

HAYCAR GEZİSİ  
VAN-MUŞ-ELAZIĞ  
guide Sarkis Seropyan  
Organizer Lora Baytar

From date 01.10.2009 a trip has been made to Van, Mush ve Elazığ(Harpout). It was an excellent trip, an evaluation has been made by

MEHMET BİLDİRİCİ

01.10.2009

İstanbul Kurtuluş (Tatavla) early morning meeting Transfer to Sabiha Gokcen airport, courtesy of Sisli municipality. 9.55 plane to Van

Transfer to Gevas (Vostan) via minibus, transfer to Ahtamar island via boat, examining restored church, local breakfast in church courtyard among almond trees. This region is known as capital of Armenian kingdom Vaspuragan.

From Van, we destine to Varaka Vank in Yukari Bakracl1 village which is in below Varak Mountain. This church is knows as Seven Churches. Very big monastery, it belongs to one individual who takes care of it. There is a visitor's notebook. Landowner says that it is his father's will to him to protect the monastery. Former priests used to teach practical education apart from religious education. There was also a printing press.

We spend the night at Merit Van Şahmeran nearby Van lake. Total distance travelled 120 km Ahtamar return trip, plus 80 km

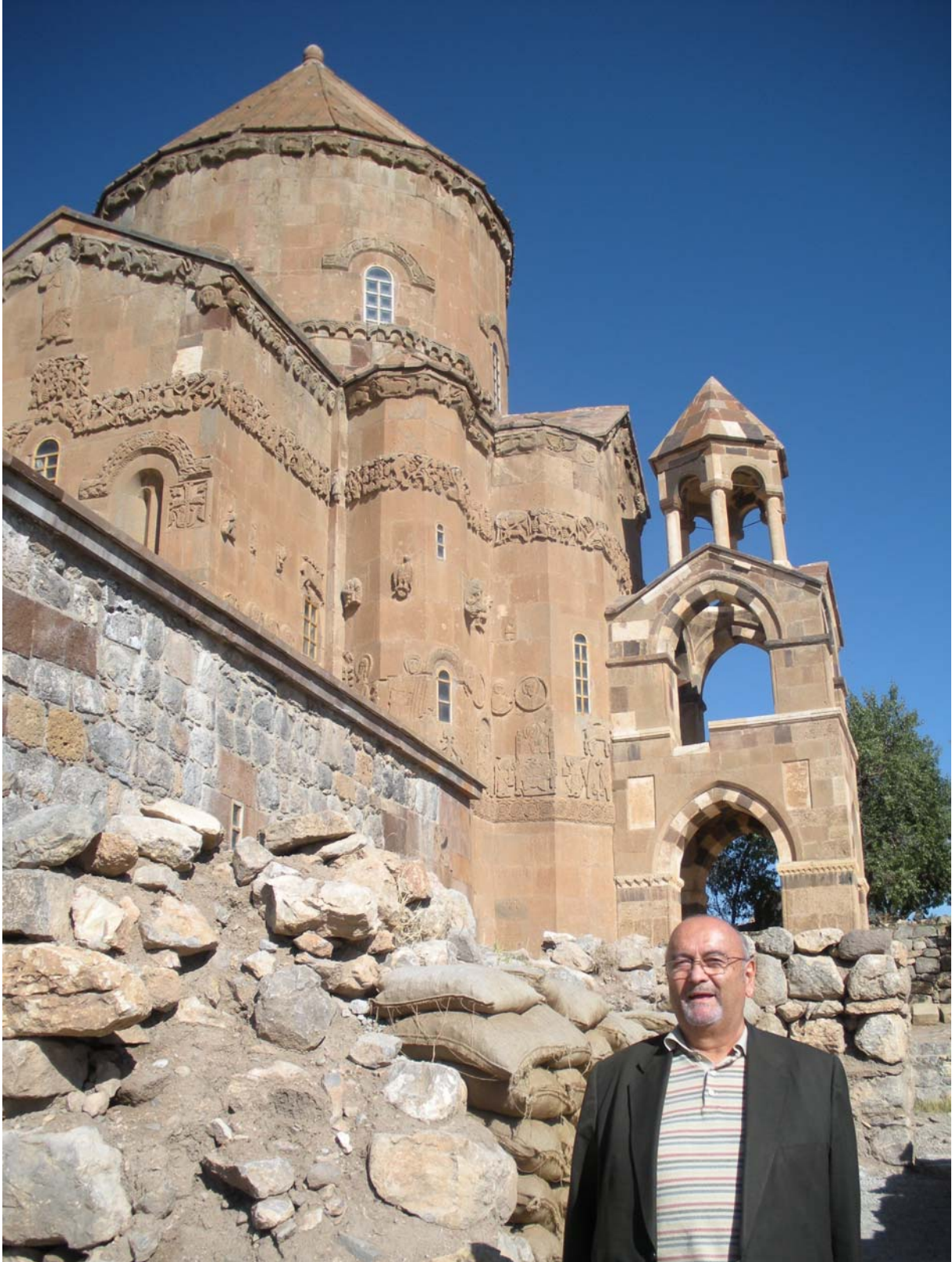
02 October 2009

After breakfast, we went to Bitlis direction. We changed course at Gurpınar (Havasar), Baskale junction. Our guide Sarkis Seropyan explains Samran (Semiramis) myth and everyone was interested. One of our particular trip friend is Madam Anahid der Minasyan who is of Mush origin and lives in France.

Next stop is Güzelsu (Hosap castle). Castle is closed to visits due to security reasons. We shoot pictures from outside. To Baskale direction. At 20 kms to Baskale, we switched to Albayrak direction. In Albayrak village, there is a big building built in honor of Bartholomew, the apostle. We secretly took pictures of it since it is in military zone. !

Sarkis Seropyan tells us that there is a nearby big church in Iran built in honor of some other apostle and he also tells us that Iran government supports religious festivals there.





Akdamar (Ahtamar) Church built by Vaspuragan King Gagik. Writer Mehmet Bildirici standing nearby, 01.10.2009



Ahtamar Church



Inside Erek Mountain Monastery (Varaka Vank) or 7 churches



