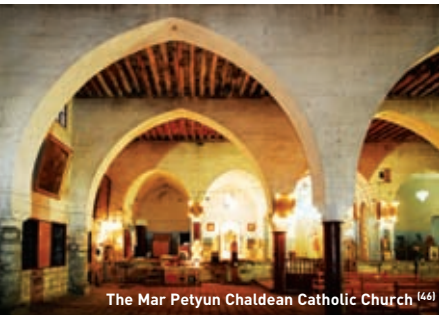
On a narrow alleyway called Göcmen Sokak opposite the Four-legged Minaret (Savaş quarter), this church was built between 1515 and 1518, and had to be rebuilt in 1888 after being gutted by fire. Built of black basalt, the church used to have a magnificent



Surp Giragos Armenian Church ⁽⁴⁵⁾

five-storey Gothic bell tower, but it was demolished in 1916 as it was higher than the Four-legged Minaret. At the start of World War I the church was used as German army headquarters. Later it was used as a state military depot and a warehouse for the Sümerbank Textile Company until, in 1960, it was handed over to the Armenian community.

Visiting in 1615, Simeon of Poland wrote: "One tradition I liked was that leaders of rites gave plenty of offerings to all priests according to their rank, and after the ceremony they invite



The Mar Petyun Chaldean Catholic Church ⁽⁴⁶⁾



Esmâ Ocak House, living room^[47]

them to dine with them at theirs. These people also offer delicious foods that I didn't see even in İstanbul or Aleppo... It's impossible to drink more than one glass of sweet and dark Ergani wine, offered with various *kebabs*, pastries or other delicacies.”

The church is large but is basically derelict and roofless. The altar and the baptismal font on the right of the church can still be seen. The family who lives here acts as the caretakers and are happy to let visitors in and may even guide you around.

Esmâ Ocak Köşkü

Just opposite the Surp Giragos Armenian Church is an old traditionally styled house Göçmen Sokak no. 17, Savaş quarter) which originally

belonged to an Armenian named Yemenici Baboş, who made hand-printed headscarves. Researcher-writer Esmâ Ocak, who has written several books about Diyarbakır, bought and restored the house and then handed it over to officials so that the place could become a tourist attraction.

Fully furnished, the house is built of black basalt and boasts a courtyard with pool, common areas and guest rooms on the ground floor, a large store-room in the basement (which also has a bedroom used for naps on hot summer days) and many rooms on the upper floor. There are also four iwans, one of which is upstairs. The house is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 8am to 7pm.



Esmâ Ocak House^[48]

Diyarbakır Houses



Diyarbakır traditional house⁽⁴⁹⁾

Traditional houses in Diyarbakır are two-storey structures built of black basalt and with a courtyard. Iwans with columns are mostly placed to the south and north of the courtyard, around which are communal areas such as the kitchen, as well as some bedrooms for guests. Stone stairs lead to the upstairs rooms, which are more private. Rooms upstairs tend to have high ceilings covered with wooden roofs which are protected by roofing tiles. North-facing rooms are used in summer and south-facing ones in winter. A sloping roof prevents the snow accumulate for long in winter. The blocks of basalt are edged with a white plaster called *cis* that contrasts with the dark stone. Windows have decora-



A door knocker from a Diyarbakır house⁽⁵⁰⁾

tive niches where lamps or framed pictures can be placed, and railings (*gezemek*) that prevent children from falling out accidentally. Upstairs there are small balconies called *cumba* where flowerpots can be displayed.

Paşa Hamam

Beyond the four-legged minaret, continue east up Yenikapı Sok and some 200m further on you will find this disused hamam on the left in the Hançepek quarter. The hamam was built under provincial governor Behram Paşa in 1564–1567, hence its name. There are entrances in the south and west, and a central conical roof of brick placed on an octagonal drum, with light furnished by a lantern as well as windows. In the middle is what would have been the massage area.

Dicle University

Looking east from Yeni Kapı, you will see some modern buildings close to the eastern horizon, on hilly land sloping up on the far side of the Tigris. Some of these are part of Dicle University, which has its origins in a medical faculty opened in 1966. A science faculty was opened in 1974, at which time the name Diyarbakır University came to be used, and the institution was affiliated to Ankara University. In 1982 the university became independent and acquired its present name. The university has produced a number of the city's politicians and other notables, and provides an opportunity for cultural and academic exchanges with students from western Turkey. The university has an outdoor restaurant, near a large pool called *Havuzbaşı*, serving a wide range of food and alcoholic drinks.

Yeni Kapı (Derîyê Nû)

This is the only one of the major city gates that can be a little hard to find, as it is right at the far end of the town overlooking the Tigris. If you get this far, you will have walked the narrow Yenikapı Sok east from the Four-legged Minaret through low-rise neighbourhoods quite unlike the rather bland modern architecture that dominates much of Gazi Cad. The houses here are not unlike those in rural Moroccan or Egyptian towns, with roughly plastered walls often painted brown, blue or green. When you reach the end of the lane you will need to turn left (north) and continue a short way to reach Yeni Kapı (use to be called Su Kapısı).

This gate with a single portal was originally built by the Byzantines. However according to other sources, when Marwanids took over the city of Diyarbakır in 997, the first thing they did was to fortify the walls of İckale, which were destroyed by Büveyhis, and build up a palace on the eastern walls overlooking the Tigris. They also built up Yeni Kapı to reach the water of the Tigris. One of the inscriptions in Ulu Camii, dated 1240, refers to it as "Water Gate". Although the walls to the right of the gate are in ruins, the sections to the left are still in good shape.

Locals cooking bread near by Yeni kapı⁽⁵¹⁾



Diyarbakır city walls^[52]

The City Walls (Bedena Diyarbakır)

Deterring uninvited guests from attacking the old city, Diyarbakır's city walls never fail to arrest your gaze as you approach the city centre. Built of dark basalt, they are an impressive 5.5km long, 10–12m high and 3.5m thick, enclosing an area that stretches 1700m from west to east and 1300m from north to south. Among several gates in the walls are four main gates at the cardinal points, officially Harput Kapı (north), Rum Kapı (west), Teli Kapı (south) and Dicle Kapı (east), though everyone calls them Dağ Kapı, Urfa Kapı, Mardin Kapı and Yeni Kapı respectively. There are other gates, rather small, not far from Dağ Kapı called Çift Kapı and Tek Kapı, built in the 1960s to answer the growing city traffic.

The city was first encircled by walls in 3000 BC by the Hurrians, and the walls were renewed and enlarged partly by Romans and then by the Byzantines in 330–377. The walls in the southwest

are from the time of the Seljuks and Artukids. The Harput and Mardin Gates were rebuilt by the Abbasids Caliph al-Muktadir in 909 after being demolished. The Seljuks built four towers on the western section, while the Artukids made many significant additions, including the Ulu Beden and Yedi Kardeş Towers. In the 16th century, the Ottomans extended some of the fortifications.

In the early part of the last century, the local governor planned to knock down the walls in various places so as to allow the city some breathing spacing. Fortunately Dr Albert Gabriel, a French

Local resting in the park by the walls^[53]



Selling local juice celled meyan ^[54]

researcher who was visiting the city in 1932, sent a telegram to the Ministry of Education and managed to get this attack on the city's historical fabric stopped. The walls have since undergone a partial facelift that has included the creation of green spaces beneath the walls and the creation of large ornamental heart-shaped cavities in certain areas.

There are some interesting views of the city and the Tigris if you care to walk along the top of the walls, though you should probably avoid doing so if you don't have a head for heights, as there are no safety railings or parapets. If you do head up, it is worth bringing water and a hat in hot

weather, and a torch may come in handy for the interiors of the gate-towers. The best stretch of wall to walk is that between Urfa Kapı and Mardin Kapı; it is in reasonable condition and the area abutting the inside of the wall here, bounded by Turistik Cad at ground level, has been converted into a green space popular for evening picnics in hot weather and with some play facilities for children. If you fancy glimpsing life in the oldest parts of the old city, continue beside the wall from Mardin Kapı towards Yeni Kapı and Dağ Kapı.

In what follows we describe the most interesting towers in the walls anti-clockwise, starting from Dağ Kapı. (The gates themselves are covered in the earlier sections "Dağ Kapı to Mardin Kapı" and "Urfa Kapı to Yeni Kapı".) You might think that the best way to see the towers is to walk through them on a circuit of the city walls, but in fact you can't see many of the details unless you are at street level. The towers can be polygonal, cylindrical or rectangular, and usually contain several storeys once used as barracks or stores.



Diyarbakir in old days ^[55]



A detail from Evli Beden Tower ^[56]

Dağ Kapı Tower (Birca Deriyê Çiyê)

The powers who have ruled the city over the years have left their mark on this tower, whether in the form of an inscription, a symbol or plant and animal motifs (note the particularly striking motifs, in which pigeons are especially common). Inscriptions mentioning various renovations are mostly placed at the entrance. The iron gate, nicely adorned, was used to be closed at sunset and opened at dawn. Inside the main tower is a book shop.

Selçuklu Tower (Birca Selçukîyan)

This Seljuk tower is south of Ulu Beden Tower and bears motifs such as deer antlers, lions and pigeons, resembling those on the Nur Tower further south.

Evli Beden Tower (Birca Bedena Mezin)

In the southwest of the city walls, this is the largest of the towers and not a bad spot to commence a walk along the top of the walls. The tower, built by the Artukids in 1208 and also called Ulu Beden, has been at various times lived in by the homeless, hence its name, literally "refuge house".

Each of the four storeys has defensive embrasures. The walls have striking inscriptions, and just above these are two double-headed eagles with outstretched wings, and below are four griffins. Lions and griffins are

particularly common on the towers, representing courage and power and acting as protective symbols.

There is a famous song about the tower:

Evli bedende kuş var,
Kanaında gümüş var
Yarım gitti gelmedi
Elbet bunda bir iş var.

*The bird is perching on Evli Beden
Its wing is made of silver
My lover has disappeared
There should be something wrong.*

Yedi Kardeş Tower (Birca Heft Birayan)

This tower, around 400m southwest of Mardin Kapı, was built by the Artukids in 1208. Architecturally it has many similarities with the Evli Beden Tower, including numerous embrasures,



Evli Beden tower ^[57]



Nur tower ^[58]



Yedi Kardeş tower ^[59]

winged lions and inscriptions on the upper sections and but the stonework is more detailed.

According to legend, the local ruler wanted to have two ornamented towers to be built in the south of the city walls. A craftsman was appointed and he decided to build Yedi Kardes



A detail from Yedi Kardeş tower ^[60]

while appointing his apprentice to do Evli Beden. Upon completion of the towers, the emperor and his courtiers inspected them and the emperor chose Evli Beden as superior. This caused the craftsman to commit suicide by throwing himself from the tower, his death also led the apprentice to kill himself, after which it was called Ben û Sen ("Me and You") for a time.

Nur Tower

Located next to Yedi Kardeş Tower, the Nur Tower was built at the behest of the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah in 1089

Keçi tower ^[61]

and designed by Urfalı Muhammed. This is the most richly decorated of the towers, with inscriptions and reliefs including long-horned deer, running horses and a seated naked woman holding her foot with her hand. On the right of the inscription is a pigeon with open wings, below which is another naked female figure; on the left is a predatory bird. The naked women believed to represent fertility. Look out also for the smiling face of the lion on the right of the inscription.

The Keçi Tower (Birca Bizinan)

A little way southeast of the Mardin Gate is the Keçi Tower, which sits atop a rock and offers a commanding view of the Tigris and a large part of the Mesopotamian Plain; it is also the oldest and one of largest of the towers, jutting out 60m from the walls. Said to have been used as a temple, it has been built in 367 by Roman Empire Valentius and it was restored by the Marwanids in 10th century and added as part of the tower. There are eleven bands in this magnificent tower.

Inside Keçi tower ^[62]

The Keçi Tower (also called Kici Burcu by the locals) is sometimes used as a site for exhibitions and poetry readings, and is a popular place with people as its offer good view of the plain and the river, also in evenings a place for couples to spend a few quiet moments together on top of the tower under the moonlight.



İçkale Artuklu Kemer^[63]

İçkale

İçkale (“inner fortress”) is located in the northeast of the walls, on a rocky crag overlooking the Tigris. It has four gates, namely *Saray Kapı*, *Küpelı Kapı*, *Oğrun Kapısı* and *Fetih Kapısı*; you’re most likely to enter through the west gate, *Saray Kapı*. To reach it, you can either head east along İzzetpaşa Cad which starts opposite Nebi Camii (see p: 204) on Gazi Cad, or follow the city walls east from Dağ Kapı, passing a green area beneath the walls, and then head south through a gate in the walls close to İçkale.

A fortress was first built here by the Hurrians, who were the first people to

settle in Diyarbakır. The inner castle separated from the rest of the city with its walls has been hosting governing units of the city since its very existence. It is one of the most significant spots where the historical fabric of the city could survive with many properties including Amida (Virankale) Tumulus, Artuklu Palace and Caravansary, the oldest church of the city dating back to 3rd century, a mosque from the 11th century and various other buildings and structures remaining from the 19th and 20th centuries. During Ottoman times, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who made four visits to Diyarbakır, added 16 towers and two gates. Until a few years ago various government offices were housed here, but now it’s due the fortress to be converted into a tourism site, which will include an exhibition centre, art gallery and museums.

The site is like an open-air museum, housing various historical relics, including the remains of an Artukid palace. The 10m-wide vaulted entrance, Artuklu Kemer, has an inscription mentioning the dates 1206–1207, making it contemporaneous



İçkale^[64]

with the palace. A relief showing a fight between a lion and a bull, on limestone on each side of the vault, is the identical to one at the Ulu Cami.

Walking through the arch into İçkale, you see the tourism office on the right. Also on the left is a stone fountain, called Aslanlı

meaning "with lion" as it bears a lion head. The water would once have run through the lion's mouth, but is now disused. Also here is the Hazreti Süleyman Camii (see below). Further on is a separate building named *Komutan Atatürk Müze Kütüphanesi*, meaning "Commander Atatürk, Library Museum", though it's just a library founded in 1973. Nearby is a large two-storey building which used to be a juvenile court. On the left of this building is another structure used for accommodating army staff. In the northeast corner is St George's Church, behind which are watchtowers at the corners of the walls. The prison is located at the left corner of the church building and facing the adult courthouse.

Stretching from the end of the church towards the gate is a long two-storeys building, which used to be army barracks. In the middle of İçkale

stands a square building which was once an adult courthouse, with a green courtyard surrounded by trees.

In order to protect this historically and culturally critical part of Diyarbakır, İçkale project was jointly launched by Diyarbakır Governorate, Greater Municipality and ÇEKÜL Foundation.



Dındıl hava pool ^[65]

Hazreti Süleyman Camii

Built by Nisanoğlu Ebu Kasım in the mid-12th century, the mosque is also known as the Kale or Nasiriye Mosque, and has entrances in the west and south, and three barrel-vaulted sections inside. The minaret, bearing an inscription with the date 1160, is square in plan and has a number of horizontal mouldings. Unlike other mosques in Diyarbakır, this one has a large number of females attending to pray in a separate section on the left.

A separate entrance leads off from the courtyard to the tombs of Süleyman, the son of Arab Commander Halid bin



İçkale, Jait ^[66]



Hazreti Süleyman Camii ^[67]



Velid, and his warriors who were martyred. Enclosed within metal grilles are the tombs itself, with beautiful decorative woodwork.

St George's Church

St George's Church (Karapapaz) is the largest building here, facing the jail. Born in Ramleh, Palestine in the third century, St George tried to persuade the Roman Emperor Diocletian to convert to Christianity which made the emperor very furious. He is said to have been martyred after barely surviving three episodes of torture.

Most of this beautiful church is built of basalt, while the walls and the arches are of thin red bricks. The church is divided into two parts. One is a large square hall with four columns on either side and a window overlooking the Tigris; the other, larger, section has a dome with a huge ornamented hole resembling a crown, supported by eight white columns. Some sources

say it was used as a hamam during the Artukid era, while others say this building was part of an Artukid palace.

The Virantepe (Amida) Tumulus

In the northwest of İckale is the Virantepe Tumulus, where settlement dates back to Neolithic times. Excavations in the 1960s unearthed the remains of a palace belonging to Artukid Ruler Melik Salih Nasıreddin Mahmud (1200–1222). The coloured stones, the fountain ornamented with mosaics and the pool surrounded by connected iwans are unique in Turkish architecture.

The northwest of the Old City

Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı Museum

Just northwest of Ulu Cami in Ziya Gökalp Sok, Cami-i Kebir quarter is a classic Diyarbakır house where the poet Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı was born in 1910 and spent his childhood. The building was constructed in 1733, and 240 years later it was converted into a museum commemorating the poet, whose personal belongings, correspondence, family photos, books and so forth are displayed here. Built of basalt contrasted with a white material called *cis*, the house has 14 rooms



Saint George church (69)

Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı museum ⁽⁷⁰⁾Entrance of the museum ⁽⁷¹⁾

to Sunday between 7.30am and noon and from 1.30pm to 5pm.

Yeni Han (Xana Nû)

South of Ulu Camii, behind the Zinciriye Madrasah, is a two-storey *han* built by one Seyyid Hacı Abdullah in 1788–1789, according to the inscription. A vaulted gate leads into the courtyard, surrounded by porticos whose columns are linked with yet more vaults. Behind the porticos are the sleeping quarters. Unfortunately the place has lost some of its original character thanks to several renovations.

Coppersmiths' Bazaar

Close by Yeni Han is the Coppersmiths' Bazaar (*Demirciler* or *Kazancılar*)

with separate sections for men and women; areas facing south were used in winter and north-facing ones in summer. Like most other houses in Diyarbakır, this building too have its basement called "*Zerzembe*". Being cooler, food for winter used to be kept here either in earthen jugs or cupboards. The kitchen is actually an *iwan* with a single arch to the north-eastern corner of the courtyard. Inside the kitchen, there is an oven with three parts located in a niche covered by a rounded arch. Since the building is presently used as a museum, the kitchen section is covered with a wooden cage in order to protect items in the building.

