

This is an account of two summers I spent with semi-nomadic Kurdish pastoralists in the summer of 1985 and 1986. During each of the summers I spent about a month on Samdi Dag mountain in the Cilo-Sat range of mountains in Hakkari Province in the very south east corner of Turkey, in what was then it's remote and anarchic borderlands with Iraq and Iran. The semi-nomads spent the winters in their village, called Ikiyaka, which was previously Sat koyu, on the southern flanks of Samdi Dag in a valley partly in Iraq. The village has ancient roots and there were many venerable walnut trees around the stone houses. It had previously been an Assyrian village and there were the ruins of a 12th Century church on its southern edge. During the warm spring the heavy winter snows, which buried the village, quickly melted and fed the surrounding pastures but by early summer these pastures were parched and only the irrigated terraced fields remained green. Then most of the families packed their black goat hair tents, cooking utensils and bed rolls and loaded them onto mules to make the journey up the steep, dry south flank of Samdi Dag to the main ridge crossing over to the northern flanks of the mountain, taking their herds of sheep and goats with them. The village would split into three groups or herding units each dispersing onto extensive pastures on the northern flanks of Samdi Dag where snowfields would persist late into the summer slowly melting and keeping the pastures green. As these snowfields retreated up the north side of Samdi Dag mountain, the semi-nomads would follow them, each herding unit moving camp, also called zozan, every few weeks so the herds would always graze green pastures. Towards the end of the summer in September the nomadic camps would be spread across the pastures at the top of the north side, often on large plateaus with glacial lakes beneath towering crags. I spent most of my time camping in the midst of one herding unit who finished the season at Sergera zozan , occasionally visiting another who ended the summer at Gaveruk zozan.

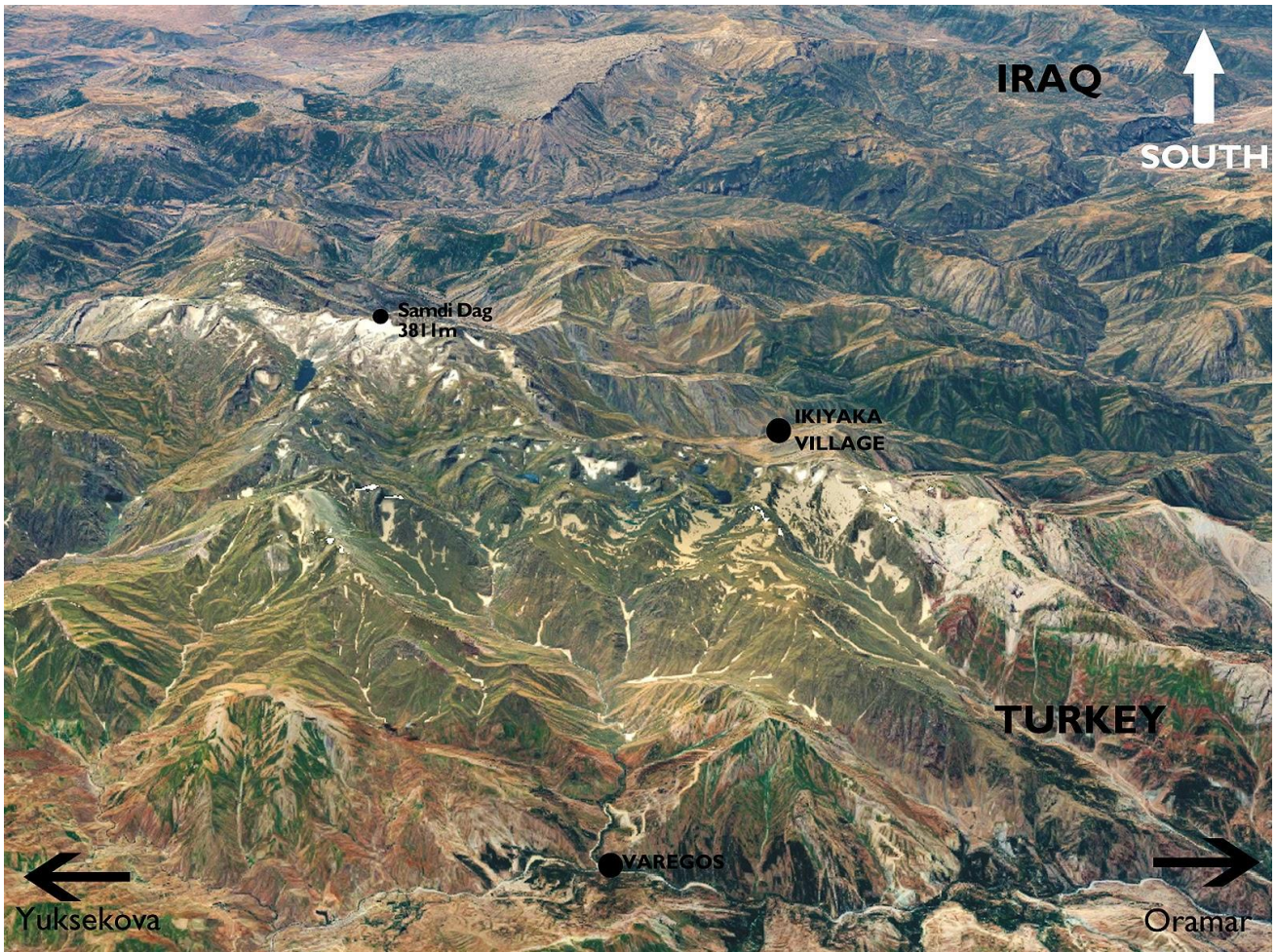


01. Ikiyaka village, formerly known as Sat koyu, is a small village of 80 houses in the wild borderlands of Turkey, Iraq and Iran deep in the northern Zagros Mountains. The village lies in Turkey but just a kilometre from the Iraqi border.

Before going up to the mountains I had to spend a frustrating week in Yuksekova, a small town in the Province of Hakkari some 3 hours south east of the city of Van. It was on one of the transit roads used from Turkey into Iran so the road was paved between Van and Yuksekova. I found a basic room above a lokanta style restaurant at the main T junction in the dusty town. It was near the principal mosque and I could hear the slightly scratched gramophone recording coming from the loudspeakers on the minaret 5 times a day as the muezzin broadcast the call to prayer. I had been in Turkey long enough to find this important part of everyday life familiar, but still found different intonations and chants exotic and somewhat comforting in this seldom visited corner. My main concern in Yuksekova was to get permission from the authorities to go up to the Cilo-Sat mountains. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had a paramilitary force based in Northern Iraq and SE Turkey and their army of outlawed insurgents were starting to attack Turkish government institutions. The Turkish military authorities were getting nervous about the border regions and were starting to limit access to them. Indeed a few remote border posts manned by Turkish conscripts and even some small garrisons had been attacked. At first I asked the Police but they were reluctant to help. "Yasak" they said. "It is forbidden". Undeterred I walked to the Gendarmerie post which was like a small barracks. I was told to come back the next day to see the commander. Again he said "Yasak" but suggested I go see the Military at the barracks up the road. At the Military barracks I managed to get a meeting the next day with a senior officer. At the meeting he said that terrorist activity in the area was minimal at the moment and their intelligence did not see a threat but I would have to get permission from the Commando Unit officer stationed in Yuksekova and also the Gendarmerie officer again. With my foot in the door I went round to the Commando Unit and got the officers approval and a letter I could show to the Gendarmerie. After some 5-6 visits to the three security force barracks over as many days I finally had permission, albeit reluctantly given, to go up to the Sat Golu lakes, now called the Ikiyaka Golu, but was told not to venture onto the south side of the mountain.

While I was seeking permission in Yuksekova I spent my spare time wandering about the town and searching out shops and markets where I might buy supplies. When I finally had approval it was easy to obtain dried and canned food, a conical tent much used by road workers in Turkey, a carpet to line the floor of the tent, local blankets, tobacco, a large paraffin stove and a 10 litre container of paraffin. I had hoped to spend about 2 weeks up in the mountains, but knew very little about what I would find up there although I had been told there were nomads (göçebe) there, so I needed to be quite self-sufficient. Once I had everything I needed, I managed to get it all onto the old jeep style minibus which went to Oramar, now called Dağlıca, every other day. It took 3 hours bumping along the rough track to the army post at Veregös. It was late afternoon when we got there and it was too late for me to go up to the mountains as the mules had already left in the early morning and some were just returning from the nomadic camps higher up.

The army post commander suggested I wait until the morning and hire a mule to take my stuff up. It was by far the most sensible thing to do but the army post commander was also reluctant for me to camp nearby. He suggested I continue in the jeep for another 2 km to the hamlet at Gürkavak and then get the jeep when it returned from Oramar the following morning. So I returned to the waiting jeep and carried on to Gürkavak where I was driven to an ordinary stone single storey village house and unloaded my stuff. It was an awkward evening as my Turkish was poor and my host English non-existent. A steady stream of men from other houses dropped in to see me like moths to a candle. My hosts fed me and I ate with the men of the household cross-legged on a carpet on the stone floor while the women served us. After the meal, I was shown a kapok mattress where I could sleep. To escape the limelight I went to bed early and wrapped up in my blankets. I had to endure the worst fleas and bed-bugs I had ever experienced that night. My hosts slept in the same room so I could not shine a torch or find somewhere else for fear of offending them. I could feel them crawling all over me, biting occasionally and had a restless night. I was glad to get up and escape in the morning when the jeep returned to take me back to Veregös.



02. Ikiyaka village lies on the south side of Samdi Dag, 3811m, one of the major massifs in the Cilo Sat range in Hakkari province in SE Turkey. Just to the south of the village is Iraq. On the north side of the mountain is the army post at Vargös on the track between Yuksekova and Oramar.

There were a few muleteers at Vargös. They were largely from the village of Ikiyaka and spent the summer going backwards and forwards in 4 stages with each stage being about 3-4 hours. They left Ikiyaka village with fresh vegetables and firewood and climbed up the south flank of Samdi Dag to the pass by the pastures by Gaveruk, unloading their wares here. They then loaded their mules with a feta type cheese and some butter which was made at the pastures and headed down to Vargös, where these would be sold and taken to Yuksekova by tractor and trailer. The mules would then load up with flour and salt and return back up the mountain to the camps around the pastures and unload what was needed here before continuing on over the pass and down to the village of Ikiyaka. It was a tall order to do the whole journey in a day and the muleteers could easily do 2 or even 3 stages in a day. I found one who was heading back up to the pastures in the mountains and made it worth his while to take my baggage up rather than the load of flour. We loaded the mule, stuffing my baggage into hardwearing goat hair sacks, which were strapped each side of the saddle. It was hot down here in the deep valley and a relief to start walking south up the valley.



*03. Half way along the road from Yuksekova to Oramar (Daglica) is the army post at Varegös. This was also where the semi-nomadic villagers of Ikiyaka traded their pastoral produce for flour. This is me and the mule I hired to take up everything I thought I needed for a month in the mountains.*

A track went up the east side of the Rubarisin stream which tumbled down a rocky boulder bed. Even in midsummer it was quite powerful and full of snowmelt. It was clear and cold as it rushed down pouring over the boulders, but I noticed a dead mule in it curved round the upstream side of a boulder. After a short hour the valley reached a junction and the track headed up the east side for a short distance before it petered out into a path. It was up the west fork of the valley I wanted to eventually go but the path up there was steep, loose and not suitable for the mules. The muleteers led me and a few mules up the east fork to the track end and then beyond until the path forked with a branch going straight up the valley to pastures and encampments on the north side of Samdi Dag peak and another path going up over the ridge separating the two streams. We took the latter crossing the stream on boulders and then climbing quickly to the apex of the ridge with the mules straining. We stopped here and one of the mules carrying flour went amok and ran back down the slope with a frantic muleteer in hot pursuit. After our break we contoured around the ridge above the previously mentioned west fork, with its small steep rocky stream. Here the terrain became gentler and we could descend to the rocky stream and cross it in a rocky ravine and then follow the well worn path up steeper pastures into a hanging valley where there was a nomadic camp at the lip.



*04. Leaving Veregös and heading up the Rubarisin stream into the Sat mountains. The path went to the left of the rocky ridge ahead and then crossed the stream and climbed up over the same ridge into the valley straight ahead before climbing out of the picture's right and into the Hanging Valley.*

My muleteer was a family member of one of these nomadic households so we stopped here and I introduced myself. Within minutes the whole camp had surrounded me. There were perhaps 5 men, 10 women and 40 children, who were all jostling about excitedly at the front. I felt a bit overwhelmed by the attention. It was obvious to me there were very few visitors here. When I explained I was from the UK few had any idea where that was. Eventually one of the older men directed me to a large, black, goat hair tent which rose up from a circular rick of stone a meter high, to which the fringe of the tent was draped over and tied down to. There was a gap in the stone enclosure about 3 meters long and a pair of wooden poles held the fringe of the tent aloft here forming a gaping mouth. I followed him in, took off my shoes and then sat cross legged on the carpet while a lady in a colourful Kurdish dress stoked the small open fire. It was not too dark in the tent and a relief to be out of the hot glare of the relentless early afternoon sun. There were a few more poles inside the tent holding the canopy aloft and carpets covered much of the floor with bedding rolls stacked up against the stones on the inside. It was smoky inside as the fire got going and the goat hair hessian hindered the smoke from rising. I made some small talk with the host as a drink of yoghurt and cold water (ayran) was prepared. My host's name was Hussein and I guessed he was 45 years old, as was the lady preparing tea who was his wife and called Huri. Hussein seemed to be the senior man in the camp.