Our first night hotel Şahmaran Oteli in Van



Hosap Castle



Very close to Iran border, Sorader (Red Church, Kızıl Kilise) monastery. Interesting architecture



Close to Iran border, Urartu era Gelincik dam(filled )



The writer is a civil engineer with great interest in Urartu and Roman water structures.

From here, we headed to Yavuzlar via village roads, Güvenlik (İran sınırına birkaç km), Eşmepınar and Yanal village. We saw remains of Sorader church (Kırmızı Kilise, Red Church ) . We were surrounded by local children, they knew Sarkis Seropyan from previous visits. Village is called Sorader. A local young girl named Nubar drew interest

We left this place and headed to Mush via Gevas and Tatvan. Mus is named Daron in Armenian history. We watched folk dances performed by teams from Mush and Armenia. There were few watchers but acclamations were sincere. .

There were sentimental moments in this folklore night. Anahit der Minasyan's (of Mus origin) grandmother (yaya) Gülizar was kidnapped by Kurdish chieftain Musa Bey. A local performer Cahit Bey (dengbej), tells this story in Kurdish as a poem. Madam Anahit listened with sorrow, happiness and tears. Total mileage Tatvan- Muş 100 Km !!, Tatvan-Van 140 km (mountain road), and Hakkari 420 km

03 October 2009

After breakfast we travelled in mountainous regions in west of Mus. There were frequent former Armenian villages, telling that before 1915, Armenians were more crowded.

We visited ruins of Mother Mary church in Mus then headed to SURP GARABET church and monastery in Cengel? village. There is no road sign for village and monastery

Very old and historic remains. Just some walls are left, 10-15 houses were built upon monastery and stone from church were used for homes. We were told that monastery stones were dismantled for school building. Anahit der Minosyan works in Paris Sourbon university, international relations. Madam Anahit lives in Paris and has books about Armenian history. Her mom left Mus when 1 year old. She recited some Armenian words near monastery walls. Afterwards, I learned that she made a votive offering for Armenuhi Kevonyan who compiled Daron (Mush) local Armenian songs.