Interestingly the basement of the houses has one particular room divided up by wooden screens that was used as a place where young single men and women from his family could meet potential spouses; the woman could see the man but he couldn't see her behind the screen. The museum (0412 221 27 55) is open from Tuesday

Coppersmit's bazaar ⁽⁷²⁾



Streets of old town^[73]

Çarşısı in Turkish) where metal items as hammers, axes and so on are produced, also similar Bazaar can be found opposite Ulu cami. Foreign travellers in the past described the place thus: "All the Armenian blacksmiths sing while fanning the fire hammering. While playing ... songs in harmony they work and sing at the same time. While hammering they work and say 'tırlaka tırlak tırlak' ..." Nowadays business seems to be declining and the bazaar is limited to one sokak.

Sülüklü Han

In the Coppersmith's Bazaar is this small han, in fact one of the smallest in the city, located in Kazancılar Sok (Savaş quarter). The ground floor is

the only surviving floor of what was once a three-storey building, and now serves as a teahouse. The courtyard is packed with pigeons and local chickens, landing it a homely feel. Originally there were 18 rooms on each floor with basement areas where the animals were kept.

Originally composed of a three storey, 18 rooms on each, the *han* has three depots at the basement, a cistern in the courtyard and an entrance from Kazancılar Sok. When the second and third floors were demolished in time, it became a single storey structure with the rooms placed along the *iwan*. While the people were sleeping in these rooms, their horses, camels or donkeys used the large depot rooms. Said by the officials to have been used as storage rooms after the war years, the building was also used as military barrack during the liberation war. It is also said there had been an underground tunnel extending to the jail, through which some inmates had escaped.

According to others, as there were many *sülük* (leeches) around the



Sülüklü Han^[74]

Pottery



Pottery making, old photo (75)

Pottery has been made in Diyarbakır since Neolithic times, and people believe that pottery is a holy craft as the Prophet Noah made utensils of clay when these were sorely lacking after the great flood. The raw material used here is a mixture of red earth, silt and clay from the banks of the Tigris, mixed with salt. Earthenware

jugs are locally known as *bardak*. Every master potter employs a team that consists of an overseer, a potter, a glazer and an apprentice. There are two places opposite the Four-legged Minaret (see p: 217) and a few spots in the "Burnt Bazaar" (see p: 210) where you can see pottery being made the traditional way, and you can buy souvenirs including clay watermelons and models of the city walls.

fountain in the courtyard, which were used for therapeutically, the *han* was given its current name.

The northeast of the Old City

This section covers sights in the north-east quarter of the old city away from Gazi Cad, except for İçkale, which is covered on. (see page: 228)

The Carpentry and Yoghurt Bazaars

East of Gazi Cad and behind the Gold Bazaar (see p: 207) is a Carpentry Bazaar (*Marangozlar Çarşısı* in Turkish, *Çarşiya Xerata* in Kurdish) where a number of workshops produce traditional small chairs and tables. Behind the Gold Bazaar as you head in is the oldest and the most authentic bazaar, called *Eski Yoğurtçular Çarşısı* or *Çarşiya Mast* in Kurdish, literally the "Yoghurt Bazaar" – though oddly they don't sell yoghurt here. Instead, in the labyrinthine streets you can find butchers, spice stores, fruit and vegetable stores, quality cheese, olive and honey along

with small restaurants. Located in the middle is the large *Eski Borsa Hanı*, once an agricultural exchange centre attended by villagers and traders; you can enter the large courtyard through a huge wooden-iron gate.

Çardaklı Hamam

Located close to the Surp Giragos Church in Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa Sok (İbrahim Bey quarter), Çardaklı Hamam is another of the city's many disused bathhouses and was built between 1520 and 1540. The changing room has two-storey *iwans*, placed in the east-west direction, one leading from the entrance area and covered with a dome. The tepid section is



Yoghurt bazaar (76)



composed of three sections, one of which is domed whereas the others have barrel-vaulted ceilings.

Fatih Paşa Camii (Kuşunlu-Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa- Merkez)

This was the first mosque built by the Ottomans in Diyarbakir, under the first Ottoman Governor, Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa, in 1516–1520. Some sources say that the St Teodoros Church was actually converted into the mosque, though the truth of this is unclear and the church may in fact have been merely close to the mosque, rather than occupying the same spot.

Located in Fatihpaşa quarter south of İçkale and facing an open square, it is also known as the Kuşunlu Mosque and is similar to Behram Paşa Camii (see p: 236) in structure. Having a different plan than those of the other mosques, the front hall is covered with seven domes supported by eight pillars. Unlike in other mosques, the domes of the front hall area have not been hidden. Inside the dome, the names of four rightly guided caliphs are written in Arabic script. To the

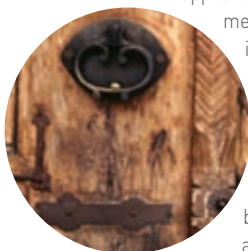
contrary, the middle entrance dome has been elevated higher. Built up of black and white stones, it has a rich appearance. There are decorative medallions between the vaults, in the corners and on the pillars and corners. The *mihrab* and *minbar* are similar to those in other Ottoman mosques. The minaret is square, with black stone used at the base and white stone further up. At the back of the mosque is a shrine where passers-by

like to pause for a short prayer. One of the tombs belongs to Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa. This monument is another unique work left behind from the famous architect Mimar Sinan.

Next to the mosque on the left side is a building that was once a mosque for those of the Shafi' school of Sunni Islam; nowadays it is an educational centre offering courses for women and children, run by the governorate.

The Tomb of Fatih Paşa

Located in a small graveyard in south of Fatih Paşa Mosque, this tomb belongs to Bıyıklı Mehmet Paşa, once governor of Diyarbakir. According to information on the gravestone, it was built in first half of 16th century. The



Door knock from
Fatih Paşa Camii (78)



Dewan at Dengbêj House (Mala Dengbêj) ⁽⁷⁹⁾

tomb once had a pyramidal roof, and the remains suggest it was an octagonal structure built up of stone blocks with windows on all sides.

The Tomb of Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa

West of Fatih Mosque is a tomb built in 1585 for Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa who was provincial governor in 1571–1575. Another work of master architect Mimar Sinan, the tomb uses alternating black and white layers and has an unorthodox design, with a square entrance unit in front of the octagonal structure.

The southwest of the Old City

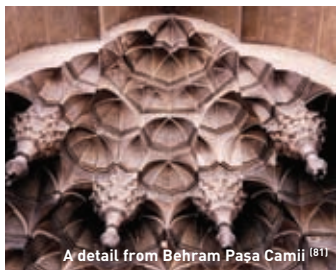
Dengbêj House (Mala Dengbêj)

This house is signposted "Dengbêj Evi" off Melik Ahmet Cad. Down a small backstreet (Kılıççı Sok), it was opened in 2007 with the support of the Municipality, the European Union, the Dicle Fırat Culture and Arts Centre and several other arts bodies to preserve the Kurdish musical genre known as *dengbêjî*, a word which also



applies to the practitioners of the art. These men (and they are almost exclusively men) sing unaccompanied ballads of love and heroism at weddings and other celebrations, and can be likened to the jongleurs of France or the bards of England. Expressing feelings of sorrow and (less often) joy, the songs (*kılams*) can last several hours or may need a few days to perform in full, and have an important educational role in that they are a form of oral history, with lyrics that cover the heroic deeds of warriors (*pêlewan*), the adventures of wanderers, battles between tribes, the tragedies and delights of loves won and lost, and struggles against natural disasters.

Visit the Mala Dengbêjan and you will find a nicely restored traditional resi-



A detail from Behram Paşa Camii (81)

dence of black basalt and decorated with traditional fabrics. The place is like an informal social club where Kurdish men gather daily to hear the *dengbêj* sing, though there are no set times for the music. As per the stereotype of folk musicians in the west, a *dengbêj* typically places his hands or fingers to his ears while singing; the music itself usually makes use of minor modes and plenty of vibratos.

The house (0412 229 20 34), which also includes a tourist office, is open daily except Monday from 9am to 5pm (6pm in summer). A celebratory *dewan*, at which *dengbêjs* sit in a line and singing together or alternately, is held on some Saturdays between 5pm and 7pm, and is usually well attended.

Behram Paşa Camii

Adjoining the Dengbêj House is this perfectly ornamented mosque designed by Mimar Sinan and built by Behram Paşa, the provincial governor in the mid-16th century. The portico is supported by 18 columns in two lines. The walls of the women's section, including the *iwans*, are decorated with large sized blue tiles. The square plan downstairs turns into an octagonal drum upstairs, covered with a huge lead-coated dome. The *minbar* is made of white marble.

Aynalı (Ayna) Minare Mosque

Some 100m further south of Behram Paşa Camii is this rectangular, flat-roofed mosque in the Alipaşa quarter. Also called Hoca Ahmet

Camii, it was built in 1498 at the era of Akkoyunlu era by a philanthropist called Hoca Ahmet, and restored in 1992. The mosque features the usual black basalt, but the beautifully ornamented minaret is more striking.

Ali Paşa Camii

Bearing the name of provincial governor Hadım Ali Paşa, this mosque and the adjacent madrasah were built during his tenure in 1534–1547; you'll find them on Turistik Cad (the street curling inside the city walls between Urfa and Mardin Gates) opposite the Yedi Kardeş Tower. The mosque is one of the early works of master architect Mimar Sinan, and includes a section of Shafi' Sunnis (in the east), a madrasah (west) and hamam. Considered as one of this single domed mosque's wall skirts have been adorned with hexagonal tiles up to 1m. Built up of stone



Ali Paşa Camii (82)



From Ali Paşa Camii (83)



blocks, the narthex and tambour of dome are adorned with horizontally placed black and white stones. The dome is placed on an octagonal drum and covered with pyramidal roof. The mosque's interior is adorned with Ottoman tiles produced in local ateliers. Half of the minaret is built of black basalt while the rest is white.

Leaving the mosque, you make a sort of semicircle on the left side to reach the madrasah, an unornamented affair built of stone blocks and brick. Now disused, the madrasah doesn't have porticos with columns in the court-

yard; instead a barrel-vaulted section is placed in front of each room. Within the rooms themselves are fireplaces whose chimneys can be seen from outside. A structure added in the northwest corner was used as a home for the poor.

Virgin Mary Church

North of the Ali Paşa Mosque and southeast of Urfa Gate is the Syrian Orthodox Virgin Mary Church (*Meryem Ana Kilisesi*). Believed to have been built in the 6th century (the site itself was previously the home of a pagan temple), the church went through several burnings, destructions, renovations and restorations. The Patriarchate of Antioch was transferred to this church in 1034 from Malatya, and the church was the centre of the episcopate of Diyarbakır until 1933.

The church, with a stunning Byzantine pulpit, is considered as one of the most beautiful examples of stonework produced by Diyarbakır's masons. On the site are the shrine of Patriarch Jacob II (who died here in 1871), four courtyards, a room for religious classes and accommodation. It has two gates, on one of which two lions have been nicely depicted; the other was meant for the use of patriarchs only and has an inscription reading,

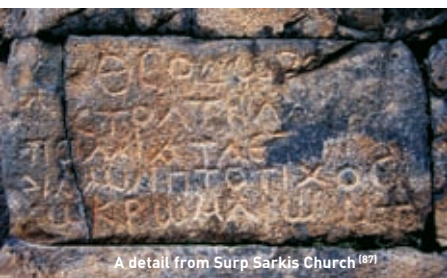




Rem horns, Symbol of luck ⁽⁸⁶⁾

“Constructed by Patriarch Jacob II, 1860. Renovated by Patriarch Abdulmesih II with the help of believers in 1896.” The inscription on the upper part of entrance *iwan* says “These buildings were constructed by our Syriac Christians of Amid [an old name for Diyarbakır, meaning “salvation” in Syriac] in 1881.”

The plan of the upper floor has many similarities with the typical houses of Diyarbakır. Marble signs upstairs with different colours indicate the graves of different figures buried here. Also here is the Divanhane building, used for entertaining guests after the Sunday service. Through a single gate behind the church once



A detail from Surp Sarkis Church ⁽⁸⁷⁾

was a former patriarch’s residence nowadays used as housing.

The southeast of the Old City

Protestant Church

In Muallak Sok in the Savaş quarter, 250m east of the Cheese Bazaar (see p: 212) on Gazi Cad, the Protestant church has been abandoned since the beginning of the last century. This church has a rectangular plan and is built of black basalt; the lead dome and part of the roof are intact. Large wooden-framed windows in the walls and dome provide ample illumination for the interior. On the western side is a u-shaped area meant for women. The family who are custodians of the site will be happy to show you around. Caretaker of the church they will allow you to visit the church, whose bell tower you will probably see before you get there.

Surp Sarkis Church

Just fifty metres east of the Protestant church is the Armenian Catholic Surp Sarkis Church, another black basalt structure, this time dating from the 16th century. The building has some similarities to the larger Surp Giragos Church (see p: 219) and is likewise roofless. While the mosaics have largely disappeared, some beautiful decorative stonework can still be seen. The church is rectangular, with five naves and four apses. The upstairs, allocated for women, is now something of a labyrinth, full of rotted wooden structures.

At either end of the aisle are large windows which might have been added later on. Stones have been used for decorations and are illuminated through the small northern window. On either side of the aisle are baptistries with windows, from where stairs lead up to the altar.

Hüsrev Paşa Camii

Just east of Deliller Han (see p: 212) is the small Çukurlu Sok in Cemal Yılmaz quarter, leading to the madrasah with 14 rooms around a courtyard. The classrooms, arranged like the interior of a small mosque, are accessed through a plain door without portico. Only white stones have been used for *mihrab*, which has rich decorations around it like a crown.

This structure was built as a madrasah by the Ottoman governor Hüsrev Paşa in the 16th century, and subsequently used as a dormitory for a religious school. A cylindrical minaret of stone blocks was added in 1728 when the place was turned into a public mosque.

South of the City Walls

South of Mardin Gate are several attractions that you can reach by taxi and in some cases on foot.

Gazi Köşkü (Semanöğlü) Lodge

One kilometre south of the city walls is



Gazi (Semanöğlü) lodge^[88]

this lodge, styled like a traditional Diyarbakır house and overlooking the Tigris Valley. It was built in early 16th century for an *emir* and later used by the Semanoğulları Regional Dynasty. When Atatürk took the command of 16th Corps of the 2nd Army, he lived in this building which had been rented from a family for eleven months and it became the headquarters of the 16th Corps. Later on the building was renovated and gifted to Atatürk when he was made an "honorary citizen" of Diyarbakır. The building has been

The Tigris

Rising from the Maden Mountains – extensions of the Taurus range – the Tigris (called the Dicle locally) is 1900km long, 523km of which flows inside Turkey. Marking the border of Mesopotamia Plain, the Tigris is shorter but more powerful than its rival, the Euphrates, and many people call the Tigris the "swift river" compared to Euphrates, which deposits more silt than the Tigris. East of Cizre, the Tigris becomes a natural border between Turkey and Syria for 40km. The two rivers eventually join to form the Shatt al-Arab in Iraq, emptying into the Gulf.

The main tributaries of the Tigris are the Batman, Garzan, Botan, Habur and Zap Rivers and Streams. Flowing at first through narrow, deep valleys, the river expands to up to 600m wide east of Diyarbakır. The Tigris is the source of life for Diyarbakır, making the area cultivable and also provides good fish such as carp, trout, pike and the small trout-like şebbot. (See page for Euphrates p:118



Fishing in Tigris river^[89]



A view from Hevsel gardens and On gözlü Bridge ^[90]

called *Atatürk Köşkü* since then – or more commonly *Gazi Köşkü*, gazi (war veteran) being a term often applied to Atatürk.

The house is now effectively a museum piece, open daily, with restaurants and outdoor cafes nearby and good views of the river and the Hevsel Gardens below. This is also a good location to dance in the evenings to live music and occasional Diyarbakır-style *eyvan geceleri* and Urfa-style *sıra geceleri* sessions (see p: 68).

Erdebil Mansion

Unknown to most locals and indeed tourists, this is the oldest mansion in Diyarbakır and superbly sited on the same hill as the Gazi Lodge, with views of Mount Kırklar, the Tigris River, Hevsel Gardens and the City Walls. In Kurdish it is called *qesra ber derê pir*, or “mansion near the bridge”, being close to the *On Gözlü Bridge*. The mansion is around 500m from *Gazi Köşkü* and open daily till late.

In 512 AD King Anatasias I built a bridge and a place to house the construction workers. So the first version of Erdebil was built, though it wasn't a mansion. In the 17th century, İbrahim Hafid Paşa was rewarded with the building, renovated over the centuries by various powers, as a reward for services to the Ottoman state.

The building has been restored recently and is now a cultural centre run by *Diyarbakır Kültür Tanıtma Vakfı*. The rooms are fully decorated, while the courtyard and nearby gardens are occupied by a café/restaurant which hosts live music performances and serves home-made Syriac wine.



Erdebil Lodge ^[91]

On Gözlü Bridge in winter ^[92]

On Gözlü Bridge/ Dicle Köprüsü (Pira deh derî)

The name of the bridge translates as “ten arches”, and there are indeed ten arches in this 178m-long bridge of black ashlar stone over the Tigris, 3km south of the city. The bridge was built in the 8th century and destroyed during the siege of the city by Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimisces, then rebuilt in 1065 by the Marwanid architect Übeyd Oğlu Yusuf. The largest arch is 14.70m wide.

Having undergone several restorations over the centuries, the bridge remains in use by both people and traffic, and is also a popular fishing spot; there are bars, restaurants and teahouses

On Gözlü Bridge ^[93]

here too. Some locals say the bridge signifies the way to God and gather here on the eve of the Bairam festival to write their wishes on small pieces of paper which they throw into the water, in the hope that God will fulfil these requests.