*05. Hussein Donat was one of the first to greet me when I arrived at the Hanging Valley zozan. He had a large black woven goat hair tent here and invited me in for tea and to enquire what I wanted to do up in the mountains. He was to become one of my patrons.*

Tea was served in small glasses on a large platter and there was a bowl with sugar lumps. A few more men joined us for tea and there was an endless stream of questions, of which I only understood a few. My Turkish was not up to replying to them so I had to get the small notebook out to illustrate my answers. I endured strained conversation for a good hour with Hussein's wife often filling the tea glasses and me nervously rolling cigarettes and offering my tobacco around. Eventually I asked if I could stay in the camp and put my tent up nearby. Hussein muttered with the other men in Kurdish and then agreed I could. We went outside and he showed me where I could camp beside a few other tents near a small brook which meandered across the pasture after emerging from a nearby spring. As I put up my large conical tent, the whole camp appeared again and surrounded me. The 5 men and just one woman were the only ones who spoke Turkish and the rest could only speak Kurdish. The men had learnt it during their 3 years of military conscription, usually in the western or central areas of Turkey. The tent was a familiar one to the men, widely used all over Turkey. I was lent a central wooden pole about 2½ meters in height and then many hands helped bang in the 8 pegs into the earthy ground. I threw all my stuff inside, rolled out the cheap carpet to cover the grass and unpacked. In the tent, I got some privacy, but the kids were crowding around the door and frequently threatened to spill in. I set up a small kitchen with rocks to enclose the paraffin stove and balance my pans on. I put my blankets over the tent in the hope the sun might cause any parasites from last night to find somewhere else. As the shadows began to lengthen I was pleased I was ensconced in this idyllic setting with a fascinating and friendly group of nomads who I was in awe of already.



06. *The zozan at the Hanging Valley zozan had 13 tents, or households, at it. Half were traditional woven goat hair tents, as pictured to the left, and the other half were more modern canvas ones., Ibrahim, on the mule, was taking dairy produce from his household down to Vargos to trade.*

I cooked a meal in the tent as late afternoon merged into early evening. It was a perfunctory dish of rice and lentils, memorable for its bland taste. All the time men dropped by the tent to peer inside at me and there was a constant stream of children milling around at the door. I would have to put up with being a curiosity and in the spotlight for a while until my novelty wore off. There was a spell of activity outside as the women returned with their pails full of sheep milk. The sheep were further up the valley with shepherds. Then a bit later, near dusk, the goats arrived and the women had to go out again into a rough stone corral where the goats were gathered and milk them too. I think there were about 400 goats in all and there were 13 tents, or households, in total so each household had an average of about 20 goats to milk. I looked on as the women chased their individual goats in the herd, subdued them and then started milking them into different pails. The whole process took a good half hour and there was plenty of yelling, shouting and pointing with the younger family members helping to round up the goats. I learnt the goats would usually spend the night in the zozan, or camp pasture, while the sheep would remain in the more distant pastures in corals with the shepherds. All the milk would be put into large pans for the evening. Later that evening 3 of the younger men came into my tent for a chat and I managed to make them tea, and share my sugar and tobacco. It was mentally exhausting to try and make conversation with them, but they were alert, enthusiastic young men and there were no awkward silences. I felt much easier in the company of men and was shy and wary of the women. One of the men who visited was Hussein's eldest son, Abdul, (left below) who had arrived that afternoon from Ikiyaka village with vegetables and wood on a mule, and was heading down to Vargös tomorrow, and another was Sabri who was returning to the village on short leave from his 3 year conscription in the Turkish army (right below). They left well after dark when everyone had returned to their tents and quiet settled over the camp. I

rolled out a blanket as a mattress and crawled under another two, pretty much fully clothed, for the night.



*07. Abdul, another guest, and Sabri in my tent at the Hanging Valley zozan after I had just arrived in 1985. Abdul, on the left, was driving his household's mules from Ikiyaya Village to Varegös taking pastoral products to trade and Sabri, on the right, was on leave from the Turkish military.*

I woke at dawn and heard a rhythmic thudding sound from outside. There seemed to be few places where the sound was coming from. I was curious so poked my head outside and a few of the brightly dressed women were swinging a goat skin which was hanging from a tripod of 3 poles. The woman next to me was Guri, who was Hussein's brother's wife. She had one end of the skin and was swinging it backwards and forwards. She had two arms on a stick between its back legs and each time she swung the liquid in the skin sloshed backwards and forwards. I was more than curious and asked what was going on and learnt she was making butter (tereyagi). The milk which had been left in the large cauldrons overnight had partially divided with the cream coming to the top. This cream was scooped off and put into the goat skin, while the more watery milk remained in the cauldron. The neck of the skin was then sealed up with a wrap of rope so the skin was watertight. The goatskin was then swung backwards and forwards for about 20 minutes and it looked quite hard work. A pot was then put under the neck opening of the skin and the twist of rope was loosened off and opaque liquid started to pour out. When it was all out the neck was fully opened and a new pot, lined with a nylon sack, was put under the neck opening. Into it was scooped firm dollops of whitish fatty butter. Once the main blocks had been extracted a ladle was used to scrap the rest of the butter out. The sack was then tidied up and hung over the pot of opaque liquid to drip into it. This liquid was whey; which was milk with the fat extracted from it. The butter sack was then laid out on the grass beside the brook where it would dry off. The butter was essentially kept for frying food while the whey would be kept and mixed back into milk which was later destined for cheese and yoghurt.





*08. Guri making butter in the goatskin in the early morning. The butter fat was naturally separated in the large cauldrons and then scooped off in the morning and put into the goatskins where it was churned until it formed butter and whey. In the foreground is the kapanak felt cloak I bought.*

The goats which had been at the camp last night left as dawn broke and went back up the valley with some youths to look after them. I thought it would be interesting to go and see what they and the shepherds were up to. It would mean I could get away from the goldfish bowl of the camp where I was still the centre of attention. The floor of the U-shaped hanging valley I was in gently rose between sides topped with craggy ridges for a couple of km to reach a craggy head wall. I could see a path heading up through the outcrops of the headwall to what must be a basin beyond. The shepherds however were in the U shaped valley looking after some 400 sheep. Long before I approached 3 large kangal dogs came bounding towards me with intent. I reached for the large knife I had tucked into a sheath in my long socks and had it at the ready, but knew it would be ineffective against these three huge dogs, each a meter high and perhaps 60kg. The shepherds were shouting at them which took the wind out of their sails a bit and they surrounded me barking loudly, but not snarling and baring their fangs. I continued to walk towards the shepherds with the barking dogs escorting me. I returned my knife to its sheath as I approached the shepherds and the perceived danger from the dogs had diminished. These dogs were sheep dogs which spent their whole life among the sheep from an early age. They were there to protect the sheep from intruders, and also wolf, bear and even lynx which sometimes visit the area. The dogs walked me right up to the shepherds and delivered me to them making sure I did not stray towards the sheep grazing nearby. The three shepherds were very welcoming and had obviously already heard about me from the people who had passed through the camp and they started boiling up water for tea.



*09. The shepherd Islam Dugran, Namen's younger brother, and Aril Donat, Hussein's son, watching the sheep in the hanging valley pasture. The automatic rifle Aziz is holding belongs to one of the village guards and is supplied by the Turkish Military to patrol the Turkey-Iraq border at the village.*

I learnt a lot about the herding from them. Idris seemed to be the main shepherd and he was accompanied by Islam and Ismail. Idris was the younger brother of Hussein, who seemed to be the most senior man in the camp I was staying at. There were some 60 households in Ikiyaka village and virtually all of them had sheep or goats. Because the land became so parched in summertime in the area around the village once the winter snows had melted, they had to leave and come up to these lush, ample pastures on the north side of the mountain. The 60 households split into 3 different herding units with about 13-24 families in each unit. The other two units were on different parts of the mountain half a day's walk away. In this herding unit there were 13 households and they all pooled their animals into 2 herds, one of sheep and one of goats with about 400 animals in each herd. These shepherds looked after the sheep, who were quite placid and naturally tended to stay in a herd and remain on the lush pastures on the valley floor. At night they huddled up together in a rough coral and the shepherds remained with them while the three enormous Kangal dogs kept an eye on everybody. The goats on the other hand were much harder work and tended to wander off in all directions and did not have an instinct to gather into a huddle at night. They had to be kept together as a group and forced back to the nomadic camp each evening to more secure corals where the goatherds had to keep an eye on them. As such the goatherds seemed to be young men who had to constantly run around the hillside and then take it in turns each evening to stay awake and make sure they did not disperse. It was almost a kind of apprenticeship into herding. The shepherds had a much easier job and could relax for much of the day drinking tea and entertaining passersby. As such the shepherds were more senior men who had been through the rigours of goat herding in their youth.



*10. Me in my typical Kurdish jacket and shalwar trousers and a pushi or Kurdish headscarf with the shepherds. The rifle was an ancient hunting rifle which the shepherds always had handy in case they needed to defend the sheep.*

Idris, the head shepherd, was a member of the Donat household, one of the largest in Ikiyaka and they had 200 sheep and 200 goats, with the other 12 households having just 200 of each between them. As such the Donat family supplied a fulltime shepherd while the other families provided shepherds and goatherds on a rota, with a change over every week. Idris knew everything about the sheep. He not only knew who owned each of the 400 sheep but also knew each sheep's family tree for a few generations. His decision on shepherding was final, so he would decide when the sheep needed to move to new pastures, which rams needed to be scarified at any festival to keep the breeding stock strong and he would deal with illnesses and infections by segregating some animals or even culling them. Islam was a member of the Dugran household and they had about 20 sheep and 20 goats. Idris also was responsible for the welfare of the goats but delegated to a rota of young goatherds. It is no problem for a household to have 100's of sheep in the summer while everyone is at the summer pastures, but impossible for the smaller households to collect enough fodder for them to see them through the winter months when the snow covered the village to a depth of 2 meters. The Donat household had the manpower for 400 livestock but the Dugran family did not. It could only manage to collect enough for 40 animals.



*11. Idris Donat was the head shepherd for this herding unit. His father owned half of the sheep and goats which were in the entire herd. He was always on shepherding duty, while the other households in the herding unit provided shepherds on a rota basis*

I chatted with the shepherds all morning until the women from the camp arrived. There were about 15 of them and they all came up the path in a lively noisy group chatting and laughing. They all carried a large aluminium pail and were coming up to milk the sheep and bring some lunch up to the shepherds. Guri, who was Idris's wife, brought a sack of large nan breads and a small pail of stew. Guri, Hussein's wife, Huri, and a few other young girls then started milking their 200 sheep while women from the other tents just had 10-20 sheep to milk. It was quite chaotic but everybody seemed to know what was happening. The women grabbed their sheep which they could recognize from the mass of the herd, squatted down beside them and quickly emptied their udders into their pails with a series of squirts. It took under a minute to do one. The sheep did not seem to mind and almost waited in line to get milked tending to cluster round their owners who would bribe them with a bit of salt to lick. There were a few who were more reluctant, but they were quickly chased down by their dexterous owners who ran after them with a pail full of milk, skilfully catching them and subduing them. It was all over after 30 minutes and then the women all returned down the path with joyous fanfare and full pails, and calm descended over the pasture again as the shepherds boiled up water for another tea.



*12. Idris Donat had been the main shepherd for the herding unit his household belonged to for a few years. He knew the family tree of all the 400 sheep in the herd, half owned by his household and half owned by the other 12 households*

After a good few hours with these 3 shepherds I saw the goats up on the hillside to the north of the valley. I left Idris, Islam and Ismail and headed up to the goatherds. As I left the kangal dogs started barking half heartedly and with just one command from Idris they stopped, circled the spot where they were lying, keeping an eye on the sheep, and lay down again. I went up the hillside towards the goats threading a route through the thorny scrub bushes which were scattered across the hillside. I climbed high above the valley floor up the side, and could see beyond the headwall at the end where there were some snow fields and a lake in a hidden basin. This area looked really inviting for tomorrow's wanderings. As I approached the goatherds I had to go through the same fearful experience again as their three dogs embedded with the goats came bounding towards me. I did not pull my knife out this time but was still scared. The dogs were confident, just surrounding me and keeping a 5 meter distance, barking loudly to be certain the goatherds were alerted. They were bellowing at the dogs which seemed to appease them, and gave me some certainly to stride on confidently. Again there were 3 goatherds who were trying to stop the goats from scattering. One of the herders was up in the crags with a few of the goats who were in search of some lofty patches of grass among the small buttresses and gullies. The goats would have gone right up the crags and over the ridge line left to their own devices as they hopped and sprung nimbly up across the steep outcrops and the goat herd was throwing stones to divert them. I sat with the other two while the third got the more feral explorative goats under control and back down to the thorny scrub. We could never really stop and make tea or chat as the goats were always on the move, eager to find fodder and often passing by nourishing clumps just to keep moving.

One of the tricks the goatherds used to keep the herd from scattering was to roll rocks down the hillside, either behind them to hurry them along or more often in front of them to stop the leaders marching off. While I was there a goatherd rolled a grapefruit size rock to speed up the stragglers.

