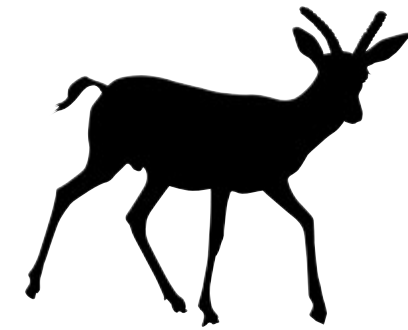


ŞANLIURFA

THE CITY OF CIVILIZATIONS WHERE PROPHETS MET

EDITED BY
ALPARSLAN AÇIKGENÇ
ABDULLAH EKİNCİ



Istanbul
2017

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(Markets and bazaars, covered markets, trading centers and caravanserais)

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THE HISTORY

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General map of Şanlıurfa Province with historical sites

1. TOMB OF HAYAT IBN QAYS AL-ANSARI AL-HARRANI

Hayat ibn Qays al-Ansari al-Harrani was a well-known scholar and Sufi sheikh who died in 1185. He was born in Harran and thus is known as al-Harrani, but according to Nisba al-Ansari, his family must have migrated from Medina. His tomb is near Şanlıurfa, where it is a place of veneration by visitors.

2. HARRAN DOME HOUSES

It is possible to run across houses similar to the ones of Harran in the villages of rural Suruç and Birecik Provinces, which share borders with Şanlıurfa. However, those of Harran are different, with bricks being used to form the top of the houses. There are two reasons for this, one being the lack of wood sources in the area, and the other the ready availability of brick-making materials in Harran. The height of the houses is at most five meters. The interior and exterior walls are plastered with clay. The houses of Harran are cool in summer and warm in winter. There are 580 dome houses within the city walls.

2. ULU (GRAND) MOSQUE OF HARRAN

Harran fell under the control of Islam in 639 during the reign of the Caliph Omar. Harran had been the capital during the Umayyad period under the rule of the last caliph, Marwan II. The Ulu Mosque of Harran, which is the oldest mosque in the Islamic architectural style in Turkey, was constructed between 744 and 750 AD during the Umayyad period by Caliph Marwan II. The wooden stairs of the minaret have been reconstructed with 105 steps, the same number as were in the original. Scholars trained in the nearby Harran School made a huge contribution to the formation of European civilization.

2. HARRAN CASTLE

Harran Castle was constructed adjacent to the city ramparts on the south-eastern side of the city. Islamic sources report that there was a Sabeian sanctuary within the area of the castle. It is estimated that the castle, on which the Umayyad Caliph Marwan II spent 10 million gold drachmas, had the dimensions of 90 × 130 meters with three floors. There was a dodecagon-shaped tower on each of the four corners of the irregular rectangular form of the castle.

3. TOMB OF IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQİR

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was the fifth of the Twelve Imams in Shi'a Islam. He is revered by Shiite Muslims for his religious leadership, and respected by Sunni Muslims for his knowledge and Islamic scholarship as a jurist in Medina. He died near Urfa in 733.

4. BAZDA CAVES

These are two historical underground stone quarries, located on each side of the Han el-Ba'rur road 16 km from Harran. It is understood from the Arabic inscriptions in the stone that these quarries were in active use in the 13th century. As thousands of stones were needed for the buildings of the nearby cities of Harran and Shuayb and the Han el-Ba'rur, many square openings, tunnels and galleries have been hollowed out in these two pits. Furthermore, exits to different sides of the mountain are provided by long galleries and tunnels.

5. HAN EL-BA'RUR (CARAVANSARY)

This caravansary (*han*) is located in Gökteaş village, which is 26 km from Harran. It is dated to the period of the Ayyubids (1219 AD). “Ba'rur” means “goat manure” in Arabic. According to the story, Hacı Hüsameddin Ali Bey, son of Imad, son of Isa had this *han* constructed, filled it with dried grapes and offered them to his guests and to passers-by. He told everyone that after him, people would fill this place with goat manure. This structure was destroyed after the Mongolian invasion and for a long time was used as a stable by the local inhabitants.

6. THE ANCIENT CITY OF SHUAYB

This site is 39 km from Harran and 13 km after Han el-Ba'rur. It was a residential community dated to the late Roman period (4th or 5th century AD). In this duplex city, the buildings of the upper side were constructed with blocks of stone, while the lower side consisted of caves. It is rumored that Prophet Shuayb used one of the caves there as his house and temple and that Moses got his famous staff from Prophet Shuayb while he was shepherding in this region. Moses climbed Tur Mountain and from there received his first epiphany and was assigned to be a prophet.

7. THE ANCIENT CITY OF SOĞMATAR

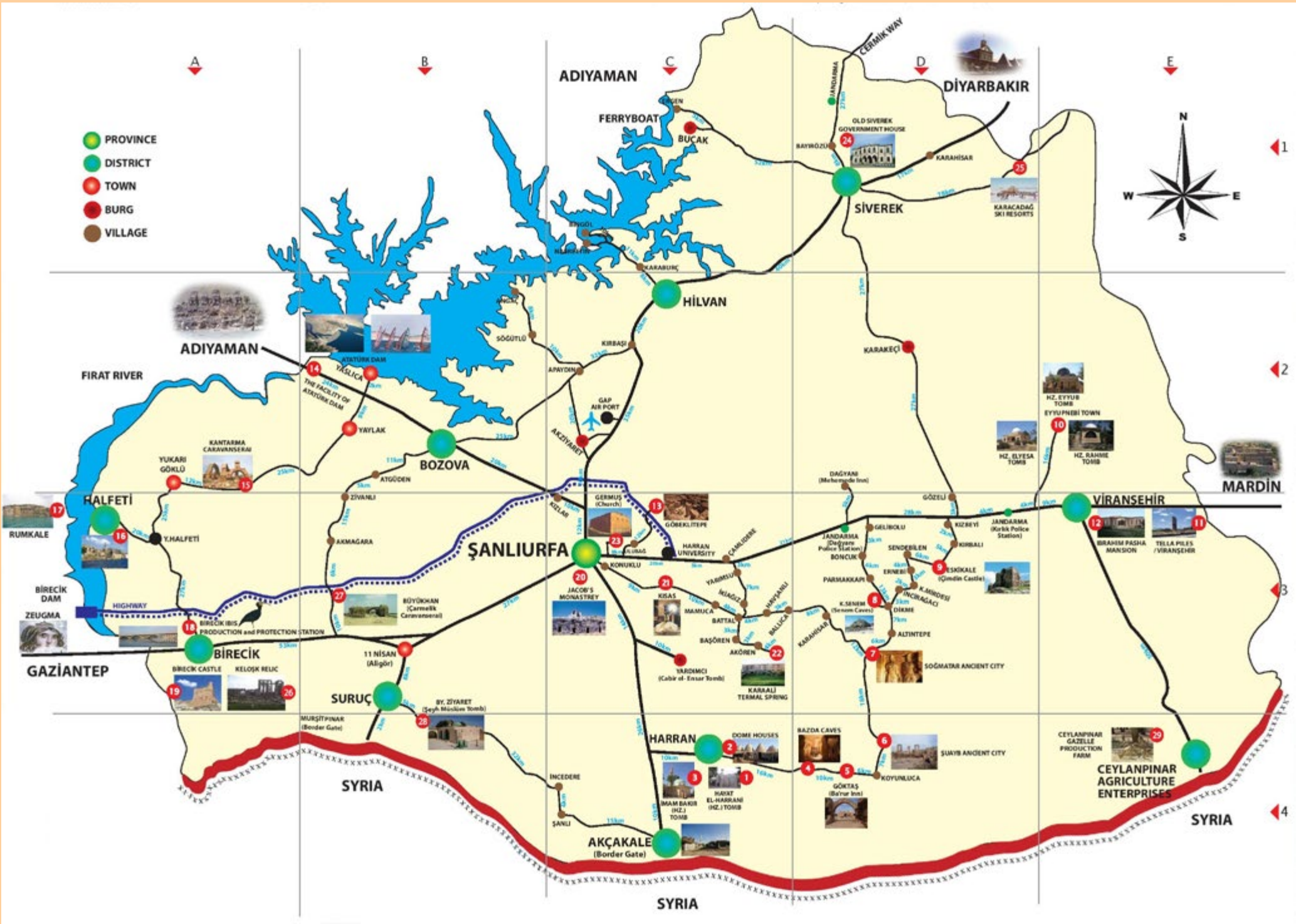
After 18 km from the ancient city of Shuayb, you will reach the ancient city of Soğmatar. It is 57 km from Harran. This region dates back to the Roman Period (2nd century AD) and was a cult center where the people of Harran worshiped the moon and planet gods during the reign of King Abgar. In Soğmatar can be seen a cave (Pognon Cave) belonging to Sin, god of the moon, a hill (Holy Hill) with reliefs of gods on its slopes and tablets engraved on the ground, five square- and circular-shaped mausoleums (Anıt Mezar), and tombs carved into the main rock. It is rumoured that the historical well in the ancient city of Soğmatar could have been the well of Moses.