Mount Kırklar

Mount Kırklar is a hill southwest of the city, overlooking the Tigris and the *On Gözlü Bridge*. Down the slope of the

On Gözlü bridge and Tigris ^[94]

Diyarbakır's Watermelons (Zebeşê Amedê)

The large striped watermelons cultivated along the banks of the Tigris have become symbols of the city. When the waters of the river recede towards the end of spring, large holes are formed in the river bed. These are fertilised with the droppings of pigeons, goats and sheep to create favourable conditions for growing watermelons weighing up to 50 kilos. It is said that when an Ottoman governor decided to send some to the Sultan in İstanbul, the camel could carry just two watermelons.

The size and taste of the melons has been remarked upon favourably by the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi and the local poet Süleyman Nazif, who commented that the size of the melons represents the city's civilisations, the black stripes stand for dynasties, the green part of the rind stands for peace and tolerance while the red flesh represents sincerity. The melons are large enough that when hollowed out a baby can be placed inside – hence

the photos depicting this feat that you may well see around the city.

Since Ottoman times, a festival has been held to mark the watermelon harvest. Celebrations took place for 15 days annually until interrupted by World War I. The tradition was revived in 1966, and now each September there are concerts by well-known singers, folk dances and other activities. The farmers display their largest watermelons and of course awards are given for the best specimen as well as the best singer, best folk dance troupe etc.



Diyarbakır's watermelon^[95]



Diyarbakır's Famous watermelon^[96]

Quarters (Mahalle)

The old city is composed of 15 (*mahalle*) whose boundaries will probably not be apparent to tourists, but which are meaningful to locals; it can be useful to mention the names of the quarters when asking for directions, and so a few have been included in the text.

Among prominent *mahalle* is the Camii Kebir quarter, on the right side of Gazi Cad if you are walking south from Dağ Kapı. The quarter gets its name from the presence of the oldest mosque of the city and once numbered among its residents many wealthy and influential people who tended to be pro-establishment. The most prominent figures of this quarter were Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı and Ziya Gökalp, whose houses are now museums. Opposite on the east side of Gazi Cad is the Saray Kapı or İçkale area, which preserves many his-

torical monuments and is nowadays home mainly to migrants from Bingöl and surrounding areas.

The Balıkçılarbaşı quarter, the former fish market, stretches from the junction of Melik Ahmet Cad to Mardin Kapı, and now includes plenty of shops and a couple of hotels. To the west is the Lalebey quarter, which was where Syrian Christians, including artisans producing silk scarves and silver filigree, used to live; the most important sight in this quarter is the Virgin Mary Church. Nearby is the Ali Paşa quarter where pro-establishment families such as Cemiloğulları and Zazaoğulları once lived.

On the east side from Balıkçılarbaşı till Yeni Kapı is a multicultural area including the Hançepek and Hasırlı quarters, housing churches along with mosques.



Life in old town⁽⁹⁷⁾

Pigeons



Pigeons owner in Diyarbakır^[98]



Pigeons^[99]

The rearing of pigeons has been practised in Diyarbakır for almost 500 years. Some of old houses had special areas where they could nest, and there were pigeon bazaars in the courtyard

of Fatih Paşa Mosque. Even today there are one or two teahouses in the old city where pigeon fanciers gather. The pigeons are called *yavru* until they are two months old, then *kızma* and finally *yeke* when they reach the age of one year. Well-known breeds include *göğsüağ*, *ketme*, *kızılbaş* and *içağlı*.

Women working in Hevsel gardens ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

hill from the road is a pilgrimage site, a simple tomb under a tree to which women who have not managed to conceive go in the hope of being granted a child. According to a local legend, this happened to a Christian woman who had a baby named Susan. The girl was taken to the pilgrimage site on her birthday, wearing her best clothes. When she grew up, Susan fell in love with a Muslim neighbour called Adil and managed to rendezvous with him on a visit to the pilgrimate site. This led to Susan receiving some form of divine punishment, in that she was thrown into the Tigris from the *On Gözlü Bridge*. Adil is supposed to have composed a love song for his lost love.

The down side of the hill is popular with youths who drive here in the evening to enjoy the view while having a drink or two in their cars. There are a few fish restaurants located on the main road on the Kırklar Mount.

Hevsel Bahçeleri

These combination of farmer's plots and green areas southeast of the city

were formed from silt carried by the river and have been yielding a variety of fruits and vegetables – including Diyarbakır's famous watermelons – for centuries. The area is popular for picnics, and there are some restaurants bars and cafés along the riverside which sell not only drinks but also freshly made *kebabs*.

The New City

Until 1860s, Diyarbakır was still confined within the city walls. The first

Hevsel gardens ⁽¹⁰¹⁾



The new city ^[102]

settlements outside the walls, built under the governorship of Hatunoğlu Kurt İsmail Paşa in 1869–1875, were barracks; no homes appeared here until the last century. Eventually, of course, development and migration necessitated building outside the city walls, and people also desired more spacious homes in greener areas. The city began to spread north from the Old City towards the vineyards of the

Bağlar quarter. Nowadays the city has also spread west and the streets are lined with many tower blocks.

The heart of shopping and nightlife in Diyarbakır is the Ofis area, where you will find the crowded *Sanat Sokağı* (Art Street), with green spaces and lined with shops, cafés and teahouses where youths like to hang out until late. Exhibitions, concerts and other events also take place here.



Art street (Sanat Sokağı) ^[103]

Diyarbakır Archaeology Museum

The main attraction in the new city is this museum, which moved here from the Zinciriye Madrasah in 1985. Located on Elaziğ Cad behind the municipality building, it houses chronological displays of artefacts as well as a large collection of ethnographic material and city coins. As well as historic carvings, it contains extensive local Roman remains, some from the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu Turcoman Dynasties that ruled much

of eastern Anatolia and western Persia in Medieval Times, and ceremonial items from dervish *tekkes* (monasteries). Excavations in the region are mostly done with the guidance of the museum's archaeologists, who also provide specialist advice to researchers, scientists and students in areas relating to history and archaeology. The museum (0412 221 27 55) is open daily except Monday from 8.30am until noon and again from 1.30pm to 5pm.

Learning Kurdish

If you're interested in learning Kurdish, pay a visit to the Kurdi Der Organisation, Huzurevleri Dr. Sıtkı Görül Cad, Kalem Sok, in the Kayapınar quarter of the new city (0412 237 38 48). This foundation has qualified teachers and offers language courses (Kurmanji and

Zazaki) at various levels to foreigners as well as locals. Another organisation in the same building is the Kurdish Institute Diyarbakır, who work on Kurdish literature and culture and art and undertake some publishing and translation activities (0412 237 43 16).



Kurdish lessons (104)



A view from Newroz Festival⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

NEWROZ

The beginning of the Kurdish New Year, better known as Newroz, is celebrated on 21 of March. Meaning “new day” in Kurdish and Farsi, Newroz commemorates the arrival of spring (the date is, of course, that of the spring equinox) and, in myth, the freeing of the people of Mesopotamia from a tyrant, *Zahhak*. The supposed date of the latter event corresponds to the fall of the Assyrian Empire and the dawn of the new empire of the Medes, to whom some historians say the Kurds are related. Besides being marked in eastern Turkey, Newroz is also widely celebrated in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan and in the Kurdish dominated areas of Iraq and Syria. The Yezidi

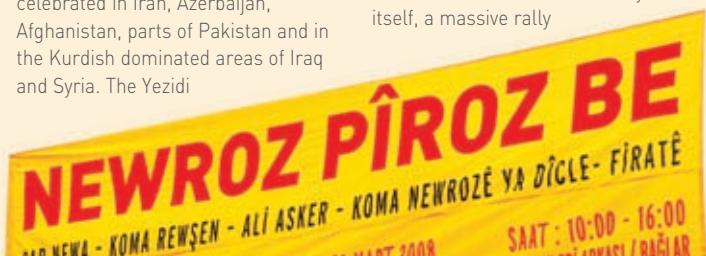


A participant in Newroz⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq celebrate it as *Kiloça Sersalê*.

For the majority of Kurds, the festival has come to assume a nationalist significance. In Turkey, the largest-scale celebrations are organised by municipalities run by DTP (*Democratic Society Party*), in particular in Diyarbakir which is the biggest Kurdish city not just in Turkey but the whole Kurdish-speaking world.

Festivities actually start about a week before Newroz, with youths in villages and towns lighting bonfires and leaping over the flames (a tradition that can also be seen in Iran). On the day itself, a massive rally



Happy Newroz⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

Locals celebrating Newroz⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

and free concert takes place in Diyarbakir. People stream in from all over the city and much further afield, along with many from the European diaspora communities as well as delegates and Kurdish community leaders, to attend the event at which famous musicians from Turkey and neighbouring countries perform, and at which yet more bonfires are lit. Attendees make V for Victory signs and wave banned Kurdish flags in red, yellow and green; some even dress themselves in those colours as some others in traditional Kurdish cloths.

Tourists are welcome to attend what is in many respects just like an open-air rock concert, with a huge crowd assembled in front of the stage and with freshly homemade Kurdish food and drink stalls on sale on the periphery. Nowadays calm and safe to take

part but in years gone by, Newroz events have been, somehow crushed by the Turkish army in an attempt to ban such day but since people determining efforts to celebrate Newroz have succeeded in keeping this very old Mesopotamian cultural tradition alive. Since then the Turkish state claims that Newroz was actually a Turkish celebration that the Turkish historians had only just conveniently discovered!

You should dress warmly, though, and be prepared for a long event, starting in the late morning and continuing into the early evening; you'll also need to sit or more likely stand through the speeches made by the Mayor of Diyarbakir and Kurdish MPs. The music and friendly people will keep you entertained, as will the sight of

Locals celebrating Newroz⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

The statue of Kawa^[111]

small groups of people participating in impromptu folk dances in the crowd so it's always a good idea to join one of these groups to get some free Kurdish dancing lesson (see p: 520). And everywhere you will be greeted with the phrase "Newroz Pîroz Be!", effectively "Happy New Year!".

The Story of Newroz

In *The Meadows of Gold* by historian Masudi, and *Shahnameh*, a poetic opus written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi around 1000 AD, and *Sharafnameh* of medieval Kurdish historian Sherefhan Bidlisi (Şerefxanê Bedlîsî 1543 – 1599, 1604 also been recorded), Zahhak is an evil king who conquers Iran and who has serpents growing out of his shoulders. In the 1930s, the Kurdish poet Taufik Abdullah, wanting to instill a new Kurdish cultural revival, used a previously known modified form of the story of Kawa. He connected the myths where people felt oppressed, with Newroz, thus reviving a dying holiday and made it a symbol of Kurdish national struggle. However it should be noted that Kurds celebrated Newroz long before this, and the word

Newroz has been mentioned in the Kurdish poetry of Melayê Cizîrî (1570-1640) in 16th century, also the famous Kurdish writer and poet Piramerd from Iraqî Kurdistan (1867-1950) writes in his 1948 poem *Newroz*.

According to the tale that has been passed down from generations, there once was a cruel King named Dehak who suffered the fate of having two snakes grow from his shoulders. Hoping that he could placate the serpents, he ordered that two citizens be sacrificed every day and their brains

Locals celebrating Newroz^[112]

fed to the hungry snakes. One day the order came from the castle that the Kurdish blacksmith, Kawa's last child was to be killed and the brain was to be brought to the castle gate the very next day. Instead of sacrificing his own child, Kawa had sacrificed a sheep and had put the sheep's brain. And no one had noticed. Soon all the townspeople heard of this. So when Dehak demanded from them a child sacrifice, they all did the same. In this manner he saved half of the persecuted population. The people lucky enough to escape the slaughter hid in the mountains and came to constitute a large community. Finally, after much suffering, the Kurdish blacksmith killed the cruel king. In order to relay the message of the king's death to all those in the mountains he lit a large fire signaling the beginning of a new era. From that day forward Newroz has been celebrated by people in the Middle East as the dawn of hope and the birth of freedom.



Locals celebrating Newroz⁽¹¹³⁾

Newroz has been mentioned in works of many Kurdish poets and writers as well as musicians. One of the earliest records of Newroz in Kurdish literature is from **Melayê Cizîrî** (1570-1640)

*Without the light and the fire of Love,
Without the Designer and the power of Creator,
We are not able to reach Union.
(Light is for us and dark is the night)*

*This fire massing and washing the Heart,
My heart claims after it.
And here come Newroz and the New Year,
When such a light is rising.*

Also the famous Kurdish writer and poet **Cegerxwîn** (1903-1984) writes about Newroz:

NEWROZ

*Newroz e Newroz e / It is Newroz it is Newroz
Sibe ye Newroz e / Today is Newroz
Maçek bide min yar / Give me a kiss darling
Cejna te pîroz e / Celebrate the feast*

*Newroz e bihar e / It is Newroz, it is spring
Bel bûne gul û dar e / trees covered with flowers
Bîna gul û lala / It smells roses and tulip
Destê min bi destê yar e / I am holding my darling's hand*

*Newroz û mizgîn e / It is Newroz it is good news
Bihara rengîn e / It is colorful spring
Kesk û zer û şîn e / resembling a rainbow
Xalîça rengîn e / in green, yellow and blue*



Locals celebrating Newroz⁽¹¹⁴⁾

Getting there



Diyarbakir Train station⁽¹¹⁵⁾

Diyarbakir has good bus and rail connections with major Turkish cities, and is served by flights from İstanbul and Ankara. A municipal-run bus runs regularly between the airport, 3km southwest, and Ofis/Dağ Kapı. The intercity otogar (Diyarbakir Otobüs İşletmeleri or DİŞTİ; 0412 236 18 06) is located along the Urfa highway, some 7km away from Dağ Kapı. Most bus companies provide a free shuttle service into Dağ Kapı and there are city *dolmuş*s as well between the otogar and the centre.

The city's districts terminal (*İlçe Otogarı*; 0412 236 18 06), used by transport operating within the province, is on Mardin Yolu Kavşağı, Şehitlik Mahallesi, 2.5km from Dağ Kapı. Buses and minibuses to all Diyarbakir districts do leave from this otogar. Most *dolmuş*s to the old town from elsewhere in the city stop at this otogar.

The train station is 1.5km west of the centre at the end of İstasyon Cad. *Dolmuş* into the centre can be caught on the opposite side of the main road.



Diyarbakir bus station⁽¹¹⁶⁾

Accommodation



Hotel room ⁽¹¹⁷⁾

The *Miroğlu Hotel* at Elaziğ Cad, no. 13 (0412 229 60 00, www.mirogluhotel.com) is a pleasant place to stay with swimming pool, sauna, restaurants and parking. Nearby there is a similar mid-range establishment, the *Turistik Hotel* (0412 224 75 50), close to the municipality building, and near that is the upper-class chain hotel, the *Dedeman* (0412 229 00 00, www.dedeman.com), which has a restaurant serving international cuisine, a pool and a business centre, among other facilities.

Most mid-range hotels are located around Dağ Kapı. Here you can find the *Büyük Hotel* on İnönü Cad (0412 224 48 59) and opposite, the *Derya Hotel* (0412 224 25 55 www.deryaotel.com). In Kıbrıs Cad nearby the *Grand Güler Hotel* (0412 229 22 21). All offer reliable comforts. Slightly cheaper is the *Kristal Hotel* in Yoğurtçu Sok (0412 229 38 00) and even cheaper, on Kıbrıs Cad, is the *Aslan Hotel* (0412 228 92 24). *Azizoğulları Hotel* (0412 224 81 81 www.azizogluhotel.com) located near by Tek Kapı by the business centres, can be another alternative for you. The rooms contain TV, wireless internet, telephone, air condition and safe box.

There are a couple of five-star places in the old city, one being the *Class Hotel*, near the junction of Melik Ahmet Cad and Gazi Cad (0412 229 50 00, www.diyarbakirclassshotel.com). A modern building somewhat at odds with the surrounding architecture, it has satellite TV in the rooms, a Turkish bath, bars and sometimes stages live music in its restaurant at the back, designed in the form of a traditional house. The other five-star establishment is the *Büyük Kervansaray Hotel* (0412 228 96 06), a magical place in a converted *han* on Gazi Cad near Mardin Kapı. The hotel has a pool, two restaurants, sauna and other facilities.

In the centre of the new city are two good four-star hotels. The *Prestij* on Ekinciler Cad in Ofis (0412 229 50 50 www.diyarbakirprestigehtel.com) is close to *Sanat Sokağı* (Art Street) and has rooms with good views, plus a terrace restaurant, an American-themed bar, a disco and live music every night till late. The other option is the *Malabadi Hotel* (0412 237 40 40) on Urfa yolu, which likewise has plenty of amenities, including a swimming pool, restaurants and bars.

Places to eat

Dağ Kapı a good culinary starting point as there are plenty of restaurants located here, some open 24/7. The *Şafak* on Kıbrıs Cad (0412 223 3074) serves different types of soup, regional meals, grills, kebabs, *lahmacun* and *pide*, and is a good place to have breakfast. Another great place to try is *Doğu Mutfağı* (Ahmet Usta), on İnönü Cad (0412 223 12 61), which serves a variety of stews and sometimes unusual seasonal fare, plus fish and, of course, all types of *kebabs*. There is no doubt that you can have a good steam cooked *kaburga* in *Kaburgacı Selim Amca* (0 412 224 44 47), the restaurant has several branches in Diyarbakır and elsewhere in Turkey even one in Kurdish administered North Iraq.

In the cool basement of Hasan Pasha Han on Gazi Cad is *Kamer'in Mutfağı* (0412 224 23 33), run by a well-known national women's organisation and serving many traditional dishes such as *içli köfte*, *kaburga dolması*, *mantı* and *örök*. On the second floor of the building are two excellent places for breakfast, *Mustafa'nın Kahvaltı Dünyası* (0412 228 93 45), and opposite the *Meşhur Kahvaltıcı Kadri*. Just opposite the Ulu Camii is *Kebabçı Hacı Halit* (0412 224 97 70), serving delicious regional food plus *kebabs* and grills. Located behind Hasan Pasha

Han try *Onur Ocakbaşı* (0412 224 14 05). This is a great restaurant which serves delicious kebabs and different different kind of salads. Further down on Gazi Cad, try *Güzelış Lokantası* (0412 228 30 71), a simply decorated restaurant with good *paça* soup and other meals. Near the junction of Melik Ahmet Cad and Gazi Cad, just opposite the famous *Dört Ayaklı Minare*, try Mardin Kebab Restaurant, one of the oldest in the city (0412 228 2981).