The goats heard it coming and rushed forwards, but the youngest dog who was still a puppy really did not. Despite everyone shouting the young dog was oblivious to the missile and it glanced at his back leg. He let out a yelp and leapt forwards with a limp. I went down to see the dog which was lucky to escape with a small cut rather than a broken leg. Being of European disposition I felt sorry for the dog. I borrowed a rag from a goat head and wrapped it round the leg covering the gash. As I tied it up the dog turned and gently bit my forearm. It was not an aggressive bite, as even this young dog was a 30 kg mastiff and it could have done some serious damage to me. With the bandage in place we carried on with the afflicted dog limping gingerly behind. Eventually we got to camp in the late afternoon and the women emerged from the tents to milk their goats after they had gone into the coral. I returned to my tent and after a while Hussein came in. He obviously had heard about the dog incident and asked me about it. He said I had to go and wash in the stream as I was dirty. Apparently even touching the dogs was polluting, but to be covered in its saliva was disgusting beyond the pale. Perhaps these aversions are linked to their knowledge about rabies. Later that evening, after the women had milked the goats, emptied their pails into the large cauldrons, and then gone up to the shepherds to milk their sheep and returned with full pails again at nightfall, Hussein invited me into his tent for a meal. I had lots of tins of tuna so took a couple over to add to his food, which was nan bread and a thick gravy with lumps of meat.



*13. Each herd of sheep and goats had a few large mastiff dogs embedded amongst the animals. The dogs would grow up with the herds and spend their entire time with them, always on the lookout. The fearless dogs would attack bear, wolf, lynx or human if they perceived a risk*

After being woken the next morning at daybreak by the rhythmic sloshing of the women making butter in the goatskins I set off to explore the lake I had seen yesterday. The goats had already left the camp with their herders and the dogs, including the injured one. I made my way up the valley to the shepherds. The dogs came bounding towards me barking loudly but as they approached they fell silent and escorted me up to the shepherds keeping an eye on me. I had tea and a chat with them before continuing up the valley to the headwall, where a path zigzagged up between the

craggs. At the top was a huge basin with a large, deep-turquoise, crescent-shaped lake across its floor. Surrounding the lake were some smooth bare crags and the greenest of pastures. Beyond them were high craggy ridges culminating in jagged peaks, many riven by deep gullies still full of snow, all rising up into a perfect azure sky. Large snow fields covered the mountainsides between the pastures and the peaks and from these small streams emerged and tumbled down the rocks sometimes in wispy waterfalls. It was the most unexpected paradise and I was astounded I had never heard of these mountains before in my now extensive travels around Turkey. I knew I had stumbled upon something really special here. I walked round the west side of the lake on the path and more and more peaks unfolded to the east. There was a brook which came down from a deep dark sunless basin to the south and flowed across the fan of a lush meadow which pushed into the lake. It was the lushest grass one might imagine and was full of the bright yellow globe flowers. I sat in the meadow and marvelled at the scene.



*14. Above the Hanging Valley was a large basin, called the Sergera Basin, surrounded by jagged peaks, On the floor of the basin were some 5 lakes with Buyuk Golu being the largest. The path to Ikiyaka village went across the basin and up over the ridge under the cloud.*

After a while I saw a mule train coming down the path from the skyline to the south. From what I had gathered this was the path over the mountain to Ikiyaka village which lay on the other side. As the mules approached I saw someone with a gun waving. It was Sabri who had been in my tent on the first night. He had been home and was now coming up to the pastures for a couple of days to fill his lungs. He was accompanied by his father Hajji, who was wearing a white turban. I knew straight away by his title and turban he had been on the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca. This pilgrimage, which all Muslims are required to do, would have involved considerable expense and hardship for Hajji. It would have conferred respect from the other villagers as it shows he is both pious and wealthy. I sat and chatted with Sabri and Hajji for a good hour until another figure approached from the direction of the camp. It was Idris the head shepherd and he soon joined us. He had come up to see what shape the pastures were in and whether it was feasible to move the

sheep up from the current pastures in the hanging valley below. He thought it would be less than a week before the current pasture was tired and the sheep's milk production fell. Currently they were producing about a litre a day. We sat in the sun while I listened to the men chatting. I understood virtually nothing they said but could tell they switched from Turkish to Kurdish at a whim. Only when they asked me a simple question in Turkish would I have a hope of understanding and even then they often had to repeat or even rephrase it. It was a timeless morning and I could have been in any century at that enchanted place.



*15. Sabri and Idris, the shepherds, chatting to Sabri's father, Hajji, who was going to Varegös from Ikiyaka village. We all sat on the lush grass beside the largest of the lakes in the Sergera basin. At the far end of the lake was the location for Gaveruk zozan which remained vacant until mid summer.*

As we chatted a few mule trains went up and over the pass and down to the village of Ikiyaka. The pass seemed just a short distance from the lake, perhaps just half an hour. I thought I would go up and have a look after I got tired from answering and asking questions, which was the only way I knew how to communicate, and it was mentally exhausting. After a couple of hours the party split up anyway with Idris returning to the sheep and Sabri and Hajji continuing down to the zozan where I had camped. There was a good path for me to follow up the gentle ridge to the pass. As I climbed up it more and more lakes appeared on the floor of this large alpine basin. To my west were two lakes, one of which was still covered in ice with snow fields covering the mountainside coming down all the way to the ice. These two lakes, and especially the upper one, were in a deep north facing corrie and were probably in the shade for much of the afternoon. To the east there were 2 more smaller lakes on the basin floor and they looked idyllic with large meadows surrounding them. As I neared the pass more and more of the mountains unfolded from behind the nearer peaks. This was going to be a fantastic area to explore.

It was an easy jaunt up the scrubby meadows of the hillside to reach the pass. The south side was much steeper, and much dryer and totally parched. I could see the path zigzagging down the initial



few hundred meters until the slope eased off and then it wove down more gently across scree covered slopes and stony ridges until it met a dried up streambed, nearly 1000m below me. Beyond the dried streambed was the village of Ikiyaka. It was perhaps 2 km long from top to bottom and all the land on each side of the village houses, which were strung out along the valley floor, was irrigated. I had been told that the Iraqi border was just beyond the lower part of the village. Beyond it was just dry barren rocky ridge after ridge disappearing into the blue opaque haze of the obscured horizon. I am sure between these distant ridges there would have been some small streams, irrigated land and even small villages, but from up here it looked inhospitable and empty. Even the terraced fields of Ikiyaka looked dry and arid, but perhaps it was the ripening grain I was looking down on. It was too far to see the houses clearly but I could see a few beside the corridor of large trees which lined the streambed. The houses I could see were the typical single story flat roofed houses found throughout the region. Far below there was a mule train approaching the village and they were easy to see because of the wedge of dust the mules were producing.



*16. From the pass to the south of the Sergera basin there was a long near 1000m descent down the south side of the mountain to Ikiyaka village. A kilometre beyond the lower end of the village was the Iraqi border and most of the land above the centre line of the photo is in Iraq.*

I returned down to the large lake where there was no one and just sat in the late afternoon sun enjoying the splendour of the area. I was enchanted not only with the landscape but also the culture of the nomads on the mountain here, which through my passing eyes looked idyllic, but I am sure was harsh. After a snooze on the flower filled meadow I headed down to where the shepherds were in the hanging valley beyond the end of the lake, which I realized had no visible outlet. A new shepherd, Namen, had joined the original 3. He was the elder brother of Islam who would be heading down to Ikiyaka tomorrow. I immediately liked Namen who had a gentleness to him which Hussein lacked. Namen was very forgiving of my fumbblings in Turkish and kept suggesting words when I got stuck. As we were drinking tea I could hear the clamour of the women coming up the valley for the late afternoon milking of the sheep. This time instead of chasing round after the sheep

with pails sloshing the women formed two rows facing each other with 8 in each row. With some encouragement from Idris, the head shepherd, the sheep then just formed an orderly queue waiting to be milked. Idris sat on a stone in the middle of the two rows of women and as the sheep slowly filed towards him he distributed the sheep to their respective owners who then milked them in an orderly manner, chatting enthusiastically and laughing loudly. All 400 sheep passed through and Idris knew which household every one belonged to. Again it took about half an hour until the evening milking was done and then the colourful enthusiastic group of women all left and headed back to camp swinging their nearly full pails.



*17. Milking the sheep near the Hanging Valley zozan. This was the orderly way of milking the sheep where they lined up and Idris, the head shepherd, passed each sheep to the individual owners who milked their own sheep. There was usually one lady, but sometimes 2 or 3, from each household.*

The next day I decided to explore a bit further, so I went back up with the women when they went up to milk the sheep in the morning. By now the 3 huge mastiff dogs were used to me and just let out a few half hearted barks without even bothering to get up. After the milking was over I had tea with the shepherds and then set off up to the big lake, which was called Buyuk Golu. I went round the south side of the lake passing through the meadows we had been at yesterday. Just beyond was a tunnel which the entire lake drained into and then plunged into the heart of the mountain in a swirling cascade. At the east end of the larger lake was a smaller lake which seemed quite shallow, as I could see many boulders in its milky azul waters. Just beyond this was yet another small lake. At the stream between the smaller lakes were many rings of stone walls which I guessed were the ruins of summer camps. I walked round the more gentle grassy south side of the lake and then climbed steeply up a headwall at the end which was still covered in large drifts of snow. Small wispy waterfalls cascaded down the headwall as I made my way up a natural ramp. At the top there was a great view across the basin to the west which I had just crossed. I however had just climbed into yet another higher basin and it had one shallow lake on its floor. To the east of this were stony slopes with a plethora of small animal paths formed by centuries, if not millennia, of grazing. I followed a

series of them up to a high col on the skyline, where a magnificent view burst upon me. In the near distance, across a couple of spurs and gullies was the mountain of Samdi Dag, the biggest in the area and the second highest in the entire Cilo-Sat Range. It was nearly 4000m at 3811m. Its jagged ridges, still harbouring large snowfields, led up to a lofty pointed rocky summit. I could see a prominent path to the east, coming up the valley below me from Ikiyaka village, which then went over a col to the north side of this mountain. It must have been the path used by one of the other two herding units from Ikiyaka village to their summer pastures, or zozan, and then on to the rough road at Varegös.



*18. The view from one of the easier peaks to the east of the Sergera basin looking east towards Samdi Dag, 3811m, the highest peak in the area. The path centre left is another way up from Ikiyaka village over the range at the visible pass and then down past zozans to Varegös.*

From the col I was on it seemed quite simple to climb up rocky slopes covered in tough, prostrate alpines to a broad peak. There was no path and I just clambered up the small stones and gentle outcrops in my sandals until I reached the top. From here I had a great view in all directions. Below me to the west were the lakes I had walked past a couple of hours ago and beyond them was a craggy ridge. The lower part of this ridge was where the goats had been grazing when the stone hit the dog. Beyond the ridge the landscape dropped away to the town of Oramar, or Daglica, deep in the Rubarisin stream valley before it flowed into Zap River. Finally beyond the valley was the massif of Cilo Dag, the highest peak in the entire range at 4100 metres. I was sure that on the north side of this mountain also there would also be groups of nomads taking advantage of the lush pastures afforded by the melting snowfields just as there were on Samdi Dag.



19. The view from one of the easier peaks to the east of the Sergera basin, below, looking west. The mountain in the far distance is Resko, the highest in the whole Cilo-Sat range at 4134m. Gaveruk zozan is between the lakes bottom right and Sergera zozan middle right near the barely visible lake.

By the time I got back to my tent via the shepherds for a glass of tea, it was late afternoon and the women were already heading off to milk the sheep. When they returned the goats were arriving for the night in the adjacent coral with the 3 goatherds and the dogs, one of which was still limping after the rockfall. One of these women, Fatima, was very confident and could speak some Turkish having been brought up on the plains around Yuksekova, before marrying someone from Ikiyaka. We had a few chats over the previous evenings. Her husband was down in Ikiyaka working in the fields and would be coming up in while to do his shepherding duties. In the meantime she was running her households tent up in the pastures and doing all the dairy tasks, and looking after her 3 children, one of which was only a year old. This evening just before milking the goats she came into the tent and put the baby down on my blankets. My tent was warm and she had her hands full. About an hour later she returned, sat down opposite me and pulled a plump breast out of her blouse. Then lifting the baby onto her lap started feeding it. I was wary and taken aback. In Kurdish society adultery is so frowned upon it is often punishable by death. If a married lady commits it then her original family will be so ashamed they will often murder her, with her brothers avenging the shame she has brought on them. Her husband's family will also take revenge on the male perpetrator. So I felt quite uneasy and hoped nobody would come in and she would finish quickly. It was not to be as soon another woman arrived at the tent, and then a few children, and then Namen, the new shepherd came in. All the time Fatima kept breastfeeding without batting an eyelid. In fact nobody batted an eyelid except for me. I had a much more Western attitude to breastfeeding with breasts seen as sexual objects, than these Kurdish nomads who saw them as perfunctory appendages. In the following weeks while I stayed there, Fatima would often drop her baby off in the warmth of my tent while she milked the goats and cooked the evening meal for her household.



20. Some of the children and ladies from the Hanging Valley zozan. The ladies were the mainstay of the zozan and were responsible for all the dairy tasks. They also cooked and looked after the children. The lady on the right with the infant is Fatima.

As the time passed I slowly became less of a curiosity. I would still go and eat in Hussein's tent every other night taking some of my supplies over to add to his food. The two women in the tent, Hussein's wife, Huri, and Idris the head shepherd's wife, Guri, were always busy cooking food, making tea, doing their dairy chores, and going back and forth to milk the sheep and goats. Over time I slowly managed to communicate with them through drawings in my notebook, sign language and what Hussein translated for them. Hussein's wife, Huri, had considerable sway in the camp being the eldest woman there and also as Hussein's wife. She had 4 grown sons and this gave her more authority and respect. Idris's wife, Guri, was certainly the junior and had to do the lion's share of the more menial jobs, together with whichever of Huri and Hussein's daughter-in-laws who were staying up at the zozan. It was a busy tent with people coming and going most of the day as they passed through the camp en route between Vargös and their village. Hussein's sons, Abdul and Aril were frequent visitors as they took turns in taking Hussein's mules back and forth.



