A Tour of Turkish Mesopotamia

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As explained in the text, this document concerns a trip made in the fall of 2008, when I was living in Ankara and working at Middle East Technical University. I created this report later in 2008. Now, almost five years later, I have made cosmetic changes, such as switching from A4 to A5 paper. I have found little reason to change much of the text itself.

Contents

1 Mathematics and history

Ayşe and I toured southeastern Turkey between Saturday, September 27, and Saturday, October 4, 2008. Since then, from the books that we have at home, I have tried to learn more of the history of the places that we saw. This article is a result of my researches and thoughts.[1]

In school, I had an uneasy relationship with history. Many people have an uneasy relationship with *mathematics,* and one reason for this may be that there is no arguing with mathematics. If you're wrong, you're wrong. But the inverse statement is equally true: If you're right, you're right. The authority that determines what is right is found within each of us. As Descartes says in the *Discours de la Méthode* [11]:

> *Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée; car chacun pense en être si bien pourvu que ceux même qui sont les plus difficiles à contenter en toute autre chose n'ont point coutume d'en désirer plus qu'ils en ont.*[2]

Good sense, or *reason,* is the best-shared thing in the world. Mathematics is founded on this principle. Disputes in mathematics cannot be resolved by appeal to authority, or the use of force, but only by the application of reason by all parties involved.

Nobody else can do mathematics for you. But in school, history is precisely something done by other people. It depends on outside authorities. You may not know enough about the world to give meaning to the isolated historical facts that you are supposed to learn. That's too bad; you still must learn the facts. You *can* learn them: it just isn't very pleasant. Therefore, as I said, in school I had an uneasy relationship with history.

However, as my childhood years went by, certain kinds of history became interesting. My mother's brother and his wife had a nineteenth-century house in West Virginia. As I visited there while growing up, I became interested to learn that the place had a history. I had always been dimly aware of an old mill on the property. I was fascinated when my uncle pointed out that a sort of channel, now overgrown with trees,

[1] Photographs from our trip, and this article itself, are at `http://mat.msgsu.edu.tr/~dpierce/Travel/2008/Mesopotamia/`.

[2] As a source for this passage, I have cited the book [11] in the list at the end of this article, because the book is in my physical possession. However, instead of actually typing out the text from the book, I cut and pasted it from `http://descartes.free.fr/` on October 29, 2008.

was artificial: it had been dug to lead water from the creek to the mill. The visual evidence of what had happened in the past helped to make that past interesting.

It also mattered that the vaguely discernible mill-race was in a place that I already liked to visit. When I first came to Turkey, in 1998, Ayşe took me to Fethiye on the Aegean coast. We were in a gorgeous region where you could bathe in the sea while gazing at the mountains above. So it was just icing on the cake to learn that Herodotus had known the city as Telmessus, whose soothsayers had advised kings of Sardis.

When people ask how I like living in Turkey, one of the reasons that I give for enjoying life here is that it is where much of my culture came from. It is where Homer lived. While I was fascinated by the mill-race in West Virginia, I was bored in a high-school course, at an Anglican school, called Christian Ideas. I complained to the teacher that the course seemed more like Christian Facts. I was just not interested in learning which theological doctrine was ruled heretical at which general council of the Church. But now I live in the country where those councils happened; so they start to take on more interest.

There is also a history of this country of which I learned almost nothing in school.

Books for tourists may provide some interesting historical information; but its validity may not be clear. How do we *know* what happened on a particular site, one or two thousand years ago? The books presumably get their information from other books; but which ones? The reader cannot usually tell. Disappointed by this inability, I intend in this document to be clear about where I get my own information.

I shall not try to tell the whole story of the places we saw on our trip. Today's Urfa or Şanlıurfa ('Glorious Urfa') was Edessa in the time of the Crusaders, and they occupied it for some decades. A lot can be said about it, but I shall not try, simply because it would have little to do with our visit there—which was not very thrilling. But Harran, south of Urfa, was exciting, and it becomes more so when, almost by chance, I learn from Gibbon and Plutarch about what happened there.

Much information can be found on the internet, especially on Wikipedia, but I prefer to confirm such information in print sources. However, undocumented claims below may come from the internet.

2 Holidays

Official holidays in Turkey fall into four classes. One of these is the class of weekly holidays: Saturday and Sunday. In a class by itself is New Year's Day (*Yılbaşı*), January 1, which is practically a Turkish Christmas. Colored lights are displayed then, and gifts are exchanged. The iconography of Santa Claus may appear. Indeed, St Nicholas can be considered as a figure from Turkish or at least Anatolian history: he was Bishop of Myra on the southwestern coast of Asia Minor.

There are currently four national holidays on the civil, Gregorian calendar:

1. April 23 is *Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı* (National Sovereignty and Children's Day), on the anniversary of the opening in Ankara in 1920 of the *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi,* the Turkish Grand National Parliament. Children come to Turkey from around the world to observe this day as Children's Day.

2. May 19 is *Gençlik ve Spor Bayramı* (Youth and Sport Day), on the anniversary of the landing of Mustafa Kemal (the future Atatürk) at Samsun on the Black Sea coast in 1919. This landing is considered as the beginning of the *İstiklâl Harbi* or *Kurtuluş Savaşı,* the Turkish War of Independence—independence, that is, from the victors of the Great War, who would have carved up Anatolia amongst themselves, and from the Imperial Ottoman government, which agreed to this division.

3. August 30 is *Zafer Bayramı,* Victory Day—victory over the Greek forces at Dumlupınar in 1922.

4. October 29 is *Cumhuriyet Bayramı* (Republic Day), commemorating the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923.[3]

Observation of these holidays is not adjusted to fall on weekdays. In 2008, these holidays fall respectively on Wednesday, Monday, Saturday, and Wednesday.

In Ayşe's childhood, there was a holiday called Constitution Day, commemorating the military *coup d'état* of May 27, 1960. Also May 1 was a holiday. These holidays were abolished after the military *coup* of September 12, 1980 [37, p. 278]. General Kenan Evren was asked why he didn't declare September 12 a holiday. He modestly suggested that a later government should do this. This has not happened. However, *demonstra-*

[3]The afternoon of October 28 is also included in this holiday.

tions happen around September 12, in support of the proposition that Evren and other *coup* leaders should be put on trial.

Finally, in the twelve lunar months of the Muslim year, there are two festivals observed as official holidays: three-and-a-half days marking the end of Ramadan, and four-and-a-half days commemorating Abraham's aborted sacrifice of his son.[4] In 2008, the *Ramazan Bayramı* or, as secularists have it, the *Şeker* (Candy) *Bayramı,* began on Monday afternoon, September 29. The government extended the festival to include Monday morning and the following Friday. Thus the country had nine consecutive days of holiday,[5] just a week and a half into the fall semester at our university in Ankara. This is when Ayşe and I took our trip.

3 Departure

We were to meet our bus by a school at the center of Ankara at 10 p.m. on Saturday, September 27. It was a drizzly evening. Across the street from the bus, a shop sold exercise equipment: there was a tandem bicycle in the window, suggesting another way we might travel some day.

I did not know what our forty travelling companions would be like. Somebody had told us of a similar tour made mostly by retirees. In the event, at the age of 43, I was in the older half of our group. There was one man travelling with his adult granddaughter. Two thirds of our group were women.

Ayşe and I were given seats 7 and 8, one row behind the front seats on the right. We would keep our seats throughout the tour. When we were all on board, our guide, Tolga, invited us to introduce ourselves. I said in Turkish that I was either David or Davut: this seemed to provide some amusement. There were two other foreigners on board, both Frenchwomen; we would learn on Sunday that they were teaching at the French-language school in Ankara where our friend Şule teaches.[6]

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[4] This son is Ishmael, in the Muslim account.

[5] That Monday and Friday would be holidays was not made official till very late, in the usual fashion. Hence some bank-workers, for example, still had to work. But Friday had always been a holiday on our academic calendar; and it was unlikely that many students would forego a longer holiday for the sake of Monday-morning classes.

[6] The school offers instruction in French *where possible.* This is why Şule has been sent to France to *learn* French. She has already taught at the school in Turkish for several years.

We would drive all night. Tolga encouraged us to sleep as much as we could. However, some of our companions went on talking a while after lights out. It didn't much matter. We had two drivers, Cemil and Ethem. Cemil drove first, and while he did, he talked loudly on his cell phone. It appeared that having seats near the front of the bus might not be so desirable. What was worse, we were hit with a wave of smoke every few minutes, when Cemil lit a fresh cigarette.

I have enjoyed bus travel in Turkey ever since I first came here ten years ago. One reason why is that passengers do not smoke. But drivers smoke. A recent law bans smoking in all enclosed public spaces, with restaurants excepted for the time being. The ban does apply to bus drivers; but how do you tell this to the man who has your life in his hands?

We took a break in Pınarbaşı, beyond Kayseri in Cappadocia. Cemil had not known where we could stop, until he telephoned another bus driver for advice. Several other busses were parked at the recommended facility, and the dining room was full. Everybody was having *sahur,* a last meal before dawn, when another day of Ramadan fasting would begin.

Ayşe complained to Tolga about the smoking on our bus. Don't worry, said Tolga, Cemil will not smoke during the day.

So our driver was keeping the Ramadan fast. Both of them were. And two days of fasting were left. But the Qur'an says travellers need not fast:

> O YOU who have attained to faith! Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of God: [fasting] during a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days; and [in such cases] it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make sacrifice by feeding a needy person. [1, 2:183–4]

Indeed, it should be incumbent on bus drivers *not* to fast, for safety's sake. They ought not to talk on the phone while driving, for the same reason. That was *my* point of view, but evidently I could not expect it to be shared by our drivers. Would the trip be a nightmare? Would we *survive* the trip?