As for the new city, next to the post office in Ofis is *Aytiti Aile Mutfağı* (0412 229 55 49), a family-run affair with a warm atmosphere and great home-cooked food, including soups, *dolma* and good breakfasts. Not far away on *Sanat Sokağı* is tiny *Penguen Balık Evi* (0412 224 13 14), serving delicious different type of fish with excellent salad. Behind *Sanat Sokağı* is *Pera Yemek Evi* on Akköyünlu 4 Sok. No:13 (0412 223 58 15), another place serving home-made dishes such as *kavurma* and *güvec*. You can have excellent *lahmacun* and *pide* in *Diyar Tatlıses Lahmacun and Döner Salonu* on Gevran cad (0412 224 84 05), plus regional fare such as the lamb stew *haşlama*. For something of a local delicacy, try *çiğer* (grilled lung) at *Çiğerci Muharrem Usta* (0412 226 87 19) located on Gevran Cad 4. Akköyünlu Sok.



Diyarbakır traditional meals ⁽¹¹⁸⁾

Municipality and Tourist Information

Metropolitan Municipality Dağ Kapı Tourism Office

This is located in the open space just outside Dağ Kapı, and has tourist literature in Kurdish, Turkish, Syriac, Armenian, English, German and French.

Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday from 9am to noon and 1pm to 6pm (closed noon to 1pm)

Tel: 412 229 20 32

Culture and Tourism Management Tourism Office

This is located in the Dağ Kapı tower and has literature in Turkish, English and German.

Hours: Monday to Friday 8am to noon and 1.30pm to 5pm

Tel: 0412 228 17 06

Metropolitan Municipality Dengbêj House Tourism Office

This is located in the Dengbêj House (see p: 235).

Tel: 0412 229 20 34

Hours: same as Dağkapı Tourism Office

Diyarbakır Association of Introduction and Tourism

Located in the Class Hotel in Gazi Cad, they can provide brochures and materials in different languages.

Hours: daily 8am to 7pm

Tel: 0412 224 15 00

Local wines



Local wine ⁽¹¹⁹⁾

The alluvial soil of Mesopotamia and the climate are ideal for growing the small dark Boğazkere Grapes of Diyarbakır, used for making red wine, for example Kocabağ and Kulüp Turasan; these wines have a dark red colour and biting taste, thanks to the thick skin and high

level of tannin in the grape. A particularly good wine is produced when wine from Boğazkere is mixed with that produced from the Öküzgözü Grape; Çankaya Boğazkere, Kavaklıdere Boğazkere, Terra and Pamukkale Diamond are examples of such wines.



Kara Köprü^[120]

Anbar Çayı Bridge

Located on the 21st kilometre of the Diyarbakır–Silvan highway, this spans the Anbar Stream and was built during the reign of the Marwanid Nasruddevle Ahmed in 1040. According to the inscription, it underwent a thorough renovation in 1223 under the Artukid Ruler Mevhud; indeed nothing survives of the Marwanid structure and only the bases of the columns still exist. There is a new bridge at the same spot.

Girikê Haciyan Tumulus

A prehistoric village was uncovered here during the excavations made by archaeologists from İstanbul University and Chicago University between 1968 and 1970; the site is a 3m-high mound 1km east of the village Ekinciler (Girikê Haciyan), 40km northwest of the city and 20km south-east of Ergani district. Among the items they uncovered were pottery, flint tools and what is believed to be a

musical instrument made from bone, among those items also houses with round domes were found here similar to the same style houses as in North Iraq, Syria and southeastern Anatolia. This site, which may have been inhabited by several hundred in 5000-6000 BC, is 175m in diameter and is now used for agriculture.

Halilviran Bridge

This bridge spans the Devegeçidi Stream on the highway to Eğıl, 25km from the town centre, and is sometimes called *Artuklu* or *Devegeçidi Suyu* by the locals. As with the Devegeçidi Bridge, this bridge has part of the *Bakara Sura* of the Koran inscribed on it, and there are two inscriptions stating that it was built up by architect Cafer Bin Mahmut during the reign of the Artukid King Melik Salih Mahmud in 1218. Built up of black basalt, the bridge is 100m long and has seven arches, the largest of which is 7m wide.

Karaköprü (Karasu Bridge)

Located on the Diyarbakır–Mardin highway, this stone bridge spans Karasu Stream and was built by Sultan Murad IV in the 17th century. With six arches, the largest 9m wide, the bridge is 74m long. The vaults underneath are circular. The bridge has lost some of its original character thanks to renovations over the years.



A shepherd near by the City^[121]



Ergani (Erxenî)



Hilar caves⁽¹²²⁾



Making Pestil ⁽¹²³⁾

Situated 55km northwest of Diyarbakır on the highway to Elazığ, the town of Ergani sits below the southern slopes of Mount Zülküf, at the edge of the Ergani Plain. The surrounding district (population 61,973) has been part of Diyarbakır since 1923. Once many Armenians lived here, but since the 1920s the majority of population has been mixture of Kurmanji and Zazaki speakers along with some ethnic Turks, locally called Qaço, a small community of Georgians who migrated from the Kars and Artvin provinces of northeast Turkey, and even some migrants from Bulgaria.

For years there has been a friendly rivalry between Diyarbakır and Ergani, and people from the former like to make Ergani folk the butt of light hearted jokes. There are also jokes directed at Zaza speakers, especially those who live in Diyarbakır, for example labelling them as people who love to put red onion in most of their meals; as locals think of the onion of being a stiff substance, this is an inoffensive way of alluding to what is regarded the stubbornness of Zaza speakers.

Besides agriculture and livestock, the local economy includes some light industry, producing cement, flour and milk. Local grapes are highly regarded, and in past times wine production was also undertaken by the Armenian community. Ergani town has a number of places to eat on the main street but no accommodation apart from the *öğretmenevi* (0412) 611 58 23.

Sevenpinar (Hilar)

Located 7km southwest of Ergani town, Sevenpinar (Hilar) village is known for the spectacular Hilar caves.

Close by is an archaeological site called Çayönü which was settled as early as 9000 BC. With such historical riches, Hilar is a village that is visited by treasure hunters, and Romans, Byzantine and Artukid coins have been uncovered in the village and its surroundings. The village is also the site of a festival held at the end of April and the beginning of May. Organised by a local conservation group and the municipality, it includes seminars by historians and archaeologists on the importance of the remains here, as well as small-scale cultural performances.

Just before you enter the village you will see the caves on both sides of the main road. One of these on the right is said to have been variously used as a caravanserai and a prison, and could house 200 people; it features nine manmade rock columns (two now smashed) and a large gate.

Around 50m on your right, you will come across some rock tombs (*kaya mezarları*), each belonging to a different family. Note the reliefs outside one cave showing a man of apparently noble ancestry and a sitting woman covered with plain cloth, as though watching rituals that would have happened here. This particular cave also has crescent-shaped decorations to either side of the entrance, there are also some Syriac writings can be found nearby the reliefs.



A view of the Hilar caves⁽¹²⁴⁾

On the left of the road is a tower said to have been used by the watchmen of the city. Just after that stretches a line of caves. Outside the caves is a small chamber with a narrow mouth carved into the rock and believed to have contained more rock tombs. One of these is referred to as the (grave of



Figure, Hilar caves⁽¹²⁵⁾

the) King's Daughter (*Kiral Kızı*) by the locals, and can be identified through carvings of a man and women and abstract symbols to its right. Just below the grave is a site locals call it Masere, where a large flat stone and a number large holes placed which once used for wine making.

Leading upward from this area towards the village is a tunnel called *Kırk Merdiven* (*Çil Pêlik* in Kurdish), with 40 steps visible taking you deep underground to a spring, now dry.

Among the tombs and caves on the right is a rectangular Sun Temple (*Güneş Tapınağı*), with seats and steps facing the morning sun. The outline of the temple foundations can be seen clearly. Historians have contradictory



Grave stone⁽¹²⁶⁾



Animal fuel (127)

ideas about the temple, but crescent-shaped decorations on the facade are thought by some to indicate that it was a place of solar worship.

There are several more caves southwest of the village. The cave referred to as Hamam of the King's Daughter (Kiral Kızı Hamamı) has more striking reliefs. Just at the start of the rocks is the grave of someone called Sarkis (*Kiral Sarkis Mezari*) from which many reliefs are said to be removed. The land is a vineyard nowadays. More archaeological excavation started again by the Diyarbakır Museum since 2006.

Çayönü Tumulus

This site, on the Çayönü or Qotê Ber Çem (as local people refer to it) riverbank behind the Hilar graves is a protected archaeological area and signposted. To reach it, backtrack to the Han Cave and take the side road leading down to the river, and then carry on 1km to the site. This tumulus

is the oldest-known settlement in near east, a window onto the lives of one of the earliest agricultural communities dating to approximately 7000 BC. Excavated between 1964 and 1991, it is of particular importance as settlement here spans the change from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled cultivation of crops such as wheat and barley, and the domestication of animals such as goats, sheep and dogs. Copper resources nearby allowed people to produce some very early hand tools made of the metal.



Çayönü⁽¹²⁸⁾

The settlement is 200m in diameter and at one time may have had up to 200 inhabitants in up to 50 buildings, with a plan of suggesting a central square surrounded by rectangular houses.

There are several historical strata, showing a transition from simple cooking pits to dwellings of various degrees of sophistication, including houses of limestone or adobe and sometimes stone foundations. Although there are few visible remains at the site, items uncovered during the excavations can be viewed in Diyarbakır's museum.

Mount Zülküfil and the Virgin Mary Church

The mountain (also called *Peygamber Dağı* or *Makam Dağı* meaning "Prophet Mountain") is so named because a prophet named Zülküf (Ezekiel) is thought to have lived here once, and the peak is therefore a pilgrimage site. The magnificent summit, 5km from the town, is also the location of the Meryem Ana (Virgin Mary) Church. There was a tomb here, but some believe that the prophet is actually buried in Eğil district, and there is also a tomb in Iraq named after him. The tomb was actually



Kirk Merdiven⁽¹²⁹⁾



Zülküfil Mt, Prophet Enûş⁽¹³⁰⁾

destroyed in 1926, after which relics from it were moved to foundations in Diyarbakır and İstanbul. A small shrine was rebuilt in the late 1950s; it is composed of three parts, namely places for men and women to pray separately and a section said to have been the tomb of Zülküf. Below are the remains of a fortress and a settlement, plus a hamam, well and dwellings. Locals like to picnic near the tomb and as ever the tomb itself is visited by the infirm and women who have difficulty conceiving, who if they manage to have children subsequently will name them Zülküf or Zülfiye.

Walking from the back of the tomb towards the cliffs you will come to the remains of the church overlooking the Tigris River and once apparently was part of a monastery. A Polish traveller

named Simeon visited here in 1612 and described the structure as a magnificent building where there was a prosperous village with another church. Formerly the church was a huge two-storeyed affair with hundreds of rooms plus wells and huge ornamented columns. Artefacts found among the ruins suggest that the interior was decorated with colourful mosaics.

The Tomb of Prophet Enûş (Ziyareta Enûş Pêxember)

Enûş (Enoch) is believed to have lived and been buried near Otluca (Qizilce) village, 14km southwest of Ergani town. To reach his tomb (*Ziyareta Enûş Pêxember*), drive 10km along the highway to Çermik and then take the left-hand turning for the village and continue 4km.

Local people make pilgrimages here at the end of Ramadan and for the Feast of the Sacrifice (*Kurban*), many of them slaughtering a rooster in the course of their visit. The site can be reached by driving or on a village *dolmuş* which arrives in the morning and departs in the afternoon.



A view Virgin Mary church in Ergani⁽¹³¹⁾

Çermik (Şamkûş)



Gelin Mt (132)

Çermik town is located on the slopes of Mount Heykel 80km of northwest of Diyarbakır. The surrounding district (population 17,825) became part of Diyarbakır during the Republican Era, though previously it was part of the *sanjak* of Ergani. The town is well known for its grapes but also has some historical attractions, mainly dating back to Artukid times, as well as a popular spa, making it one of the most visited in the area. The population is a mixture of Turcomans and Zazaki- and Kurmanji-speaking.

The spa facilities attract more than 200,000 people annually and contribute significantly to the local economy, as does marble quarrying. The spa and the town's other attractions are celebrated by the annual Queen *Belkıs Thermal Waters Festival* (Melike Belkıs Kaplıcaları Festivali), held in July. A fairly diverse affair, the festival includes traditional music and dance, presentations concerning the waters, activities such as fishing and promotions offering free entrance to the spa.

It's worth trying the most well-known local food speciality, *meftune*, an oven-



Making Pestil (133)

cooked dish consisting of lamb, aubergine, tomatoes, sumac and garlic. The area is also known for an entertainment for the ladies, which traditionally accompanies springtime. It is believed that a woman whose wishes have been granted by God should invite female neighbours for a picnic in which a goat kid is sacrificed and delicious meals are prepared by everyone; the women dress up in their best clothes and sing songs and dance. The event also gives attendant mothers whose sons are at marriageable age the possibility to choose a beautiful bride for her son.



Hot springs, Çermik^[134]



Çermik house^[135]

Çermik Hot Spring

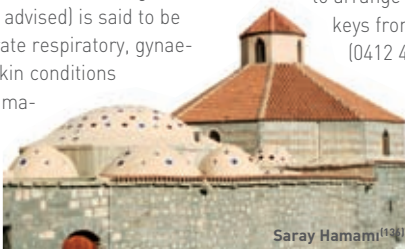
Situated 3km outside the town centre is this signposted resort with a huge choice of accommodation (see p:266), restaurants and various shops. The spa water is at 48°C and bathing in it (drinking is not advised) is said to be able to ameliorate respiratory, gynaecological and skin conditions as well as rheumatism. Some patients are officially sent here by the Medical

Faculty of Dicle University in Diyarbakır, though it should be noted that people with heart conditions are recommended not to use the spa without the assent of their doctors.

Open all day till late, the spa is easily visited on a day-trip from Diyarbakır. There are two large pools for men and women respectively, and some private en-suite facilities are available.

Saray Hamam

Located in the center of the town in the Saray quarter is this disused hamam, dating from the 16th or 17th century. The exterior of the site has been restored and when the interior is renovated, the hamam will be open to the public. Until then, visitors will need to arrange to collect the keys from the municipality (0412 461 20 01).



Saray Hamam^[136]

The changing room, with a tiled dome and containing circular windows, has a



Haburman Bridge⁽¹³⁷⁾

pool in the middle. In the northwest of the changing room is a low vaulted door giving access to a rectangular area with a window and lantern. The floors are all covered with cobblestones.

Çermik Kalesi (Kela Çêrmûkê/ Kela Şamkûşê)

On a craggy hill in the west of the town is this ancient, ruined fortress, which has yet to be excavated. Surviving parts include one complete gate, several cisterns, a well and a church wall. It is said that the fortress was inhabited until Ottomans attacked with artillery, at which point the inhabitants fled into the plains where their descendants have lived ever since.



Locals from Ergani⁽¹³⁸⁾

Ulu Cami (Mizgefta Mezin)

The Ulu Cami, also called Camii Atik and Sultan Alaaddin Selçuki Camii in historical records, is located in the Kale quarter. According to a two-line inscription in Kufic script, it was built by Abu Mansur İnallı, the İnalid ruler from Diyarbakır, in 1144/45, while an inscription in relief on the minaret states that it was built by Seljuk Sultan Alaeddin III (1297–1302) soon after the destruction wrought by the Mongols. In the east of the mosque, a four cornered structure with dome has been added by Çermik *sanjak* leader Şah Ali in 1517. In the mosque also is the piece of dark blue cloth, considered sacred and believed to have been once covered the Prophet's coffin. Preserved by the local Mütevelliler Tribe, who are believed to have migrated here from Mecca, the cloth is exhibited at mid-afternoon prayers at the Korban (*Kurban*) Festival each year. One section of the cloth is kept at Bingöl's Ulu Cami.

The figures which appear on a nearby mountain which can be seen from the mosque are a reference to a bridal procession, called *Çîyayê Bukê* in Kurmanji and *Koyê Veyvek* in Zazaki. It

Sinek Bridge ⁽¹³⁹¹⁾

is believed that people attending the ceremony were turned to stone because they were disrespectful of a blessing by one of the female guests.

Haburman Bridge

Also in the Kale quarter is the Haburman Bridge, which takes its name from the nearby village. Spanning the Sinek Stream, this three-arched bridge has been built in 1198/1199 with funds from Zübeyde Hatun the daughter of Artukian Necmeddin Albi. Its original purpose was to form part of a connection between the Ahlat-Tabriz (Iran) road and the Urfa-Aleppo (Syria) road, which would have enabled people to bypass Diyarbakır where the rival İnallı (Inalid) and Nisanlı Dynasties were dominant.

Built up of large white stone blocks, the bridge is 106m long and 5.5m wide, and slopes upwards from both ends to reach its maximum height of 19m high in the centre. There are three inscriptions on the bridge, two of which are about its construction while the third concerns a renovation.

Sinek (Sînak) Bridge

The remains of this bridge over the Sinek Stream are limited to just two

stumps. In the Kale quarter, the bridge was probably built in the late 12th century and was once 51.8m long, with two arches. Unfortunately it was destroyed by floods in 1973; a temporary suspension bridge was used until a concrete replacement was built in 1999.

A Synagogue and some Church Remains

The Kale quarter contains a synagogue which remains in good condition, though little about its provenance is known. Built of basalt rock and set in a large courtyard, it is now the residence of a Turcoman family, who use most of it for storage and will show you around on request. Locals found and removed a large number of books and hand-written manuscripts in the main prayer room.