*21. The path between the hanging Valley zozan and the Sergera basin was a few km. To leave the hanging valley the path climbed up the steep slopes to the right and over the lip of the basin. There were often children running errands who went between the camp and the sheep in the pasture.*

The other tents were much quieter and I was seldom invited into them. It was largely because they were mostly occupied by women who had their family's dairy tasks to do. Occasionally their husbands would appear either to do a stint of shepherding duty, or to take dairy produce down to Vargös and bring flour and supplies back up and over to the village. The children from these other tents formed a lively, wild, cluster who as a group were always excited and were often around me with each one trying to show off, often at my expense. There were about 20 of them in all and if they were out in force it was like an anarchistic mob. Occasionally I would walk with one or two up to the shepherds and then they were a delight, wanting to pose for photos, scribble in my books or show me things they found. On one occasion in the camp a group of younger children were crowding round the door to my tent when one of the elder boys pushed a few of them in. One of the girls fell on my stove and knocked the tepid water over. It was the last straw for him and I ran out of the tent, chased him across the marshier ground near the spring, and clipped him on the back of the head. He stumbled and fell face first into the soft mud, then got up and went off wailing. The women doing their dairy tasks had seen it all unfold and I was expecting some reprimand but instead there was laughter and approval. After that the rowdier children of the mob were more cautious and did not taunt me again and would sometimes come into my tent and quietly sit as I did my domestic chores.



*22. The children in the camp at the zozan were quite an unruly mob. There were perhaps 30 of them and they got up to all sorts of games, but also mischief. I was occasionally the target of their mischief until I grabbed hold of the ringleaders here and reprimanded them*

There was always a strong smell of feta-style cheese around the camp. Once the milk had been collected the pails were emptied into large pans. Some would be destined for the butter churning in the goatskins every morning, some to make yoghurt which would be blended with water to make the ayran drink, but most would go into cheese production. In the evenings something was put into the cheese to make it curdle and in the morning it would have separated into curds and whey. The solid curds were scooped off, mixed with salt, and put into nylon sacks which were then tied up and left by the small brook emerging from the spring. They would lie in the warm sun with the curds draining until the feta style cheese was quite firm. Flies swarmed over sacks, sometimes they were so prolific the top side of the sacks were almost black. It would take the cheese in the sacks a good day to drain and form into feta. They were then taken down by mule to Varegös to be sold. The teenage boys who loaded the sacks and drove the mules stank of cheese, as when they manhandled the sacks they dribbled the rest of their watery whey onto their clothes, which were never taken off and washed. I frequently ate these cheeses as they were a staple dish with the meal every night, usually rolled up in a piece of nan bread. It was never my favourite especially when small gusts of wind swept through the camp and covered the dishes with a fine layer of dried dust, which was essentially powered goat droppings. Somehow in each of the months I was there for summer of 1985 and 1986 I never got ill.



23. *One of Hussein's younger sons was responsible for turning the feta cheese sacks as they dried in the grass beside the brook and also for loading them onto the mules. Whey dribbled out of them as they were man-handled and often onto the clothes of the young lads who stunk of feta.*

During the day I spent more and more of the time with the shepherds, and often the goatherds also, although the latter was hard work as the goats were always on the move. In the evenings the goats returned to the camp while the sheep were collected into a coral and guarded by the 3 large dogs. The shepherds would have their evening meal brought to them by their wives when they came up to milk. They would eat their meal after the sheep had been milked and dusk fell, then build the fire for evening tea. When the sun dipped below the horizon the temperature plummeted. During the day it was perhaps 30 centigrade, but during the night it would be down to minus 5 and there was a frost on the ground every morning. The shepherds would huddle beside their fire in a small ring of stones beside the sheep coral drinking tea for a couple of hours until they went to bed. For bedding they just had a 'kapanak' which they withdrew into pulling it over themselves. A kapanak was a large cloak which was split down the front. It did not have arms but rested on the shoulders. They were quite heavy, about 4-5 kg, and entirely made of felt, perhaps a 4 square metres of it. The felt was made by collecting sheep's wool and roughly twisting it together in small loose rectangular blocks. These blocks were then taken to the stream, soaked, and then beaten with a heavy stick to flatten the block into a sheet some 1-2 cm thick. It took a lot of beating to make one sheet with more wool being constantly added to the thinner bits. The sheets were then joined together with more loose wool packed around the periphery of each sheet which was again beaten until the sheets were one. When worn over the shoulders the kapanaks came down to above the ankles and were extremely warm, windproof, and I am sure waterproof. The shepherds slept in them by putting their head into one of the shoulders, then lay on the ground and pulled the upper side over them tucking it under their side which lay on the ground. Then by pulling bending their knees up the hem would enclose their feet enveloping themselves in a warm wrap of felt.





24. Two shepherds from Vargös in their felt cloaks. These felt cloaks were homemade from sheep and goats wool and were very warm. At night they tucked their head into one of the shoulders, lay on the floor and wrapped themselves in it. I bought one like this from Hussein.

Hussein had a spare kapanak and offered to sell it to me. It was much warmer than my blankets. It meant that after a week of being in the camp I could go and spend the night up with the shepherds. Idris was still the main shepherd and always was as his household had half of the animals in the entire herd. Islam was still there finishing his households duty rota, but Ismail had returned to the village, his households rota finished and he was replaced by Namen who was Islam's older brother. Namen was very friendly and avuncular, not only to his brother, Islam, and Idris, but also me and indeed everyone including the rabble of children at the camp. While Hussein was always trying to maintain his authority in the camp and was constantly looking for opportunities, Namen was easy going, friendly and warm. They were delighted to see me pitch up with my kapanak at dusk. I had some food and we ate supper together and then huddled round the fire. Idris and Namen had a constant ear out for the mood of the sheep, while Islam made pots of tea. It was an evening filled with wonder and I felt like I was in a nativity play. The evening was like a scene from the Old Testament. A picture from a children's edition which had come to life. Indeed this was a lifestyle which had probably not changed for the last 5000 years since man had domesticated sheep and goats. Humanity enjoyed this lifestyle for hundreds of generations until industrialization disenfranchised us from it. But here in a hidden corner of the globe was a pure relic of our past. For most of us this enchanting lifestyle is part of our cultural DNA shimmering just below the skin and it was easy for me to immerse myself into the time of the Prophets and pastoral parables. After a few hours when the sheep had settled, the dogs were alert, and the temperature dropped to zero under the crystal studded sky. I lay down on my new kapanak. I put my head in its pointed shoulder recess and pulled it over me. It was very warm and although I could feel the cold stinging my exposed nose the rest of me was snug in the cocoon of felt.



*25. Islam Dugran was a regular shepherd and was often with the herd of sheep. He was one of the rota shepherds who helped Idris Donat. At night they slept near the sheep in a small coral of stones while the dogs watched the sheep. Before they went to sleep the shepherds always brewed tea.*

We all woke at dawn when the sheep were stirring. Idris went to check on them while Namen made a pot of tea. Down at the camp I imagined the rhythmic sloshing of the goat skins as the women churned their butter and the children were subdued and shuffling about rubbing their sleepy eyes. Perhaps most were still swaddled in scratchy blankets on a carpet on the floor of their black tents. I knew the women would arrive in a couple of hours with bread and food for the shepherds and a pail for the morning milking. As we were having morning tea in the bitter shade of dawn there was a discussion amongst the shepherds, then Namen told me Idris had decided to move the flock tomorrow up the mountain to the lush pastures at Sergera as the pastures here were getting exhausted. The animals each produced about a litre of milk a day and this would decrease if they continued to graze on these close cropped and browning pastures. The untouched pastures at Sergera were plentiful enough to see them out until the first of the winter storms arrived in October and sent both this herding unit and the other two on the mountain back to Ikiyaka for the winter. This was exciting news for me as I would witness the camp move and then set up again at Sergera. I did not know where Sergera was but knew it was up beyond the craggy headwall of this hanging valley and in the idyllic basin above with the lake surrounded by an amphitheatre of jagged towers. It meant a lot of the mules which were going backwards and forwards from Varegös to Ikiyaka would spend the night in the camp so they would be used to transport the tents the next day. After milking I returned with the women to the camp, as I too had to prepare to move my tent and belongings.



26. *Islam Dugran with the sheep and his nephew, Namen's eldest son. Islam had occasional epilepsy but I never saw it so he was seldom left alone and was unmarried. He was a gentle man and reminded me of a typical shepherd from an illustrated edition of the Old Testament.*

When morning came the dairy chores were all done as usual with butter being churned and the cheese being prepared from the remainder of the milk. The tents were then quickly emptied and the possessions bundled up in old goat hair sacks or new nylon sacks. When everything was out the poles were taken down and tied up in a bundle and then the large black awning of goat hair matting which was the roof of the tent was folded into a long strip which was then folded up. It was remarkably big and bulky, but then it was perhaps 30 square metres. The 9-10 mules which were collected at the zozan for the move could not manage all in one go so had to make two journeys. Namen had arranged for a mule to take my tent and I managed to stuff the rest of my possessions into two large nylon sacks which I tied together and slung over my shoulders. I was my own mule. Half the camp went with the first load and half stayed behind and would come up with the next load in a couple of hours. There was excited chatter as we went up the hanging valley with everyone carrying something. Even the toddlers were playing their part and carrying empty milk pails or serving trays. We passed the pasture where the sheep had gathered each night and it was now empty, as the sheep had already moved off at dawn with the dogs and shepherds. We climbed the zigzags at the valleys head wall and reached the basin. I knew the camp would be beside a lake but did not know which one and was surprised to see everybody heading to the smaller lake on the very east of the basin rather than the main lake, Buyuk Golu. We went to the far end of this lake just before the rise up to the lake which was still covered in ice. There were some stone circles here, upon which the black goat hair tents would soon be pitched. Namen was already at the new camp called Sergera, beside the lake. He pointed to a nice flat grassy area near the stone circles where I could pitch my tent, but said it would be best to wait for Hussein.



27. In the centre right of the picture is the Sergera basin with its 5 lakes and two zozan, Sergera and Gaveruk. The herding units who ended the summer here came from the Hanging Valley zozan and one in the valley to the east of it respectively. The black lines are the paths from Ikiyaka to Varegös..

We did not have to wait long before the mules, Hussein and some of the girls arrived and I could see a colourful string of the children coming along the lake. Hussein said I could camp in the spot Namen showed me. The mules were all unloaded and their saddle bags emptied before they all turned and went back to get the second load. It seemed everyone had their respective place, probably where they camped last year. In no time the tents were unrolled and the fringes of the black goat hair tents were placed on top of the rings of stone walls. Then rocks were tied to guy line ropes. The shorter poles were then put on each side of the entrance to the tent and fixed with guy lines, then the longer poles were put in the middle of the tent to keep the roof up. It only took an hour before all the tents were up, including mine. Then stones were rearranged on the earth floor of each tent to make a fireplace and before long smoke was leaking out of the tops of the tent and palling in the still air above the camp as tea was made. Soon afterwards the mules returned with the final load and the rest of the camp arrived in excited groups all burdened down with pots and sacks which the mules were not carrying. Carpets and bedding were soon rolled across the floors of the tents and some 3-4 hours after the starting to dismantle the last camp in the Hanging Valley this new camp at Sergera was all set up and functioning. Most of the men were helping with chores to get settled in and were helping each other. Namen was busy helping everyone and I followed him around helping him. Fatima's husband was still in the village and she had to do everything on her own, so Namen and myself helped put up her tent which was a modern metal pole and canvas one with many guy ropes and homemade wooden pegs. It was a jovial atmosphere and I am sure I heard some jokes with sexual innuendo from Fatima as the pegs were banged in, but I shyly ignored it while Namen laughed.



28. Namèn Dugran and some of the children at Sergera zozan beside the higher lake. His herding unit of 13 tents moved here from the lower zozan in the Hanging Valley in August each year. One of the black tents behind them is the traditional woven goat hair tent of Hussein Donat.

By midday the whole camp was set up, food was being prepared by the women, and the men were discussing and smoking while sitting cross legged on the carpet in Hussein's tent round a large tray full of tea glasses. I assumed an account of whose mule had carried whose possessions, and what the various mules would do now in the afternoon, either go down to Vargös or over the pass to Ikiyaka, were the topics. After lunch the women, who were always busy, headed off to the sheep, who were grazing nearby and had not been milked yet. Half an hour later they were back to pour their pails into the large pots to start the dairy process off again at the new location. With my tent set up I went for a walk to the Idris, Namèn and a new shepherd who had replaced Islam. The sheep were grazing on the south side of the main lake enjoying the lush ungrazed grass while the shepherds were sitting on a boulder basking in the sun. It was a biblical scene again, but in this unrivalled setting. It was a paradise, with the bountiful flower-filled meadow full of green grass beside the shimmering lake, and all beneath a cirque of high peaks, each looking over their neighbour's shoulder as if in frozen curiosity. This really was the land of milk and honey which I previously could only imagine. Here I was living in the midst of it with the most noble and hospitable pastoralists, with a seemingly idyllic and sustainable lifestyle which was as old as the scriptures.



*29. The sheep grazing the new pastures in August between Sergera lake and Buyuk Golu lake, seen in the picture. Another herding unit from Ikiyaka village arrived about the same time each year at their zozan at the east end of Buyuk Golu lake (far end) which was called Gaveruk zozan*

I went for a walk with Namen to the smaller lakes to the west of Buyuk Golu Lake. He explained to me that the stream which drained the lake and plunged into the steep, dark shaft heading towards the heart of the mountain later emerged again on the south side of the mountain just above the village of Ikiyaka and it was the lifeblood of the village and allowed them to irrigate their lands. Beside the other two smaller lakes, beneath a band of steep rock over which wispy waterfalls cascaded were the pastures I had seen a week ago when I went up the peak ahead. Namen showed me the stone circles in an idyllic spot between these lakes and explained that another of the herding units from the village would be moving here in the next week or so when their current pastures were exhausted. This zozan was called Gaveruk and the pastures around it were reserved for their herds. There seemed plenty of grazing up here for everyone.