4 Destination

We were headed into a land that had been, at various times, Hittite, Assyrian, and Persian. We were roughly following the Persian King's

Road to Susa. This is what I gather from a Turkish historical atlas [10]. This atlas is perhaps suspect, for a couple of reasons:

1. In a map of *Türkler'in Anayurdu ve Göçleri* (Motherland and Migrations of the Turks), arrows are shown radiating from central Asia and reaching as far as Ireland. No time-period is given, though the next map in the atlas is of Mesopotamia in 3000–2105 B.C.E.,[7] and the previous map, of *İç Denizler ve Türkler'in Anayurdu* (Inland Seas and Motherland of the Turks), is dated 20,000–10,000 B.C.E. So I suspect that the map in question represents not scholarship, but wishful thinking.

2. The atlas omits all mention of Armenia and Armenians. For example, in a map of the Persian Empire, 553–330 B.C.E., the area around Lake Van is labelled simply as Urartu. But this is the region that Xenophon and the Ten Thousand crossed in 401 B.C.E.; Xenophon called the country ἡ Αρμενία, and its people, οἱ Ἀρμένιοι [36].[8] A map in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* [19] refers to this area as 'Armenia (Urartu)'. Similarly, the Turkish atlas gives the names *Kilikya* and *Kilikya Krallığı* (Cilicia and the Cilician Kingdom) to what the *New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* [20] calls Armenia and the Armenian Kingdom.

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[7] With dates, Turkish uses *M.Ö.* and *M.S.,* for *Milâttan önce* and *Milâttan sonra,* which mean before and after the Birth. I gather from Redhouse [2] that *milât* or rather *milâd* is originally an Arabic word for birth; but it is now used mainly to refer to the birth of Christ. A book called *Jesus: Prophet of Islam* does not appear to refer to Jesus as Christ, but does claim that Jesus was the promised Messiah [35, p. 280]. The first evidence for this claim is supposed to be the following.

> For, indeed, We vouchsafed unto Moses the divine writ and caused apostle after apostle to follow him; and We vouchsafed unto Jesus, the son of Mary, all evidence of the truth, and strengthened him with holy inspiration. [1, 2.87]

All of this is to say that B.C. and A.D. may be more literal translations from the Turkish than the B.C.E. and C.E. that I am using.

[8] Xenophon and the Ten Thousand crossed the river Centrites, which separated Armenia from the land of the Carduchians (οἱ Καρδούχοι). There are apparently claims that the Carduchians are the predecessors of today's Kurds. The Centrites is said by Umar [34] to be today's Bohtan or Botan. However, from just looking at a map, it is not clear that the Centrites is not the Habur (Khabour) River, which enters the Tigris along the border between Turkey and Syria, south of the Turkish town of Cizre. Indeed, Umar would seem to have the Habur in mind. He (or possibly she) doubts that the word Centrites comes, as sources claim, from the Armenian word for separating, since he does not think an Armenian name would appear south of Cizre. But the Bohtan is north of Çizre. In any case, Umar seems to be confused, since he says Xenophon encountered the Centrites while marching *to* the country of the Carduchians (not *from* this country to Armenia).

To be fair, it may be pointed out that the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* is suspect for mapping out the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt as if it were historical fact;[9] and the *New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* never refers to the Holy Roman Empire as such (it refers to the German Empire instead).

Alexander swept through region of our travels (or rather south of it) in the fourth century B.C.E.; his general Seleucus gave his name to the dynasty that ruled over the Asian portion of Alexander's conquests. The earliest remains we would see on our trip belonged to the Commagene Kingdom, which split from the Seleucid Empire in 162 B.C.E. and was annexed by Rome under Emperor Vespasian in 72 C.E. [32, p. 78].

In the early seventh century C.E., the Persians under Chosroes II conquered Roman Mesopotamia. Down south in Arabia, the followers of Muhammad were worried to hear of the losses of the Romans, since these, as Christians, were fellow monotheists [1, p. 617, n. 2]. Why the new Muslims would not have supported the Persians as monotheists, I don't know, unless the Persians were too tolerant of other religions besides their own Mazdaism [28, p. 7]. In any case, the Prophet observed in 615/6:[10]

> Defeated have been the Byzantines in the lands close-by; yet it is they who, notwithstanding this their defeat, shall be victorious in a few years; [for] with God rests all power of decision, first and last.
>
> And on that day will the believers [too, have cause to] rejoice in God's succour: [for] He gives succour to whomever he wills, since He alone is almighty, a dispenser of grace. [1, 30:2–5]

And so it was. Emperor Heraclius (610–41) recovered the lost Roman territories. But soon they were lost again, this time to the new Arab caliphate. Henceforth Mesopotamia would be in various Muslim hands, except for some inroads by the Crusaders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

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[9] Shlomo Sand, 'Comment fut inventé le peuple juif' (*Le Monde diplomatique,* Août 2008, p. 3):

> *Les découvertes de la «nouvelle archéologie» contredisent la possibilité d'un grand exode au XIII^e siècle avant notre ère. De même, Moïse n'a pas pu faire sortir le Hébreux d'Egypte et les conduire vers la «terre promise» pour la bonne raison qu'à l'époque celle-ci... était aux mains des Egyptiens. On ne trouve d'ailleurs aucune trace d'une révolte d'esclaves dans l'empire des pharaons, ni d'une conquête rapide du pays de Canaan par un élément étranger.*

[10] About 7 years before the *hijrah.* But Rodinson [28, pp. 136–7] seems skeptical about the dating and interpretation of this passage.

5 Harput

On the bus, I did get some intermittent sleep until 5:30, Sunday morning. Then there was enough light to see the landscape by, and I could not help but look. I saw the familiar barren hills of central Anatolia. These hills might have supported forests, thousands of years ago. After countless generations of humans and their animals had lived off the land, the only trees left were in low-lying areas.

The plain of Malatya was such an area. It was green with apricot trees. We stopped in town at Hotel Avşar for breakfast. Now we had a chance to see our companions in the daylight. Some of them bought dried apricots in the hotel lobby, after a man touted their benefits to health. Then we continued on to Elazığ.

The Nişanyans [24, p. 358] refer to Elazığ as 'a bastion of conservative Turkish nationalism.' It is a new city—new for Anatolia, that is: it was built during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz (1861–76) as an extension of the old city, Harput. Harput was our destination, up on a hill. At the edge of the hilltop, there was an equestrian statue of Balak Ghazi. Erected in 1964, the statue looked like concrete. Balak himself had been an Oghuz Turk of the Artuqid dynasty.

Turkic peoples had been on the borders of the Roman Empire since the fourth century, but their conquest of Anatolia is dated to 1071. This is when the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes was defeated by the Seljuq leader Alp Arslan at the Battle of Manzikert,[11] north of Lake Van. The Seljuqs were Sunni Muslims. Egypt at the time was under the control of the Fatimids, who were Shi'ite Muslims; Alp Arslan's real aim was to take Egypt from these heretics. Norwich [25, p. 242] writes wistfully that, after the Battle of Manzikert, the Empire might have kept most of its Anatolian territories, had Romanus been allowed to keep his throne and fulfil his treaty obligations to Alp Arslan. As it was, Romanus was deposed, his successor abrogated the treaty with Alp Arslan, and Seljuq Turks occupied Anatolia.

The Seljuqs were one of 24 Oghuz tribes [32, p. 109]. The Artuqids were also Oghuz (or 'Ghuzz'), and they created some of the remains that we would be seeing on our trip. But most of my print sources[12] do not

[11] Malazgirt today.

[12] Including, surprisingly, *The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History* [27], which, despite its name, has 1200 pages.

mention them. Perhaps these sources are too Eurocentric. The Rough Guide [3] names the Artuqids in connection with some of their remains. Runciman [29, pp. 28–30] does mention Artuq (calling him Ortoq) as the viceroy in Jerusalem (by 1079) of the Seljuq ('Seldjuk') prince Tutush, brother of Malik Shah, the son and successor of Alp Arslan.

From Maalouf [18] I gather that Artuq was succeeded in Jerusalem by his sons Sokman and Ilghazi; but they capitulated and were released after an Egyptian siege of the city in 1098. Jerusalem was in turn taken by the Crusaders in the following year.

Ilghazi somehow became governor of Mardin, which we would visit. In 1117, he was chosen to rule Aleppo. At the Battle of Sarmada in 1119, he defeated the Crusader-led forces of Antioch; but then he got drunk instead of attacking Antioch itself. He died three years later and was replaced in Aleppo by his nephew, the Balak of the statue in Harput.

Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, had invaded Egypt in 1118, but fell ill. He died on the way back to Jerusalem, and he was replaced there as king by his cousin Baldwin, Count of Edessa (today's Şanlıurfa). Joscelin replaced Baldwin as count.

Though he does not name Harput, Maalouf otherwise confirms and elaborates on the placard beneath Balak's statue: Balak managed to capture Joscelin in 1122 and imprison him in Harput Castle, sewn into a camel's skin. Baldwin II came to the rescue, but while encamped somewhere in the plain below Harput, he rose early one morning to engage in his new Oriental pastime of falconry. Then Balak captured him too.

It was with this background that Balak became ruler of Aleppo. At this time, Tyre was beseiged by the Crusaders, and the Tyrians appealed to Balak for help. He set out for Tyre in 1124, first visiting a fortress called Manbij, where one of his vassals was in rebellion. There an arrow shot from the fortress killed him, but not before he exclaimed, 'That arrow will be fatal for all the Muslims.' The Tyrians then surrendered to the Crusaders.

Balak's statue in Harput was adjacent to a *café.* There was a great view of the plain below. The *café* could have had many customers on such a beautiful cool yet sunny day. But the *café* was closed until *iftar,* the evening breakfast.