Synagogue ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

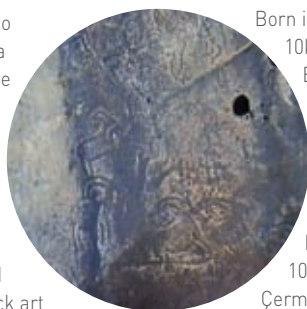


The synagogue's care taker ^[141]

Some 150m away are the remains of the town's only church – just a foundation stone and a large stone bearing Armenian writing with symbols on both sides. A private home has been built on the original place of the church.

Rock Art at Sinek Creek

Driving from Çermik to Çüngüş, you will see a signed waterfall on the left of the road at the 6km mark. Some 700m north of the waterfalls are caves called *Kayaaltı Sığınakları* (meaning Kayaaltı Shelters) and containing ancient rock art depicting hunting. Excavations



Rock art ^[142]

here in 2005 uncovered 16 images of animals and one of 11 hunters with bows, which date back to 15,000 to 13,000 years ago (the Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic Ages), making the oldest examples of their kind in Anatolia. More animal images were found underneath a calcareous layer, including depictions of goats and members of the cat family.

The Tomb of Şeyh Fevzi

Şeyh Fevzi was born in Kümtere (Kemtere) village near Derik (in Mardin) in 1931, and lost his sight as a result of an illness when he was 7. He settled in Çermik in 1946 and lived here thereafter. A member of the powerful tribe of *seyyids* called Mala Bub, he was considered the mirror of spirituality among the people, and upon his death in 1978 he was buried in a graveyard called Heykel Önü in the Tepe quarter. His tomb has no special architectural merit but is often visited by locals.

The Tomb of Hacı Mehmet Baba

Born in Gürüz (Güriz) village 10km from Çermik, Hacı Baba was much respected locally and performed many pilgrimages on Thursdays and Fridays. His tomb in Karataş (Çivan) village, 10km southwest of Çermik, is visited by many locals especially on holy days.

Accommodation

All of Çermik's accommodation is in the spa area, which has a staggering large number of hotels and guesthouses. Choices include the *Kaplıca Turistik Hotel* (0412 461 23 23, a four-star place very close to the spa and with a restaurant outside; the *Büyük Akdağ Apart Hotel* (0412 461 42 46), where there is no restaurant but the rooms have catering facilities; and the *Yayla Hotel* (0412 461 20 95), a small place with a tea garden at the back.

Çüngüş (Çîngûş)



Pestil making in Çüngüş ⁽¹⁴³⁾



Çüngüş house ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

In the far west of the province, Çüngüş is a cosy little town around 80km from Diyarbakır as the crow flies. It clings to the side of the mountain at an altitude of 1000m in a rugged area, with the Karakaya Dam on the Euphrates to the west. Completed in 1987, the dam is the third largest in the GAP Project (see p: 67) and contains six generators, each with a capacity of 300 megawatts.

The town got its name after the Ottoman Pasha Kapkırın Mehmet Ali Paşa visited in 1596 and called the place "Çün Guş" meaning "incoherent". He was aiming not only to put an end to disorderly settlements but also to introduce new infrastructure, including waterworks and transport links. Of the several civilizations which held sway in the area, the Artukids were of particular benefit to the town. Under their control the town flourished and the Silk Road traffic was secure, and the Artukids left a considerable legacy in terms of hamams, fountains, bridges and mosques.

Çüngüş district (population 2,930) was a subdistrict of Siverek *Sanjak* in 1880, Çermik *Sanjak* in 1883 and downgraded to a village at the end of World War I, though in 1953 it became a district of Diyarbakır. The inhabitants of the area are migrant Turks, Turcomans and Zaza speakers. Until the 1920s the town and surrounding area also had many Armenian residents, as is clear from the Armenian names of settlements and home-made wines mentioned in



Çüngüş Monastery (1451)

records. As the district is largely mountains, cultivable areas tend to be limited to those close to streams. The main crops include grapes, cotton, watermelons.

It is worth strolling uphill through the town to see some interesting old houses, nicely decorated with murals and woodwork and with doors built partly of metal, with interesting shapes; you will find the houses on your left and a few more down below the Camii Kebir quarter. Some of the houses are dilapidated but you can ask locals if you can take a photo or two of them. The town's old-fashioned mill, with animals powering the grindstone, is inside a house not far from Çüngüş Church.

If you are here in September, you might be able to take part in the three-day *Üzüm, Bal, Pestil ve Nar Festivali*, organised by the municipality and celebrating the area's grapes, honey, pestil (thin sheets of sun-dried fruit) and pomegranates. Needless to say,

these commodities are served to participants and the very best examples of these products are awarded prizes, but the festival also includes a concert (indeed one of the people behind it is the singer İzzet Altınmeşe).

Monastery

At the entrance to Çüngüş town are the remains of an Armenian monastery, located on a hill near the road to the Turcoman village of Aktaş, 300–400m from the main road before you enter the town centre. The site, including its garden, occupies an area of 1500 square metres. The only part of the perimeter wall that survives is in the east, but you access the site through a low gate in the west. Just above the gate are three arches, the largest placed in the middle. In the northeast corner is a chapel accessed through a gate in the west. This basilica-planned monastery, said to have been built in the 15th



Old water Mill stone (1466)

century, has three naves on each side separated with columns.

Tomb of Hasan Dede

In a small graveyard at the entrance to the town is the tomb of Hasan Dede, about whom very little is known. The entrance is the adjacent structure in the north, called a dervish lodge and said to have been added later on. Accessed through a circular vaulted gate, the tomb is covered with a low dome and contains three graves, the large one belonging to Hasan Dede himself while the other two belong to his sons. The tomb is not decorated and has no inscription dating it, though it is thought to be from the 16th century.

Ali Bey Camii

Opposite the municipality in the town centre in Camii Suk quarter, this mosque can be picked out from the surrounding buildings thanks to its minaret. According to inscriptions, one in Arabic and one in Turkish, the mosque was built by Yulad's son Ali in AH 1095, while the minaret was built in AH 1117. An attractive gate in the northeast gives access to the courtyard with ablution taps, a fountain in the northern part of the outer wall



Ali Bey Camii⁽¹⁴⁸⁾



Hasan Dede tomb⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

and a small storeroom in west. The praying area has a vaulted entrance, and to the east is a minaret with a square base. Just behind the minaret is rectangular room belonging to the *muezzin*, accessed through stairs.

Further west in the prayer area is a lower vaulted access into the women's section, with three naves linked with cusped arches. The *harem* is illuminated with the windows on all directions.

Çüngüş Hamam

Around 100m southwest of the Ali Bey Mosque is this hamam, thought to date from the 17th century and no longer in use, though visitors can get the keys from the municipality. The structure is accessed through a western gate which gives onto a square changing room, covered with an octagonal dome from which a lantern hangs. The warm room has three sections encircled with terraces for people to sit at. In the hot room you will find a dome with holes providing illumination, while to the northwest and northeast of the same room are small rooms, themselves domed and with floors covered in cobble-like stones. The hamam has undergone several renovations in which several concrete iwans were constructed in front of the gate, while the main dome was restored in 1975.

Merkez Ulya Camii

Prominently located on a terraced slope, this mosque appears to be



Çüngüş Church^[149]

single-storeyed viewed from the north, and three-storeyed from south. Accessed through the stairs down from the courtyard, the lower floor is the residence of the *muezzin* (it is also said to have been used as a madrasah) and has been indeed designed like a home, with a long narrow corridor along which rooms are placed. The upper floor is the prayer area, though in its northern section is a women's section whose wall is soundproofed, with two naves parallel to the *mihrab*. The *minbar* is built of walnut wood and decorated with plant motifs.

The door and window jambs have been built up of stone blocks while the rest of this rectangular mosque has been built up of broken stones.

The date 1870 appears on the entrance gate, but exactly who originally built the mosque and when is unknown.

Ulu Cami

Located on a slope in the Cami-i Kebir quarter in the west of town, the Ulu Cami is a converted 13th-century church according to some sources,

though others emphasise an 1134 inscription containing the name of Mahmud bin Abdullah, although it is not clear whether this relates to construction or renovation. The only access is through a small gate in the south to the praying area extended out towards the west and encircled with a wall. In the northern side is a door leading into the trapezoidal-shaped women's section whose west wall is soundproofed. The *mihrab* is circular and undecorated, while the *minbar* is probably a more recent addition. The structure generally has been built up of uncut stones but stone blocks have been used for window jambs. The use of oil paints used in the interior has spoiled the originality of the mosque.

Çüngüş Church (Dêra Çingûşê)

This 15th-century church is at the highest point in the Cami-i Kebir quarter on a terraced slope, with a commanding view of the whole town. The church occupies 500 square metres on an east-west axis, with 12m-high walls. The north and south facades are symmetrical and a chapel

has been placed at all four corners of the facades, though only two remain. The chapel in the west has two loop-holes below and two above, while the eastern one has two illuminating windows above.

Look up to the ceiling to see clay jugs inserted in order to reflect sound downwards and reinforce the impact of the religious music.

Çüngüş Bridge

Located at the end of the Cami-i Kebir quarter is this single-arched, vaulted bridge, which spans the Çüngüş Creek and once carried Silk Road traffic. The bridge is 17m long, 5m wide and 15.2m high, and its supporting pillars are placed natural rock on either side. The arch itself measures 8.7m and is built of stone blocks while the rest is of broken stones. The bridge, which underwent thorough restoration in 2006 is said to have been built along with Ali Bey Camii by Kapıkıran Mehmet Ali Paşa in the 17th century. If you cross the bridge, turn around and



Çüngüş Bridge ^[151]



Adas Church ^[150]

look up to your left, and you will see a beautiful residence in two sections, the smaller part of which is perched on top of a steep cliff with a wooden bridge linking it with the main house.

Adeş Village Church

The small and beautiful village of Değirmen Suyu (Adeş), 4km from Çüngüş, contains a church placed at the edge of a cliff overlooking a deep valley by Çüngüş Creek and the Euphrates. With its high walls the church looks like a three-storey house. In the south, built as an annex to the church, is another structure currently inhabited by villagers. The church is accessed through a gate in the west. Unlike other churches in Çüngüş, it does not have large windows beside the gate, but there is a loophole at each side. Being at the soil level there aren't any windows in the north but a loophole for each nave in the east. Nearby are the ruins of an old water mill.

Eğil (Gêl)



Assyrian rock tombs ^[152]

With some of the most impressive historical sites of Diyarbakır, a setting by the Tigris and hospitable locals (almost entirely Zazaki-speakers), the small town of Eğil has plenty to interest visitors though it has a low profile even in Turkey. The town, which lies 48km north of Diyarbakır in a valley just west of the Tigris, is also believed to have been home to the Prophets Zülküf and Elyesa, and is thus also a minor religious centre.



Water way near Assyrian rock tombs ^[153]

There are various theories as to how the town got its name. The famous Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi called it Gel, while the *Şerefname* - the historical chronicle by the Kurdish lord Şerefxané Bitlisi - mentions the tale of a holy man calling the local fortress "eğil", meaning "bend down" in Turkish. Eğil only became a district (current population 6,122) in 1987. Recently discovered oil resources and the Dicle Dam (part of the GAP Project, see p:67) have given a boost to the local economy.



Cross sign from cave church ^[154]

In 1997, despite protests by locals and environmental campaigners, the government went ahead with the building of a dam which submerged the entire Çarkören *Mahallesi* along with historical sites such as a bazaar and the Tekke Hamam, though a number of prophet's tombs were moved beforehand.

There are number of tea gardens and a fish restaurant called *Asur* near the municipal ferry jetty where boats to Dicle and Hani depart. The restaurant is a good place to try freshly fried fish from the Tigris.

Eğil Kalesi ^[155]

Eğil Kalesi (Kela Gêl)

Placed on a massive rock, this fortress is surrounded by walls and has valleys on three sides. Before you head up to the castle, look out on the right for what is thought to be an Assyrian ruler depicted on a western rock face; the best time to identify the figure is in the afternoon.

Occupying an area larger than three football fields, the fortress functioned as a refuge during wars and also a place to store important resources. Four tunnels were dug down from the fortress to the Tigris to serve as an escape route and also so that water could be brought up to the site. Just below the largest remaining room are number of stone chairs for the king and his ministers.

Also inside the fortress and just to the west of the figure of Assyrian King is a cave church (*mağara kilisesi*), which has many crosses marked on the rock representing different periods. It is believed to have been visited by one of Christ's apostles in the first century to establish a Christian monastery and Episcopal centre. You need to use a narrow path to ascend around 5m up a rocky cliff to get to the cave.

Another prominent figure from this monastery is one Musa, who wrote a biography of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and his wife. Musa was born

and lived in Eğil in 6th century and lived in the region. Theodoto is another prominent figure, born in Eğil. He became well known in Diyarbakır and surroundings through curing orthopaedic diseases and comforting desperate people. Taking over responsibilities at different monasteries, he worked as a peace mediator between Arabs and Romans as well. He passed away in 698 and is considered among the saints of the 7th century.

Deran Hamam

Located on a large creek in the Deran area is a *hamam* connected to the fortress through an underground tunnel. Functioning until recently, this structure has been submerged under the water and can be seen only when water level drops by several metres. Two large arches are the only surviving parts.

Water Cistern

There are three water channels carved out of the rock and leading from the fortress down to the river – two channels in the north and one to the south. This surviving structure resembles the well-known Yerebatan Cistern in İstanbul. The town's water was supplied from afar using earthen pipes leading to this cistern, and from there distributed to hamams, mosques and fountains. Some of these earthen pipes have been uncovered during the excavations north of town hall.

Assyrian ruler ^[156]



Taciyen Camii

Four walls and a small part of a tiled dome with Kufic inscriptions are all that survive of this Artukid mosque, on a valley slope south of Eğil Fortress.

The Assyrian Rock Tombs

Located near the Dicle Dam northeast of the fortress are some rock tombs whose Turkish name (*Asur Kiral Kaya Mezarları*) indicates their association with the Assyrians. Ferries from the municipal jetty stop here on request and will wait for you so you can have a quick look around and take some pictures.

The tombs have been carved into cylindrical shapes sitting side by side like rosary beads, and surrounded by a large number of caves. Within the tombs you will find some columns and paintings, while opposite the tombs on



the other side of the valley are a number of stone pyramids.

The Prophets' Tombs

On the road to Diyarbakır 3km out of Eğil town is a signposted road to Nebi Harun Hill on whose summit are the so-called prophets' tombs (*peygamber mezarları* in Turkish or *gorên pêxemberan* in Kurdish). The area is very popular with locals as a pilgrimage site and for weekend picnics.

A panel at the tomb of Nebi Harun reads: "This tomb belongs to Berhiya's son Harun-i Asefi who was the clerk of the Prophet Suleyman. He approximately lived in 900 BC." Nearby is another grave belonging to Harun İbn-i Pir-i Can according to the inscription.



The six-metre tomb of Elyesa (Elisha) was moved to the hill to avoid being submerged when the dam was built, and is visited mainly on Thursday evenings. A panel here says that

"Elyesa is the son of Ehtub and cousin of İlyas. He approximately lived in 1200 BC."

As in Ergani, a possible tomb for the Prophet Zülküf makes an appearance on top of the hill. This particular tomb used to stand in the Hacıyan area 4km from town, and was moved here in 1995 to avoid being submerged. Zülküf is mentioned twice in the Koran as a tolerant of people in general, including those hostile to him.

Kalkan (Şelbetin)

The village of Kalkan (Şelbetin), 12km south of Eğil on a tumulus on the Diyarbakır road, used to be of strategic importance thanks to its position at the start the fertile Diyarbakır Plains and at the junction of important trade



Prophet tombs^[160]

routes. As a result, the Eğıl rulers Lala Kasım Beg and his successor Murat Beg had a caravanserai, hamam, madrasah and mosque built in the village.

The caravanserai, on a small hill overlooking a tributary of the Tigris, is a long, straight, flat-roofed stone building. An Arabic inscription states that it was built in 1561–1562 by Murat Beg and named in honour of his uncle Kasım Bin Şah Mehmet Beg. Nowadays the ground floor is used as a barn.

Around 200m northwest of the caravanserai are two cupolas on a small hill, one as a tomb for Kasım Beg, the other for Cafer Beg. Said to have been built in the 16th century, the

cupolas are built of basalt and have conical roofs, but are now rather worn. Each of their faces has a large window of identical size and shape. The cupolas have no ornamentation and one has been largely pillaged for building materials; there aren't any traces of graves inside either cupola.

Selman Kalesi

The fortress near the village of Selman, 10km southeast of Eğıl, is one of relatively few that are well preserved; most of the walls and gates still stand. To reach it, drive 3km south out of the village and then walk 500m to the site.



The tomb of Prophet Harun^[161]



Kalkan (Şelbetin)^[162]

Dicle (Pîran)



Old houses in Dicle (163)

Some 85km north of Diyarbakır, Dicle is a Zazaki-speaking town which became a district in its own right (population 12,227) in 1938. The town has a special place in Kurdish political history as the location of the first major meeting between Sheikh Said (see p:139), leader of the Kurdish rebellion in the 1920s, and a group of Hamidiye soldiers along with Zaza tribal leaders. It was also where his armed struggle against the Turkish republic began. The old name of town "Pîran" means "scholar"; the town was given its cur-

rent name (which is in fact the Turkish name for the Tigris) during the republican era.

Centrally located on a hill dominating the town are some caves with the perimeter of a military base and believed to have been settled by humans in the past. Nowadays, people are allowed to make pilgrimages on Thursdays, to the Tomb of Sheikh Yusuf also within the military base. From up here you can easily observe the town's old fortress, which is in ruins.