Mush Cultural Affairs Office: : Sason Armenian folk dance group



Excursion in Mush



Remains of Surp Garabet Church



Anahit Der Minasyan votive offering at Surp Garabet Monastery

From here we begin to travel to Elazig(Harpout) bypassing Bingöl (named as CapakCur in Armenian history)

We stopped at Habap (Ekinözü) village. Former name is Havav. This village is 20 km on left from Tunceli road junction. The village has a fountain and Mother Mary church. Fountain is classical Ottoman style with barely readable Armenian script on it. Church is from near era. Importance of this village is that it is the village of Armenian friendly (Hrant Dink's ) lawyer Fethiye Cetin's grandmother. In 1915, Ms.Cetin's grandmother was five years old and taken by a Turkish family and raised as a Turk. They also renamed her as Seher from her original name Heranus. Ms. Cetin discovered that her grandmother is of Armenian descent when she was 95 and found her relatives. She also wrote the the book (My Grandmother, Anneannem) outlining the events. Ms. Cetin also takes care of the restortstion of village fountain.

#### PALU CASTLE

palu castle was magnificent. Palu town moved to flat land below in 1940's. Murat, branch of Euphrates was running nearby Palu castle. Most interesting buildings were Armenian church, historical bridge and Urartu king Menua's epigraph.

We headed to Elazig , then to Diyarbakir and came to a lodging place near Lake Hazar. Daily mileage is 380 km

04 October 2009

After breakfast we went to Sivrice nearby Hazar lake. Here we saw remains of sunken city and monastery (Dzovk)

Our guide Seropyan made explanations about this city. There was a famous Armenian patriarch from this city who also worked in Rumkale (Hromgla). With the water level increase in Hazar lake, this Dzovk became sunken. Government requires permission for diving and shooting pictures in this city.

We go from inter village roads. We stop at a village with former name Percenk and visit an Armenian family. Sarkis Lazoglu lives here in summers with his mom and spouse, winters in İstanbul. He tells with great pride that Governor visited him and asked for help for the restoration of the village church. We took pictures and leave them.

We go to Harpout from village roads. We pass from a quarter of Harpout Huseyni (Huseynig??) village.

#### HARPUT

We drank tea at a tea garden across castle. We saw ruins of Mother Mary church walls. We learned that there is a Syrian church operating in Elazig.



One of my journey friends was Arto, proficient in Music. He told me that Classical Armenian and Turkish songs is based on Harparsum musical notation.

Then we saw Keban town. We saw a church used as a warehouse. Lastly we saw the church the governor asked to be restored. Its roof didn't collapse yet. Best preserved church. Daily mileage is about 250 km. We traveled about 1400 km in 4 days



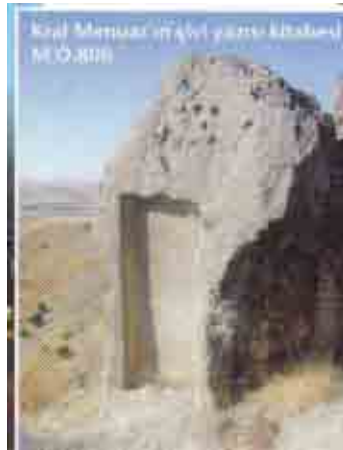
Elaziğ former Habap (Ekinözü) village church remains (Mother Mary)



Habap (Ekinözü) village fountain epigraph



Palu Armenian church



Urartu King Menua's epigraph



Palu'da historic bridge



former Percenk village Mehmet Bildirici- Sarkis Lazoğlu- Arto (standing)-  
Lazoğlu'nun old mom



Prayer for a famous Armenian theater critic Agop Ayvaz



Anahid Der Minasyan



Scenes from trip