The nearby tomb of Arap Baba had been built in 1279. Supposedly this man left an incorruptible corpse. According to legend, at a time of drought, a woman named Selvi dreamt that she could end the drought by throwing the head of Arap Baba into a spring. She did this, and enough rain fell to cause a flood. Then Selvi dreamt she could end the flooding by replacing the head. That's what the placard said anyway, in Turkish and English. Further away from the edge of the hilltop was the tomb of Mansur Baba, with an octagonal floorplan and pyramidal roof. Here the placard was only in Turkish, but suggested a construction date of 1234. Signs pointed to other attractions, including an old church: supposedly Harput had been a locus for Christian missionary activity in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. But we did not pursue these leads. We were supposed to have lunch in Diyarbakır.

6 Diyarbakır

In Turkey, many stretches of the Euphrates and Tigris have been turned into lakes by means of dams. We crossed one of these lakes on a bridge. Then we passed by a vast natural lake, Hazar, where the Tigris originated. We stopped to take pictures. Tolga said the water was good for drinking and agriculture, but there were only scrubby trees on the hills above the lake.

The highway was being widened here from two lanes to four. This would often be true on our trip. It meant we had to drive slowly on dirt, while construction equipment sat idle for a week because of the holiday.

We followed the Tigris southeast through a spectacular gap in the Taurus Mountains. This gap was reminiscent of the Cilician Gates, which Ayşe, my mother, and I had traversed on the way to Antioch the previous winter, and which our bus would traverse on our way back to Ankara the following Saturday. Both gaps had railways, which required many tunnels. Tolga said the railway to Diyarbakır had been built by Germany as part of the Istanbul-Baghdad Railway; but the map given in the Wikipedia article 'Baghdad Railway'[13] does not confirm this claim.

In the gap, first we saw a lot of trees. Then these started to disappear, and then the hills disappeared, and we were in the plain of Diyarbakır. We had seen some signs of the Turkish military, though perhaps nothing like what we might have seen a decade or two before, when the Kurdish rebellion was raging. In the years 1000 and 1030, there was a Kurdish Emirate of Diyarbakır (or 'Diyarbekr'), according to the *Penguin Atlas*

[13] Accessed November 11, 2008.

[20]. A corresponding map in the Turkish atlas [10] indicates a Seljuq conquest of Diyarbakır in 1085, and indicates that the city had not then been part of the *Bizans İmparatorluğu;* but there is no mention of Kurds as such. As we drove towards Diyarbakır, a man in camouflage with a rifle walked along the road. Soldiers watched the road from a bunker. A military checkpoint caused us to slow down, but the soldiers did not stop us. As we entered Diyarbakır, a sign welcomed us in Turkish and Kurdish. Then we saw an apartment complex, surrounded by barbed wire, across from a military base.

We drove through a breach in the old city wall where the Harput Gate had been. We drove counterclockwise along the inside of the wall, through traffic both motorized and ambulatory, then back out through the Mardin Gate to reach the *Gazi Köşkü* (Ghazi Kiosk) for a late lunch. This was a facility built around a house once used by the Ghazi himself, Atatürk. There were fountains and lawns and little statues of animals; also a real peacock and some bunny rabbits. Looking away from the *kitsch,* we could see the black basalt walls of Diyarbakır on the horizon, sitting above the lush green bottomland beside the Tigris.

At our meal, the woman sitting across from me turned out to be a math teacher; the woman across from Ayşe was a friend of the *patronne* of our favorite Ankara restaurant. We usually found some sort of connexion like this with any of our bus companions that we talked to. But we did not get to know everybody.

Our group were not the only customers at the restaurant. That is, we were not the only people in Diyarbakır who were not fasting. However, a *buffet* was being prepared for *iftar,* which was not far off. A sign said something like 'Take only what you want; waste is a sin.'

The *Gazi Köşkü* itself was built of alternating black and white courses of stone. The top floor was mostly a terrace with a view of the Tigris; indoors there was a bedroom, with the Turkish crescent and star on the bed, and above, a photograph of a young Mustafa Kemal, in fez and pointed mustaches, with his mother and sister.[14]

After our meal, we had a look at the *On Gözlü Köprü* (Ten Eyed Bridge, that is, bridge with ten arches) over the Tigris; then we drove back into the old city. We crept north along *Gazi Caddesi,* which was

[14]The photograph had presumably been taken in Salonica, now in Greece, where Atatürk was born and raised.

a busy marketplace. Clothing and shoes were a common article for sale on the tables: people buy new outfits for the Ramadan festival. Looking down on the scene through the glass windows of a bus was not the best way to experience it. Ayşe and I would have to come back on our own some day. This would be true for most of the places we were to see.

A police officer let us double-park, and we walked through the crowds to see the *Ulu Cami* (Great Mosque) or at least its courtyard. Whoever built this mosque (the Seljuqs, it seems) probably cannibalized Roman structures for the Corinthian columns; but between the columns there was more flowery carving that incorporated Arabic lettering. A square black minaret, unusual for Turkey, overlooked us from the south. On the north side was a fenced-off gallery; a man lounging there seemed to wave me away when I approached with the camera.

In the fading light, we took an alleyway to the house of poet Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı (1910–56). The house itself was closed, but again we could look at the courtyard, which was spectacular with its black stone walls inlaid with white. What is apparently one of the poet's best-known works [33][15] begins:

Yaş otuz beş! Yolun yarısı eder.	Thirty-five years old! It makes half way.
Dante gibi ortasındayız ömrün.	Like Dante we are at the middle of life.

But Ayşe favors 'Abbas' [33][16]:

Haydi Abbas, vakit tamam;	Come on, Abbas, it's time.
Akşam diyordun işte oldu akşam.	You said evening; now it's evening.
Kur bakalım çilingir soframızı;	Set our drinking table, let's go;
Dinsin artık bu kalp ağrısı.	Let my heart ache no more.
Şu ağacın gölgesinde olsun;	Use the shade of this tree,
Tam kenarında havuzun.	Right beside the pool.
Aya haber sal çıksın bu gece;	Tell the moon to come out tonight,
Görünsün şöyle gönlümce.	Let it be seen the way my heart desires.
Bas kırbacı sihirli seccadeye,	Set the whip on the magic carpet;
Göster hükmettiğini mesafeye	Show who is in charge of space

[15] I took the text from `http://cahitsitkitaranci.uzerine.com/index.jsp?objid=965` on October 9, 2008, but edited it slightly to agree with the print version. The translations of this and other Turkish texts are by me.

[16] Again, I took the text from the web, `http://epigraf.fisek.com.tr/index.php?num=263`, October 9, 2008; but I had to edit it to agree with the print version.

Ve zamana.	And time.
Katıp tozu dumana,	Put the pedal to the metal,
Var git,	Come on now, go,
Böyle ferman etti Cahit,	Cahit has spoken.
Al getir ilk sevgiliyi Beşiktaş'tan;	Go get my first love from Beşiktaş;
Yaşamak istiyorum gençliğimi yeni baştan.	I want to live my youth again.

The reluctance of Abbas to serve liquor to his master reflects the situation in Diyarbakır and almost everywhere else we went on our trip. There had been no alcohol at the *Gazi Köşkü;* there would be none at our hotel that night.

From Cahit Sıtkı's house we walked to the east of *Gazi Caddesi* and saw the *Dört Ayaklı Minare* (Four Footed Minaret). Perhaps this had once been a church bell-tower. A sign nearby pointed the way to some old churches. We did not get to see them, because a police officer in plain clothes told Tolga that the area was unsafe for us. However, sundown was fast approaching, and boys were running through the streets with trays of food for *iftar.* Perhaps our officer wanted to eat, rather than guard a bunch of tourists.

Our hotel, Miroğlu Hotel, was outside the walls on *Elazığ Caddesi*, across from an upscale shopping center called Diyar Galeria. We had a fine *buffet* dinner. One wall of the dining room featured painted low reliefs of the city's attractions. There were the Ten Eyed Bridge, the city walls, and watermelons—again, *kitsch,* as in the garden of the *Gazi Köşkü.* Here I understand *kitsch* as art that adds nothing to its subject, but relies on that subject alone for any appeal it may have. Alternatively, I might just refer to the reliefs as Primitivist.

Since we had not had time on Sunday afternoon to explore the city walls, on Monday morning we looked at them and climbed on them briefly. On the inner side, there was a nice green lawn, with trees and benches; on the outer side, evidence of fires and the remains of an old truck. There was sometimes a faint smell of animal waste. Something missing was empty beer cans and the smell of human urine. This is what you get in the Ankara citadel; in Diyarbakır, perhaps, the sentimental poets are gone, and people's minds are on other things than getting drunk.

7 Malabadi Bridge

We headed east towards the town of Silvan through plowed fields. Not a tree was in sight, nor anything else green; but here and there, cows looked for fodder. We did not stop in Silvan, though the Nişanyans [24, p. 197] recommend the Great Mosque there. We continued a bit further to the Malabadi Bridge, which had apparently been built in 1147 by Ilghazi's son Timurtash, if this is the same person as the İlgazitimurtaş named on the sign by the bridge. According to Maalouf [18], Timurtash had replaced Balak as ruler of Aleppo; but he preferred to live in his home town of Mardin. He released Baldwin in exchange for a ransom. Baldwin then beseiged Aleppo, and Timurtash ignored the Aleppans' pleas for help. Still, if it was he who built the Malabadi Bridge, then he did a good job. The bridge remained intact for our visit, still spanning with a single arch the Batman River, a tributary of the Tigris, just below a modern dam. The modern highway used an adjacent bridge. In the spandrels of the old bridge were rooms that may once have served as a hotel for travellers. Again, in another part of the country, these might have been littered with beer cans and urine; here they were not. I am told that, on the walls of the *café* by the parking lot at the east end of the bridge, there were posters of Yılmaz Güney and Ahmet Kaya: Kurdish artists of Turkish citizenship who died in exile in France.