The oldest mosque in town is the Yukarı Camii, located in the Yeşiltepe quarter (*Mahalleyi Celo* in Zazaki). Its age and builder are unknown, but it is probably late Ottoman, though the beautifully ornamented minaret was added more recently. The mosque is partitioned into two by a big wooden door. Three old graves in the small yard have headstones nicely decorated with verses from Koran. Unlike at other local mosques, the ablution area is indoors rather than outside.

Finally, there are two fountains in the Yeşiltepe quarter of Dicle district. One is called *Eyni Ceyno* (Women's Fountain), where women gather to socialise and wash large items such as carpets. Just behind is the *Ayni Comêrdo* (Men's Fountain). Both are built of yellow limestone and have an arch-shaped recess at the base.

Pir Mansur Türbesi

This tomb, which villagers call *Pir Mansur Ziyareti*, is located in a graveyard near Kocaalan (Dîrey) village, 5km east of Dicle. This large rectangular structure has a door inscription stating: "Haza Mescid-i Mansur, date 1611". Also here are the graves of people believed to be descendants of Pir Mansur.

The Rock of the King's Daughter (Kiral Kızı Taşı)

On the southern slope of a valley by the Maden Stream is a huge rock on



Tigris river ^[165]

which two windows have been carved, making it look vaguely like a house. It is located on the Diyarbakır road some 7km west of Dicle and 1km east of Daxon village, but is best viewed from the roadside as it is fairly inaccessible. To the right of the rock is an obelisk and further down a single-windowed stone grave, whose local name translates as "King's Daughter's Rock" by locals. According to legend, a king punished his beautiful daughter for falling in love with a shepherd by imprisoning her here. The guards, witnessing two pigeons flying out through the window, realised that the girl was not there the next day. There is said to be treasure inside, a notion supposedly based on tales of storks flying from here with a piece of carpet or *kilim* in their mouths.



Women fountain ^[166]



Graves in Yukarı camii ^[167]

Hani (Hênê)



Children from Hani^[168]

On rugged terrain 1200m up, Hani town is 86km north of Diyarbakır and gets its name from the Zazaki word (*hênê*) (“fountain”). The area became a district of Diyarbakır province in 1958 and now has a population of 8,292. In the centre and nearby villages the inhabitants are mostly Zazaki-speakers, though there are also some Kurmanji-speaking villages. To either side of Ambar Creek vegetables and grain are grown for self-consumption, while some people also keep livestock.

Hani town is encircled by the southern Taurus Mountains to the north and slopes down gradually towards the south. At first glance the town may come across as conservative; in fact this is the only district town of Diyarbakır where there are relatively few women in the streets and most of those you do see are in black chador and wear the veil. That said, the locals are friendly and may well offer you local tea and even show you around a little.

Ulu Cami (Hani Camii)

Centrally placed near the town hall is the Ulu Cami, which is thought to be

Artukid. In the west of the mosque is a gate leading into the courtyard, in whose northwest corner are doors giving access to two different sections for women to pray, connected to each other and with a roof of clay tiles. The western and eastern parts of the mosque have three and two naves respectively, parallel to the south wall. The stone minaret nearby the mosque is rectangular and unadorned. The mosque was restored a few years ago, as well as much in 1657 and 1682 according to inscriptions, it is where most of the locals gather at the tea houses near by the pool.



Hani Ulu Cami^[169]

A local woman ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾

Hatuniye (Zeynebiye) Madrasah

This newly restored madrasah, roughly 300m southwest of Ulu Cami, is thought to be a late-13th-century Artukid construction. On the north side is a beautiful *iwan* with a fountain, while at the opposite end is the mihrab, nicely decorated with Koranic verses, and on the right of this is a room containing a small pool. Also striking are the geometric decoration and masonry work of the *mihrab* and the two windows of the domed rooms in the main hall, the areas above which have been decorated with Arabic calligraphy and vegetal motifs.

Hatuniye (Zeynebiye) Madrasah ⁽¹⁷¹⁾

Aynkebir Pool

Just below the Ulu Cami and next to the Hatuniye Madrasah, this large pool dates all the way back to the Hurrians in 2000 BC, and is fed by water from the slopes of Mount Hani. The water builds up in a natural underground reservoir and then emerges through nine conduits at the base of the wall on one side of the pool. The very same water, which is clear and said to be drinkable, helps to irrigate some of the land in the area and once powered eight mills as well. The teahouses near the pool make an ideal place to relax and enjoy views of the pool and the Ulu Cami, and are popular with locals.

Aynkebir pool ⁽¹⁷²⁾



Tomb of Seyyid Caferi Tayyar⁽¹⁷³⁾

Sheikh Bedrettin Türbesi

This stone tomb on a rectangular plan sits within a nice garden in the Derele quarter of the town, a few hundred meters down from the Hatuniye Madrasah. The entrance is cusped and has an Arabic inscription indicating a date of construction of AH 1292. A small window illuminates the interior. The tomb is in two sections, one containing three graves said to be belongs to two brothers and a sister of Sheikh Bedrettin, while the Sheikh's own grave is in an open area behind. The tomb is regularly visited by locals, mostly women.



Sheikh Bedreddin Türbesi⁽¹⁷⁴⁾

Mosque and Tomb of Seyyid Caferi Tayyar

Located in the Zirve quarter in the upper part of town, this building is rectangular in plan and built of limestone, with a wooden roof. The minaret is rectangular in cross-section and has a conical top. Caferi Tayyar is thought to have been buried here after being martyred in a war. His tomb is visited by many locals who come to read the Koran and pray, mostly on Thursday evenings. Both mosque and tomb were renovated in 1978.

Ankeris (Ava Sipî) Spring

Also called *Şifalı Su* ("Medical Water") by the locals, the spring is under a large mulberry tree in the Veziri quarter, 2km from the town centre on the road to the Lice district. Bathing in, and indeed drinking from, the small pool is said to cure liver complaints, and draws many people from various provinces especially in the early morning.



Ankeris (Ava Sipî) spring⁽¹⁷⁵⁾

Lice (Licê)



A traditional meal (kaburga dolması) ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾

Lice town (population 13,118), named Şirişa in Assurian records and İlica in Ottoman records, is 85km northeast of Diyarbakır at the foot of Mount Akdağ, though it used to be situated on the hillside until that settlement was hit by an earthquake in 1975, which killed 2800 and destroyed 8000 houses. The unrest of the 1990s brought a second shock as thousands migrated to Diyarbakır and the cities of western Turkey, but today the town has recovered its equilibrium. Walnuts, grapes are the main products of the district, and some employment is also provided by a marble factory built by the businessman Halis Toprak (who is originally from Lice).

Ulu Cami

This mosque, also called Vakıf Ahmet Bey Camii, is in old Lice, abandoned since the earthquake, in the middle of a valley through which a clear water flows. The mosque was built in 1540 by Ahmet Bey, a descendant of Hasan Ezraki. After a fire in 1845, the structure was renovated and expanded by Hacı Sadullah Bey in 1875. The prayer



Ulu Cami ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾

areas have been separated with columns and large pointed vaults.

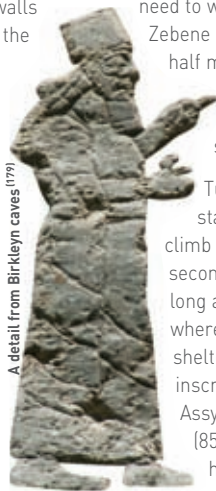
Birkleyn Caves

These three caves extending parallel to one another into the rock are located on the Bingöl-Muş highway, 26km from Lice on the right side of the main road; bring a torch if you want to look around inside. Work led by German archaeologist, Andreas Schachner has uncovered five inscriptions and three reliefs dating to the Assyrians in 1100–850BC. According to him, the remains suggest that these places were inhabited since 6000 BC.



Birkleyn caves ^[178]

Remains of stone steps and walls can be seen to the south of the cave on the left. As you enter there are two inscriptions dating from the reign of the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser I (1116–1090 BC). As the inscriptions are high up on a northern face of the cave, they haven't been defaced. This is also the cave from which the Zebene Stream, one of the main tributaries of Tigris, emerges and is sometimes called a gate to the next world by locals. In order to explore this cave you will



A detail from Birkleyn caves ^[179]

need to walk through the shallow Zebene Stream, which is around half meter to one meter deep.

The water is clear and cool, very tempting for swimming.

Turning back to your starting point, you need to climb further up to reach the second cave, which is 600m long and has a large entrance where birds seem to like sheltering. A partly destroyed inscription from the time of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III (859–825BC) can be found halfway through the cave.

Birkleyn caves^[180]

The third and longest cave is another 100m up and reached via a narrow pathway. This cave has a rather small mouth but opens up further in. It is said that even after an hour of walking, villagers did not manage to reach the end of the cave, which is one of the most beautiful caves in the region. Its stalactites and stalagmites are said to have healing powers for asthma.

Çeper Hanı (Xana Kelê)

You can visit what remains of the hilltop Zülkarneyn Kalesi in Çeper village west of the Diyarbakır–Bingöl highway, 16km west of Lice. All sources say this was a Persian settle-

ment, though some sources say it was named after Alexander the Great stayed there, while others say this was associated with Emperor Kuroş in the 6th century, who is depicted with two horns on his head as he united the empires of the Medes and Persians and is thus called Zülkarneyn (“two-horned”). Some foundations of the walls can still be seen, as can the remains of three bastions and two gates.

Four hundred metres on from the end of the village is a large former Silk Road caravanserai, Çeper Han (Xana Qelê), which remains in good condition though some parts of the roof are



Çeper Hanı⁽¹⁸¹⁾

damaged. Inside is a large hall with three rows of columns, each with six large arches made of white stone. Rooms for the tired travellers are located on either side of the building. In the leftmost room is the tomb of respected Sheikh Tahir-i Keli, which is visited by many pilgrims; his father is buried nearby in the courtyard.

The Caves of the Ashab-ı Keyf

These caves are one of a number of sites (the others are elsewhere in Turkey and in several neighbouring

countries) said to have been a refuge for the Ashab-ı Keyf, a group of seven brothers and their dog, who had to flee persecution because they believed in *Allah* rather than idols. The caves are on top of the 650m Mount Rakim, close to Duru (Derikqm) village, 15km from the centre. Once you get to the parking area you need to climb up metal ladders to reach the first cave, where people pray and leave offerings. The second cave, also reached by ladder, is where the Ashab-ı Keyf are believed to have slept.



Hospitality Çeper Hanı⁽¹⁸²⁾



The caves of Ashabi Keyf⁽¹⁸³⁾

Their story is mentioned in one of the *suras* of the Koran, namely AL-Kahf (the Cave), though it does not give dates and places nor the number of people involved. One of the most common legends about the group mentions a brutal pagan ruler Dakyanus who had six advisors. Discovering that they believed in one god, he threatened them with execution if they would not convert to idolatry. They fled the palace for the mountains, en route to which they met a shepherd who took them to the cave. God had them sleep for 300 years in the cave, by the end of which they were in no danger as the ruler of the time had adopted the same faith as them.

A religious festival is held at the mountain on 28 May every year, when people come from around the province to visit the caves. There they touch the walls of the caves, drink water that drips down from the roof and pray. Afterwards they gather in picnic areas to eat home cooked food and perhaps sacrifice an animal to share the meat out with others, as hawkers peddle snacks, drinks and ice cream.

Dakyanus

This ancient settlement is on a 1000m hill on Fis Plain near the village of Fis



(Deşta Fîsê), 19km west of Lice town. From the village it may take you around 20 minutes climbing to get to the site, and it may be a good idea to arrange guides by contacting the village *muhtar*. It is known that the settlement was ruled by a powerful tyrant named Dakyanus, although little is known as to when it was built and destroyed, and by whom, as excavations have yet to be undertaken. However, the features of the remains, including columns, encircling walls and some walls and vaults referred as the palace of Dakyanus, suggest it may be of Seleucids or Roman construction. As is often the case, some of the columns have been incorporated into a mosque in a nearby village.



Kulp (Pasûr)



Sericulture in Kulp ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾

Kulp district (population 11,474) is at an altitude of 1132m and around 120km northeast of Diyarbakır. The area is traversed by the Kulp Stream and the Sêqas and Sarım Streams (tributaries of the Batman River), water sources which have not only aided local agriculture but also attracted the attention of various civilisations over the centuries. Some sources say the old name of the district derives from *pasur* meaning "fortress encircled by ditches", others claim it comes from *bayê sar* meaning "cold wind", and a third group say it comes from *pa-sûr* for "the main fortress". The current name may derive from that of a local ruler called Kulpo.

Kulp is well known locally for producing a large number of qualified teachers and is a relatively populous part of the province, helped by the opening of the highway between Kulp and Muş. The inhabitants are a mixture of Kurmanji and Zazaki speakers.

Sericulture is one important source of income in the district; in fact Kulp town and the village of Ağaçlı (Cixsê) to



Sericulture ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾

the west account for most of the country's silk industry. With the support of Swiss Development Cooperation, Turkey Development Foundation (TKV) has made a pilot project in 1977-1995 on "integrated sericulture development" in Kulp town. The foundation has established sericulture integrated facilities and carpet workshops in Ağaçlı (Cixsê), Narlıca (Tiyaxis) villages and central Kulp town. In the last few years with the financial support of EU, *Kulp Koza Yetiştiriciler Birliği* (Kulp Cocoon Producers Unity) and Diyarbakır Commerce Chamber, the region received a boost in its production. Furthermore the *Kulp Koza ve Kültür Festivali* (Kulp Cocoon and Culture Festival) in June includes not only the usual cultural performances but also visits to silk production facilities in Ağaçlı and other sights in the district.

Telli Ağa House ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

The house was built of white stone from the village of Taşköprü some 25km away by Telli Ağa and his brother Abdül Ağa in 1650. There is beautiful stonework on the main door. The house has two storeys but has fallen into disrepair through neglect and the impact of landslides, though it is currently being restored. The western part of the house is still standing. From the house you get good views of Kulp town and the Kulp Stream. From a little way below you can see the Kevirê Nivîsî (literally "written stone"), a big rock bearing cuneiform inscriptions; it's located near the stream and 2km from Kulp Bridge.

Ağaçlı (Cixsê)

The House of Telli Ağa

This house is located on the slopes of Mount Hesandîn in the especially pretty Karabulak (Nêrçik) village, 10km east of Kulp town. To reach the house, once in the village you will need to park your car and walk for around 10 minutes east of the village, past trees of pomegranate, walnut, almond and mulberry.

Ağaçlı, 18km west of Kulp town, is the site of Ağaçlı Kalesi (Kela Cixsê), a ruined fortress on a hilltop. It is said to have been built during Byzantine times and includes the remains of two ancient churches. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi describes the inhabitants as good ironsmiths who sold handmade swords to caravans passing through the Kevirê Dîkan area in the west.

GABB Birlık Parkı ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾



Locals Ağaçlı (Cixsê) [190]

This village is large, well kept and contains many mulberry trees; indeed it has two silk workshops and most household engage in sericulture as a sideline to earn some extra income. The park and spring-fed fountain at the end of the village are worth a look; some locals say that once upon a time the spring was a meeting point for lovers.

Konuklu (Duderya)

Nearly 20km southeast of Kulp is Konuklu village, where you will find *Kefrum Kalesi* (also called *Kela Mîra* or *Kaferê Romê*), a cave site that was fortified under the Byzantines. The site takes its name from the fact that non-Muslims (*kafir*) used to rule the place; one of the rulers was Kulpo, from whom the district took its name.

The village is also home to the biggest *küllîye* (a religious complex next to a mosque) in Turkey, built with funds from a retired imam Sheikh Siraceddin, plus contributions from people all over Turkey. Located at the

highest point of the village, this massive white building has large number of rooms for *feqîs* (madrasah students), halls for prayers, a guest-house and a residence for the sheikh himself, who receives visitors daily.

Surp Kevork Church (Simetaq)

Once serving the Armenian community, this church is located in the Smetak quarter of Yaylak (Eskar) village, some 22km north of Kulp town. The church consists of one large room with a smaller one to the side, but is now in ruins. Nearby are three caves inhabited in ancient times.

İnkaya (Kanikan) Caves

These caves are located in İnkaya village, which is close to the Kulp Stream 25km south of Kulp town. It is said that a Persian ruler once lived here and that the ruins around the caves are the relics of an ancient city. Remains of water tanks, watchtowers and rooms used by soldiers can be seen, and there are still forty poles standing which horses were tied up to. There are also two mills in the caves that would have been powered by water.

Taşköprü (Godernê)

Geliye Godernê is the largest valley in Mesopotamia and was populated by Armenians for a long time. Here, 27km southwest of Kulp town, you will find the village of Taşköprü (Godernê),



Kefrum Kalesi [191]



A local Konuklu (Duderya) [192]

Andok Mountains^[193]

which takes its name from the stone bridge spanning the Sarim Stream and connecting Kulp to Silvan. The site was inhabited by early Christians, and some ruins of the tomb of a priest called Ekso can be seen. A 200m-high gorge here contains caves where traces of Stone Age occupation have been found. Around 70m before the bridge if you approach from Kulp is a large stone cave grave located inside a pleasant garden.

Beyond the village, you can take a right down to the bottom of this amazing lush valley, containing green fields and small vegetable plots. The valley is a popular picnic site for locals, and is certainly great for swimming and fishing.

Andok and Berbihîv

Andok and Berbihîv are two of the highest and most beautiful mountains in the district. Heading from Kulp towards Muş, drive 20km and Mount Andok (3074m) will be on your right, Mount Berbihîv (2000m) on your left. Each has the tomb of a sheikh on its summit: that of one Sheikh Mihemed

on Andok and that of Sheikh Mihemed Huseyn on Berbihîv. Inhabitants of Kulp and Muş make pilgrimages to these tombs at least once a year, performing the customary slaughter animals and sharing out the meat with relatives. The Andok pilgrimage, which is the more significant and lasts three days, starts on the 14th of July (as Andok is such a high mountain, people prefer to go there in summer). As with other local pilgrimages, people wear their best clothes, prepare their best foods, sing traditional songs and read sections from Quran. The pilgrimages also attract hawkers selling a variety of wares.