8. SENEM CAVES

The Senem Caves are located in the village of Senem Mıgar near Şanlıurfa. These caves were actually carved into the huge rocks during Roman times by Christians who were trying to escape persecution. In the village there is a hill with ruins of a three-storey structure believed to have been a church built by these Christians. There are small chapels carved into the rocks on the northern side of the village.

9. ÇİMDİN CASTLE (OLD CASTLE)

This is a historical fortress which can be reached by going 61 km on the Şanlıurfa-Viransehir highway and then taking the south exit and continuing for 9 km on that road. It is estimated that this castle, which is surrounded by a deep defense moat, was constructed during the Ayyubid period. According to the epigraph, the tomb in the castle is that of Mesut Ali, son of Ibrahim, who was a descendant of the Prophet (pbuh). There are huge caves below



the western entrance of Çimdin Castle. The well of the castle was restored during the Mameluke period.

10. THE TOWN OF EYYUBNEBI (PROPHET JOB)

This site is 101 km from the city of Şanlıurfa. The town of Eyyubnebi is at the end of the 15-km asphalt road that exits the Urfa-Mardin highway after 85 km. The tombs are here of Prophet Job (Eyyub) and his wife Rahme, and of Prophet Elijah (Elyssa), who came there to find Prophet Job. This town has been called Eyyubnebi for 400 years based on this legacy. These tombs are visited by thousands of people, especially on religious holidays and on the eve of religious holidays. A large basalt stone believed, according to legend, to be the stone against which Prophet Job used to lean is known as the “Stone of Patience” and is a pilgrimage site. After being cured in Urfa, Prophet Job returned to Eyyubnebi, where he lived for a long time, acquired property and had a child. He regained the wealth that he had had before he was tested. When he passed away, he was buried in Eyyubnebi, and 50 meters from his tomb is that of his wife Rahme. Prophet Elijah passed away upon reaching Eyyubnebi when he was about to visit Prophet Job, and his tomb is located 500 meters from that of Prophet Job.

11. TELLA PILLARS / TELLA MARTYRION

These structures, called “Tella” during the Byzantine period, are on the west side of Eski Paşalar School in Viransehir. Several significant historical sites are to be found in this district of Şanlıurfa Province. These octagonal structures were built in the 4th or 5th century to honor a Christian saint known as Martyrion. Originally there were eight, but only one has survived until the present day. These structures were decorated with beautiful mosaics, some of which are still intact.

12. İBRAHİM PAŞA MANSION

This is a historical building from the Ottoman period used by General Ibrahim who was the commander-in-chief of the South Eastern Army. Between 1923 and 1941 it was used as a school, but since then it has been abandoned. Recently however, the district governor took over the building in order to restore it as a public library.

13. GÖBEKLİTEPE, THE OLDEST ARCHEOLOGICAL SANCTUARY IN THE WORLD

Göbeklitepe is 17 km east of the Şanlıurfa city center and 3 km northeast of Örencik (Karahrabe) Village. It is the oldest archeological sanctuary in the world, dating back 12,000 years. Excavation work has continued since 1995 and has been carried out by archeologist Klaus Schmidt from the German Archeology Institute since 2007, under the decree of the Turkish Council of Ministers.

Among the interesting findings that have been revealed at Göbeklitepe are included embossed depictions of creatures like the desert monitor (Varanus griseus), wild boar, common crane, white stork, fox, gazelle, wild donkey, snake, scorpion, wild sheep, lion, spider and humans without heads, as well as male sculptures with exaggerated organs. All these provide important clues as to the belief system of the humans who adopted the sedentary life 12,000 years ago.

The 12,000-year-old structures of Göbeklitepe are accepted as the beginning of the history of architecture. The first sanctuary belonging to the polytheistic period that came before the monotheistic religions was understood to be the sanctuary on the island of Malta, which dates back to 5000 BC. With the discovery of the Göbeklitepe settlement, this information is no longer valid. Now it can be verified by scientific data that the first sanctuary built by humankind was at Göbeklitepe, dating back 12,000 years. According to

accepted worldwide archeological understanding, the most important factors for the transformation of a people from the hunter-gatherer to a settled lifestyle are the fear of hunger and the protection instinct. Göbeklitepe shattered this theory in that it proves that religious beliefs may have affected the transition to the settled life.

14. ATATÜRK DAM, PRIDE OF TURKEY

The Atatürk Dam project began in 1960 and was completed on January 10th, 1991. In June 1992, electricity was generated and it began to irrigate the Harran lowlands. As a result of this, annual harvests from these fertile soils have been doubled or tripled. Atatürk Dam is the biggest dam in Turkey, the 6th biggest dam in the world in terms of backfill, the 9th tallest dam in the world, and the 8th largest dam in the world in terms of its reservoir volume.

15. KANTARMA CARAVANSARAI

This is the site of an old caravanseral built by the Seljuks in the 13th century right on the Silk Road.

16. SECRET PARADISE - HALFETİ

The name of this district was Şitamrat when it was conquered in 855 BC by Salmanassar III, King of Assur. Afterwards, it fell under the control of the Greeks, Assyrians, Arabs, Byzantines, Mamelukes and Ottomans, respectively. A large part of the district was flooded by the waters of the Birecik Dam. The “black rose”, which is the symbol of the city, attracts huge attention. Transportation is available by boat to Rumkale, where the Saint Nerse Church, Barşarma Monastery and many historical edifices are located, and to the historical Savaşan village, where there is a rock church.

17. RUM CASTLE/ RUMKALE

Rumkale is located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River, north of the Birecik lowland and Halfeti, on top of a hill in the direction of the Şanlıurfa road. It became the center of the Armenian Bishopric in the 12th century. Visitors are provided with a magnificent view of Rumkale via the boat tours beginning from the Halfeti coastal area and traveling to Savaşan Village, which is noted for its historical features.

18. BİRECİK and THE BALD IBIS SANCTUARY

In 1956, with the construction of the Birecik Bridge, one of the longest in Turkey, over the Euphrates River, the district began to redevelop. Birecik is an important migration center for the bald ibis, which travel to Birecik and northern Africa to nest. These birds arrive in Birecik by mid-February and leave by mid-July together with their offspring. In 1977, due to various reasons their numbers decreased and they were put under protection at the Bald Ibis Sanctuary and Breeding Station established by the Directorate General of Forestry.

19. BİRECİK CASTLE

The exact date when it was built is not known. However, the earliest information available is that it was in the rule of the great Assyrian King Salmaneser II (859-824 Bc) who renovated the castle and strengthened it giving it its appearance that we have today, although later some more repairs were done. There are four main gates to the Castle. In 1894 French archeologist J. E. Gautier did excavations there and discovered some object through which he could estimate the settlements there to belong to the Paleolithic ages. The city of Birecik was occupied at different times in history by the Hittites, Assyrians, Parthians, Macedonians and Romans.

20. DEYR YAKUB (JACOB MONASTERY)

This is 10 km from the city center. Legend has it that King Nimrod, whom Prophet Abraham defied, had used this place as his capital, so colloquially, the building was called “Nimrod’s Throne” or the “Devil’s Mill”. Indeed, it is a monastery. The name of Şardu Bar Ma’nu’s wife Amaşşemeş is written on the epigraph of the mausoleum on the north-western side of the monastery. The tablet and building have been dated to the 2nd or 3rd century.

21. KISAS

Kısas, is an historical village about 12 km southeast of Urfa near the Tektek Mountains. It overlooks the Harran Valley. The inhabitants are Turcoman tribes who settled here in the 11th century and they have preserved their old traditions and customs.

22. KARA ALİ THERMAL SPRINGS

In the Karaali Hot Springs 40 km east of Şanlıurfa, the Hot Spring Hotel and indoor pool facilities were built by the Şanlıurfa Special Provincial Administration. There are 34 rooms and 68 beds. It has a 150,000 m³/hour hot water capacity. A residential hotel consisting of 54 flats has been in service since February 2000. It has been determined that the hot spring water (49-55 °C) can be successfully used to treat diseases related to the nervous system, diarthrosis, skin conditions, circulation problems and more. Apart from health tourism, the Karaali hot springs are utilized for greenhouses.

23. GERMUŞ CHURCH

Germush Church is located in Germuş Village (Dağeteği) 10 km northeast of the Şanlıurfa city center. It is estimated that this church was constructed in the 19th century. On the church grounds can be found a stream, the church (Saint Jacob/Yakub Church) and a place for church gatherings (*maidan*). The church was built of stone and has two storeys.