8 Hasankeyf

We followed the Batman river south towards the city of that name. Soldiers waved us through a checkpoint. Between the highway and the river, there were fields of tobacco stalks from which most of the leaves had been stripped. We passed through Batman. It did not look any different from any other modern city in Turkey, although it was the center of Turkish petroleum production. South of the city, we stopped to photograph one of several oil pumps, scattered among barren rocky hills.

We continued down a valley along a muddy ditch. Here and there were small settlements with a few trees. We met the Tigris at Hasankeyf.

First we stopped at a ruined complex whose most notable remaining feature was a cylindrical tower topped with an onion dome. A placard dated this to 1475 and said it was the tomb of the son of king Uzun Hasan, a White Sheep (*Akkoyunlu*) Turk; but the madrasah and caravanserai of the complex were attributed to Artuqids, two centuries earlier. The construction material of the tomb was stone, faced with brick; some of the bricks retained a cobalt and sky-blue glaze. Local children gathered around our group. On the opposite (southern or right) bank of the Tigris were vertical cliffs, topped by the ruins of dwellings. From these ruins, a stairway, carved into the rock, zigzagged down to the river. Perhaps in the past this stairway was entirely hidden inside the rock. At the base of the cliffs were restaurants for tourists, with outdoor tables shaded by rushes. Beyond the cliffs, just downstream, was the town of Hasankeyf, with its two minarets.

A boy told the story of these minarets. One of them was unfinished; the other concealed *two* stairways, forming a double helix. In a contest, the former minaret was built by a master; the latter, his apprentice. When the master saw his apprentice gloating from the top of his finished minaret, he ran up one of the stairways with an ax. He did not know that there was another stairway until he reached the stop and saw that his apprentice had escaped. The master leapt to his death. So, I am told, is the story.

A romantic scene that I know from my youth is at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, where the Potomac River breaks through the Blue Ridge Mountains and receives the tribute of the Shenandoah River. Alongside the modern bridges there, one sees the piers of ruined bridges. Hasankeyf is different. The river valley is broader, and the dominant color is brown, not green. But there are piers of an old bridge, telling the same story of the power of nature and time. Those piers were familiar from the photographs of Hasankeyf that had made me want to visit. The photographs had been published because of the threat that the site would be drowned by the proposed Ilısu Dam.[17]

From the *Akkoyunlu* tomb, we returned to the bus and crossed the river on the modern bridge, just downstream of the ruined Artuqid bridge. We alighted and wandered into town along the main street leading away from the highway. Beyond the mosque, the street split: you could go right, down to the restaurants along the river; or left, into a gorge behind the cliffs. This gorge was lined with caves that had been dug out for human use, as in Cappadocia. We climbed up to the top. There were the ruins

[17]The rumor went around our group that, according to the Prime Minister, Hasankeyf was safe for now. But the Wikipedia article on Hasankeyf, as of October 27, 2008, mentions a plan to *move* Hasankeyf to higher ground.

of the old palace, and a cemetery where men were praying. We walked over to the river side and contemplated the valley below.

Tolga had left us free in town for an hour and a half. It was up to us to find lunch. But Ayşe and I were vegetarians, and the riverside restaurants served only meat. Tolga had told us generally that, for our lunches, Ayşe and I might have to settle for *gözleme.* Outside of Ramadan, we could have found *gözleme* back in town; but it was the last day of Ramadan, and the restaurants in town were closed. So we bought provisions in a small grocery store and a loaf of fresh *pide* bread at the bakery. While waiting for our fellow travellers to gather, we sat on stools by the road among the local men. These men would have been drinking tea in any other month. Now that they were fasting, we did not want to eat our food till we got on the bus.

9 Yazidism

We drove to Midyat, which touted its multiculturalism on a column erected at a central intersection. Depicted in low relief on the column were two kinds of minarets, a church bell-tower, and a peacock. The last presumably symbolized the *Melek Tavus,* the Peacock Angel that, in the Yazidi religion, existed before creation and sent helpers to this world to warn the chosen people and keep them from doing wrong [30, p. 54]. I knew of the Yazidis only from *On Horseback Through Asia Minor*, a first-person account of a journey taken in 1876 by a British military officer. Captain Burnaby writes:

> The Yezeeds' religion, if such it may be called, is based upon the following dogma: that there are two spirits—a spirit of good and a spirit of evil. Allah, the spirit of good, can do no harm to any one, and is a friend to the human race. The spirit of evil can do a great deal of harm, and he is the cause of all our woes. From this starting-point the Yezeeds have been brought to believe that it is a waste of time to worship the spirit of good, who will not hurt them, and that the proper course to pursue is to try and propitiate the spirit of evil, who can be very disagreeable if he chooses. To do so they never venture to make use of the name of the devil, as this they believe would be an act of disrespect to their infernal master. [7, p. 257]

It sounds like a religious doctrine as reasonable as any, if not more so; but is Burnaby's account accurate? After two more paragraphs, on specifics of Yazidi practice, he attributes his information to Turks he talked to. A Yazidi host repudiates these claims. Burnaby then asks his host whether the devil is the Grand Vizier of Allah.

Burnaby has just told us that the Yazidis do not name the devil. Burnaby names the devil in their presence. He is lucky to escape alive. It appears that Burnaby takes the Yazidi distress on hearing the Unholy Name as justification of the Turkish account of Yazidi doctrine. Look up Yezeeds in his index, and you are told: '*See* Devil-worshippers.'

It appears that another name for the *Melek Tavus* is indeed *Şeytan* (Satan):

> *Yalnız Yezidiler'in tapındığı Şeytan'ın, isyankar meleğin ürkünç değil, iyi bir Şeytan olduğunu biliyoruz.* (However, we know that the Satan that the Yazidis worship, the rebel angel, is not fearsome, [but] a good Satan.) [30, p. 53]

But why the name *Melek Tavus?* Wikipedia[18] suggests that *tavus* (or rather *tawûs,* presumably the Kurdish form) has the same Indo-European root as the Greek Ζεύς. In that case, it is cognate with the Latin *deus* and *dies* and the English *Tuesday, diary, journey,* and *psychedelic* [21]. But I have no printed confirmation of this speculation about *tavus.* In Turkish dictionaries, it just means peacock (or peahen). Nişanyan [23] derives the word from the Arabic *ṭāwūs,* and this from the Aramaic *ṭa'ūsā;* these are said to be cognate with the Greek ταώς, all of these probably originating, like the bird, in India. Liddell and Scott [17] confirm this, suggesting that the Greek, the Latin *pavo,* and perhaps the Hebrew *tukkîyîm* (peacocks) 'may be borrowed from the same oriental source.' Moreover, the *pea-* in *peacock* and *peahen* comes from the Latin *pavo* [22]. So, it turns out, does the obsolete English word *po* for the birds.

Now something curious happens. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also gives *another* obsolete word *po,* of obscure origin, which meant a small devil. Does this possibly represent the same development whereby *tavus* means also Satan?

Another Turkish etymological dictionary [14] does not indicate any Arabic connection for *tavus.* But the Redhouse dictionary [2] does, and moreover lists a number of 'poetical' compounds, based on the 'learned' form *taus:*

[18] In the article 'Yazidi' (accessed November 28, 2008), though not the article 'Melek Taus'.

tausi ateșber sun,
tausi felek, tausi huld, tausi kudsi angel,
tausi mașrık rising sun,
tausi sidre angel Gabriel.
Something mysterious is going on here; that's all I can say.

10 Mor Gabriel

Our bus did not stop in Midyat, but we continued on towards Mor Gabriel monastery. We were in a land of low rolling hills covered with scrubby trees. Here and there were vineyards, comprising separate bushes with no trellises and no obvious irrigation. A sign from the main road pointed out the direction and the distance to the monastery: 2.5 kilometers. At a gate in the monastery's outer wall, a placard gave the foundation date as 397. The Roman emperor Theodosius had died two years before. His sons Honorius and Arcadius had divided the Empire between themselves. Gibbon writes of the occasion, a bit absurdly:

> The division of the Roman world between the sons of Theodosius, marks the final establishment of the empire of the East, which, from the reign of Arcadius to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, subsisted one thousand and fifty-eight years, in a state of premature and perpetual decay. [15, ch. XXXII, vol. II, p. 237]

Mor Gabriel did not appear to have suffered from decay. We drove along a tree-lined lane to a rather large parking lot beside the inner gate to the monastery. Nearby were large, clean, beautiful rooms of toilets—the best toilets on the trip, according to some.

We had to wait before we could have a tour. Adjacent to the parking lot was an orchard of olive and pistachio trees. Our fasting driver Ethem hopped over the wall and broke off a branch of pistachios. I do not know whether anybody ever ate them.

Soon a young man in a black tee-shirt invited us in for a tour. Above the gateway was writing in two or three alphabets. The name of the monastery was written out in Turkish, using the modern Latin-derived alphabet. Higher up, the writing was presumably in the Syriac alphabet. But in an arc just above the name of the monastery, there were letters that I (who know nothing of Semitic languages) would have taken for Hebrew. In Mersin in 2005, Ayşe and I had visited a church where the liturgical language was Arabic.[19] That church fell under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, though the patriarchate was physically located in Damascus. The use of Syriac at Mor Gabriel was apparently a sign that the monastery was Syriac Orthodox, ruled by a different patriarch of Antioch.

From appearances, there was no telling how old the monastery was. Everything was built from sandstone[20] of a warm light-brown color that fit the landscape. Inside the monastery, we could see nothing *but* this stone, except for sky if we were in a courtyard. Given the monastery's defensive function, this was not surprising. We were shown various rooms, one of them currently used for worship. Our companions seemed especially interested in photographing the altar, in front of which was a Bible with a silver cover.

