



The publication of this book was made possible with the support
of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

GÂVUR MAHALLESİ

[Infidel Quarter]

Aras Yayıncılık
İstiklal Caddesi, Hıdivyal Palas 231/Z.
34430 Tünel, Beyoğlu-İstanbul
Tel: (0212) 252 65 18 - 243 06 02
Fax: (0212) 252 65 19
info@arasyayincilik.com
www.arasyayincilik.com
Sertifika No: 10728

ARAS - ԱՐԱՍ 186

Gâvur Mahallesi
Mıgırdiç Margosyan

Translation
Matthew Chovanec

Cover Photo
A view of Diyarbakır, with summer beds on rooftops,
and the onion-shaped steeple of the Surp Giragos Armenian Church
in the background

Joint publication of the Gomidas Institute (London) and
Aras Yayıncılık (Istanbul)

© Gomidas Institute 2017
© Matthew Chovanec 2017

ISBN 9786055753955

Printing
Sena Ofset: 2. Matbaacılar Sitesi 4NB7-9-11 Topkapı-İstanbul
Tel: (0212) 613 38 46 / Sertifika No: 12064

June 2017, Istanbul

GÂVUR MAHALLESİ

[Infidel Quarter]

Mıgırdiç Margosyan

translated by
Matthew Chovanec


Gomidas Institute
London


ARAS

CONTENTS

Foreword to English Translation	ix
Photographs: Gâvur Mahallesi cir. 1910-1990	xi-xix
The Gavur Quarter	1
Kure Mama	7
Dove	13
The Rain in Shishli	25
“How Happy are the Poor”	31
Dikran, Nazar, Hacho and Others	39
Tumas’ Daughter	47
Us	53
Bread, Bread, Bread	59
Yucky Silva	67
Hacho	77

I'd like to first thank the Sahaf, whose name is lost to time, who first handed me this book when I came in to his store asking for books on Diyarbakir. I would also like to thank Mark David Wyers, without whose inadvertent encouragement I may not ever have begun learning Turkish, not to mention translating from it. Thank you to ALTA for rewarding my efforts by inviting me to read excerpts of the book at their annual conference in 2013. I am indebted to Raffi Khatchadourian for promoting my work and helping me to better understand the context of Mr. Margosyan's city. A special thank you to Ardashes Margosian for his invaluable feedback concerning my translation. Finally, I'd like to thank the tireless work of Ara Sarafian at the Gomidas Institute and Aras for publishing this work. — Matthew Chovanec

Foreword to English Translation

When Mıgırdiç Margosyan wrote his memoir, *Gâvur Mahallesi* (Infidel Quarter), he tried to capture the lost world of Diyarbakir Armenians in Sur district. This was the old quarter of the city where he had grown up as a child, among Armenians who had survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915. However, during Margosyan's lifetime, the continued exodus of remaining Armenians from this region practically ended the historic Armenian presence in the city.

Margosyan's account touched his lost world, as he described everyday realities, in what had become a purely Kurdish city. He loved his native land and the sweetness of life in that medieval city of Diyarbakir – or Dikranagerd in Armenian.

Margosyan wrote in Turkish, and his work was embraced not only by Armenians, but also thousands of Kurds. He was honoured as a celebrity and treated with respect every time he visited Diyarbakir. Ordinary Kurds lamented the disappearance of their Armenian neighbors. The city authorities did everything they could to retain the memory – if not recreate the reality – of Diyarbakir Armenians. The renovation of Sourp Giragos church less than ten years ago, the use of Armenian alongside Kurdish and Turkish by Sur Municipality, or the retelling of an inclusive history of the region were concrete steps at making amends. Armenians were not strangers in those lands, but lost custodians.

Who would have thought that in 2016, the Sur district of Diyarbakir would endure a new calamity and destruction? In a protracted struggle between Kurds fighting for autonomy and the state, much of Margosyan's Diyarbakir has been laid to waste by modern warfare, the use of heavy weapons, and the political designs of the state to bring the area under its control. Many have argued that this has been a political

war to silence Kurds through death and intimidation, the sequestration of properties, and the erasure of memory. The state is already talking about the gentrification of Diyarbakir and the creation of a more compliant Turkish city.