25. KARACADAĞ SKI RESORT

The ski-runs are prepared according to the snow conditions by the governorship of Karacadağ which is in Siverek district. A 250-m chair-lift was built for the 600-700 m-long ski runs. One 60 m² cafe and one 30 m² bungalow-type service area can be found at the ski center, which is 60 km from Siverek. There is a four-month skiing season beginning in November.



The ancient city center with the Mosque of Abraham, God's Friend (Khalilu'r-Rahman) and the fish lake



Ancient carvings in
Harran Soğmatar

Throughout history, the city of Urfa and the region in which it is situated have been known by a variety of names. Among these, the most commonly recognized are Ostroene, as it was called by the Romans and Al-Jazeera (The Island), so named by the Arabs. The Arabic name is derived from the fact that the plains were surrounded by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The region was divided into three parts under the Persian Sassanians: the Land of Rabia, the Land of Mudar, and the Land of Bakr, named after the three tribes that had been settled there during the Pre-Islamic period.¹ Moreover, Makdisi, in his work *Ahsan al-Taqasim*, called Al-Jazeera the Akur Region.² In this brief history of Urfa, we will try to trace the historical roots of the city in ancient times.

PREHISTORIC AND ANCIENT PERIODS

According to one point of view, the origin of the name Urfa is the Arabic *orhai*.³ Based on this claim, some historians assumed that *orhai* was derived from *vurhai*, meaning “watery” in Arabic. Subsequent versions of *orhai*, such as *orha* and *orhe*, eventually emerged as *Urfa*. The Greeks called the city Kaliura, which means “maid servant of miyah (water)”.⁴ According to another theory, the word *orhai* originated



Stone reliefs with animal motifs from the Göbeklitepe Temple site



Map 2. Seleucid Empire after Alexander the Great (312-63 BC)

from *osrhoene* in Greek –*orrpei* in Latin– meaning “castle” or “spring.” Some historians have called Urfa by the name of Ur, or Ur of the Chaldees. However, the ancient origin of the name Urfa as being Urha or Ur of the Chaldees is unlikely because the Ur occupied by the Chaldeans was located a short distance from the shore of the Euphrates in the southern part of Babylonia (in today’s Iraq, see Map 3).

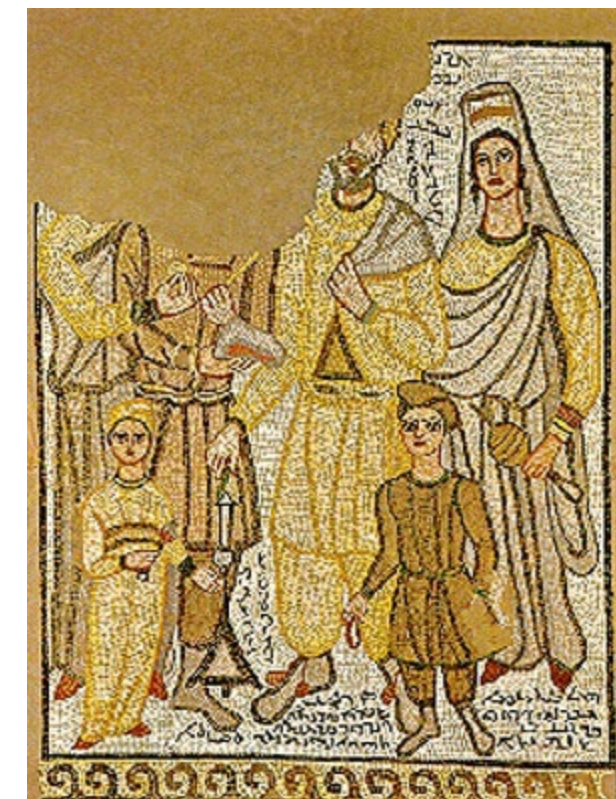
Between the years 605 and 550 BC, Urfa was ruled by the Babylonians.⁵ After its conquest by Alexander the Great, Urfa was known by the name of Edessa under the Seleucids (312–63 BC) (see Map 3). From 132 BC to 214 AD, a kingdom of Nabataean origin was established in Urfa/Edessa. During the period lasting from 215 AD until the collapse of the Roman Empire, Edessa was known by several names. Based on a study of coins from Edessa, Segal demonstrates that the city was named after a succession of Roman rulers. In 215 the city was named Aurelia, Antonina. In the period of the emperor Macrinus, the name was replaced by Opellia, Macrinina. Afterwards, Edessa was referred to as Marcia, Aurelia, Antoniana and Alexandria, or Alexandriana.⁶ In the following period, between the 3rd and 7th centuries, the region continued to be an area of conflict between the Roman/ Byzantine and Sassanid Neo-Persian empires.

There are a number of opinions as to when the city was founded. For example, Abu al-Faraj and the Assyrian, Mihail, date the foundation of the city back to the prophet Noah, but those views are exaggerated.⁷ On the other hand, there are also those who have based the city’s foundation upon mythological heroes. Moreover, Abu al-Faraj pointed out that the prophet Enoch founded 180 cities, and that Edessa was the greatest among these. During archaeological surface excavations around Urfa, some tools found in the terrace sets of the Euphrates located between Birecik and Nizip and between Sürtepe and Tilvez Village show characteristics of

the Paleolithic Age. Among these, the most interesting is a 20 × 9 cm hand axe made of flint. In addition, other tools made of flint have been found 1–1.5 meters below the surface during excavations carried out in Soğut Tarlası.⁸ It is uncertain whether these tools belong to the Paleolithic Age, but they are considered to be part of an industry that produced simple stone hand tools.⁹ Many such blade-type tools were made at the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic period.



Stone reliefs in Şanlıurfa Archeological Museum



Mosaics left from the Osrhoene Kingdom, 120 BC

GÖBEKLİTEPE

An archaeological site that changes our present time framework of human civilization

Approximately 12,000 years ago, the area of land between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, near present-day Şanlıurfa, was the site of the most important change in the history of mankind. The hunter-gatherer lifestyle of early humans was beginning to evolve into a more settled, herder-farmer way of life. The remains found at Göbeklitepe reveal that life during this period of change, thousands of years ago, was not the simple, unsophisticated life that we have thus far assumed it to be. On the contrary, Göbeklitepe reveals that the hunter-gatherers were living through a magnificent age.

Göbeklitepe is composed of 20 round and oval structures reaching 30 m in diameter. Of these, six have been exposed through excavations and the rest have been mapped using geomagnetic and georadar survey methods. These monumental structures were built for ceremonial purposes. In the center of these circular structures are two T-shaped, free-standing limestone pillars which are about 5 m in height. Smaller versions of these pillars, each of which weighs 4 tons, are placed around the inside walls facing the central pillar. The animal motifs and various abstract symbols carved on the pillars seem to point to some kind of a communication system.

The findings at Göbeklitepe reflect a competent level of stonework and the rich content of the carved motifs show that a level of complex thought had developed in this early period. The monumental structures of Göbeklitepe were deliberately buried by the Neolithic people who built them. It almost seems that the burial was a planned part of the construction right from the beginning.

The earliest reference to the name Göbeklitepe appears in a 1980 publication of archeological research indicating that the site was discovered in 1963 during a surface survey carried out jointly by Istanbul University and the University of Chicago. The first large statues and T-shaped pillars dating from the same period were discovered in the Nevalı Çori excavation near Urfa in the 1990s. In 1994, Klaus Schmidt, a German archeologist and professor at Erlangen University who had worked on the Nevalı Çori excavation, visited Göbeklitepe and was able to get a grant to begin excavations there in 1995. He and his team uncovered what had remained buried under ground for centuries.