The local guide explained the Syriac practice of fasting for lent. He also said that, by law, students at the monastery had to attend Turkish public schools also. They could not be ordained in Turkey: they had to go to Syria for that. I do not think the guide explained the origins of Syriac Orthodoxy, as distinct from Greek Orthodoxy, in a disagreement over the condemnation of Monophysitism at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

It seems that the Council of Ephesus in 431 had condemned Nestorianism, according to which Jesus Christ was a person distinct from God. As a result, Orthodoxy held that Jesus Christ *was* God, or at least one person of God (the other persons being the Father and the Holy Spirit). Monophysitism held further that Jesus had, not just a divine *person,* but one divine *nature* (φύσις). Chalcedon said No, Jesus had two natures, divine and human; but the Syriacs disagreed.

One of my sources for the story here is [31], the text for the course called Christian Ideas that I mentioned in §1. The teacher of that course admitted that the book was very bad, but said there was no alternative. Perhaps he meant that there was no alternative written from the Anglican point of view. The book ridiculed Judaism and Islam (calling

[19]We were told that the church also used Turkish, since young people were not learning Arabic.

[20]I guess it was sandstone. If I read correctly the Geological Map of Turkey that I have on my office wall for decoration, the stone around Midyat was laid down in the Eocene epoch—from 55.8 ± 0.2 to 33.9 ± 0.1 million years ago, according to Wikipedia.

the latter 'Mohammedanism') and also Roman Catholicism. I imagine that students at Roman Catholic schools have their own books of Church history and doctrine, but that these books are at pains to show that the Roman is the One True Church.

In any case, our book did not say much about the church in the East. It did not, for example, mention James or Jacobus Baradaeus, Bishop of Edessa, from whose name is derived the term Jacobites, which is what Gibbon [15, ch. XLVII, vol. II, p. 988] uses for the Monophysites.

11 Eating, drinking, and smoking

After the tour of Mor Gabriel, we headed west, back through Midyat, towards our hotel in Mardin. The sun was sinking, and our driver Cemil wanted to reach the hotel before sundown so that he could break his fast there.

We were on a narrow two-lane road where the speed limit was presumably 90 kilometers an hour. Cemil went almost 120. Up ahead there was an ambulance with lights flashing. We seemed to be gaining on the ambulance. I wondered: Will Cemil really pass an ambulance? He did not. But the ambulance sometimes took the middle of the road, as if to *keep* Cemil from passing.

None of the women in our group wore headscarves; but it transpired that three of them were fasting also. As sundown approached, and we were still far from our hotel, the fasters started getting food and drink ready. Non-fasters helped them. I had a vision of tolerance. Most of our group were Muslims, at least nominally; and we were coming from a friendly visit to a Christian institution. No fasting person on the bus expected others to keep the same fast; eaters sympathized with fasters. I also remembered that Ayşe and I were on a perpetual meat-fast. When the others' fast was broken, my spouse even tolerated the drivers' smoking of a cigarette. But it did not happen again.

While passing through Midyat a second time, we did pause to photograph the old city from a distance. Tolga explained that the bus could not actually go there, because of the narrow streets, and anyway it looked just like Mardin. A couple of church towers were visible, like those of Mor Gabriel.

Even if we had reached our Mardin hotel by sundown, our drivers could not have enjoyed their *iftar* there. On arrival, they could not find the key to the luggage hold. The rest of us went into the lobby, where two young women in some sort of red ethnic dress offered us *eau de Cologne* and bags of sweets. From the balcony of our room, I saw a group of men gathered around our bus, collectively trying to figure out how to get at our bags. Eventually the bus drove off. Apparently it went to a place where one of the locks could be drilled out: when the bus returned, all of our bags came out through one door.

The Yay Grand Otel was in Mardin's *Yenişehir* (New City). It had a large dining room, with tables labelled for several different tour groups. Many dishes were available at the *buffet,* and we had a good meal. But there were ashtrays on the tables, and some people put them to use, despite the big No Smoking sign on the wall. I and others complained to the staff, but they said there was nothing they could do. The experience would be repeated. I think hotels put up these signs because the law requires it; but they do not enforce the signs, either because they do not want to lose customers, or because their sense of hospitality does not permit them to tell anybody *not* to do something. But this cannot be the whole story.

The Yay Grand Otel had been given four stars by the authorities. It could not get the fifth star because it did not serve alcohol.

'Why not serve alcohol then?' asked one of our companions.

'Then local people would come and disturb guests like you' was the reply.

More likely, either the owners took the Qur'an seriously, or else they were being pressurized by other people who did. In the ceiling of our room was a small arrow labelled as *Kıble,* the direction of prayer (namely, the direction of Mecca). There was a prayer rug in the wardrobe.

But what does it mean to take the Qur'an seriously? In what is supposedly one of the last *surah*s revealed to the Prophet, we find

> (5.90) O you who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state! (91) By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist? [1, p. 162]

A note from the translator, Muhammad Asad, suggests that an intoxicant is anything that obscures the intellect. It seems to me that cigarettes obscure the intellect. Most smokers know, intellectually, that their smoking is harmful to themselves and their bank accounts; but the craving for a cigarette obscures this knowledge and prevents them from acting on it.

Moreover, it appears that the Qur'an presents intoxicants as being dangerous, but not strictly forbidden. Compare a verse earlier in the *surah:*

> (3) Forbidden to you is carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than God's has been invoked. . . As for him, whoever, who is driven [to what is forbidden] by dire necessity and not by an inclination to sinning—behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of Grace.

Even here, though certain foods are expressly forbidden, exceptions are still possible. Indeed, several passages in the *surah* warn against asceticism:

> (93) Those who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds incur no sin by partaking of whatever they may, so long as they are conscious of God and [truly] believe and do righteous deeds. . .

In a note, Asad mentions an interpretation according to which this verse refers to those who lived *before* the 'prohibitions' of intoxicants and such. Asad himself finds 'a much wider meaning,' according to which *no* believers should deny themselves of what has not been prohibited.

I would propose an even wider meaning, as suggested by Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel according to Mark:

> 7:15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.
>
> 16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
>
> 18 . . . Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;
>
> 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?
>
> 20 . . . That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.
>
> 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

> 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:
>
> 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.[21]

What you eat or drink does not matter, as long as you watch what you *do.* Jesus does have a warning about intoxicants, in Luke:[22]

> 21:34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.[23]

Again though, watch what you *do.*

12 Deyrulzafaran

Rain fell in the night and through breakfast on Tuesday morning; then it mercifully stopped. It was the first full day of the *bayram.* Before we left the hotel, our group did *bayramlaşma,* an exchange of holiday greetings. We formed a queue to make sure that each person greeted everyone else with a handshake or kiss.

Our first stop in the old city of Mardin was the *Kasımiye Medresesi,* built (according to the placard) by the *Akkoyunlu* ruler Kasım *Bey* in the fifteenth century. We were on a slope facing south over the Syrian plain. The courtyard of the madrasah was open in this direction, except for a mesh of iron bars. On the other side, a fountain in a tall and deep niche fed a stream that emptied into the pool at the middle of the courtyard. Such places are an image of heaven. Then we were told that the red stains in the niche were the blood of victims slain in battle.

The old city of Mardin is laid out on the hillside above and east of the madrasah. Tolga had us dropped off on *Yeni Yol,* the 'New Road' running below the city: as we walked along, we could gaze up at and photograph the old stone houses of the city. Then we drove to Deyrulzafaran monastery, four kilometers away.

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[21] King James version, from a Project Gutenberg mirror `ftp://pandemonium.tiscali.de/pub/gutenberg/etext05/bib4110.txt`, accessed October 27, 2008.

[22] I found this passage by noting Drunkenness on the list of 'Teachings about some of life's problems' at the beginning of a Gideons New Testament.

[23] King James version, from a Project Gutenberg mirror `ftp://sunsite.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/pub/mirror/ibiblio/gutenberg/etext05/bib4210.txt`, accessed October 27, 2008.

Mor Gabriel had had a parking lot and toilets for tourists. Deyrulzafaran had a whole visitors' center, with gift shop and *café*. There were books for sale in Turkish and Syriac and English. I might have bought a Christian Bible in Turkish, but its covers were not well made. (There were several New Testaments, in various languages or combinations of languages.) Ayşe selected some books in Turkish about the monastery and the area; I bought a tee-shirt. Then we sat outside at the *café* and waited for our tour. The monastery could hold only so many visitors, and there had been other busses in the parking lot. On a wall was a letter from the local metropolitan, offering Ramadan greetings to Muslim visitors.

Like Mor Gabriel, Deyrulzafaran was Syriac Orthodox. Having somewhat obscurely named Severus as a Monophysite patriarch of Antioch in the sixth century, Gibbon mentions Mardin and the monastery:

> The successors of Severus, while they lurked in convents or villages, while they sheltered their proscribed heads in the caverns of hermits, or the tents of the Saracens, still asserted, as they now assert, their indefeasable right to the title, the rank, and the prerogatives of patriarch of Antioch: under the milder yoke of the infidels, they reside about a league from Merdin, in the pleasant monastery of Zapharan, which they have embellished with cells, aqueducts, and plantations. [15, ch. XLVII, vol. II, p. 988]

Gibbon is out of date on one point: The patriarchate was moved to Homs, Syria, in 1933.

The monastery seemed still to be full of visitors when we entered. We were shown a high vaulted room where priests were buried sitting up, facing east towards the rising sun. The stone walls used to be gilt, until Tamerlane came and melted down the gold. If a monastery could survive Tamerlane, I supposed it could hope to survive modern Islamic fundamentalism.

We had a brief look at the church, but then we had to make way for a service. However, at least one member of our group stayed behind to photograph this.

The monastery had apparently been founded atop a temple of the sun. We were shown this temple, a subterranean chamber with a slit in the wall through which the sun might shine. However, as the opening was then configured, the sky was not visible through it, but only a hillside. The ceiling of the room was flat. The stones composing it were said to be two meters thick, and slanted appropriately, with keystones in the middle, on the principle of an arch.