When we returned to Idris and the other shepherds a small group had gathered. One had an old rifle with a worn and polished stock which had many ancient wounds in the wood. A small flock of ducks had landed in the middle of the lake some 200 metres away and they were preparing to have a shot at the peaceful raft of them. Sabri was amongst them and he took the first shot. The sights must have been previously knocked as the bullet splashed into the water some 10 metres to the side. The ducks remained blissfully unaware they were being shot at and continued to preen themselves. It took about another 10 shots, each one getting closer as the sights were adjusted, before one duck was flung into the air as it was hit by the rifle bullet and killed. Unfortunately, the other ducks still remained unaware of what was happening and continued to preen. After another 20 shots two more ducks were dead and the other dozen had at last flown off. The trouble for the hunters was the ducks were still in the middle of the lake and there was no wind. Namen asked if I could swim and soon I was down to my underpants and knee deep in the freezing water plucking up the will to overcome the cold and swim out and retrieve the ducks. I don't think they thought I would

really swim out to get the duck as when I returned 10 minutes later they were incredulous. So incredulous they gave me one of the ducks. I returned to the zozan in triumph with it and Hussein arranged we would eat it that evening, giving to his wife, Huri, to pluck and prepare. Namen arrived an hour later and told the story how I swam out to retrieve the ducks to the camp. I felt like a schoolboy whose teacher had just sung his praises to his parents. About 6 of us shared the duck that evening which Huri had cut into small pieces and fried, almost beyond recognition. The new camp was in an idyllic location beside the small lake, but the very steep ridge to the south west plunged the camp into the shade in the late afternoon so the nights here were a bit colder.



*30. Sergera zozan was the camp and herding unit I spent most of my time with. They moved here from the Hanging Valley each August and I moved with them. Just above Sergera was a lake which remained ice covered through the year. Beyond the far ridge is the steep descent to Ikiyaka village*

I spent about 2 weeks of my stay in 1985 camped beside the cluster of tents at Sergera. Much of the daytime I spent with the shepherds who were usually around the western half of the largest lake Buyuk Golu. It was a very sociable place as it was also on the path between Varegös and Ikiyaka near where it crossed the main ridge. The shepherds rotated a couple of times during these weeks but Idris always remained. One of the visitors was Yusuf. He was the elder brother of Hussein and Idris, and was eldest son of their father Haggi Donat, Haggi was reputedly 90, but I'm sure there was some licence in the figure and he was probably a little under 80. Haggi who I had not met apparently commanded considerable respect in Ikiyaka as he was formerly the village Agha, or headman, he had also been on the Hajj to Mecca, and he had 2 wives, 4 sons and 14 grandsons and many great grandchildren. Yusuf, I think, had just come up to have a couple of days in the zozan, which must have felt like a liberation after spending much of the summer in the parched heat of Ikiyaka village where he ran the household for his elderly father. In his earlier years Yusuf also spent much of the summer in the zozan and I am sure he missed its lifestyle.



*31. Yusuf Donat was an occasional visitor to the zozans but spent most of the time in the village with his elderly father. His brother Hussein Donat was the leader of the herding unit when they were in the mountains. In the near distance, just before the band of cliffs is Gaveruk zozan.*

A few of the boys used to play in the water on the lake's edge occasionally. After my now infamous swim Hussein asked me if I could teach some of them how to swim. The water was cold as it was largely snow melt. Although the air was perhaps 30 Celsius during the day, it was often just below freezing at night to counteract this. Where the small brook entered on the west side the water was slightly warmer and there was a small alluvial fan to wade in across. Nobody could swim as there had never been the need, but the boys were eager to try. I spent an hour a day wading about the shallows trying to teach 6 boys. Despite the water temperature they threw themselves into the water and splashed around hopelessly keeping within their depth. It was a testament to their hardiness they braved the water for so long. After a week they had calmed down and were able to float and do a simple breast stroke. I never had to find them at the start of the swim session as they started badgering me for their lessons after their camp and dairy chores were finished. Virtually all the children had household chores to do and it was amazing to see how a five year old could separate the curds from the whey and put the curds into the sacks and carry them to the brooks edge to mature into cheese. The young girls were already helping to milk the sheep and goats at five years old. They were keen to please their mother or elder sister who was in charge of the household dairy. If they fooled around, spilt milk, or were difficult they were quickly reprimanded with a shout or slap on their hand. To me it was unfathomable that such young children could be eager and effective on tasks which needed some competence. It would be a rare sight to see a 6 year old girl wrestle a goat into position and then milk her in Europe.





*32. After I had swum in the lake to retrieve some ducks which were shot by the old shepherd's rifle Hussein persuaded me to teach some of the boys how to swim. Despite the freezing temperatures they managed to stay afloat with a simple breaststroke after a week's worth of lessons.*

Most of my conversations were mundane and were often initiated by me asking a question about the dairy tasks, or sheep or who was related to who. Occasionally the topics were more worthy and there were discussions about religion, geography, or astronomy. The Kurds of Ikiyaka were all Muslims. Namen, along with many of the others prayed five times a day. If he did not have his small carpet to hand when shepherding he laid out his jacket and faced the south towards Mecca at the appointed hours. In fact Namen even kept his watch at Mecca time rather than Turkish time which was an hour behind. I always choose to say I was a Christian rather than an Atheist as this would have been unnecessarily insulting. We would discuss the Prophets, which both Christians and Muslims shared as indeed did Jews. Abraham was the first prophet in all three of these monotheistic religions but held a more prominent place amongst these Kurds that he did in Judaism and the Christianity I was familiar with. Perhaps it was the pastoral lifestyle which these Kurds shared with Abraham which made them so fond of him or perhaps it was because he was God's first Prophet. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail, in obedience with God's wishes, before God sees Abraham's devoutness and provides a goat instead for him to sacrifice is the basis for an important festival, namely Eid al-Adha. In 1985 I was largely unaware of it until I noticed Idris, the head shepherd, separating off about 20 sheep and goats which were going to go down to Ikiyaka village the next day to be sacrificed a few days later in ritual commemoration of Abraham's piousness.

Most of the other prophets of this Judeo-Christian-Islamic were also familiar to both these Kurds and me. The difference being my interpretation was that the prophets stopped with Jesus, the son of God, who they called Isa, while their interpretation was that Isa was just another prophet and not the son of God. Mohammed who lived 700 years after Isa (Jesus) was the final prophet and the Quran was revealed to him by God through the Angel Gabriel. In these discussions I did not argue any points, but rather acted as naive and wrote their interpretations in my notebook. Where I was slightly

more convincing was my explanations of the mountains and lakes, why the sun and moon rose and fell and the shape of the earth. Again my notebook came out and I used drawings to illustrate how the glaciers had been much bigger once and had gouged out the landscape or how the limestone had eroded subterranean passages into which the stream from the lake followed or how the planets revolved around the sun and earth, which was round and not flat. Hussein had an enquiring mind and it was usually with him I would discuss things. He would then later relay them to others at the meal and I would have to rejustify my explanations as we sat on the floor eating dinner. It was usually met with scepticism as there was a thought that things had always been as they were since the Creation. These discussions always left me exhausted as my Turkish was just not good enough to discuss such lofty topics. However the use of the notebook to help communication was invaluable and I would have been lost without them. The discussions were always friendly as I was always aware that I was on thin ice and was never dogmatic.



*33. Hussein with Hodgir. Hodgir was the village teacher and Iman and was quite political. His household had a tent in the herding unit where his wife and children spent the summer doing the dairy tasks. He always dressed in like a Peshmerga*

There was a school in the village and the teacher was called Hodgir. He was one of the few political people had come across up here. I did not get into any meaningful conversation with him about the Kurdish situation but you could see he was a patriotic Kurd, much more so than the others. He dressed in the same style as a Peshmerga from the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) which was a much more liberal independence movement compared to the PKK. If Kurdistan was mentioned in a discussion he would cross his clenched fist across his chest. His family was at the Sergera zozan and he came up frequently but I never saw him shepherding. Perhaps as the teacher he was excused from the shepherding rota, as say a Catholic priest might be. When he was at the camp he spent much of the time with Hussein. Both of them were quite serious characters which could have been due their responsibilities, or perhaps they choose responsible roles because of their seriousness. I also heard people refer to Hodgir as Imam as he was very familiar with the Koran and

its Surahs. I did not discuss religion with him as I was on thin ice and he was authoritative and would have considered me ignorant at best, or a blasphemous infidel at the worse. It was necessary to remain on the right side of Hodgir. He had a young son with blonde hair and blue eyes, which was not unusual and many people had green or blue eyes, especially the women. Kurdistan had for millennium been a crossroads of peoples and gene pools so Hodgirs's son was not unique.



*34. Hodgir with his son at the Hanging Valley zozan. There were many people from Ikiyaka and in the surrounding villages with blue eyes or blonde hair and Hodgir's son had both.*

After about a month with the Kurds of Ikiyaka on the north slopes of Samdi Dag my supplies were running out and I had completely overstayed the permissions which the Military Gendarmerie and the Commando's had given me. I felt I was still welcome at Sergera zozan with Hussein becoming a patron-like figure and Namen keeping me under his wing. In hindsight I learnt there was little trust between the Kurdish villagers of Ikiyaka and the various factions in the lawless lands of Northern Iraq just beyond the villages boundary. The most infamous faction was the PKK, a soon to be terrorist organization whose ultimate goal was to capture all the historic Kurdish lands in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria and unite them into one country under a Marxist regime. Turkey, having the largest area of Kurdish lands and population, was the PKK's primary target. But unfortunately for the PKK, Turkey was a well organized country with a massive well equipped army, including some 2 million conscripts. All the Kurdish men from SE Turkey were obliged to sign up for 3 years, as were all other Turkish citizens. The Kurds did so, some grudgingly and some willingly, and were often posted to Western Turkey. As a result they developed some patriotism and few had the stomach for a fight with Turkey. Most just wanted to get their service over and done with and return to their homelands. With increasing border raids by the PKK the Turkish Military recruited village guards for many of the villages along the Iraq border. These local Kurdish men were trained in the Turkish Army and then returned to their village with a salary and a supplied assault rifle. The village of Ikiyaka had a few village guards, who spent most of their time in the village as this was where any insurgency would first come from. Occasionally they would come up to the zozans on the north of

the mountains just to see what was happening. I only met one of the village guards at Sergera zozan and he was called Sadi. He looked an extremely hardy and fearless character with his assault rifle over one shoulder and a bandolier over the other and in full Kurdish regalia. He was exactly the sort of man that the Turkish military would want to recruit and I should imagine the type of man the PKK would also be interested in recruiting, but his allegiances were already spoken for.



35. Hodgir with Namen's son. Beside them is one of the village guards, possibly Sadi Aykut, who was visiting Sergera. Sadi was associated with the largest herding unit along with the Muktah's household beyond the ridge some 3-4 hours from here. I did not visit and knew little about them.

On the day I left I first packed up my tent and stove and a small sack of other clothes including my kapanak which was much warmer than my sleeping bag. Namen wanted to go down to Varegös and offered to accompany me down. He managed to find a passing mule with a light load and negotiated my bundle of possessions onto it. It was sad leaving Sergera zozan and saying goodbye to Idris, the shepherd, Hussein, Islam (Namen's younger brother), Fatima, Huri, Guri and the rabble of kids but I knew I would be back next summer. It was the most extraordinary place I had ever visited, with the purest of people, and I really felt I had much more to discover. It took about 3 hours to walk down and then I had to wait a couple of hours for the afternoon jeep to take me along the bumpy dusty road for about 3 hours to the town of Yuksekova. Namen saw me get into the jeep and then he returned back to the zozan in the afternoon. He was an exceptionally kind and helpful man and everybody spoke highly of him, not only in his herding unit but also members of other herding units I occasionally came across. Yuksekova was a busy noisy town full of merchants and trade. It was a far cry from the simple idyllic lifestyle I had left behind up in the mountains which I was yearning for already. From Yuksekova I took the bus back to the once ancient, but now burgeoning city of Van, on the shore of Lake Van, where I spent a couple of days before taking the long bus journey from Van to Istanbul, which took 2 days. Back in the UK I realized how fortunate I had been to spend a month on the pastures of Samdi Dag with the Kurdish pastoralists from Ikiyaka village and longed to be back. It was clear to me that I would be returning the next summer.

And so it was some 11 months later I found myself back in Yuksekova having the same merry dance with the Gendarmerie, Military and the Commando units stationed there to try and get permission again. There had been no incidents in the last year with the PKK in this area and as I had a clean sheet from last year it only took me a couple of days to get permission and then a further few days to buy provisions and get some local clothes made for myself. I also printed a bundle of photos from last year so I could distribute them to their subjects in the zozan. I was keen to get out of the hustle and bustle of Yuksekova but desperate to avoid another night in the bed bug ridden house in the hamlet of Gürkavak where I slept last year so took the earliest jeep towards Oramar (Daglica). There was one which left at 0600 in the morning, well after the imam's evocative first call to prayer. I bundled a month's worth of supplies into it again with a new tent, paraffin stove and sacks of dried food. After a few hours on the dusty road the jeep finally reached Varegös. Despite my letter from the military authorities in Yuksekova the officer in charge of the heavily fortified army post at Varegös was not helpful. He demanded to know why I was going up there and why I was interested in what he called "the savages". He was from Ankara and must have despised being here in the remote far south eastern corner of Turkey in the hostile borderlands. He even made a rudimentary check of all my baggage just to make sure I had nothing untoward. One thing I did have was a rare English-Kurmanji dictionary and I knew this was a contentious item as the centralized Turkish Government was cracking down on Kurdish language and culture and its use was frowned upon. Luckily he did not find the book. On my release I went up to the trading post where sacks of flour were stacked up waiting to be sold and taken up the mountain and over to Ikiyaka village by mules.