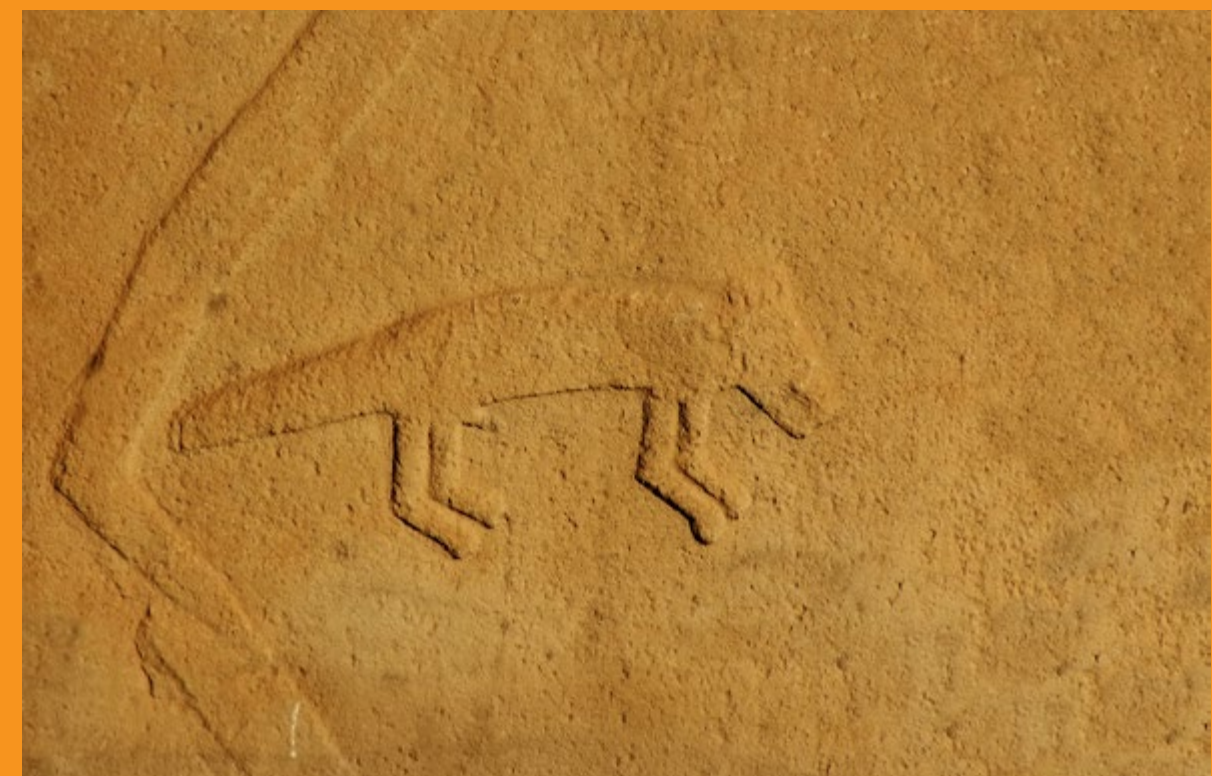
An artist's depiction of the Göbeklitepe Temple (*National Geographic*, June 2011)



Göbeklitepe temples



Göbeklitepe excavation sites



Carving details on the temple stone

Findings uncovered during the environmental planning of Balıklıgöl have revealed that the city of Urfa was built upon a mound belonging to the Neolithic Age. This section discusses the history of the city and its settlement, which dates back to 9000–8000 BC. Moreover, findings in Urfa and its outskirts related to the Bronze Age are not limited to the Titris, Kurban, Hassek, Zeytin Bahçeli, Hadji Nebi, Lidar and Kazene mounds around Urfa and Harran.¹⁰ It was during this period that Hattusili I, king of the Hittites, fought against the Yamhad kingdom of northern Syria. After the destruction of the capital, Aleppo, he probably conquered Hassuva, near Birecik,¹¹ where a significant finding, the name of Kuzi Tesup, king of Karkamis, was discovered written on a seal.¹²



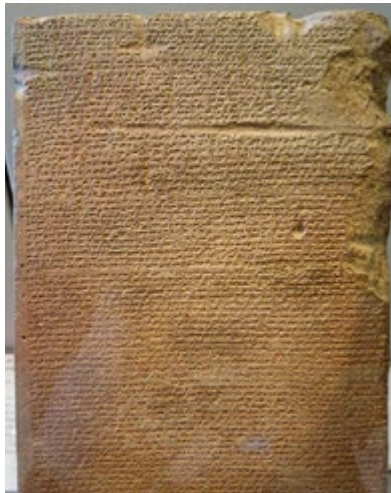
Göbeklitepe
Temple steles

Southern Mesopotamia witnessed the dynamism of several rival city-states after 2500 BC. As a result of excavations made since 1979, it is recognized that Urfa was once under the dominion of the Ebla kingdom. In cuneiform archives found during the archaeological excavations in Ebla, the center of the kingdom was recorded as Harran, and it was ruled by a queen named Zugalum¹³

It is actually the ancient history of Urfa that makes it significant because many Biblical and Qur'anic prophets lived in this area. In one way or another, their paths crossed through the ancient city, according to the legends told among the local Urfa inhabitants, and some cases are confirmed by historical documentation. For historical insight into the circumstances, we need to examine a brief history of the Mesopotamian cities in the proximity of Urfa at that time (see Map 3).

GREAT CITIES OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

Uruk was one of the first major cities in the history of the world. It reached its peak around 2900 BC when it had an estimated population of nearly 80,000 inhabitants, making it the largest city in the world in ancient times. This means that there was a settlement in this place at the time of ancient Sumer until the late Babylonian period, spanning from about 4000 BC to the late Seleucid and Parthian periods. Uruk was located in southern Mesopotamia along the banks of the Euphrates River. It was the center of the Sumerian civilization and was able to grow so large because of advanced farming and irrigation techniques. The abundance of



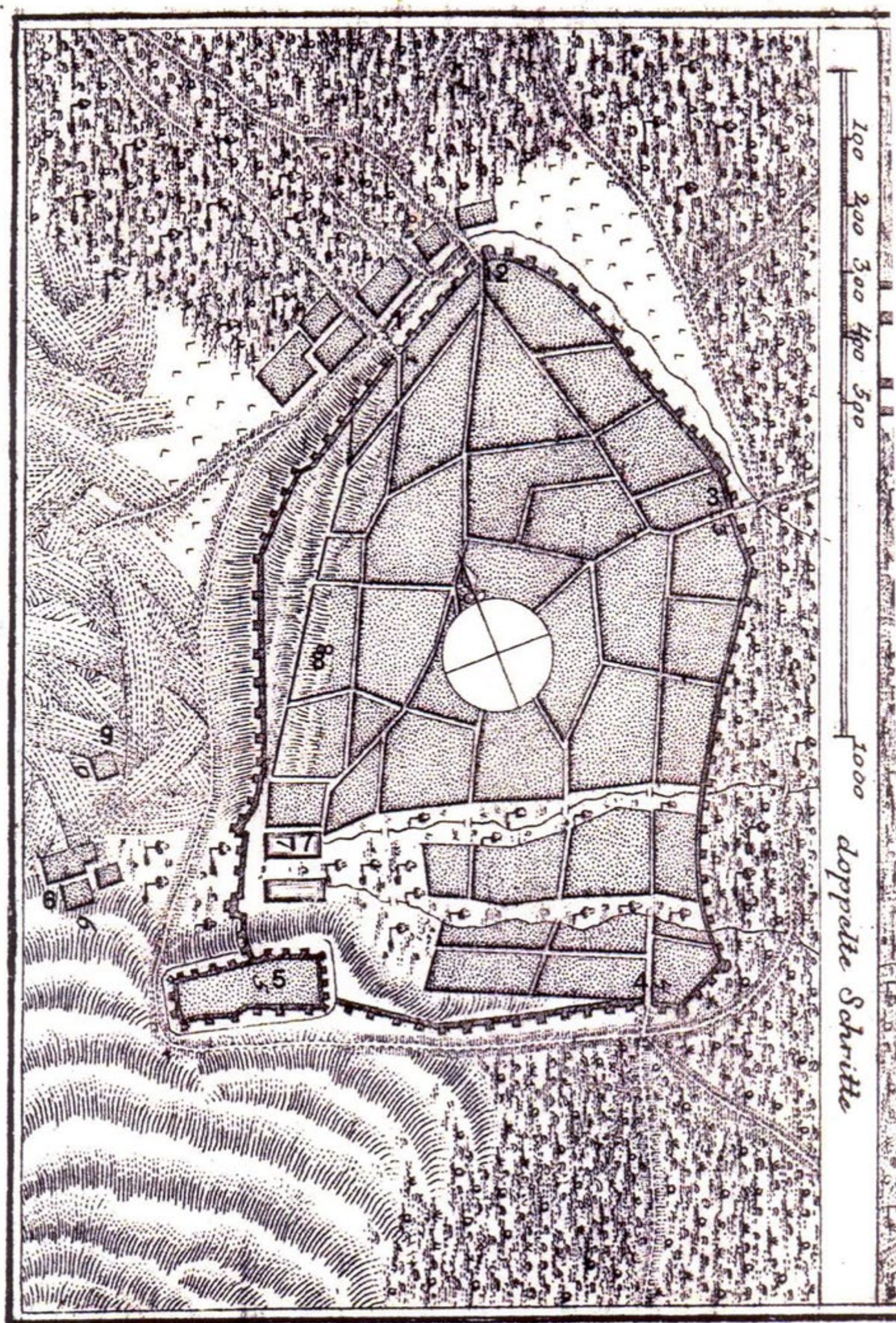
An example of a Cuneiform Tablet.
From Annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II,
king of Assyria (890–884 BC),
[http://www.ancient-origins.net/
ancient-places-asia/rise-and-fall-
sumer-and-akkad-003192](http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/rise-and-fall-sumer-and-akkad-003192)

Map 3. Great cities of ancient
Mesopotamia

food made the city rich. The most famous king of Uruk was Gilgamesh, who was later turned into a mythical hero through the tales of his exploits and superhuman strength in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The city is also connected to the name of Nimrod, who established Uruk as part of his empire.