Other attractions in the compound included a model of the monastery made of matchsticks.[24]

Why did the patriarch no longer reside at Deyrulzafaran? According to one of the books from the monastery [4], the patriarchate had been there continuously since 1293. In 1922, patriarch III. İlyas Şakır went to Ankara to congratulate Atatürk on the founding of the national parliament. This patriarch died on a visit to India in 1932. His successor, Afrem I. Barsavm, was chosen by the metropolitans of the church at a meeting in Homs in 1933. Then, the book says discreetly, because the new patriarch could not meet the conditions of living in Turkey, the patriarchate itself was moved to Homs. But what were those conditions? The book does not say. Perhaps they were the same conditions laid on the patriarch of Constantinople: He should be Turkish, and he should not claim authority over anybody outside Turkey.

13 Mardin

Back in Mardin, Tolga arranged for a local boy to show us around. Besides *Yeni Yol,* the old town had just one other road accessible to cars: *Birinci Yol* or First Street. Otherwise one got around through a maze of stairways and alleyways. Since it was a holiday, we had these mostly to ourselves, though we walked among a lot of shuttered storefronts.

In Hana Makhmalbaf's recent movie, *Buddha Collapsed out of Shame,* boys play at fighting with each other and subjecting girls to the burqa. By way of rifles, the boys use sticks. The setting is Bamyan, home of the Buddhas dynamited by the Taliban. Had Makhmalbaf shot her movie in Mardin, she could have filmed the gang of boys who followed us around. Their guns were plastic toys, which they enjoyed aiming at each other.

They also enjoyed smoking cigarettes. Indeed, they asked me to photograph them as they did this. This happened in the courtyard of the Great Mosque. Their attitude to life drove some of our companions almost to tears. But Ayşe just talked cheerfully to the boys, and they taught her some Kurdish.

[24] Mor Gabriel had had a similar model, apparently by the same person.

Higher up in the city, we visited the *Zinciriye Medresesi,* built by Artuqid leader Melik Necmeddin İsa Bin Davud in the fourteenth century. At the top of the hill was an old fortress, but this had been declared off-limits by the Turkish military.

Otherwise, we could wander as we wished until meeting the bus at 4 p.m. Many people wanted to visit a silversmith's shop, and Ayşe and I went along to see. There were pictures of Jesus on the walls. Afterwards, as we walked along First Street, Ayşe was greeted by some girls who turned out to call themselves *Grup Şurup*—the Syrup Group. When I started taking pictures, the girl whose shirt said 'You're not dreaming, I'm real' insisted on seeing the pictures; so Ayşe took her email address.

We learned that a particular silversmith would sell you wine if you asked for it. Indeed, he offered us a taste before we bought. We bought two bottles. The wine was called Asuri: Hand Made Syriac Wine.

At the museum, housed in the former Syrian *Catholic* Patriarchate, there was not a whole lot to see, apart from the great stone building itself, and the view of the Syrian plain. But the museum keeper was reading Mehmed Uzun, who wrote in Kurdish and who lived in exile in Sweden until returning to Turkey to die of cancer in Diyarbakır. The museum keeper's little girl latched onto us and could hardly stop talking. Then she took us through the alleyways to a Syriac Orthodox church.[25]

The church itself was accessible from a small inner courtyard. Some children were horsing around there, and one of them said in English, 'Stop it, Andrew!' I speculated that they were living in the UK or the US, but had come to their ancestral home for a visit. However, I did not ask.

We went to our bus and, at a nearby kiosk, while we waited for everybody else to show up, Ayşe bought another bottle of wine, this time unlabeled, but said to be from Midyat. We drove to Şanlıurfa in the setting sun. The way was flat, but the old road had just two lanes. Once I cried out when a donkey wandered into the road and I was sure we would hit it. We did not: Cemil swerved, and the donkey also stepped back. Another time, Cemil went to pass a car, then decided he could not, *then* decided it was too late to give up the attempt. We barely missed the oncoming car.

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[25] The placard called it Syrian Orthodox; but according to the Wikipedia article 'Syriac Orthodox Church' (accessed October 27, 2008), a synod of 2000 ruled that 'Syriac' was the correct name in English.

14 Harran

The Asur Hotel in Urfa was older and less pretentious than Mardin's Yay Grand Otel. It was across the street from a commercial block of shops selling things like toys in wholesale quantities, or crop irrigation equipment. But we were walking distance from city center.

Although Tolga had told Ayşe that all of our dinners would be open *buffet,* dinner in Urfa was not. Nor would any more of our dinners be. Ayşe went to talk to the kitchen staff to see if they could serve us a decent vegetarian meal. People asking me about life in Turkey assume that it must be hard to be a vegetarian here. I have always said that, on the contrary, it is easy. There are not many vegetarians as such; but good meatless dishes are commonly available. But now I must revise this claim: it is not valid in the east.

On Wednesday morning we drove south to Harran. This is possibly the city named in Genesis as Haran:

> 11:27 ¶ Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.
>
> 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.
>
> 29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.
>
> 30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child.
>
> 31 ¶ And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.
>
> 32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.
>
> 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:
>
> 2 and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
>
> 3 and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

> 4 ¶ So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.
>
> 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.[26]

In any case, the Harran that we visited was Καρρᾶι to the Greeks [34], and hence Carrhae to the Romans. To some Turks, it has apparently been known as Altınbaşak (Golden Ear [of Grain]). At least, it is so called in one Turkish atlas [12, p. 30], which was approved on January 1, 2001, by the *Harita Genel Komutanlığı* [Map General Command Headquarters] of the Ministry of Defense. Perhaps the name was introduced in a project to Turkify place-names in Turkey. However, a more recent atlas,[27] approved by the same body on March 9, 2005, says Harran.

Harran is known for its mud-brick houses. There being no wood for rooves, the bricks are built into domes, rather as igloos are built I suppose. Lack of trees suggests desert conditions, which perhaps prevailed a few decades ago. Apparently they prevailed two millenia ago as well. Plutarch describes the campaign of Crassus against the Parthians, in which the Romans crossed the Euphrates at Zeugma, then followed the river south, until they were tricked by an Arab chief named Ariamnes:

> He drew him from the river into vast plains, by a way that at first was pleasant and easy but afterwards very troublesome by reason of the depth of the sand, no trees, nor any water, and no end of this to be seen; so that they were not only spent with thirst, and the difficulty of the passage, but were dismayed with the uncomfortable prospect of not a bough, not a stream, not a hillock, not a green herb, but in fact a sea of sand, which encompassed the army with its vastness.
>
> [26, pp. 664–5]

The army was headed towards its defeat near Carrhae/Harran in 53 B.C.E. [16, p. 91]. The Rough Guide [3] claims that Crassus was crucified and had molten gold poured down his throat. Indeed, this would

[26] King James version, from `http://www.bartleby.com/108/01/`, accessed October 25, 2008.

[27] *Türkiye Coğrafya Atlası [Turkish Geographical Atlas]* (İstanbul: Doğan Burda Dergi, 2006), a spiral-bound volume serving as a promotion for Oyak Bank.

be a poetic end to one who suffered what, according to Plutarch, was Crassus's main vice:

> People were wont to say that the many virtues of Crassus were darkened by the one vice of avarice, and indeed he seemed to have no other but that; for it being the most predominant, obscured others to which he was inclined. [26, p. 650]

As for these other inclinations, Plutarch does mention that 'later in life he was suspected to have been too familiar with one of the vestal virgins' [26, p. 650]; but this was only because he wanted to buy some property from her. Plutarch says nothing about death by gold. At Carrhae, the Parthians induced Crassus to treat with them, and then

> Crassus was killed by a Parthian, called Pomaxathres; others say by a different man, and that Pomaxathres only cut off his head and right hand after he had fallen. But this is conjecture rather than certain knowledge, for those that were by had not leisure to observe particulars, and were either killed fighting about Crassus, or ran off at once to get their comrades on the hill. [26, pp. 673]

The head of Crassus was delivered to Armenia, where the Parthian king Hyrodes had made peace with the king of Armenia. The head arrived in the middle of a performance of a scene from the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Naturally, it was the scene where, in a drunken frenzy, Agave tears off the head of her own son Pentheus, thinking him a wild animal. This is the punishment of Dionysus for the strict opposition, by both mother and son, to what he has to offer. The actor incorporated the head of Crassus into his performance.

Today Harran is not in a desert. It is surrounded by green fields of corn and cotton, all irrigated by waters of the Euphrates collected behind the Atatürk Dam.

From the bus, we saw remnants of the old city walls. Then we drove inside, alighted from the bus, and were surrounded by children. The children sold decorative strings of seed-pods of *Peganum harmala,* 'Syrian rue' [24, p. 144]; or they just asked for money. The ground was mostly bare earth, with two archeological sites fenced off. One site consisted only of foundations, unexciting to the untrained eye. The other held the remains of the Grand Mosque, built (according to the placard) in 744–50 by the last Ummayad caliph, Mervan II. Some walls and arches remained, but most striking was the square minaret. The site is also billed as the 'first university of Islam', and the minaret was supposedly used as an astronomical observatory.

A local man explained that Harran was misunderstood by outsiders. It was not true, he said, that men took several wives and sat at the teahouse all day while the women worked. There was not a teahouse in Harran anyway; and the local women knew all about popular culture, which showed that they had plenty of time to sit at home and watch TV. Also, in Ankara, when a man wanted to sleep with another woman, he told his wife some lie; but in Harran, the man brought the woman home to meet his wife, to see if the two could get along; only then did he take her as a second wife. When confronted with his contradiction about polygamy, the man just said that not many men in Harran actually took a second wife.[28]

Outside the walls, there was a compound of dome houses set aside for tourists. Tea was available, and *mırra,* a strong bitter coffee; also an assortment of the colorful robes apparently favored by the local women: some of our companions tried these on.