It was my great luck that Hussein's eldest son Abdul was down to sell a few sacks of feta and buy flour with the proceeds. He would then take these up the mountain to the zozans and then over the ridge to the village of Ikiyaka. We recognized each other and he was keen to take my stuff. We walked up the dusty track beside the tumbling stream to the point where we had to cross the tumbling shallow water. There was a tent here with some nomads from a different area who had been displaced. Abdul beckoned me over to the tent and I was shocked to see a toddler who had been badly scalded by a pan of hot water which had burnt his leg. The worst of it was the toddler's leg was bare and he was crawling about the ground in the dust which was a mixture of dusty loam and dried powdered goat droppings. After last year when I realized there was a woeful lack of medical supplies or knowledge I had come well stocked and spent a small fortune in Van on the way here buying medical supplies. The scalding incident was a few days ago and the toddler was over the pain but his wounds were open and seeping. I cleaned it up with cold water and then applied antiseptic cream and put on a loose bandage. It was all I could have done really. Unknown to me at the time it was Hodgir's wife's sister's child. The rest of the walk up to the camp in the nomadic camp in the hanging valley was easy as it followed the same path as I took last year. Once I crossed the smaller steep ravine and started up the final slopes to the camp, word got out I was arriving. All the children, some 25 of them, came running down the pastures shouting my name. I was completely overwhelmed with a lump in my throat and it was difficult not to cry such was their enthusiasm. All wanted to hold my hand and we walked up to the camp in a huddle. Hussein was there to greet us and I was ushered into his tent where Huri made tea. As we sat on the floor of the tent on a carpet more and more over the men came in. Sabri was now at the camp, as his 3 years of military service finished. Fatima came over with her infant, now a year older and very healthy. Namen who was further up the valley helping Idris with the shepherding heard I had arrived and he soon came down to the camp. When he walked in I nearly burst out crying. I felt real affection for this kind, gentle man. I could see Namen was also moved as he probably thought I would never return when he walked down to Varegös with me last year. Everybody wanted to know what I had been doing, Had I married yet? Did I have any children in the last year?



36. Hussein with one of the other men, Mustafa, who was visiting his household's tent at the zozan. Mustafa spent most of the time in the village while his wife and children stayed at the zozan. On this occasion Mustafa was going down to Varegös to negotiate trading his dairy produce for flour.

I put up my tent up in the same place as last year beside the small brook with the sacks of feta cheese draining beside it. There were many hands to help me and the children excitedly unpacked and handed me things. They were much more respectful it seemed this year. Once I had the tent up I unwrapped a bundle of photos I had taken the previous year and developed for them. It caused a frenzy with everyone pushing forwards. Namen and Hussein rescued me and directed me into Hussein's tent, then kept the children and teenagers out. Hussein then went through them and took nearly half to distribute to his family, many of whom featured. The camp would apparently be moving up to their final pasture at Sergera in two days which was good news for me as it was so beautiful up beside the lakes. Hussein and Idris's wives, Huri and Guri, made a large welcoming meal that evening to which I contributed a few tins of tuna and some other snacks from Yuksekova. The next day I went up to the shepherds, where Idris was still the main shepherd, the other shepherds were my friend Namen, and Sabri. It was great to be with the shepherds again. It was where I felt most comfortable socially and Idris and Namen went out of their way to be welcoming. Hanging out with them while they monitored the sheep, brewed tea and chatted with passer bys going over the mountain was what I had been day dreaming about for the last year. Even the dogs guarding the sheep partially recognised me as they barely barked when I approached. I spent my second night with the shepherds in a new kapanak which again I bought off Hussein. I think it was his own kapanak in case he needed to spend the night shepherding and by selling it to me he made sure he had a excuse.



*37. Namen and Ibrahim and some of the swarm of children at the zozan. Namen spent most of the time at the zozan, while Ibrahim was an occasional visitor either passing through to trade at Varegös or doing a stint of the shepherding rota which his household had to occasionally perform.*

The only bad news from them was that one of the shepherds, Ismail, had been killed. Earlier in the year he had taken the goats over the ridge onto another village's pastures. These pastures traditionally belonged to the village of Gürkavak where I spent a night last year in a bed bug infested house. Apparently Ismail was confronted by some angry villagers and an argument broke out, which led to a fight. During the course of the fight a gun was fired and Ismail was killed. I was shocked as I had spent about 15 nights sleeping with the shepherds last year and Ismail was there for a few of them. His death seemed so excessive for the infringement of going onto someone else's pastures. I was sure there was more to it than what I was told and understood. I knew throughout Kurdistan there was blood feuding. This goes back to the Old Testament where it was an "Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth". It meant the household of the dead or injured person must compensate for their loss and defend their integrity. Ismail's family must ask for compensation and if this is not forthcoming they must defend their honour and inflict a similar loss on the offending household. As Ismail was shepherding it also brings into question the honour of his herding unit, one of the three which Ikiyaka village split into. I was told that there were discussions between Ismail's household and the pertinent household in Gürkavak whose member killed Ismail, to make up for their loss and should these break down Ismail's brother was duty bound to carry out a retaliatory murder in due course. I did not know the history of this feud and maybe that the killing of Ismail was in itself a retaliatory murder for a previous incident as far back as a generation and the negotiations were just to settle the feud permanently.



38. Namen and Ismail at the Hanging Valley zozan in 1985 with my conical tent behind Namen. Ismail was killed in a grazing dispute when he took some sheep onto the pastures of a herding unit from another village called Gürkavak, which was another village of the Oraman Kurds.

After two nights the herding group of 13 households moved from their middle camp at the lip of the hanging valley up to Sergera. Like last year it was a slick operation and after two loads by the mules the whole camp had moved and re-established themselves within 4 hours. Hussein arranged a mule for my stuff, which was quite a lot as I had a month's worth of supplies, and I went up in the second wave. The place where I camped last year was still free so I put my tent up here again. Once I had unpacked everything I went over to the shepherds who were beside the main lake in the large alluvial fan where the small brook meandered through the flower filled meadow. The sheep had just arrived and were lively in this new ungrazed pasture full of lush grass. This would boost their milk production again and they could now expect over a litre a day from each animal, nearly doubling what they got from the old close-cropped, well-grazed pasture in the hanging valley. Later in the afternoon I went up to the other lakes to the east of Buyuk Golu, (Big lake) where there were more meadows before the crags. I went to the south of the crags up a ramp where snowfields still persisted and continued past the small shallow lake which led up to the pass. To the north of the pass was the granite tower of Satbasi 3475m, which was the main peak in the cirque of mountains surrounding the basin of lakes. It was too steep for me to climb but I had frequently climbed the peak to the south of this pass where a steep gravel ramp full of alpiners and cushion plants. From this pass there was that exciting and inviting view of Samdi Dag, the main mountain in this massif at about 3800. I thought I might try and see how far I could get up it tomorrow, but it looked fiendishly difficult to me. When I mentioned the idea to Namen and Idris they were full of caution.





39. *Namen brewing tea on a mule dung fire while looking after the goats. Namen had 2 young youth with him to run around the hillside and try and keep the goats together. Tea played a big part in the shepherd life and was drunk with sugar cubes, In fact the tea almost washed the sugar cubes down.*

The next day I got up early and set off, even before the women had started churning their butter in the goat skins hanging from the tripod of poles. It was easy to go up to the pass I was at yesterday and it took an hour. However, from there I had a long descent down into a deep valley. As I descended into the valley, losing hundreds of metres in height, I could see a path coming up from Ikiyaka village. It zigzagged up the head of this valley to another pass and it was to this pass I was heading. It was used by another herding unit from Ikiyaka village to and from their summer pastures. I could see mules, laden with white sacks of flour, heading down the path to the village. They must have spent the night at the zozan of the herding unit beyond this pass. I traversed across the hillside trying to contour across the hillside to the pass, but it was steep and craggy and I had to surrender much more height than I wanted. By the time I got to the path the mules were long gone and I could see a puff of dust where their hooves were kicking up the parched soil. It took me a while to get up the zigzags to the pass and by the time I reached it the mid morning sun was beating down mercilessly on me. I could not see the other herding units pastures from here but could see the path going down the mountainside and into the valley where it must lie. I, on the other hand, had to continue east. I traversed along a slope of scree for a good hour on the north side of the ridge, again trying to keep my height. There were plenty of craggy outcrops to weave a path between and mostly beneath, but I could see a high plateau beyond and if I could get onto it I would be near the base of the mountain. There was a short steep scrambling section to gain this plateau which I am sure the herders goats would manage but not the sheep. Once I was on the plateau it was an easy jaunt across the parched grassy surface strewn with rocks. It was a poor stony pasture, as if a glacier had just vanished and this moraine debris was just covered with a dusting of soil and gravel. However, it was rich with alpines and cushion plants. I walked east across it for an hour, slowly climbing up to a ridge where I hoped there would be an route to the base of the highest peaks.

However, when I got there I could see the game was up. There was a canyon to the east of me which was nearly impassable and beyond that there were glaciers with open crevasses. The peaks rose very steeply out of the glaciers and there was no way I could hope to climb them alone and without equipment. They had no chink in their fortified ramparts. Furthermore it was now early afternoon and I would have to turn round now to get back to the camp before darkness fell. I admired this Valhalla of a mountain while I ate some nan bread and tuna in awe of my surroundings. I wondered how many tourists had been here before, I suspected just a handful as I had never heard of them before I came here last year. This mountain was an undiscovered treasure.



*40. Samdi Dag, 3811m from the west at the point I turned around. There was no way I could cross the canyon at the bottom of the picture easily and make it to the final plateau before the glacier and return to the zozan before nightfall*

It only took me a few hours to return over the two passes and back down to the lakes. By now it was late afternoon and I was tired and thirsty. The shepherds were on the other side of the main lake so I went straight down the south side of it past the gaping hole into which the stream flowed and continued on to the camp. I was tired but Hussein saw me arriving and beckoned me into his tent. I took my shoes off and sat cross legged on the carpet as Guri got a tea going. One of my toes had burst through the end of my sock and Huri noticed it. She was sitting spinning thread from a bundle of sheep's wool. She saw the hole in my sock and reached beside for a large needle. Sitting up again she broke a piece of tread off the spool she was spinning and threaded it through the needle. Then she leaned forwards grabbed my foot and without taking the sock off just pulled the tip away from my toes and sewed up the hole in about 10 stitches. She then put the needle away, joined the threads she broke by twisting them and carried on spinning. It was all over without a word in about a minute leaving me humbled.



41. Idris's wife, Guri, (left) and Hussein's wife, Huri (right) were always busy. Just after this photo Huri spotted a hole in my sock and without taking the sock off pulled it from my foot and sewed up the hole using the thread she was spinning here.

After I had been at Sergera camp for about a week another herding group arrived from further down the mountain. It had 21 households so was a bit bigger than the one I was with. I don't know where their previous pastures had been but I knew it was in a valley to the east of the hanging valley. I recognized a few of the men as they had taken mules backwards and forwards over the mountain and had often stopped to chat to Hussein at the camp or stopped with the shepherds to chat with Idris and Namen. I was fascinated to see them arrive and went over immediately as the first mules pulled up on the meadow. It did not take long for the men to unload the mules and start to put up the tents. Most of the tents were the traditional back goat hair tents but a few were more modern ones with aluminium poles and canvas sides. A few were even the same single pole conical tent like mine. The shepherds were arriving with the sheep later, but the goats arrived mid morning with the younger goatherds while the first mules were unloading. In the space of a few hours the quiet tranquil, lakeside pasture, full of flowers and hovering insects became a pulsating village with 21 tents, 50 people and soon to be 1000 animals. The children had probably heard of me from the men who visited the camp I was staying at on their travels over the mountain but this was the first time we had met. It took no time for their shyness to disappear and soon they were surrounding me lining up to have their photo taken assuming I had an instant camera. I think the herding groups were loosely based around patrilineal connections where each household could claim some sort of descent from a common male ancestor.



*42. A herding unit arriving at Gaveruk from their previous camp down the mountain, It only took a few hours to unload the mules and put the tents up. Here are the wooden poles to hold the black goat hair tents up. By midday the place had transformed from deserted pasture to bustling zozan.*

I was excited about this new herding unit moving to Gaveruk. They were a larger unit than the one I was in and very friendly. They were just a short half hour walk from my camp and I could see myself visiting frequently. Their camp was clustered around the meadow between two smaller lakes beside a large pasture, which the goats would no doubt graze short in a few days. Beside the camp was a jumble of large boulders upon which their sacks of corn were piled up on, out of the way of nibbling rodents. Men and women from the group I was affiliated to frequently came over to chat with the members of this group. Although they were from different herding units on the mountain, for the remaining 7-8 months of the year they were neighbours in the village of Ikiyaka. Namen visited frequently and he seemed well liked by everyone from this unit also. I am sure many were relations and I remember Namen saying Aziz was a nephew, but that could be a nephew in a very loose sense.