Uruk had monumental mud-brick buildings decorated with painted clay cone mosaics embedded in the walls and amazing works of art. “Large-scale sculpture in-the-round and relief carving appeared for the first time, together with metal casting using the lost-wax process. Simple pictographs were drawn on clay tablets to record the management of goods and the allocation of workers’ rations” (*Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*). Stone temples built in Uruk formed a complex with a great ziggurat at the center. Ziggurats were built as temple complexes by the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian inhabitants of Mesopotamia as part of their religion. These were massive structures built from sun-baked bricks which were glazed from the outside so that the

Grundris der Stadt Orfa



Niebuhr 1766

An old map of Urfa



Urfa in the 19th century

walls would look aesthetically beautiful, but at the same time they depicted some astrological references. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus claimed that ziggurats were built to support the important buildings in a temple complex.



Artist's depiction of daily life in ancient Uruk
<https://antiquitynow.org/2014/05/28/>

Ur was the great city-state of the Sumerian empire in ancient Mesopotamia. Ur was originally a coastal city on the Persian Gulf, but the coastline has shifted and the remains of the city are now inland, south of the east bank of the Euphrates, about 16 km from the city of Nasiriyah in present-day southern Iraq. According to written historical documents, the city of Ur dates back to about 3800 BC, which means it must have been well established even before this date. Archeological findings show that this site must have been inhabited during the Ubaid period (6500-3800 BC). Excavations of the ancient city have revealed evidence of a great flood, as mentioned in the sacred texts and also in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

The Akkadian Empire, founded by Sargon the Great, took control of Ur between the 24th and 22nd centuries BC. The Akkadians were a Semitic-speaking people who gained ascendancy over the Sumerians of Mesopotamia and indeed, much of the ancient Near East. According to one estimate, Ur was the largest city in the world from c. 2030-1980 BC. Its population was approximately 65,000.



Artist's impression of the city of Ur
<http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/rise-and-fall-sumer-and-akkad-003192>

This city is traditionally held as the birthplace of the prophet Abraham (Abram, or in the Qur'an Ibrāhīm) sometime between 2200-2000 BC. There are also traditional reports that the city mentioned in the Book of Genesis, "Ur-Kasdim" meaning "Sanctified Ur," is Şanlıurfa (Genesis 11:28, Genesis 11:31 and Genesis 15:7; also in Nehemiah 9:7). Others claim that it may be Urkesh, Urartu or Kutha. Ur-Kasdim is rendered into English as "Ur of the Chaldees." However, although the Chaldeans were settled in the vicinity by around 850 BC, they were not the rulers of Ur until the late 7th century BC. On the other hand, Ur was under the dominion of the Elamites during the time of Abraham, around 2000 BC. Elam was an ancient civilization whose capital was Susa, in present-day Khuzistan in Iran. Elam ruled the large area primarily east of the Persian Gulf extending to some parts of southern Mesopotamia, including Ur, between 2700 and 539 BC.

The city of Akkad was the center of the world's first empire, the Akkadian Empire. The people of Akkad, under the leadership of Sargon the Great, conquered many of the Sumerian city-states and took control of Mesopotamia. The Akkadian language took the place of Sumerian and continued to be the primary language of the region into the time of the Babylonian and Assyrian Empires. Archeologists, unsure of its location, still have not found the city of Akkad. It was likely located in southern Mesopotamia just east of the Tigris River.

Assur, located in northern Mesopotamia on the western bank of the river Tigris, became the first capital city of the Assyrian Empire. Although other cities would later take over as the Assyrian Empire's capital, Assur continued to be recognized as the religious center of the empire. Assur was named after the primary god of the Assyrians, and the city and the god are sometimes called "Ashur".

Babylon was the capital city and center of the Babylonian Empire. It is mentioned in the Qur'an by its Arabic name "Babil":

They followed what the evil ones gave out (falsely) against the power of Solomon: the blasphemers were not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men magic, and such things as came down at **Babylon** to the angels Harut and Marut. But neither of these taught anyone (such things) without saying: "We are only for a trial; so do not blaspheme." They learned from them the means to sow discord between man and wife. But they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's permission. And they learned what harmed them, not what profited them. And they knew that the buyers (of magic) would have no share in the happiness of the Hereafter. (2: 102; *Surat al-Baqarah*-The Cow)

This verse indicates the use of astrology, which was highly developed at that time in Babylon, for magical practices. During its peak, Babylon was the largest city in the world, with a population exceeding 200,000. It was home to kings such as Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar as well as the site of the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was also the location of the famous Tower of Babel. Babylon was located in central Mesopotamia along the banks of the Euphrates River. Today the ruins of the city can be found around 50 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq.



Hammurabi (standing), depicted as receiving his royal insignia from Shamash. Hammurabi holds his hand over his mouth as a sign of prayer. (Relief on the upper part of the stele of Hammurabi's code of laws)
Hammurabi reigned between 1792 and 1750 BC as the sixth king of the First Amorite dynasty of Babylon. He was very successful in expanding the kingdom to conquer all of ancient Mesopotamia. The kingdom of Babylon comprised only the cities of Babylon, Kish, Sippar, and Borsippa when Hammurabi came to the throne but, through a succession of military campaigns, careful alliances made and broken when necessary, and political maneuvers, he held the entire region under Babylonian control by 1750 BC. He is best known in the modern day for his law code which, although not the earliest code of laws, came to serve as a model for other cultures and is thought to have influenced the laws set down by Hebrew scribes, including those from the biblical Book of Exodus. This picture and information is taken from:
<https://www.ancient.eu/hammurabi/>



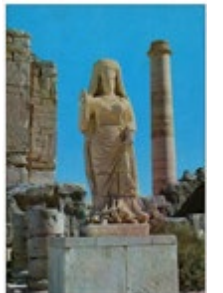
Tower of Babel depicted by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

Babylon is mentioned several times in the Bible. It became the capital city of the Assyrian Empire in the 13th century BC. Although the city later fell into ruins, the great King Ashurnasirpal II rebuilt the city and made it the Assyrian capital in 880 BC. Babylon boasted some of the most magnificent palaces built in ancient history. The palace of Shalmaneser III covered over 12 acres and had more than 200 rooms. Under Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC), the city of Babylon was rebuilt with great splendor and would eventually become one of the most magnificent cities in the Middle East and Mediterranean region. But all was not perfect beneath the shining surface of the Babylonian city-state, as there still existed a number of cities that were loyal to the Assyrians and resented Babylonian hegemony.

Nineveh was the greatest city of the Assyrian Empire and at its height became the largest city in the world. The city was largely built under the rule of King Sennacherib, around 700 BC. The great walls of Nineveh enclosed an area of seven square kilometers and had 15 gates. There were 18 canals that brought water to different areas of the city. Nineveh was home to King Ashurbanipal, the last great king of the Assyrian Empire. Under his rule a



Nineva: an artist's impression
<https://www.shtreber.com/Mesopotamija>



Nineva ruins
https://www.delcampe.net/en_GB/collectables/postcards/iraq/ak-irak-hatra-nineva-nr-56-alte-postkarten-275471657.html

great library was built that housed over 20,000 clay tablets. Much of what we know about Mesopotamia is from these tablets. Nineveh is also famous from the Biblical story of Jonah and the Whale. In the story, God tells Jonah to travel to Nineveh, but Jonah refuses. Jonah then tries to run away from God, but is swallowed by a great fish and is spat out on the shore. Finally, in obedience to God, Jonah then travels to Nineveh.

Harran was founded around 2000 BC as a mercantile outpost of Ur situated on the major trade route across northern Mesopotamia. The name comes from the Sumerian and Akkadian “Harran-U”, meaning “journey”, or “crossroad”. For centuries it was a prominent Assyrian city, known for its temple of the moon god Sin. The Harranians also claimed that they were descendants of Abraham and that Adam was among their ancestors. This is perhaps a result of the later influence of Islam.¹⁴ According to the Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus (see Nabonid stele



Dome houses of Harran

on p. 94), the children of Sin, Ishtar (goddess of love and war) and Shamash (god of the sun) were worshipped as well. However, these were not the only deities worshipped at Harran. Ningal and Nusku as well as Nabu and other lesser gods were all worshipped to some degree.¹⁵ It is important to keep this in mind so that we understand why Abraham vehemently opposed this kind of idolatry (see Part III: Gods and Goddesses for detailed information on the Harran and Urfa pantheon).