At a nearby house, Ayşe talked to some children about growing up speaking Arabic and learning Turkish only in school. At least, she talked to those children who had managed to learn Turkish already. When we had to leave, some of the children asked for money. There was a ruined castle, but we did not stop there.

15 Urfa

We drove back to Urfa to see the *Balıklı Göl,* the Pool of the [Sacred] Fish. Urfa is supposed by some to be the hometown of Abraham: the Ur of the Chaldees mentioned in the Genesis passage above. When Nimrod tried to burn Abraham alive for his monotheism, the burning logs turned into fish. Those are the fish in the *Balıklı Göl.* They stick their mouths out of the water to receive the food that you can buy from the sellers standing by.

As it was a holiday, there were many fish-feeders. Tolga proposed to take us to the cave where Abraham was born; but the queue was so long that we did not bother. Above us were the ruins of the citadel. People

[28] Polygamy is technically illegal in Turkey.

were walking up there, but Tolga said there was not much to see, and I accepted this. We just went and had lunch.

Urfa somehow was not very pleasant. It was swarming with people, perhaps because of the *bayram.* They seemed to be conscious of us as intruders: they were constantly saying 'Hello,' but (perhaps unfairly) I understood this to mean, 'What are you doing here?' It did not help that Ayşe and I did not have a map of the city. We did know roughly how to walk back to the hotel; this we did, and had a nap.

Tolga arranged a *sıra gecesi* that evening. Perhaps traditionally this was a social gathering where children learned how to behave in public. For us it meant going back to the same restaurant (*Çardaklı Köşk*) where we had had lunch; this time we listened to the music of a local band. In Athens, it is desirable to spend one's evening in view of the Acropolis. In Urfa, we could see the citadel behind the band. I felt better about Urfa after hearing the music. The singer had shaggy hair, not the militaristically short hair on all the other men around. The singer said the band had spent a month playing around İzmir. Audiences there must have enjoyed *rakı* along with the music. In Urfa, all we were offered to drink was tea and *ayran.* But I didn't mind; it was impressive if an audience could be intoxicated by the music alone.

16 Euphrates

Urfa was the only place where we stayed two nights in the same hotel. On Thursday morning, we drove west through a desert landscape, but on a good divided highway, to Birecik on the Euphrates, home of some of the world's last bald ibises. We saw them in a cage, where they are kept during what would normally be their time of migration. When birds are released for migration, some die or are killed on the way. This was explained by a man who expressed hope of teaching the birds to migrate again after the captive population was large enough. But one thing that kills the birds is pesticides.

The next stop was upriver at Halfeti. This town is half drowned behind a dam. You go there to take a boat further upriver, in order to see the Roman castle carved into the cliffs on the opposite (west) bank of the river. The castle was a spectacular sight, but I was mightily disappointed when our little boat just turned around without docking.

‘Tourists don’t go to the castle’ said Tolga.

This tourist wanted to. There had been nowhere for me to sit on the boat, perhaps because a few people not in our group had also got on. And the boat badly needed to be scraped and painted. Perhaps the locals were so bitter about losing their land to the waters of the dam that they did not care about maintaining their boats. Anyway, I wanted to see the castle from solid ground. As with so many other possibilities on this trip, that will have to wait for another time.

We expected to eat lunch in Halfeti. There was even supposed to be a place to eat that served alcohol. But Tolga had somehow miscalculated. He told us we would eat an hour and a half later, at Atatürk Dam.

We took a short cut there. This meant driving slowly on poor roads through small villages surrounded by pistachio trees. I don’t know how often the villagers saw tour busses; most of these must stick to the main roads. We needed to ask directions sometimes. But when we did finally reach the highway below the dam, we saw a bus that Tolga said had left Halfeti an hour before ours.

The military guards would not let us into the best overlook from which to view the Atatürk Dam. We went to another. There was a monument to the workers killed in making the dam. There was a man selling tea. There was no food.

‘We shall eat in Kâhta,’ said Tolga.

Some of us were enraged. We had not been fasting as long as one did during Ramadan. But we had not chosen to fast. In an area of low population density, in the middle of a holiday, it might be hard to feed a busload of tourists. But it was Tolga’s job to do this. Maybe it should not have been: maybe the job of entertaining tourists and informing them about the sights required different skills from arranging for food and lodging. Maybe these jobs should have been done by different people. I think food just was not very important for Tolga, and he assumed it was not important for us.

Tolga proposed eating at a fish restaurant 5 kilometers beyond our hotel in Kâhta. Once we were there, and my hunger headache was going away, I thought the day was not turning out so badly. Our tables overlooked the lake that had once been the valley of the Euphrates. Various dishes of vegetables were brought to us: *çoban salatası, semizotlu cacık* (yogurt with purslane), grilled onions, grilled tomatoes, grilled and peeled eggplants. Ayşe and I also had cheese *pide* and *menemen.* Alcohol was served, and other guests besides our group were drinking it, moderately.[29] The grandfather in our group politely declined an offer of *rakı,* indicating that he was a *hacı,* a pilgrim to Mecca. Beyond the tables was a rudimentary playground where three children from our group passed the time. I walked beyond them into the fields, away from the noise and into the roaring silence. There was a sliver of new moon in the west. It was almost time to go to our hotel and—have dinner.

At Nemrut Hotel, I had to revise my notion that Thursday was turning out well. The hotel was initially impressive. It had a square plan, with several floors of rooms arranged about an atrium. Stairs rose up the middle of the space. But when I tried to have a short nap before eating, I was disturbed at irregular, but frequent, intervals by something like a slamming door. When I got up and went out myself, I learned the problem. Our doors could be locked only by pressing the little button on the inner knob. Then the door could not be closed without slamming.

We would be rising at 2:30 to ascend Mount Nemrut. In our room after dinner, when we wanted to sleep, Ayşe and I could hear something like a radio, and then somebody talking on the telephone. The sounds were coming from the direction of the window. But they were not coming from outside: they were coming through an airspace between our room and the one above. The glass outer skin of the hotel was not actually connected to the floors. Ayşe confirmed this by telephoning the room above; I could hear the phone ring and the guest answer.

I went to find Tolga, who went with me to reception. The man there had two days' growth of beard, a cigarette, and a cataract in his right eye. He listened to my complaints and offered us another room, in a wing that used to be a separate hotel. I looked at the room, which was larger than our original room. The floor and ceiling met the walls in the usual fashion. As far as I know, nobody else from our group but Tolga was staying in that wing.

Next day, I heard complaints from others that their rooms had been filthy. Our original room had been clean, but the shower leaked onto the bathroom floor. Before we left the hotel for good, around noon on Friday, I used the men's room in the lobby and found both of the toilet bowls smeared with shit. I considered asking the man at reception whether the

[29] Some guests were also listening to music of the leftist band Grup Yorum. Later, back in Kâhta, Ayşe would visit a shop with a poster of the revolutionary martyr Deniz Gezmiş.

toilets in his own house looked like that.

17 Mount Nemrut

Meanwhile, everybody did get moving promptly in the pre-dawn; we all piled into four local minibusses and left Kâhta around 3:00. It would become clear why we did not just use our own big bus. We drove a while on decent roads before the turnoff to Mount Nemrut. Once we were on our way up, we stopped at one facility where the lights were on, but there was no tea. There was tea at the next stop. After a break, the busses continued to climb in the darkness. Guards let us into the National Park proper, and the road became brick. Eventually we reached a parking lot. Some people entered the facility there, for more tea and perhaps a smoke. The rest of us waited outside. It was dark and very cold: I wore a wool sweater, a fleece jacket, a windbreaker over that, and a wool hat. I was glad to have all of these, and sorry that I had not also brought gloves. The stars were brilliant.

We started hiking the rest of the way to the top at 5:00. We were on a stairway of large stones, and it was good that some people had brought torches. Eventually our eyes adjusted, and also the twilight began. It took half an hour to reach the top. Many people were already there, milling about or settling in on the ancient altar and modern helipad, waiting for the sun. A number of people were wrapped up in blankets from their hotels. In the dim light, we could see the colossal heads, set up now at the feet of their bodies, which were seated facing east—as Ayşe observed, just like the priests buried at Deyrulzafaran.

As the light grew stronger and we sat down to wait for the sunrise, Ayşe and I noticed that one man in our group had brought a bottle of *kanyak:* his daughter brought us some in plastic cups. (This was the man whom we had asked not to smoke at the dinner table the night before.) At around 6:00, people raised their cameras to the rising sun; I raised my camera to them. In Side in 2006, there had been applause when the sun was totally eclipsed by the moon. On Nemrut I rather expected applause when the sun rose, but there was none (except from me).

In the sunshine, we could better see the colossal heads and bodies. Perhaps most impressive was the tumulus behind the statues: an enormous mound of gravel, every piece presumably placed there to cover the grave of the Commagene king Antiochus. Guards blew their whistles whenever anybody walked around the statues or started to climb the tumulus.

We went around to see the statues and reliefs on the west side of the tumulus, but it was so cold in the shade there that we soon began our descent back to the busses. New busses of tourists were arriving as we left: they would have a warmer visit.

We descended the mountain by a different route, taking some hairpin turns for which the driver practically had to stop the car. He was very careful. We saw the smaller monuments at Arsameia and peeled off the layers we had worn at the top. I spoke to a man who turned out to be from Spain and who had tagged along from Nemrut in one of the other minibusses. I don't know how he had got to the top to begin with; but he was on holiday from his regular job of organizing international tours to the Far East.