*43. By the afternoon the whole of the Gaveruk zozan was established beside the small stream between two smaller lakes and all the tents had been put up and the women had gone off to milk the sheep which were on their way to the zozan from the previous camp.*

The women of this herding unit were always colourfully clad in the traditional Kurdish dress. It was a long flowing and baggy dress which went all the way to the neck and covered the shoulders and arms, leaving the forearms free. Long tails, a good metre long, dropped from each sleeve above the elbows and these would have trailed on the ground were they not knotted on a loose bow behind their backs in a distinctive Kurdish fashion. They often wore a long strip of material around their waists which was looped back on itself from a central position in the front of their stomachs in a similar fashion to the men. This looped cloth or belt was called a sal and was also very distinctively Kurdish. Over the top of the brightly covered dress they wore a bright blouse or waistcoat which always contrasted with the dress beautifully to make a striking outfit.



44. *The colourful ladies at the Gaveruk zozan in their traditional costumes. The sleeves from the dresses were very long, at least a metre, and they were usually tied together behind their backs. On top of these flamboyant dresses they wore a bright blouse, which contrasted with their dress.*

The men were not so flamboyant but also had a distinctive costume. Long baggy trousers, called shalwar, with tight ankle cuffs made out of a tough khaki or olive green material. On top they either wore the traditional jacket which matched their trousers or they wore a more western style jacket. If they wore the traditional shalwar and jacket then they always wore a sal also. Those who dressed in the traditional way nearly always wore the headscarf, or pushi, which was normally worn in the Barzani style of Iraq. But usually the men wore the traditional Kurdish trousers, a jersey and jacket and then a flat cap. Hussein always wore a jacket and cap while Hodgir, the village teacher was always dressed in the style of Barzani. Hussein's elder brother, Yusuf, who was a rare visitor to the camps, wore a mixture of the two styles with his traditional baggy shalwar trousers and a Barzani style pushi, but he did not wear the sal cord or a traditional jacket and opted for a western jacket instead.



*45. Yusuf Donat was Hussein's elder brother and made the occasional visit to the zozans from the village. Beside him is Namen's eldest son. They are both wearing the traditional Kurdish shalwar trousers which are loose and hard wearing.*

On one occasion I was at the Gaveruk camp during the day a group of men from my camp at Sergera came over. I think it must have been a meeting because everyone was well dressed. They all disappeared into a tent and I was not invited. Suddenly all hell broke loose outside. One of the dogs from Sergera had followed the men over and the 4 dogs from Gaveruk suddenly attacked it thinking it was a predator. The dogs are very attached to their own sheep having grown up in the herd since they were a puppy and are very protective. All the men ran out of the tent towards the furious and frenzied dog fight. There were about 10 men all with sticks and they were raining blows down on the 4 attacking dogs who were oblivious to them. The attack lasted a good two minutes. After much shouting and beating the Gaveruk dogs eventually relented and released the Sergera dog whose legs were badly injured. Once the Gaveruk dogs had been chased away Namen, Hussein and Sabri had a look at their dog who was trying to stand but was too injured. It was too traumatic for me to watch and I disappeared over the other side of the small lake where the children were playing. After 10 minutes a shot rang out as the injured dog was dispatched with an old rifle. The ferocity of the attack is still clear in my mind today. I used to keep a large knife in a holster in my socks in case I ever got attacked, but on reflection it would have been little use as these dogs would have ripped my windpipe out even if they had stab wounds and punctured lungs. I think even the men were quite traumatized by the whole episode and I am sure the meeting was overshadowed by it.



46. *Namen and Hussein, far right and Sabri, middle left and waving, from Sergera zozan visiting some of the men at Gaveruk zozan on the occasion one of the dogs followed from Sergera and was badly savaged by the dogs at Gaveruk.*

I spent about two weeks going between the two camps. Most of the time I was at Sergera and I either slept in my tent here or slept where the shepherds of Sergera were. They virtually returned to the camp every night as the pastures were quite close by. I spent a lot of the daytime at the pastures of Gaveruk which had a fabulous setting beside the smaller lakes. It was one of the most idyllic places I could ever imagine and certainly the most unspoiled and picturesque place I had ever been. This was largely due to the people here who were so honourable, hardworking, joyful and generous. I think their environment has lifted up their spirit and souls. Occasionally I would go for a walk up the steep hills around the pastures and look down on the tranquillity below. I could always see Gaveruk camp and spot the sheep in the pastures nearby, or even trying to cool off on a snowfield. The goats would usually be further afield during the day being looked after by the older boys who were constantly on the alert to control them.





*47. Gaveruk zozan was beautifully placed beside the stream between two smaller lakes which then flowed into the larger Buyuk Golu lake. The pastures around the zozan were enough so the sheep could graze quite locally and the women did not have to travel far to milk them.*

One of the happiest occasions at Gaveruk was milking the sheep. Like Sergera, there were two ways, the chaotic one where every woman would run around after her own sheep and direct her daughters to catch and milk others. I am sure pails got knocked over and milk split in this turmoil. The sheep tried to make it easy as they usually wanted to get milked and did not run away but the goats were much more difficult. Once the sheep were caught they were generally milked from the back rather than the side despite their large fat filled tails getting in the way.



*48. Milking the sheep at Gaveruk zozan in the evening. Sometimes the sheep were not milked in an orderly manner and their owners had to chase round after them and grab them before they could milk them. Often the children were used to run after the sheep and grab them.*

The other way of milking the sheep was for them to queue up along the edge of the lake with the men and the boys herding them into a line, which they tended to form of their own accord. The shepherd, who I assumed was like Idris and was the main permanent shepherd and knew all the animals and to whom they belonged, sat in the middle of the line of sheep. As the sheep came towards him he would distribute them to the owners to milk. He knew each of the 500 sheep in his flock. The women of each household would sit each side of the shepherd and only milk their own sheep. There was a lot of joking and laughter at this good natured time and frequently all the women would break into song. I started to recognize some after a week. They were always very eager I should take their photos despite not seeing the result. It was quite a privilege to sit under the warm sun and watch this tight knit group of pastoralists joyfully milk their sheep as their forefathers and indeed all of our forefathers had once done for millennia since before the days of the Old Testament. Most of the milk was made into a feta type cheese with some being churned into butter in the goat skins. A little was also made into yoghurt and drunk as ayran when watered down.



49. Usually the shepherds at Gaveruk herded the sheep into a line and the sheep queued up quietly passing through two rows of milkers with the main shepherd distributing the sheep to the various individual owners as they came past. Easy sheep would produce a litre of milk in the summer.

One of the nicest parts of Gaveruk was the meadow beside the lake. It was an ideal place to lounge around and watch the comings and goings of the herd and it was also the place where the children could run riot, being away from the tents. It is where I spent a few half days relaxing on a carpet while people came and went. The children were always wanting me to take photos of them and I had to be quite firm so as not to be too badgered. The small lake just below the camp, more of a tarn really, was shallow and although the water coming into, via the adjacent lake, was snowmelt, there was a small bay where the sun took the chill off the water. The kids often splashed about here in the knee deep water. I never washed here as there were too many women in the camp so went to a much colder bay on the larger Buyuk Golu lake. Namen visited frequently as he had relations in this herding unit also, and even Hussein sometimes visited.



50. *Namen was popular at Gaveruk zozan also where he had some relations. Whenever he arrived here the children would rush to meet him. Aziz in the yellow and red striped jersey was his nephew but I could not work out the link.*

It was a shame that Hodgir did not have lessons up in the zozan for the children. They had to help their parents regularly throughout the day, especially with the milking and dairy tasks, by when they were not working they ran around the meadow, splashed in the shallows, threw stones inaccurately at the dogs if they came with range, chased the goats, made small fires from grasses and ran circles around me. It would have been easy for Hodgir to have set up a canvas and aluminium tent at one of the two adjacent zozans at either Gaveruk or Sergera and have classes in it with the kids sitting on carpets. I think the value of education had not really filtered down to the villagers of Ikiyaka who were still living a very traditional life. People's roles in life were already defined at birth; women would work, bear children and live in their husbands household, while men would help their parents, serve in the army, father children and then grow their herds as they endeavoured to become a patriarch. Education had little use in pastoral society unless it was to gain a better understanding of the Koran, so it was not considered important.



51. *The children at Gaveruk zozan. They were like the children of Sergera in so much as they were an untamed feral gang but they did not get up to so much mischief with me and often played in the shallows of the small lake.*

I had been up onto the pass and looked down on the village of Ikiyaka a few times on each of my visits here. For weeks I had seen people and mules come up from the village and then return over the ridge to the village. I had heard a lot about it from everybody who waxed lyrical about its setting and tranquillity. Looking down from the ridge it looked parched and barren, lost in a hidden valley on the edge of the world. For weeks last year and weeks this year I had wanted to go down to the valley to see their homes, however the military had said it was forbidden, (yasak) and unsafe. As my time on the north slopes of Samdi Dag unfolded I thought it would be perfectly safe and a few people were encouraging me to go, including Namen and Hussein. So after I had been there for a few weeks on my second visit I eventually resolved to go. I was just waiting for the opportunity. It came quite soon as Yusuf, Hussein's elder brother had visited the zozan for a couple of days and was returning on foot the next day. Namen also wanted to take a break from shepherding and return to see how things were in the village with his family and they were both willing to escort me down.



52. *Sergera zozan (middle left) seen from the path to Ikiyaka village near the pass over the main ridge. It was beside Sergera lake and a little below the ice covered lake just out of the picture to the right. The west end of Buyuk Golu lake can just be seen and the Hanging Valley is below it.*

We set off early the next day and climbed up the ridge to the pass where one got great views back down to Sergera zozan beside its hourglass shaped lake. There was a frost as usual as we went up the path but as soon vanished as we got to the top and looked down the steep rocky slope on the south side. I could feel the warmth welling up from the south side, even at this early hour. The well constructed path zigzagged down for about 20 hairpin bends, each one resting on a foundation of stacked stones, until it got to the bottom of the rocky gully. The path then veered to the south west out of the gully and onto the steep hillside where it continued to descend through another series of zigzags which were much more gentle. The concave hillside soon became gentle enough for the path to pretty much head straight down a shallow ridge to the west of the developing valley floor. Both Namen and Hussein were older than me but they had a nimbleness to their stride which I lacked and frequently stepped on loose gravel, sliding a bit, or stubbing my foot on larger rocks. I was clumsy and they were graceful and sure footed by comparison. The streambed which was forming to our east as we descended was completely dry with a string of hardy weeds along the bottom of it. As we descended further another valley came down from the northeast descending from the pass I crossed when I went to explore Samdi Dag. It also had a path on it up to the other pass and I could see mules coming down towards the village. These two forks of the main valley met just above the village. Where they met a large spring which came welling up out of the ground and I assumed it was the subterranean stream which disappeared into the bowels of the mountain at the outflow of the main lake. The water emerging was crystal clear and icy cold and sweet to drink.

Just below this spring irrigation channels guided water off on each side of the stream and contoured across the sides of the valley floor. Immediately below them we reached the first of the terraced fields, banked up with rough tufa stones. They were verdant and lush with vegetables, especially

greens which I think were spinach or some other brassica. There were many vegetables growing here too; tomatoes, aubergines, potatoes, lentils and tobacco, to name a few, and all this was made possible but the constant supply of irrigated water to keep the soil moist. There were women in a few of the fields with mattocks to weed between the rows and also to open up and close down the smallest irrigation channels in between the rows, which were the capillaries of nourishment. I asked Namen if they could grow vegetables in the winter also and he looked at me with astonishment. Apparently winter snows covered the whole area for a few months and they indicated it was 2-3 metres deep. Indeed they pointed to a slope further down the valley and said that there were avalanches down it each year. In this shimmering summer heat it was difficult to believe but I had seen pictures of Anatolia and the Zagros mountains in winter under a deep unifying smooth blanket of snow. Poplars and willows formed thickets around the water channels, their intertwined roots reinforcing the banks. Excess water drained out of some of the fields, heavy and muddy it flowed through the grass at the lower edge depositing silt and then trickled over the solid walls of the terrace. As we neared the village larger trees appeared, especially venerable walnuts with huge boughs big enough for children to sit on as they left the main bole and stretched out horizontally before curving upwards. I am no expert but I guessed some of these walnuts were perhaps 5 centuries old. They cast a cool shadow and it was under their welcome shade that people gathered. They looked at me as we arrived and there were lively greetings towards Namen and Hussein.

We walked down the beaten path between some of the simple flat roofed houses. The thick stone walls were covered in earth and they supported many rough log beams. Once inside a house you could see up between the beams to a solid mat of smaller branches laid tightly together parallel to each other so there was no or little gap. On top of these smaller branches were some 10-15 centimetres of kneaded mud which had been smeared across the whole roof and when it dried formed an impervious layer which rain or melting snow would not permeate. There were usually crops, vegetables, or tobacco drying somewhere on a roof and more stored here away from the ravenous appetites of livestock and rodents. Grass was also dried up on the roofs before being taken inside for winter storage. Some of the houses were small with rustic shutters and plastic sheets for windows, while some of the bigger ones had glass in regular square frames.