In 363 AD, Emperor Julian paid his respects to the Temple of Sin. Jacob of Searug also wrote of Sin, the moon god of Harran.¹⁶ The Harranians were also heavily influenced during this period by the Christians and other religious groups, including those of the baptizing sects like the Mandaeans. After the conquest of Alexander, Harran came to be a center of intellectual and religious activity, which evolved into a philosophical tradition centered on Hermes Trismegistus. At one time, Hermes Trismegistus was thought to be an Egyptian priest who lived in very ancient times and wrote a series of books on magic which became known as Hermetic literature. In reality, Hermetic literature is a series of books written by

various authors containing a mixture of popular Greek philosophy, Platonism, and Stoicism influenced by Jewish and Persian religious theology.¹⁷

After the conquest of Harran by the Muslims in 639 AD, the city shifted to an Islamic affiliation. Muslim authors described the Harranians as Nabataean pagans and Greek immigrants. The Harranians made calculated moves to make peace with the Muslims. The Umayyad Caliph Marwan (744–750 AD) made Harran his home and moved the center of the Umayyad Empire from Damascus to Harran. Then in 830 AD the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun demanded that the pagans of Harran either change religions or accept death. They chose to be identified with the “Sabeans”.¹⁸ They also succeeded in having the School of Philosophy and Medicine moved from Alexandria to Harran. Moreover, a number of famous scholars in philosophy and medicine are said to have come from Harran (see Part IV: History of Thought and Science).

Harran in Biblical sources is the city where Abraham was cast into Nimrod's



Inside view of the dome of a Harran house

furnace to face trial by fire. But this name also resembles the name of the first son of Terah, the eldest brother of Abraham (Genesis 11:27), who migrated with his family from Ur of the Chaldees to Harran, where the descendants of his brother Nahor had established themselves. The Romans called the city Charrae, but today it is called Harran in Turkish. Some of the incidents mentioned in the Qur'an concerning the call of Abraham and the opposition to Nimrod also took place in Harran, a major district of Şanlıurfa Province today. Moreover, Abraham is said to have set out from Harran on his pilgrimage of faith to Canaan (Gen 12:1). According to the *Bible Encyclopedia – ISBE*, “The name appears in Assyro-Babalonian as Kharran, which means ‘road’, possibly because here the trade route from Damascus joined that from Nineveh to Carchemish. It is mentioned in the prism inscription of Tiglath-pileser I. It was a seat of the worship of Sin, the moon-god, from very ancient times. A temple was built by Shalmaneser II... [the] destroyed [temple] was rebuilt by Ashurbanipal, who was here crowned with the crown of Sin.” In 53 BC, the Parthians defeated the Roman army near Harran and slew its general, Crassus.



The remains of the ancient Harran School

Each one of these cities, as well as others not mentioned in this context, housed a temple that was the seat of a major god in the Mesopotamian pantheon. Some of these temples evolved into massive ziggurats. These gods controlled the powerful forces which were believed to dictate the fate of all humans. In the beginning, the priesthood had the duty to please the town's patron deity, but this role soon passed to the secular kings. Yet the priesthood did manage to hold great authority owing to their interpretation of omens and dreams.

Harran citadel



The tower of the ancient Harran School



Harran, Ulu Cami
(The Grand Mosque)

THE ISLAMIC PERIOD

Muslims began to populate the city of Urfa during the time of the Four Great Caliphs (632–661 AD). In the year 639, at the death of Abu Ubayda, the caliph ‘Umar appointed Iyad ibn Ghanem as governor and charged him with the order to conquer Mesopotamia. ‘Umar especially wanted to control the cities of Homs and Kinnesrin in order to extend his zone of influence. In order to conquer this area, the Muslims first invaded Urfa in the second half of that year.¹⁹ In response to the advances of the Muslims, the emperor Heraclius increased his efforts to retain the area beginning in 627. In order to save Homs, he tried to make use of the military resources of Ruha, another name for Urfa which was becoming popular among the Arabs. Ultimately, he had to turn back to Constantinople, effectively relinquishing his control over the Al-Jazeera region.²⁰ After Iyad’s death, the caliph ‘Umar appointed Sa’d ibn Amir ibn Hizyam al-Jumahi as governor of Homs and the territory which included all of the Al-Jazeera region.

Following ‘Umar, the caliph ‘Uthman was also interested in conquering this area. After the illness of ‘Umayr Sa’d, ‘Uthman discharged him from duty and put Homs and Kinnesrin under the direction of Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan.²¹ ‘Uthman also ordered Muawiya to go to Simsat, so Muawiya sent both Habib ibn Maslama and Shatwan ibn al-Mu’attal to the region. With the state of affairs being at peace in Ruha (the name frequently used for Urfa during the Islamic period)²², these men later conquered Armenia.



Urfa Citadel

Prior to the Muslims, the area was opened to settlement by the invasions of Arabian nomadic tribes. Subsequently, Urfa and its surroundings were named after the tribes that settled there. The Land of Mudar²³ was invaded under the leadership of Muawiya during the Islamic Period. At ‘Uthman’s request, Muawiya relocated the Mudar tribe far away from the city. After the Mudar were resettled, the Kays, Numeyr, Ukayl and Süleiman tribes were also relocated.²⁴ In this way, Muawiya dominated over an area which became the keystone of the Umayyad dynasty.²⁵ Urfa and its surroundings were used as a military base to protect against Byzantine attacks.²⁶ Upon the martyrdom of ‘Uthman on 17 June 656, the most important stage of the battle between the caliph Ali and Muawiya took place in Siffin, near the Land of Mudar.²⁷

There were no serious disturbances in the Land of Mudar during Muawiya’s time; however, his successors, Yazid and Muawiya II, witnessed the struggle of the Arabian tribes.²⁸ Similarly, the internal conflict amongst the members of the Umayyads was of particular concern. As a result of the struggle over the throne, the Kalb tribe escaped to Tedmur. The conflict was resolved with the submission of Ibrahim ibn Walid to Marwan ibn Muhammad, who then marched to Damascus in 744.

Mosaics from the period





Relief on a tombstone, Şanlıurfa Arkeological Museum

In this period, Harran became an important location for the Umayyad Dynasty. The holy wars fought by Maslama ibn Abdulmalik, who blockaded Constantinople, began in Harran.²⁹ He chose Harran rather than Kinnesrin as his capital and built a palace there.³⁰ When Maslama seized power,³¹ he gave the charge of the city to his brother ‘Umar ibn Abdulaziz.³² During the Umayyad dynasty, a period lasting more than 90 years, the caliph Abdulaziz’s rule is of special importance. During this time, the reforms of Abdulaziz were beneficial for the area, as justice was applied and honest governors took the place of despotic ones. In addition, he appointed new *qâdis* (judges) to several provinces and employed teachers for the schools in Antakya and Alexandria.³³

After the Umayyad dynasty collapsed in 750, the area came under the rule of the Abbasids.³⁴ The Arabs of Syria and Al-Jazeera rebelled in 751, but the uprising was quashed by the Abbasid military.³⁵ The second revolt against Abbasid power was carried out by Abu al-Ward, but it was defeated when Ishaq ibn Muslim al-Uqayli took over as the leader. The city of Harran with its Abbasid governor had been surrounded by Ishaq and his forces for two months when he charged his brother, Abu Jafar, with bringing the revolt to an end. He sent his other brother, Bekkar, to Mardin to the aid of the Land of Rabia, whose leader was Bureyka. Aware of the advent of Abu Jafar, Ishaq lifted the siege of Urfa and withdrew. Abu Jafar, who became stronger with the participation of Musa b. Kaab’s troops, went to the Land of Rabia via Raqqa and killed Bureyka, so that the rebellion there was suppressed. Bekkar, who had not seen action in Rabia, returned to Urfa, where Ishaq left him in charge of defending the city and keeping them from changing allegiance. After besieging Samsat for seven months, Ishaq eventually negotiated a surrender.³⁶ Some Islamic states which settled in Abbasid lands—like the Tulunids, Ikhshidids, and Fatimids—also dominated the Syrian and Palestinian region prior to the conquest of the Selçuks. (The Turkish spelling *Selçuk* is pronounced “salchuk”).³⁷ Egypt tried to dominate the area by sending governors.³⁸ For instance, Ahmad ibn Tolun and Sajoglu Muhammad ibn al-Afshin governed in the Land of Mudar, but by this time the city was under the control of the Selçuks.³⁹