18 Septimius Severus

The fertile valley below was idyllic. Tolga tried to point out the bridge we would visit next. Now called *Cendere Köprüsü* after the river it crossed, it had been built in the reign of Roman emperor Septimius Severus (193–211) and was still standing.[30]

A golden age of the Roman Empire ended with the death of emperor Marcus Aurelius in 180. He had been the adopted son of his predecessor Antoninus Pius, who had been adopted by *his* predecessor, Hadrian. Marcus made the mistake of passing the empire on to his biological son, Commodus. The example shows that virtue cannot be taught. Commodus was a disaster and was ultimately killed, but only after thirteen years of rule. His successor Pertinax was a prudent man who set about to restore the empire to its former good condition; but this offended the Praetorian Guards, who killed him after a reign of about three months. The Guards then *sold* the empire to a rich senator, Didius Julianus.

Such treatment of the Empire was unacceptable to the Roman armies in Britain, Pannonia, and Asia. In particular, the Pannonian army declared their leader Septimius Severus to be emperor; he marched to Rome, dismissed the Praetorian Guards, and deposed Julian before vanquishing the other two armies (whose leaders had similar designs on the Empire). My source is Gibbon, who again displays his prejudices:

[30]However, some restoration work had evidently been done.

> The military labours of Severus seem inadequate to the importance of his conquests. Two engagements, the one near the Hellespont, the other in the narrow defiles of Cilicia, decided the fate of his Syrian competitor [Niger]; and the troops of Europe asserted their usual ascendant over the effeminate natives of Asia. The battle of Lyons, where one hundred and fifty thousand Romans were engaged, was equally fatal to Albinus [leader of the British army]. The valour of the British army maintained, indeed, a sharp and doubtful contest with the hardy discipline of the Illyrian legions. The fame and person of Severus appeared, during a few moments, irrecoverably lost, till that warlike prince rallied his fainting troops, and led them on to a decisive victory. The war was finished by that memorable day. [15, vol. I, p. 141][31]

Gibbon observes generally that since such wars were not fought over principle, at least on the part of the soldiers, they were not protracted affairs. Soldiers would quickly desert a lost cause. Gibbon notes Byzantium as an 'honourable exception': it held out three years against the forces of Severus.

Having consolidated his power, 'by gratitude, by misguided policy, by seeming necessity, Severus was induced to relax the nerves of discipline' in the soldiers [15, vol. I, p. 145]. Being from the provinces (specifically, Africa), Severus had no sense of the value of the Senate:

> He disdained to profess himself the servant of an assembly that detested his person and trembled at his frown; he issued his commands, where his request would have proved as effectual; assumed the conduct and style of a sovereign and a conqueror, and exercised, without disguise, the whole legislative as well as the executive power. [15, vol. I, p. 147]

This leads Gibbon to a grave assessment:

> The contemporaries of Severus, in the enjoyment of the peace and glory of his reign, forgave the cruelties by which it had been introduced. Posterity, who experienced the fatal effects of his maxims and example, justly considered him as the principal author of the decline of the Roman empire. [15, vol. I, p. 148]

Maintaining an empire was not so satisfying as acquiring one. Severus's interests turned to his family. His second wife, Julia,

[31] Instead of typing out this and other quotations from Gibbon, I have cut and pasted from the Christian Classics Ethereal Library `http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume1/chap5.htm`, November 27, 2008.

> possessed, even in an advanced age, the attractions of beauty, and united to a lively imagination a firmness of mind, and strength of judgment, seldom bestowed on her sex. [15, vol. I, p. 150]

Gibbon cannot resist a bit of gossip; nor then can I:

> If we may credit the scandal of ancient history, chastity was very far from being the most conspicuous virtue of the empress Julia.
> [15, vol. I, p. 150]

Julia bore two sons, Caracalla and Geta. I see no hint in Gibbon of when the *Cendere Köprüsü* might have been constructed; but today it has three columns: two columns at one end, and one at the other. These (according to the placard) were in honor of Severus, Julia, and Caracalla.

The brothers Caracalla and Geta hated each other. Severus treated them equally and made them both co-emperors with him. He tried to improve their relations or at least their discipline by taking them along to deal with an invasion of Roman Britain by 'the barbarians of the North'. Severus never returned from this campaign, but died at York in the eighteenth year of his reign. There was some notion that his two sons might divide the Empire between themselves, with Geta taking the east and living in Alexandria or Antioch. The thought horrified everybody else, including Julia. She induced her sons to visit her apartments to be reconciled; but there Caracalla had arranged for Geta to be killed.

Caracalla's guilty conscience induced him to erase the memory of Geta. Hence, apparently, a fourth column on the *Cendere Köprüsü,* in honor of Geta, was removed. But a guilty conscience is a strange thing. Caracalla almost killed his mother for weeping over her other son's death. He had twenty thousand people killed for having been friends of Geta.

Caracalla was not content to stay in Rome, but travelled about the Empire, abusing his power. Of interest for our own journey is where he met his death. He was travelling from Edessa to visit the temple of the moon at Carrhae. The various tourist books, including [13], indicate that there was indeed a temple of the moon god Sin at Harran. The exact site seems to be unknown: the Rough Guide [3] claims the castle was built over it, but the Lonely Planet [6] reports this merely as hearsay. In any case, Caracalla was headed to the temple when he stopped for a pee (Gibbon calls it 'some necessary occasion'). His guards kept 'a respectful distance,' and he was killed by the agent of the man who would be his successor.

Back at the Cendere, we walked across the old bridge, while our busses took the new bridge. There was one more stop before going back to our hotel for breakfast. The Karakaş Tumulus was a Commagene tomb surrounded originally by three pairs of columns topped by animal statues. An eagle still looked down at us from one of these columns. On the horizon we could see the tumulus atop Nemrut.

19 Antep

After our late breakfast at Nemrut Hotel on Friday, we drove to Gaziantep and saw the Zeugma mosaics in the museum without having lunch. These mosaics were spectacular, though perhaps not more so than those in Antakya. One displayed mosaic had a large missing piece, and the placard excoriated the thieves who had taken this piece. No mention was made of those who decided to flood the remains of Zeugma behind the Birecik Dam.

Our hotel, Tilmen, was comfortable and was in the city center. Ayşe and I went out to look for a late lunch, but what we had been told at reception seemed to be true: it was impossible to find cooked vegetables. It was even impossible to find a cheese *pide;* 'We don't eat *pide* here' said somebody. A Turkish guide that Ayşe had brought [5] mentioned the chickpeas served by somebody at the (raw!) vegetable bazaar; we found the bazaar and the chickpea man, but he used meat stock to cook the peas. We settled for *simit.* Dinner as usual would not be long. Unfortunately yet again our tour company had arranged for the (cheaper) set menu, rather than the open *buffet.* We vegetarians got some insipid canned vegetables. The meat eaters did not do much better. In a city known for its *kebap* and *baklava,* our companions were given chicken and fruit.

On Saturday morning, instead of following Tolga to the ethnographic museum, a few of us wandered over to the castle; but it was closed for restoration. In a nearby shop selling *sedef* (mother-of-pearl) handicrafts, two people in our group of five made purchases, and we were all given tea. On the way back to the bus, we bought *katmer,* greasy sheets of dough folded around a sweet pistachio paste.

20 History and mathematics

We returned to our hotel and drove to Ankara. First we were supposed to have lunch somewhere in a park; but to save time, Tolga just took us to an *et lokantası* (meat restaurant) right by the road. It was fine; Ayşe and I had *kaşarlı* and *domatesli pide* and grilled eggplants.

Once we were out on the highway, Cemil fidgeted at the wheel. He complained to Tolga about not being able to smoke. Our first rest stop came soon. Cemil told Ayşe that he was committed to not smoking, although it did not make sense to him.

One of the little boys on the bus, Görke, had taken a liking to Ayşe; he came to play with her when we were on the road again. When we reached the Cilician Gates, we had to leave the divided highway. All of the holiday traffic slowed to a crawl at the toll gate. Görke was able to hop off the bus for a pee by the side of the road.

We were supposed to have dinner on the road; but Tolga observed that all of the restaurants seemed to be full. He suggested just going straight through to Ankara, and nobody seemed to mind. We arrived around 10:30 p.m., as planned.

On the way, I had finished reading Collingwood's *Principles of History.* Collingwood removes the distinction I drew at the beginning between mathematics and history:

> Like every science, history is autonomous. The historian has the right, and is under an obligation, to make up his own mind by the methods proper to his own science as to the correct solution of every problem that arises for him in the pursuit of that science. He can never be under any obligation, or have any right, to let someone else make up his mind for him. If anyone else, no matter who, even a very learned historian, or an eyewitness, or a person in the confidence of the man who did the thing he is inquiring into, or even the man who did it himself, hands him on a plate a ready-made answer to his question, all he can do is to reject it: not because he thinks his informant is trying to deceive him, or is himself deceived, but because if he accepts it he is giving up his autonomy as an historian and allowing someone else to do for him what, if he is a scientific thinker, he can only do for himself. [9, ch. 1, § 3, p. 11] or [8, p. 256]

The historian must reject a ready-made answer, I think, just as a calculus student, faced with the problem of finding a primitive for the function

$\sec^3 x$, must reject the answer

$$\tfrac{1}{2}\bigl(\sec x \tan x + \log|\sec x + \tan x|\bigr)$$

if she finds it in a book. It may well be the correct answer; but the point is to know *that* it is correct, and even to know *why* it is correct, or how it is obtained; this requires independent reasoning on the part of the student.

In this narrative, I have engaged in what Collingwood denigrates as scissors-and-paste history. This is the kind of non-scientific history that *does* rely on ready-made answers supplied by authorities. The scientific historian may refer to the research of others, but the newer the better; the scissors-and-paste historian seeks the oldest works he can find, as being potentially the most authoritative.

But none of the works I cite is an incontrovertible authority. If I cite old authors like Gibbon and Plutarch, it is because they tell a good story, and a story that every other historian will want to come to terms with. Indeed, the author of the *Penguin Atlas* [20] writes

> The theme of the medieval centuries is not the decline and fall of the Roman Empire but the emergence of Islam and western Christendom. It is a better theme than Gibbon's.

He is probably right.

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