Taşköprü (Godernê)^[194]

Huvde(hê) Adarê/Ser Huvdeh



Women in Ser Huvdeh ceremony ⁽¹⁹⁶⁾

Huvdê(hê) Adarê is regarded as one of oldest traditional festivals and is celebrated in a triangular area formed by Silvan, Kulp and Sason. As with most religiously based festivals, Ser Huvdeh has various legends associated with it. The festival actually commemorates Maaz bin Cebel (Muez bin Cebel), the commander of a conquering Muslim army who died just a few days before his wedding. In recognition of the Maaz bin Cebel, the caliph promised his mother that they would hold a wedding ceremony every year at the time when he would have got married. The story has it that the mother also died shortly after her son was killed, and she was buried opposite the tomb of her son.

Today festival participants assemble in late March (though the name of

the festival actually implies a date of 17 March, as the Kurds used an Islamic calendar -Şemsi- which is normally 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar, this event still celebrated according to the old calendar) at the site of the two tombs, near the village of Kumgölü (Emerka), about 35km south of Kulp town. Here they perform traditional dances accompanied by percussion and singing to moan the young warrior. The men consist mainly of the devout, such as *feqîs* and *imams*, and dance in the area near Maaz Bin Cebel's tomb, while the women dance to either side and also prepare henna as though for a wedding ceremony. Just as a traditional wedding reaches its height at the end of the celebration, so the last day of the festival, 30 March, is the most interesting. An elderly religious

Men in Ser Huvdeh ceremony ⁽¹⁹⁶⁾

man playing percussion circles the tomb, with women behind him holding a tray containing lighted candles and henna (everyone will rub some henna on their hands) and this continues for hours, after which the henna is distributed for people to apply to their hands. (It is believed that doing so will bring about marriage to their beloved soon, and lifelong happiness.) The women perform religious dances (*cezma ketin*), sing religious songs and may work themselves into an ecstatic trance-like state, chanting the name of *Allah* repeatedly.

A well-attended, high-spirited fair also takes place during the festival. Many people attend for three days, camping alongside the tomb or in

the hills nearby. Food stalls and tea shops are set up and vendors also sell handmade items anything from percussion instruments to traditional clothes and even the traditional Kurdish chewing gum of the region, said to be good for the stomach. Competitions are organised involving a game not dissimilar to polo. The winner may even find wealthy people at the event prepared to offer a good price for his horse.

Ser Huvdeh ⁽¹⁹⁷⁾



Carpet weaving^[198]

Hazro (Hezro)

The district of Hazro (population 5,478) is located on the south side of the Hacertum Mountains, 70km northeast of Diyarbakır. Hazro gets its name from Hataro Tercil, a fortress built here by the Assyrians. Under the Ottomans it was a *sanjak* of Diyarbakır province; in the 1940s it came under the jurisdiction of Silvan district until becoming a district of Diyarbakır in 1954. The local economy is based on agriculture and livestock, with some silk production too. A carpet-weaving programme aims to provide job opportunities for young women (although low paid) and to produce high-quality silk and wool carpets for sale in Diyarbakır and further north in Erzurum.

Hazro town used to be populated by not only Kurds but also Armenians, and the Armenian legacy will be apparent if you walk through the centre, in the style of the masonry and the building facades. There is even a fountain in the centre called the “Armenian fountain”, though it is no longer functional. The stream that flows through the centre once divided the Armenian and Kurdish parts of town. Besides Tercil Fortress, the town has a number of other historical sites, including the Ulu Cami and the ruined Derebeyi Palace, made of white limestone, which originally had 40 rooms; this was where Atatürk stayed on a visit to Hazro.

Ulu Cami (Mizgefta Hezro)

This striking mosque of white limestone, built in the 16th or 17th century, is located on a hill overlooking the whole town. The mosque has retained its character despite several renovations. The niches above the entrance and *mihrab* are nicely decorated with geometric figures. The stairs on the left of the entrance lead to a portico upstairs, which has a door into the



Derebeyi palace^[199]

women's prayer area, a two-storey rectangular structure with lancet-arched stonework on the facades. The minaret, accessed through a vaulted door, is built on a pedestal with nice decorations and masonry work.



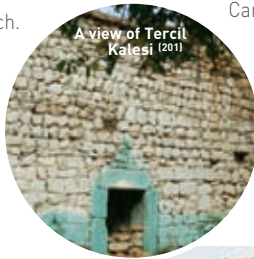
Hacı Abdulfettah Yazıcı Seydah Hacı Tomb

This tomb is located in the Cami quarter in the centre of Hazro district. Its occupant (1892–1975) was a teacher in a madrasah and regarded as an intellectual, and his tomb is visited by many locals. His tomb has not been ornamented though he had asked for this to be done.

Tercil Kalesi (Kela Tercilê)

Located near Terdöken (Tercil) village 10km from the centre, the fortress resembles a church. In the past it contained a settlement under the jurisdiction of Tercil Beylik.

Below the castle is a two-room structure which is now a pilgrimage site. Local people believe that mentally retarded people can be cured if they are kept here overnight, and that people who are treated thus will have specks of blood appear on their backs, representing genies which were causing the disease. There is also a fountain here whose water is believed to have a curative effect on epileptics.



Tomb of Sheikh Hasan Ezraki

There are different legends about this holy place, in Ülgen village (Mêrenî) around 10km east of Hazro town. According to one of the most popular tales, Hasan Ezraki emigrated from Damascus in order to study science and divinity in Mardin. His influence in the region intimidated the local ruler so much so that he decided to put him in an underground dungeon. The guard was very surprised to see him materialise outside the dungeon to perform his ritual ablutions for prayers. He observed that the Sheikh appeared to be escaping and returning on a beam of light, and upon the ruler being informed of this miracle, the sheikh was released. The Artukid ruler had him brought to the palace to cure his mentally retarded daughter, and when he achieved this, he was offered her hand in marriage, but he refused. The girl's hand was then offered to his son, with control of three fortresses as a sweetener.

Halı Atölyesi

This carpet atelier located in Elhuan quarter, north of the town centre, was originally opened in 1988 with support of governor and the Sümer

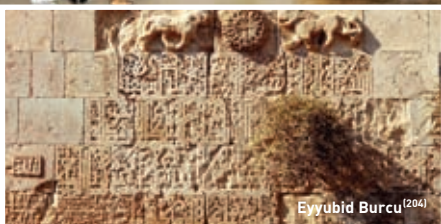
Carpet Company. Three instructors teach and manage around 50 young women who make some fine carpets using original designs and materials.



Silvan (Farqîn)



Malabadi Bridge^[203]



Eyyubid Burcu^[204]

The district of Silvan (population 47,105) occupies an undulating area traversed by the Diyarbakır–Batman highway. Silvan town, some 75km east of Diyarbakır, is said to have been founded during Assyrian times; in the past Silvan was identified with the Hellenistic city Tigranocerta, but more recent research makes it more likely this site should be identified with Eğil. The city was subsequently named Martyropolis after 40 Byzantine troops killed by the Sassanids were buried in the town's fortress, and renamed Justinianopolis when it was fortified by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. Under Islamic control the town had various names, including Meyafarqîn,

Farqîn Silvan, while the Armenians called it Muhargin. The town was finally renamed Silvan in the republican era, though locals still call it Farqîn.

Silvan was the seat of several dynasties including the Artukids, during which most of the historical works have been built. The city was also the seat of the Kurdish Marwanids for around hundred years, during which they reached their apogee in terms of culture, trade and science. The city was dominated by Seljuks and Artukids until 1185, after which the Ayyubids took over until 1260 when the Mongols looted the place and slaughtered many people. With the arrival of the Mongols, the town fell into obscurity.

A prosperous and at the same time conservative place, the town today has



Marwanids coins^[205]



Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii (Ulu Cami) [206]

come through a period of troubles in the 1990s, when it was the scene of several assassinations by the shadowy Hezbollah which remain unsolved. The Silvan Barrage has allowed much of the surrounding land to be irrigated and the district is well known for its rice and tobacco; brick production, flour milling and cotton processing also contribute to the local economy.

Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii (Ulu Cami)

Centrally located, this mosque is one of the largest in the region. Some sources say it was always a mosque, while others say it is a converted Byzantine church, but what is not in doubt is that this is one of the largest mosques in the region. After the city was taken over by the Ayyubids, the mosque was renovated and named after Selahaddin (Saladin), and thus bearing both Ayyubid and Artukid inscriptions. In a picture taken by the British archaeologist Gertrude Bell in 1911, the mosque seems to be partly ruined; it is said to have undergone a complete renovation by Mardin



The entrance of Selahaddin Eyyubi Camii [207]

artisans in 1913, and portals added to the north and south at the time have partly spoiled its character. Nevertheless, with its impressive masonry work, large dome of nicely decorated *mihrab* and woodwork on the doors, the building sets a standard for other Anatolian mosques to emulate.

The mosque is built of white stone while the dome has been painted white. The octagonal dome is 13.5m

Saladin (Selahedîn Eyûbî)



Selahaddin Eyyubi (Selahedîn Eyûbî) ⁽²⁰⁸⁾

Saladin was originally born in 1138 as Yusuf in Tikrit, what is now Iraq; later he became known as Selahaddin meaning “the peace of religions”. His family, the Ayyubis, was drawn from the Hezbani Kurds who settled in a town called Duvın in Azerbaijan. Led by Sazi, Saladin’s grandfather, the family migrated to Tikrit during the reign of the Seljuk Muhammad Tapar at the beginning of the 12th century. The grandfather became a tutor of the Seljuk provinces and governor of Baghdad, while his son, Necmeddin Ayyubi, became the governor of Tikrit. Saladin’s father had to flee for Mosul, however, after accidentally killing a man serving the Seljuk Ruler Behruz. Saladin continued his education in Mosul and then in Damascus, where he lived ten years at the court of his uncle, Nur ad Din, who was a nobleman. After finishing his first military education, he accompanied his uncle on campaigns against the Fatimid rulers of Egypt in the 1160s. Another of his

uncles, Shirkuh (Şirguh), a lieutenant of Nur ad Din, became vizier there and was succeeded by Saladin upon his death in 1169. After the death of Nur ad Din, Saladin proclaimed himself Sultan of Egypt, thus founding the Ayyubid Dynasty. Conquering western and northern shores of Africa, he also took over Mosul, Aleppo and other swathes of territory from rival Muslim rulers. In 1183, he mounted a major attack on Crusader-held Jerusalem which failed. In 1187 he declared *jihad* and drew on troops from Syria and Egypt to battle the Crusaders, taking not just Jerusalem but also other major cities in Palestine. Christian forces, led by King Richard I of England, defeated Saladin but were not able to recapture Jerusalem.

Saladin died on 4 March 1193 after twelve days of illness and is buried just outside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.



Back door of Eyyubi Camii ^[209]

across and covered by a pyramidal roof. The front courtyard of the mosque has pleasant green area, popular with old men debating while drinking freshly made tea. The front entrance is packed with street stalls and religious book sellers.

The Broken Minaret

Located on a hill southeast of the centre, this striking minaret (*Minara Qot* to locals) of white sandstone is all that remains of a mosque built between 1199 and 1210 under the Ayyubids. The minaret is 35m tall, square in cross-section and used to have five storeys, though the top section has been destroyed – hence the minaret’s name. On each side of minaret are nicely decorated inscriptions. On the entrance door there is inscription from the time of Melik Evhad Eyyub (1199–1210) on the first storey, an inscription relating to Melik Eşref Musa (1210–1220) on the second, and an inscription of Melik Muzaffer Gazi on



The broken minaret (Minara Qot) ^[211]



Belediye Camii ^[210]

the fourth. The minaret is in the courtyard of *Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulu*, a boarding school; permission to visit can be obtained from the head teacher.

Belediye Camii

Near the Ulu Cami is this mosque, originally a church, then converted to a cinema for public use before becoming the Belediye Camii in 1988. One wall to the right of the entrance survives from the old church and it bears some frescoes.

The City Walls

Silvan’s walls were originally built in 77 BC when it was part of the kingdom of the Armenian Tigranes the Great, and underwent various additions under the Byzantines (particularly under Justinian I), Hamdanids, Ayyubids and Marwanids. Built of local limestone, the walls enclosed an area that was roughly a 600m square and were 25m high, with 50 bastions in all spread 25m apart. Sadly most of the walls are now destroyed and in some cases people have built their homes over what is left and even scavenged some of the walls for the purpose, so don’t be surprised to see residences blending in



Zembilfiroş Kalesi ^[212]

with what remains. There were once nine gates, some of them still have their thresholds and lintels visible with nicely decorated inscriptions. The gates which still survive in various states are Boşat Gate (in the north-east), Aşağı Mahalle Gate (south) and Süslü Kulfa (Qulfa) Gate (east).

Ayyubid Burcu (Aslanlı Silvan Burcu)

Built by the Ayyubid King Evhad, this square-planned bastion on Gazi Cad in the Mescit quarter bears an image of the sun between a lion and a tiger facing each other.

Kulfa Kapısı (Deriyê Qulfayê)

Turning into Gazi Cad from the bastion, you will come to Süslü Kulfa Kapısı located to the south side of the walls, a gate built by the Mervanians. Above the gate an Artukid turret can still be seen, with a partly obliterated inscription on the upper part.

Zembilfiroş Kalesi

All that remains of Zembilfiroş Kalesi is a tower between the Cami and Feridun quarters. The fortress is

associated with a tragic love story that locals like to relate. One day the son of an emperor was returning from a hunt when he passed a graveyard and realised that ultimately rich and poor alike will meet the same fate. Leaving the palace with his wife, he became an ascetic and a simple *zembilfiroş*, meaning "basket seller". In Silvan his good looks attracted the attention of the wife of the local ruler and she immediately fell in love with him. On the pretext of purchasing a basket, she invited him to the palace and offered herself to him, and when he refused, she followed him and discovered the tent where he lived. Having been harassed by the ruler's wife, the basket seller's wife fled, whereupon the ruler's wife wore her clothes and lay in bed waiting for the basket seller. The young man only realised that it was not his wife he was with when he heard the sound of the woman's silver bangle, instead of betraying the ruler and his wife, the basket seller throws himself down from the castle. Shocked by this event, Hatun too chooses the same way. Although this story is said to have taken place in Silvan, it is retold among Kurds all over the region and many songs and poems have been written about it.



Kulfa kapısı ^[213]

Zembîlfiroş / The Basketseller



Old photo, Kurdish woman (214)

Zembîlfiroş zembîla tine /
Basketseller brings baskets
 Kolan bi kolan digêrîne /
walks in the streets
 Gava ew zembîla tine /
when he brings the baskets
 Xatûn li bircê dibîne / *Xatûn (The*
Queen) sees him from the tower
 Bi eşqa dil dihebîne /
falls in love with him
 Aqil diçe sewda namîne /
loses her mind and falls in love

She brings over him to go in the castle with the blind excuse of buying baskets and declares her love with a poem:

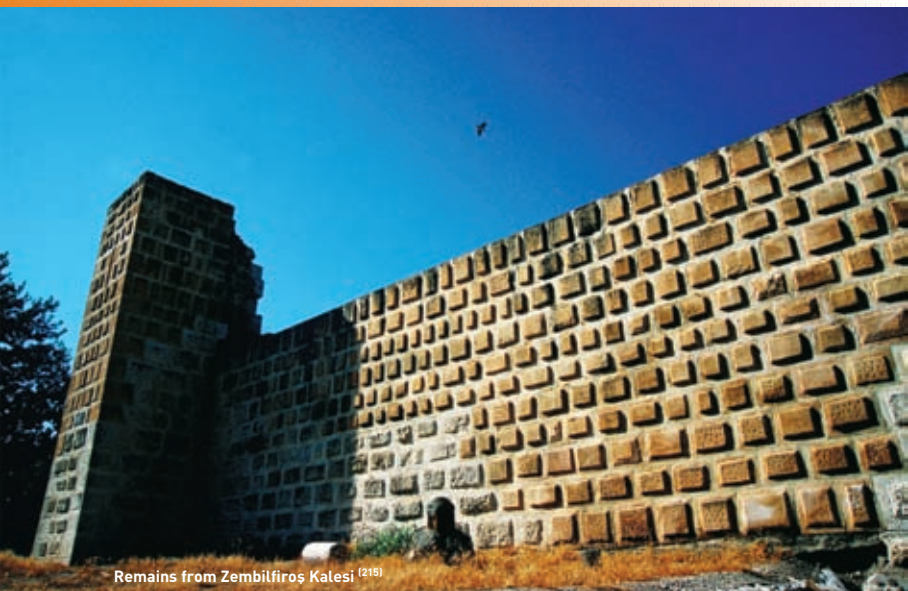
Kuro sêlka vir de bîne / *Hey! Boy bring the baskets*
 Mîr dixwaze te bibîne / *myrh wants to see you*
 buha buha ji te bisitîne / *he will pay you well for your baskets*
 Lawiko ez evîndar im / *Ohh boy I fell in love*

But the basketseller is married, loves his wife, he is a dervish and a repentant of any other women so he refuses the love of Xatûn....