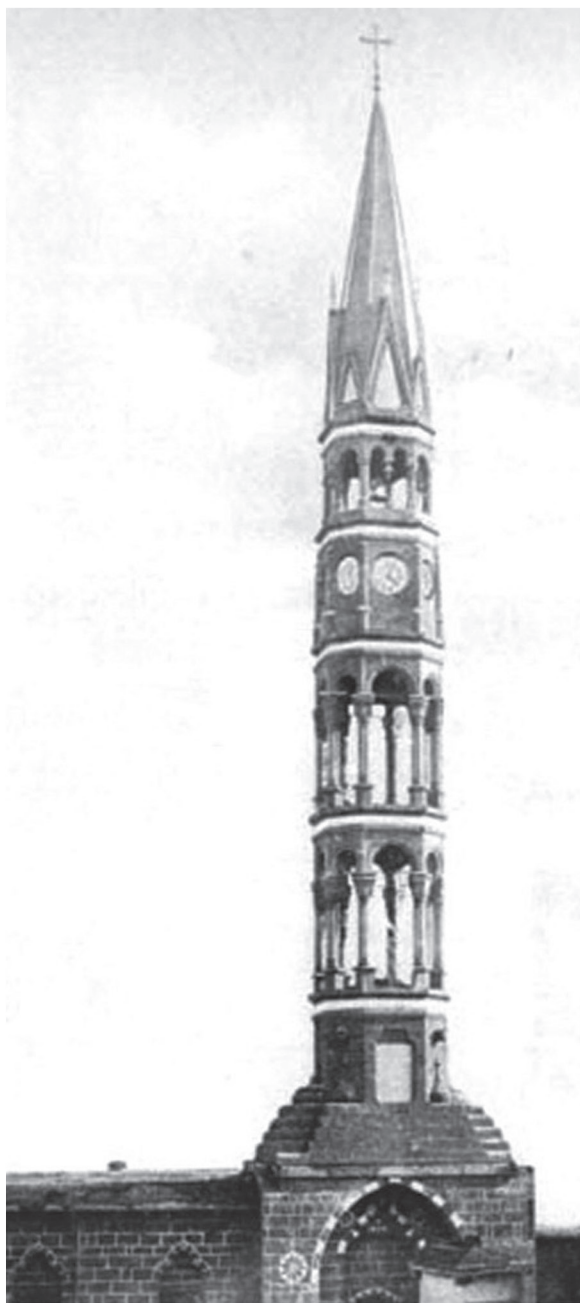
Margosyan's world has now been dealt another blow and probably lost forever.

—Ara Sarafian

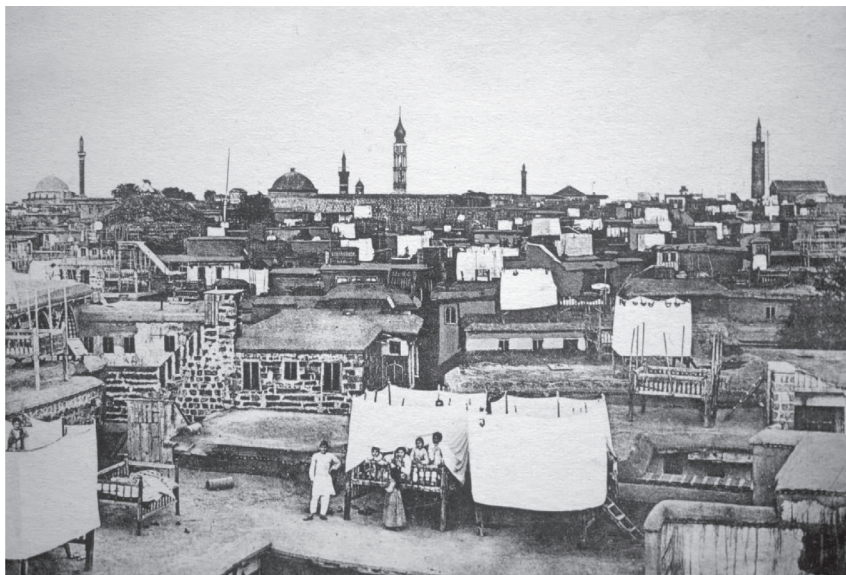
London

Jan. 2017

Photographs : Gâvur Mahallesi
cir. 1910 – 1990



St. Giragos Church bell tower
(before 1915).



(*Top*) Diyarbakir, inside city walls. St. Giragos bell tower in centre of image. (*Below*) Diyarbakir city walls.
(Both photographs taken before 1915).



Author with maternal grandfather Halo and
grandmother Senem. (Diyarbakir, 1943).



Author with his maternal aunt Yeğsa (Mirye Baco) in Diyarbakir before setting off to school in Istanbul. (1953).



Photo taken after a special service at St. Giragos church,
Diyarbakir, 1961.



St. Giragos church trustees and members of community in the 1950s.

(First row, left to right) Tailor Antranig Şirikci; visiting priest from Istanbul, Der Garabed (?); Diyarbakir priest Der Arsen Çöz.
 (Second row) “Nazir” Emin Karakaş and son Hagop Karakas, /man in jacket/. (Third row) Clothier Faik Ayık; Sobacı Ramazan (Hovhannes Uzatmacıyan); Chaplain; Yemenici “Şişgo” Hagop (Sarafyan).
 (Backrow) Dişçi Ali (Sarkis Margos); Dabağ Karnik (Dabağ).