THE SELÇUK ERA

The first entrance of the Turks to the areas surrounding Urfa occurred in the Selçuk era during the sultanate of Tuğrul Bey. In 1059, Turkish warriors entered Anatolia, and in 1060 they attacked Byzantium under their leader, Altunkök. In this period, his general, Salar-ı Horasan, conquered most of the fortresses near the Tigris, but he could not manage to conquer Urfa.⁴⁰ When Tuğrul Bey died in 1063, Alparslan ascended to the throne.⁴¹ Salar-ı Horasan, who was responsible for the conquest of most of this region, finally entered Urfa in 1065–66. Turks under his rule attacked Siverek and Nasibin.⁴² The Franks had difficulty resisting the Turks, who again attacked and captured two fortresses. In the same year, Salar-ı Horasan tried to attack Culap and captured the fortress of Diphisar. After conquering it, he

set up a base in Ksos. Four thousand Byzantine soldiers advanced against the Turks, but lost the battle and were therefore forced to retreat.⁴³

Sultan Alparslan arrived at the Urfa fortress on 13 November 1070, and set up camp there for a night. The people of Urfa, under the rule of Duke Vasil, the son of the Bulgarian Alusianus,⁴⁴ resisted Alparslan and denied him entry.⁴⁵ They put catapults, ballistae and all manner of weaponry around the fortress in preparation for war.⁴⁶ When the sultan saw this, he became angry and initiated an offensive, but without success.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Byzantine emperor sent a letter and an envoy to Alparslan. This envoy came to Urfa and negotiated an agreement between the people of Urfa and Alparslan.⁴⁸ The battle had already lasted nearly two months, and the wearied sultan agreed to the arrangement.⁴⁹ After the agreement, however, the people of the fortress deceived Alparslan and backed out of the treaty.⁵⁰

In the meantime, if we look at Şanlıurfa as it is seen today, we will see in the southwest of the city the lakes of Aynzeliha and Halil'ür-rahman. There is an inner fortress on the hill, its east, west and south sides surrounded by ditches and the north side filled with stones. It is possible that the inner side of the castle was built during the Arab invasion of the city in the years 812–14 AD. There are stone tombs underneath the ditch on the south side. This bit of evidence tells us how difficult it was to conquer Urfa at that time.

Exhausted, Alparslan moved to Malazgirt (Manzikert) to engage the Byzantine army led by the Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes. Alparslan's decisive defeat of the Byzantine army played an important role in undermining Byzantine authority in Anatolia and opened the doors of Anatolia for the Turks. The Selçuks nevertheless insisted on conquering Urfa. At this time, Sultan Alparslan was also planning a campaign against Egypt, but this never took place and he straightaway returned to confront Urfa. Upon the way, Alparslan lost some of his horses and mules, so when the duke of the city presented him with fresh horses, mules and food, the sultan was satisfied and continued eastward without harming Urfa.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the Selçuks' interest in Urfa was not limited to Sultan Alparslan. After him, this interest grew and the sons of the Selçuk Chief (*Bey* in Turkish) Kutalmış, Suleyman Shah (the ancestor of Osman Bey, founder of the Ottoman Empire), Mansur, Alp İliğ and Devlet settled in the areas around Urfa and Birecik in either 1072 or the following year.⁵² As a matter of fact, upon settling there, they came in contact with the Turkomans of Yavekiyye⁵³ and Navekiyye,⁵⁴ who were also travelling about in the region of Urfa, and gained their support⁵⁵ in surrounding Urfa in preparation for invading the city.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Alparslan was assassinated by an Isma'ili⁵⁷ in 1072 and his son Melik Shah ascended the throne. Melik Shah's commander, Gümüştekin, routed the remaining Byzantine armies around Urfa and Nizip,⁵⁸ but in 1086 Melik Shah came to Harran from Tikrit. Barsama, who was then the ruler of Urfa, sent envoys who told him that they would surrender Urfa to him. Melik Shah sent one of his representatives to Urfa, but this man deceived the people and confiscated their properties. Because of this, Barsam withdrew the offer of handing over Urfa to Melik Shah.⁵⁹ Consequently, Melik Shah gave the task of conquering the city to Emir Bozan,⁶⁰ who proceeded to block all food and drink



Ancient palace in
Harran castle

coming into the city. The people rebelled against Barsam, who died a few days later after unsuccessfully trying to escape from Emir Bozan. The leaders of Urfa then surrendered the city to Emir Bozan on 28 February 1087.⁶¹

Emir Bozan was good to the people of Urfa.⁶² However, the city shortly thereafter fell from the hands of the Selçuks. The Crusaders occupied Urfa and set up a colony there on 10 March 1098. The Selçuk Beys along with the Turkomans attacked the Urfa fortress in order to recapture it from the Crusaders, but they finally had to give up due to the strength of the resistance as well as resilience of the fortification.⁶³ Meanwhile, the Crusaders took advantage of this loss and seized Antakya under their occupation.⁶⁴ The Crusaders conquered Antakya with the help of a traitorous Armenian who pretended to work with the Turks.⁶⁵ This help that led to the fall of Antakya and rescued the Crusaders also increased the reputation of Baudouin de Boulogne, the king of Jerusalem.⁶⁶ Subsequently, the Turkish sultans struggled to take Urfa back from the Crusaders. Finally, the Atabeg of Musul, Nur al-Din (*Nurettin* in Turkish) Zengi, conquered Urfa in 1144.⁶⁷ After the conquest of Urfa, the local Christians were not harmed, but all the Franks were slaughtered.⁶⁸ The defeat of the Crusaders caused anguish in Europe and the conquest of Urfa by Muslims was seen as a threat for Syria and Iraq.⁶⁹ On hearing of the crushing of the Franks in Urfa, the Europeans were provoked into organizing a new Crusade, which was directed by Saint Louis VII and Conrad III.⁷⁰

After the death of Atabeg Nurettin Mahmud, ruler of Zengi, in 1174,⁷¹ his chief commander, Salahuddin (known in Latin as Saladin), founded the Ayyubids in Egypt.⁷² He made efforts to syndicate the Islamic states and annex the Euphrates and Tigris valleys.⁷³ After some time, Salahuddin achieved dominion over Syria and Al-Jazeera.⁷⁴ He then went on a military circuit tour of the east,⁷⁵ to Anatolia. Salahuddin set up a base on the Euphrates near eastern Birecik. The ruler of Mardin, Ilgâzi, had already captured some places in Birecik, but upon hearing of the Ayyubid's arrival, he cleared out of the region. After the sultan's conquest of these places, he gave them to Sihâb al-Din Ilyas.⁷⁶ The Ayyubids consolidated all the areas of Urfa under their rule. When they captured Diyarbakir prior to the battle of Yassiçemen, their interests came in conflict with those of the Selçuks.⁷⁷ With the aim of founding the first true Turkish state in Anatolia, in 1235, Alaeddin Keykubad, the sultan of the Anatolian Selçuks, sent an army of fifty-thousand soldiers under the command of Kemaleddin Kemyar to invade Urfa and Harran.⁷⁸ The Selçuk army set up catapults around Harran and then began to destroy the walls of the fortress with stones. Although the people of Harran were frightened by the attacks of the Selçuk forces, they resisted this siege because the town was entrusted to them. However, when they were no longer able to maintain their resistance, they sent a few trustworthy envoys to Amir Kemaleddin Kamyar. They agreed to surrender Harran and evacuated the town. After the Selçuks seized Harran, they marched on to Urfa and called for its surrender. The people of Urfa resisted, however, insulting the sultan of the Selçuks. Angered by their words, the sultan invaded Urfa. They dug holes in the ramparts of the city, and by setting up ladders, scaled the towers and captured Urfa.⁷⁹ The Selçuk army then looted the city. The Ayyubid commanders along with some two thousand of the soldiers in Urfa were then sent away to the inner parts of Anatolia and the Selçuk sultan later began new negotiations in Urfa.⁸⁰