Xatûna min a delal e / *My beautiful lady!*
 Min bihîstî Mîr ne li mal e / *I've heard that Myrrh is not at home*
 Bazara'm bi malê helal e / *I deal with permissible things*
 Xatûnê ez tobedar im / *My Lady, I'm a repentant*
 Tobedarê Zerdeştê Kal im / *I'm a repentant of Zerdeştê Kal*
 Ji ser toba xwe qet nayêm xwarê / *I won't recant my repentance...*

The basketseller refuses the love of Xatûn but Xatûn is insistent:

Çavên min mîna eynan e / *I've shining eyes*
 Biskê min mîna qeytan e / *I've string hairs*
 Diranê min mîna mircan in / *I've coral-like teeth*
 Eniya min mîna ferşan e / *I've a wide forehead*
 Berê min mîna fîncan e / *I've cup-like breast*
 Fîncanên mîr û paşan e / *the cups of Myrrhs and Kings*
 Sîngê min mîna zozan e / *I've wold-like chest*
 Zozanên haft eşîran e / *wold of seven tribes*
 Zembîlfiroş, lawikê derwêş / *Basketseller! The dervish boy*
 Lê bike kêf û seyran e / *Come on enjoy them*



Remains from Zembilfiroş Kalesi ^[215]

Mansions

Silvan has several old mansions, called either *kasrı* (*kasır*) (literally “palace”) or *konağı* (*konak*) (“mansion”) by the locals. One of these is the 18th-century *Üstünler Kasrı* (Sadık Bey/Mala Beg Kasrı), with decorative stonework. In Gazi quarter, Surbaşı sokak (also called Serê Surê), it dates from the reign of the Ayyubid Ruler Ul-Kamil Muzaffer, though the part of it on the historical walls is an 18th-century addition. On the west side of this building there is an inscription dating back to the time of the same Ayyubid ruler. The owners, who live in an adja-

cent house, are usually happy to show visitors around the mansion. The wooden ceiling of the guest room has been beautifully painted by Kurdish artists. The house also has a relaxing garden and fountain.

Another Silvan mansion is the *Dr Azizoğulları Konağı*, located on a hill overlooking Azizoğulları Cad in the Mescit quarter of the city centre. Dating back to 18th century, this two-storey house is built of limestone.

Accommodation

Silvan Öğretmenevi: Tel (0412 711 56 94) in Selahattin Street can be a good place to stay. The *Belediye Konak (Konuk) Evi* (Guest House 0412 711 50 81) of the municipality also offers some comfortable rooms.

Hasuni Caves

These caves, located some 8km east of Silvan on the left side of main road as you head out and close to İncesu (Tilmîn) village, are well signposted. You may need to head up for around 100 meters from the parking area to get to the caves, which was designated



Üstünler kasrı ^[216]

Serê Gulanê

The festival of *Serê Gulanê* (literally "1st of May", though actually held on 14th of May) is celebrated in different districts of Diyarbakır as the wedding ceremony of the last rains of May or spring. It is marked with communal picnics and barbecues especially at Kulp, Lice and Silvan. Popular spots for the festivities are the villages of Gürpınar (*Bêzwan*) 15km from Silvan towards Batman; Çatakköprü (*Mala Badê*), 25km from Silvan and the nearby village of Yeniçağlar (*Quba Zîla*); and Eskiocak (*Kaniya Navîn* or *Sextê*) 10km from Silvan and just 1km from Hasuni Caves (see p: 302). People also visit the graves of their relatives or the tombs of local

sheikhs. Tours of these tombs and the caves are organised by the Silvan Municipality and the foundation of the citizens from Silvan (*Silvanlilar Derneği*).

At Gürpınar, where some of the biggest celebrations take place, people come together to offer prayers at the tomb of Sheikh Mihemed Emin, the great-grandson of Sheikh Ebdilqadirê Geylani (the noted Sufi Sheikh who was leader of the Qadiri order) and then go to the picnic area near the Batman Dam Lake nearby. The afternoon is spent with family and friends or at gatherings where people indulge in traditional songs and dances.



Serê Gulanê [217]



Hasuni caves ^[218]

an archaeologically protected area in 1990.

These caves are said to have been inhabited in the Mesolithic Age and during the first period of Christianity. There are actually some 300 caves and the remains of paths, stairs, cisterns and a stone church. At the entrance to the caves are the ruins of what is believed to be a Roman bath. Above this is a reservoir connected to the top of the structure with pipes through which melting snow and rain water could flow.

Boşat Kalesi

Located in Boyunlu (Boşat) village 12km north of Silvan, the remains of this Roman and Sassanid fortress – a few stone chambers – crown a massive rock. A horse ridden by the Sassanid King Ardişir I and a woman believed to be his lover, followed by some more people and deer have been depicted on the exterior of the fortress. Inside are caves connected



A view from Hasuni caves ^[219]

through secret passageways. To the north of the village there are a number of caves excavated by humans, part of a settlement most probably dating back to the Sassanids. According to the locals, there were once bazaars, a dungeon and an old monastery here.

Malabadi bridge^[220]

The Malabadi Bridge (Pira Mala Badê)

The Malabadi Bridge is one of the best-known monuments in this part of Turkey, and is considered the longest historical bridge of Anatolia. Built in 1147 by the Artukid Timur Taş (although some sources claim that's was built by Marwanids) , it spans the Batman River on the Diyarbakır–Batman highway, 22km east of Silvan, and is 150m long, 7m wide and 19m high; the central arch is

the longest of any stone bridge. It is not surprising for the French researcher Albert Gabriel to say, "It deserves admiration to build such a bridge in a period when modern static formulas were not yet invented. The dome of the Hagia Sophia (Aya sofya) in İstanbul could easily be placed underneath the bridge. There is no other bridge in the Balkans, the Middle East and Anatolia that is the same age and that has an arch-width as wide as this one has." The Ottoman traveller

King Ardişir, Boşat Kalesi^[221]

Evliya Çelebi described caravanserais accommodating travellers under the arch and many small rooms above the arch, and that he saw people chatting or fishing.

Angular breaks in the east and west approaches allowed the bridge be set at an angle to the river. To either side of the main arch is a guard room. On the facade of the bridge are the depictions of human figures and decorative stonework. On the south side of the

large arch is the relief of a sitting man. Just above this, two men, both wearing cusped conical hats, are shown with the standing man offering something to the one sitting. Further down is a frame containing a depiction of a man and sunshine and an animal resembling a lion. Today the bridge takes pedestrians but not traffic. Unfortunately a hydroelectric plant and a newly built bridge to close the historical bridge is a bit of a blot on the landscape.

Çarşema Reş



Çarşema Reş (222)

According to Islamic belief, the world was made in seven days and devilry and damnation was created on Wednesday (although the festival originates from the Zoroastrianism). The last Wednesday of February and the first two Wednesdays of March are regarded as *Çarşema Reş* ("black Wednesdays"), at which time people believe they must not harm anybody because if they do so, they will not be friends with the person they have harmed for a year. Some people leave town to avoid temptation, while people in general

visit the tombs of local sheikhs and pray for forgiveness.

A place that is especially visited at this time *Ziyareta Girkûvî*, an old cemetery on a mountain at Demirkuyu (Dêrika Miqûrê) village, 20km from Silvan on the Batman road. The childless, those whose children have died in infancy, those looking for the love of their live and so forth make a pilgrimage to the site. Afterwards there are picnics and traditional dances around the site.

The oldest known lovers ^[223]

Bismil

Bismil (population 57,359) is the largest district of Diyarbakır and situated on a fertile plain through which the Tigris flows; unsurprisingly agriculture dominates the local economy with cotton being the main crop. The town of Bismil is 52km east of Diyarbakır and has different stories associated with its name, one of which is that it derives from *Bistmal*, meaning “20 houses” in Kurdish, a reference to a settlement of 20 houses established by former slaves who migrated here from Persian territory 2000 years ago. The area became a district of Diyarbakır in 1936.

During the cotton harvest between September and December, the municipi-

ality organises a Harvest Festival (*Hasat Festivali*) lasting two or three days, with folkloric concerts and competitions to choose the best donkey in town (the district is known for its white donkeys) and select the best cotton, the winner of the latter contest being awarded a gold medal.

Üçtepe (Kerxê)

The village of Üçtepe, 12km west of Bismil town, is home to one of the most important archaeological sites in Diyarbakır. During the constant battles between the Assyrians and Hurrians to dominate the fertile lands of Mesopotamia, the Assyrian King Banibal gained the upper hand by building a fortified structure called *Tuṣha* in the area now occupied by Üçtepe. This was said to have been a centre of intelligence for the Assyrians, who also built a bridge over the Tigris here to connect it to Diyarbakır, through which caravans passed. It is said that the remains of the bridge are underwater in the Tigris.

Üçtepe (Kerxê) ^[224]

During the excavation made at Üçtepe's tumulus by British traveller Taylor in 1865, two obelisks bearing Assyrian inscriptions were uncovered. The inscription on the obelisk displayed in British Museum says this of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III: "I destroyed the beautiful plantation, wonderful vineyards, burnt and destroyed the forests and stepped on the magnificent palaces with the feet of our horses". After these items were displayed in the British Museum, the tumulus attracted the attention of many leading archaeologists who discovered some remains of *Tuṣha* in 1989, several gold and bronze sculptures, coins, glass items and other artefacts, which are now on display in Diyarbakır Museum.

Körtiktepe Tumulus (Girê Kortikê)

This mound is in the village of Ağıl (Encolîn) on the way to Batman at a distance of 30km to Bismil. The Upper Tigris Valley which is actually an extension of Mesopotamia to the Anatolian Peninsula has established itself as an item in scientific research agenda with excavations carried out in such mounds as *Körtik Tepe*, *Hallan Çemi* and *Demirköy*, which gained further importance upon impending inundation as a result of various dam constructions. Still, it is already proven



that with its archaeological heritage and cultural assets, the region is actually older and richer than what was assumed previously. Körtik Tepe, for instance, stands out as a unique location where past cultural developments can be grasped well in terms of the modes of responding to vital needs, dwellings, burials, production of instruments, development of religious beliefs as well as images depicting these beliefs.

Ziyaret Tepe Tumulus (Girê Behramkê)

This tumulus with scant remains is in Ziyaret Tepe village 11km from Bismil and 1km east of *Tepe* (Behramkê). The relics of an ancient Assyrian city, belonging to the late Iron Age (900–600 BC) was uncovered here. It is believed to have been an important urban centre on the northern edge of the Assyrian Empire, and cuneiform texts suggest it might have been Tushan, the provincial capital of Assyrians. Excavations



Ziyaret Tepe tumulus (Girê Behramkê) [227]



Hakemi Use tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê)^[228]



Hakemi Use tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê) ⁽²²⁹⁾

support the idea that Tushan was abandoned after the collapse of Assyrian heartland of Nineveh, sacked by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC.

Hakemi Use Tumulus (Hakemê Ûsê)

Hakemi Use is located 10km east of the district, on the left of the road as you head from Bismil to Tepe village.

Relics uncovered at this tumulus include 5cm-sized sculptures and thirty fireplaces resembling tenur

(earthen ovens). Archaeologists discovered a grave in which the skeletons of a man and woman were found as though hugging each other; they have been described as the oldest known lovers in the world. The Third Period identified at Hakemi Use denotes a specific period in Mesopotamian chronology during which ceramic works appeared and the tradition of producing painted jugs emerged. The period also stands for early farming and animal breeding rural communities. Until recently, the scientific community was rather suspicious about the early existence of this culture within the boundaries of present Turkey, assuming that it was confined to central Iraq and northern Syria. Excavations in Hakemi Use are therefore important in invalidating this assumption and demonstrating that the Upper Tigris Valley was an important part of this culture. This culture also referred to as "Hassuna/Samara Culture" is a contributing origin to the subsequent emergence and development of the great Sumerian civilization.

Finds obtained during *Hakemi Use* excavations include, beyond ceramic objects belonging to the Hassuna/Samara period, bone piercing devices denoting the practice of tanning; stone and earth balances for looms signifying the practice of weaving; bulla evidencing distant trading; and flint stone and obsidian tools suggesting farming practices. Finds also include female figurines from Iraq and Iran made of clay. Excavations at *Hakemi Use* also unearthed a rich array of small artefacts supplying Diyarbakır

Museum with significant objects remaining from this specific period.

Yedi Kızlar

There are three Turcoman villages in Bismil, namely Türkmenhacı, Seyit Hasan (Bakarak) and Ulutürk. Unusually for Diyarbakır, the inhabitants are not only Turcoman but also Alevi, who migrated from Mosul, Kerkuk and Urfa some 100 years ago. In the centre of Türkmenhacı village is a pilgrimage site called Yedi Kızlar ("Seven Girls"), comprising a number of rocks.

Sersal



Sersal, meaning "start of the year" in Kurdish, is commonly celebrated on 14th of January (as the Kurds used to use Islamic calendar-Şemsî-which is normally 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar, the sersal still celebrated according to the old calendar), particular in villages in the districts of Bismil, Çınar and Silvan. Just before sunset on this day, village youth come together and dress up two boys, one as an old man with a beard of wool and a stick, and the other as his wife. With crowds behind them, they visit houses in the village and collect money, food, biscuits and soft drinks; it's customary for households to offer them something, though they must earn these gifts by being polite and telling stories or singing songs.

For a family that doesn't have children they say:

*Serê salê binê salê
Xwedê kurekî bide vê malê
(The end of a year, the beginning of a year
God! Give a boy/baby to this house)*

And For a family who single sons, they say:

*Serê salê binê salê
Xwedê bûkekê bide vê malê
(The end of a year, the beginning of a year
God! Give a bride to this house)*

At the end of the night, the youths come together to cook and eat the food they have been given and enjoy themselves till the early hours of the morning. The two lads who did the collecting will jokingly utter prayers for the rest, saying:

*Xwedêyo pezê me mê bîne
God! give female births to our animals
[so they can become pregnant and we would have lots of animals]*

*Xwedêyo bûkên me nêr bînin
God! give male births to our brides
[so there would be lots of men and we would be strong...]*

Çınar (Melkis)



Summer palace of Güzelseyh^[231]

Situated on a fertile plain, Çınar (population 12,725) is 35km south of Diyarbakır on the main road to Mardin. The area has been settled as far back as 3000 BC, as the Hurrian settlements of Hur-Hurik (Sırımkesen) and Besta Hurriyan in Beneklitaş village, west of Çınar town, show. Çınar was once administratively part of Diyarbakır with the name of Akpınar-Hanakpınar until becoming a district in 1937. With the migration of new settlers from Bulgaria and Jerusalem from 1939 to 1950 the town rapidly expanded into the blend of different languages and cultures. The new quarter is comprised of Turcomans and a small minority of Arabs, though the majority is Kurds. The motifs woven on *kilims* reflect the feelings and cultural heritage of the people. Popular dances have names like *esmer*, *delilo*, *tik*, *lorke* and *gorani*, and are performed by men and women together.

The Göksu Irrigation Dam here enables the production of vegetables for self-consumption, and other crops

such as wheat, cotton and rice, sold in Diyarbakır city. The villages close to Karacadağ Mountain rear livestock, while some families also earn a living through the fishing in the dam lake.

Pornak Tumulus

In the Murattaşı (Pornak) quarter of Beşpınar village, 7km north of Çınar town is this large, unexcavated tumulus. Some bowls and items of earthenware were uncovered accidentally while villagers were loading their trucks with soil from the area, which is a protected archaeological site.



Inside palace of Güzelseyh^[232]

Summer Palace of Güzelşeyh

Around 7km northeast of Çınar town, near the village of Altınakar (Altuxerê) are the remains of a beautiful stone-made palace built by a local notable called Sheikh Kasim. Most of the palace is intact, including the main hall and upper floor. The stone work and design are similar to buildings in the Mardin area.

Textê Silêman Ağa and Çemê Reş

Some 15km south of Çınar town towards Mardin is Demirölçek (Zelzevan) village. A narrow turning on the right here and a ten-minute drive will take you to Textê Silêman Ağa, a series of rock chambers in the mountainside dating back 2000 years. A notable called Süleyman Ağa, residing here, gave his name to the area, which is by the Göksu Stream in a locality called Karaçay. Down below the caves is a picnicking and swimming spot known as Çemê Reş ("Black River"), popular with locals.

Zerzevan Kalesi

Around 1km past Demirölçek are the remains of Zerzevan fortress, built by the

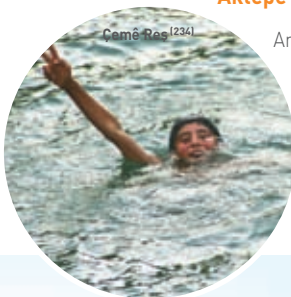


Textê Silêman Ağa Caves^[233]

Romans on the highest hill in the vicinity which might take you 15 minutes to climb up. The remains of some walls and some wells can be seen, though once there were high walls surrounding the fortress, and an underground tunnel down to the creek as at many other fortresses. The stones which remain are quite massive, at 2m long and 0.5m thick, and some have been appropriated by locals for building though the area has protected status.

Aktepe (Axtobê)

Around 18km east of Çınar is Aktepe village, in the centre of which is a beautiful 500-year-old stone minaret whose top section has disappeared. It has been



Çemê Reş^[234]



Zerzevan Kalesi^[235]

declared as protected, as has the nearby Aktepe Tumulus, which is not unlike mounds in other villages in the area.

Aktepe is the centre of a pilgrimage that happens on 19th of May, attracting thousands to the white tomb of *Sheikh Evdirehmanê Axtepi*. People come to offer prayers: the unmarried ask for his help in finding them a partner, the ill for a cure for their illnesses, the childless for babies. Once their prayers are done, people like to have picnics around his tomb.



Aktepe (Axtobê) (238)



Aktepe (Axtobê), minaret (237)

Sheikh Evdirehmanê Axtepi



Sheikh Evdirehmanê Axtepi (238)

Evdirehmanê Axtepi was born in Aktepe in 1854, the eldest son of *Sheikh Hesenê Nûranî* from Hakkari province. Having completed his primary education in Aktepe's madrasah, he went on to study in Iraqi and Syrian madrasah and in several other institutions in Middle Eastern countries before returning to Aktepe. There he took over the madrasah upon the death of his father. He wrote and translated many books and articles on subjects such as health, astronomy and Arabic grammar, some of his work being in Arabic though two are in Kurmanji. His epic poem *Rewdetineim*, about the

life of the Prophet Muhammad, is considered an important work in Kurdish literature, comprising 4531 staves. While he used *Rûhî* or *Şemsedin* as a nickname in his poems, in his writings he generally mentioned the problems of destitute, disabled, inoffensive people and challenged the atrocious, rich people and the administrations. He died in Diyarbakır in 1910.



Religious singing (239)