THE MONGOL INTERIM

Kharzem Shah's forces came to Diyarbakır and Al-Jazeera in 1239 and brought a major threat with them in the form of the Mongols. Having captured Urfa and Harran earlier in the time of Artuqid Najm al-Din (1242), they were under threat because of their refusal to submit to Mongol rule.⁸¹ In 1251, the Mongols had invaded Diyarbakır and the regions surrounding Meyyafakirin, where they continued to loot, take captives, and massacre the people until they reached Suruç, Harran, and Urfa.⁸² The Mongol leader, Hulagu, then set out in September 1259 with his army to invade the northwestern part of Syria.⁸³ He came to Ba Nahrin with four-hundred thousand soldiers and established a military camp near Harran. Meanwhile al-Malik, the ruler of Aleppo, Nasrullah ibn Sayyar, the governor of Yusufin, and Nasiruddin Muhammad ibn Husamuddin, the commander of the citadel, were all in Harran. When it was clear that the city would fall, they asked for mercy from Hulagu, who took the treasures of the city but did not harm the people. Hulagu appointed Ali Savrani as the ruler of Harran, but the citadel's commander continued

to resist. When the bastions had fallen, al-Shaykh Hayat al-Harrani asked for mercy from Hulagu, who forgave them.⁸⁴ In 1271, when the Mongols realized that they could not take the treasures of Harran, they demolished the mosques, bazaars, city walls, and the citadel, bringing its people and assets to Mosul and Mardin. The traveler Ibn Jubayr described Harran's state before it was destroyed by the Mongols in this way: "Harran was full of trees. There was a great variety of vegetables and fruits, and an abundance of water. The water of the city was brought from outside the walls and every house had its own well. The people were very hospitable. Their roads were great and broad and they had covered bazaars. People from other cities came and traded there. A drought then broke out which lasted seven to eight years and Harran fell into ruin." After the Mongols' destruction of the city, Harran lost its significance and Urfa took its place as a major city of the region.⁸⁵

After Hulagu conquered Harran, the residents of Urfa were not harmed. The people of Suruç did not send a delegation, but rather asked for assurance that their lives would be spared. They were massacred nevertheless.⁸⁶ Hulagu spent the winter of 1259 in Urfa making plans for further invasions in the spring. He ordered his soldiers to build bridges in three different spots: Halfeti and Samsat on the western side of the Euphrates, and Karkisya. The Mongols took action in the spring and captured the cities of Manbij, Raqqa and Jaber, all alongside the Euphrates. Of these, Manbij was subjected to mass killing and plundering. The Mongol leaders then positioned warriors against the citadels of Birecik, Necm, Jaber, Kalanikos and Balas,⁸⁷ and in the end, all the inhabitants there were slaughtered.⁸⁸

After the destruction the Mongols had wrought in Anatolia, a new power began to rise in 1395 in the form of Timur, who viewed himself as the heir of Genghis Khan. Timur, known as Tamerlane (Timur the lame), was a Turco-Mongol conqueror and the founder of the Timurid Empire in Persia and Central Asia which extended well into Anatolia (Asia Minor). He wanted to take back the lands the Mongols had previously captured.⁸⁹ After gaining control over Ra's al-Ayn, he approached Urfa.⁹⁰ The governor of the citadel of Urfa, Guzâl, fled with fear upon hearing Timur's arrival was imminent. In this case, the people of Urfa also fled, taking refuge on a nearby mountain. Due to this conduct,



Girls in traditional dress at an ancient site in Harran



A holiday celebration, early 20th century



Timur ordered a group of soldiers to confiscate their assets.⁹¹ The Turkmen Junayd declared his loyalty to Timur and asked for mercy for his friends, province and people. The Sultan of Hisn-i Keyfa also declared his loyalty. After over nineteen days in Urfa, Timur and his army destroyed the Urfa citadel and advanced to Mardin on 29 January 1394.⁹²

Following Timur, the Akkoyunlu dominated the region. In fact, the domination by the Akkoyunlu was realized only after Timur's Syrian battle. Timur's absence in Urfa in the year 1400 allowed Dimask Hoca, the ruler of Doğers, to rule between 1403 and 1404. When Dimask Hoca was killed by Nuayr ibn Hayyar in 1404, the Memluks once again prevailed in this area.⁹³ Meanwhile, Karayuluk Osman had the leadership of the Akkoyunlu. He reigned over the area between Amid and Bayburt, later incorporating the cities of Urfa, Erzincan, Çemişgezek, Harput, and Erzurum into his territory.⁹⁴ He gave Sarki Karahisar and Kemah to his son, Yakup Bey, Tercan to his brother's son, Mose Bey, Urfa to his nephew, Ali Bey, and Bayburt to his other brother's son, Kutlu Bey, as fiefdoms.⁹⁵ The Memluks and Akkoyunlu battled repeatedly in Urfa until it was dominated by the Safavids in 1514.⁹⁶

THE OTTOMAN PERIOD AND MODERN TIMES

When the Safavids appeared on the stage of world history, the Ottomans took action to prevent the cities of southeastern Anatolia from being held by Shah Ismail. To this end, Sultan Selim I sent the Akkoyunlu sultan, Murad ibn Yakup, to occupy

Diyarbakır before the Ottomans and Safavids did battle in Çaldıran. Murad, with an army comprising about eight thousand Ottoman soldiers, encountered the smaller forces of the Safavids under the leadership of Sultan Eco Kacar, who would later be called the "Kuturmuş" Sultan. Murad was killed in 1514 and his head was presented to Shah Ismail by Sultan Eco. Meanwhile, Sultan Selim sent Bıyıklı Mehmed Pasha to the area to seek advice from Idris-i Bitlisi.⁹⁷ The sensitivity of Selim and the efforts made by Idris-i Bitlisi paved the way for the capture of the Mardin citadel. The castle of Hisn-i Keyfa and the fortress of Savur were also surrendered peacefully thanks to Bitlisi and efforts made by Mehmed Bey, the ruler of Sason, Davut Bey, the ruler of Hizan, and Malik Halil Ayyubi. When Urfa and Cermik's fortresses were captured, Urfa was given to Piri Bey.⁹⁸ Under the rule of the Ottomans, a census was carried out in 1518. According to the results, there were 782 Muslim households with 75 adult male taxpayers, and 300 non-Muslim households with 42 adult male taxpayers.⁹⁹

In 1525, in the early years of Ottoman governance in Urfa, there were 163 villages, 294 arable fields, and eight migrant-settler communities. Its population was 8000 (6300 Muslims and 1700 non-Muslims) in 1525. The famous 17th century Ottoman traveler, Evliya Celebi, stated that Urfa had nearly 2600 households in 1646. The number of total households was 2380 in 1871 (1377 Muslims and 1003 non-Muslims).¹⁰⁰ Urfa maintained its position as a *sanjak* (district) affiliated with the state of Diyarbakır until 1587. It was connected to Raqqa when it became an autonomous state. Since Raqqa was not given much importance, the ruler of the state resided in Urfa, a situation which continued until 1822. In the 16th century,

Abdulhalim Karayazic, the Jalali leader, captured the city and destroyed it.¹⁰¹ The Jalali revolts together with the wars against Iran in the 17th century resulted in the growth of the city being centered around the citadel. Upon visiting the city in 1646, Evliya Celebi narrated that there were 200 soldiers in the citadel, whereas the records in 1525 showed that only 57 soldiers were present.¹⁰²

During his Baghdad campaign, Sultan Murad IV stopped in Urfa. When rebellion broke out there, Murad ordered Hafız Mehmet Pasha, then governor of Egypt, to quell the uprising. The Ottoman army was defeated, however, in the battle of Birecik. In 1842, Urfa was joined to the state of Aleppo by special decree, becoming a *sanjak* (administrative district) once again. But later, in 1910, it became a separate *sanjak*.¹⁰³

Though being among the most loyal subjects in the Ottoman government until 1876, the Armenians were provoked by Western nations, who had the intention of fragmenting the political, social, and economic infrastructure of the empire. As part of this conspiracy, a number of incitements were organized in Urfa. Events beginning in April 1915 spread to the village of Germus in August of that year. At that time, in an attempt to attack the city, the Armenians fired the first shot in Urfa, on 7 August 1915. The uprising in the city continued at intervals until 16 September. The army, under the leadership of Fahri Pasha and a German military officer named Graf Wolfskehl von Reichenberg, came to Urfa with cannons. After having lasted seven months, the Armenian revolt was finally suppressed on 16 October.

Urfa could not rid itself of its troubles completely during that period. People oppressed by the Armenians and Russians in Van, Muş, Erzurum, Bingöl and Bitlis took refuge in Urfa. At first it was thought that civilians coming to Urfa were going to be delivered to cities such as Konya, Teke, Sivas, Leal and Kastamonu. Because they could not be sent immediately, they struggled to survive in poverty and lived miserably in temporary settlements. By December 1916, 40,000 people had been taken in temporarily as refugees.¹⁰⁴ By the end of 1917, 200,000 people in total had amassed in Muradulaziz, Diyarbakır, and Urfa. Over 50,000 people were sent to Konya by train. Even by the 1920s, there were still 48,778 homeless Muslim refugees in Urfa.¹⁰⁵

Urfa was affected by the political and socioeconomic incidents which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries. Following the Mondros armistice, invasions began to occur and Urfa was occupied by the British and later by the French. An organized resistance took action on 9 February 1920, forcing the French to leave. In the first years of the Republican regime, Urfa became a province according to the administrative divisions set forth in the constitution of 1924.