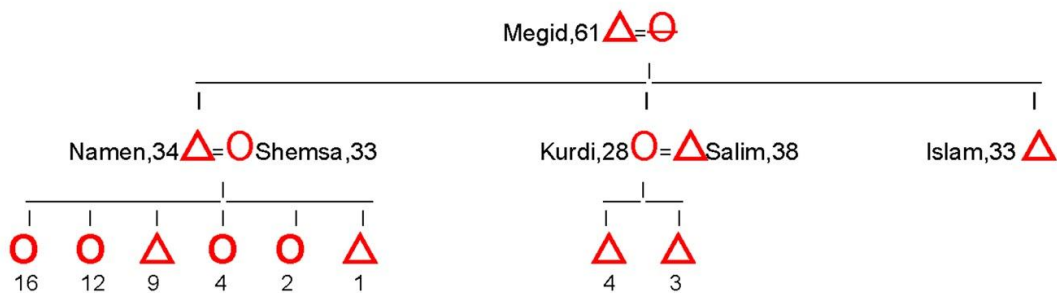
*53. Salim was an Iranian Kurd who had been a refugee in Yuksekova and had somehow ended up marrying Namen's sister, Kurdi. He was the only man I knew of in Ikiyaka who was staying with his wife's family and they had 2 boys, who would eventually strengthen the weak Dugran family.*

We stopped at Namen's house and he beckoned me in. Hussein and him then had a discussion in Kurdish of which I sensed I was the topic but knew nothing else. After a few minutes they reverted back to Turkish and explained to me that I was to have tea with Namen and his family and then I was to come down to Hussein's a few houses further down for the evening meal and to spend the night. I went into Namen's house. It was one of the smaller ones in the village and perhaps had 3 rooms. We went into the main room which was dark and smoky. Namen's father, Megid, greeted me and beckoned me to take a seat on a carpet. He was old before his time and was perhaps just 60 but seemed to be suffering from arthritis, crippled by a lifetime of toil which had broken his back. I knew Namen's mother had died some 5 years previously, so Megid was on his own, the sole survivor of his generation in his household. Megid was fortunate to have two vigorous sons in his household, Namen and Islam, although Islam suffered from epilepsy occasionally and it was difficult to get medicine. Megid was perhaps unique in Ikiyaka in that his married daughter, Kurdi, also lived in her paternal household, as daughters always go to live with the husband's paternal family at marriage leaving the household they grew up in. This was because Kurdi married an Iranian Kurd, called Salim, who was a refugee from Iran and migrated here some 15 years ago. Namen's wife, Shemsa, who was 33, and Namen's sister, Kurdi, ran the domestic side of the household. I had met them both before up at the zozan when they were doing the milking and dairy tasks for their household in their tent. It was usually Namen and Shemsa's eldest daughter who ran the household tent, but Shemsa or Kurdi sometimes relieved them arriving with their younger children. The Dugran household was quite a small and relatively weak household in Ikiyaka and had to cooperate with other households frequently and maintain alliances. Namen was good at this and was a popular man at his zozan at Sergera, and also the one at Gaveruk. After a good hour having tea at Megid's, which was served by Shemsa, I was a little relieved to leave. Although Namen was around he was



busy with his children and had a few tasks to do So I was mainly on my own with Megid and the conservation was often strained.

THE DUGRAN HOUSEHOLD. 1986



3 Generations and 4 adult Males

KEY:

- △ Male in Household    ○ Female in Household    △ Male in different Household    ○ Female in another Household
- △ Deceased Male    ○ Deceased Female    = Marriage    14 Age

*54. The Durgan family tree. Namen's father Megid was the household head but his wife had died. Namen, his brother Islam, and their brother-in-law Salim also lived in the house with a small collection of Megid's grandchildren.*

Namen eventually rescued me and we left his house and walked down through more of the village. Some of the walnut trees we passed were enormous with huge boughs, and some children ran up some of the more accessible ones to wave at me. Through a gap in the trees Namen pointed to a hillside further down the valley where he said there was also a big avalanche there each year. After a couple of hundred metres and some 15 houses, all linked by a wide path like a track, we came to a large house within a small compound. It was the Donat house. Kids came out to greet Namen and to a lesser extent me. I felt a bit nervous being on show but Yusuf and Hussein came out to welcome me. Their house was virtually two stories as it had so many storage sheds on the roof. In the compound were two large low barns which was where the sheep and goats must have been crammed into for the winter. The Donat family had about 400 animals to house plus some 10 mules. On the roof of each barn was a large three sided shelter with a sloping log and mud roof and it was nearly full of sheaves of grass. These would sustain their flock through the winter when the whole village was snowbound. It was very intensive work to collect the winter fodder and grass from the surrounding area and many in this large family spent a few months filling the sheds. There was just enough grass to keep the animals alive rather than well nourished and the milk production virtually ceased during the winter apparently.



*55. Aziz was Namens's nephew, albeit once or twice removed, but his parents belonged to the other herding unit at Gaveruk rather than Namens herding unit at Sergera. Although only 6 he had some authority with the other children and I am sure would grow up to be a leader.*

I followed Hussein into the house and down a dark corridor which led to a room lined with carpets and blankets. It was the main room of the house and it was where the men met, sat, ate and conversed. In the centre was an old wizened man, Haggi, whom I was told was 90, but he did not look so old sitting comfortably cross legged on a rich carpet with a couple of woven kilim bolsters nearby. He wore a white pushi, or headscarf to show he had been on the pilgrimage to Mecca and his title, Haggi, also indicated this and I never established his birth name. He clothing was the typically Kurdish earthy brown jacket and baggy shalwar trousers and a violet sal or long cloth belt woven around his waist a few times. Hussein, Yusuf and Namen all took their shoes off and sat on various rugs and then beckoned me to sit down also. Haggi's first wife, Feda, was also in the room on a carpet covered bench by the window. She was 83 and was quite frail but having had three sons who in turn had 12 grandsons she was hugely respected in the household. Haggi's second wife Gulistan was much younger, but also commanded a lot of respect especially over the younger women of the household who were often Feda's grandsons wives, a few of whom I recognized from Sergera zozan. This was the pasture where the herding unit were currently at and where Gulistan's son, Idris, was the head shepherd and who I was friendly with. It was a lot to take in and the atmosphere here was vibrant with people coming and going the whole time. There were people in other rooms, the hallway and in the compound outside preparing things. Everyone except the older gathered men and Feda were working doing something or on errands, with Gulistan managing the tide of people. It was in stark contrast to the more sombre Dugran household.

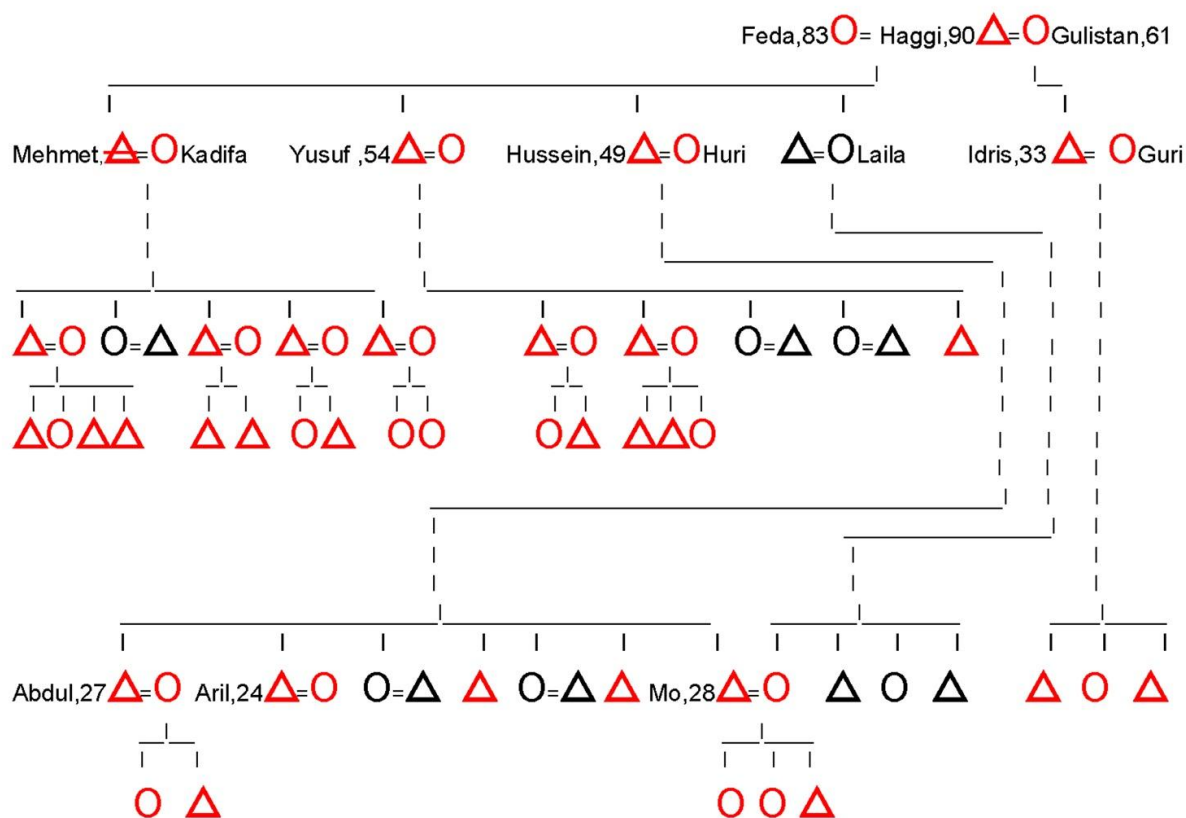
One of the brightly clad granddaughters-in-law brought in the tea and Hussein and Namen poured and distributed it, along with lumps of sugar. In Kurdish society, as all the pastoral patriarchal societies of the Middle East and Central Asia, when a daughter marries she always goes to live with her husband, and by extension her husband's paternal family, usually joining as a very junior

member and often bossed about. Son's are always expected to stay in their father's household while he is alive to help run the household's affairs. An incoming daughter-in-law would remain a junior member of her husband's family until she gave birth to children and then her status would climb, especially if she had a lucky bias for sons. As these sons grew and in turn got married she would then have daughter's-in-law herself coming into the household and her status was assured. In the case of Feda, who had granddaughters-in-law who were themselves producing sons she had huge esteem with 24 male descendants.

Haggi was also the previous Agha, or headman, of the village of Ikiyaka, as was Haggi's father. Ikiyaka village was one of nine villages which made up the tribal fiefdom of Oramar. The Oraman Kurds were previously presided over by a Tribal Agha who lived at Oramar who had great power. The Tribal Agha, who also had the title Shaik due to the religious leadership and duties bestowed on him, was a political leader too. He adjudicated in conflicts within his tribe and with other tribes. He took tribal decisions on whether to go into conflict with other tribes or even the Ottoman, and latterly Turkish, authorities or not. The Tribal Agha was a title which was inherited patrilineally from father to son and even today we can see this with the Barzani clan even if the role of Tribal Agha is much reduced. The Tribal Agha expected loyalty from the village Aghas and if they were not loyal they were deposed. However, in the last half century the Turkish authorities based in Ankara have sought to reduce the power of these Tribal Aghas in Turkish Kurdistan and have replaced them with Ankara appointed Muktahs, both at a tribal level and village level. The newer Muktahs are all native to the villages to which they were appointed, but outside their own herding unit remain unpopular. So the social structure of the Oraman Kurds still remains hierarchical but the allegiance is shifting towards Ankara. Haggi's father was the previous village Agha in Ikiyaka and would have adjusted the zozan boundaries for summer grazing pastures, delegated land for houses and fields, arbitrated in disputes, especially with irrigation, and would have presided over the village guesthouse showing visitors hospitality with taxed produce. Haggi would have inherited this role had the Turkish authorities not gradually usurped his position and appointed a Muktah and some village guards loyal to this Muktah.

Despite having his role diminished by the Turkish authorities Haggi was still held in very high esteem in the village. He also derived respect from the fact he had been on the pilgrimage to Mecca, this not only shows a religious piousness but is also an indication of wealth as the pilgrimage involves considerable expense. In addition to this, his family was the biggest family in Ikiyaka village and with 16 adult males in his household, he wielded tremendous power. In a dispute or feud with other households in Ikiyaka the Donat household was a formidable foe to take on, as not only did they have many males but in Haggi, Yusuf and Hussein they also had males who were wise and looked up to throughout the community. I could see it was no accident that Namen and his relatively weak family had aligned themselves to Haggi, who he viewed as a patron. Even the Muktah and the village guards would have to tread carefully when it came to dealing with the Donat household. But by the same token I often saw Hussein entertain the village guards in his tent at the zozan so the Donat family were themselves cautious and wise in dealing with the Muktah.

## THE DONAT HOUSEHOLD. 1986



4 Generations and 16 Adult Males

56. *The large Donat family under the household head of Haggi. He had the descendants of 4 sons living in his household with numerous grandsons and a burgeoning collection of grandchildren. His daughter and most of his granddaughters had married and were living with their husbands family.*

Haggi was also the wealthiest household head in Ikiyaka where wealth is measured by the size of your herd. Haggi had about 200 sheep and 200 goats. While it was no problem for Idris, Haggi's son to look after perhaps 10 times as many sheep in the summer when the grass was lush it was the collection of winter fodder which limited the size of a household herd. From late November until late March the flocks were inside barns beside the owners house as deep snow lay outside in the village. During this time the flock was fed on fodder collected in the summer and autumn and stored above the barns. This was very intensive work and it would have been impossible for the workforce of 5-6 people in the Dugran family to collect enough fodder, and still do all their other jobs and duties, for 400 animals and this is why they only had 40 animals. Conversely the Donat household had a workforce of around 30 people and could therefore put considerable effort into collecting enough fodder during the summer and autumn;- and still perform all the other jobs like the dairy and shepherding duties in the zozan and all the work in the terraced fields. So they could collect enough fodder for 400 animals. It was this task of collecting the winter fodder which determined the number of animals a household could keep through the winter and therefore their wealth. If a household had a high proportion of sons then these sons would in turn bring daughters-in-law to the household virtually doubling the size of it in a generation. While if a household had a high proportion of daughters then these would all leave the household when they married and the workforce would shrink even further.

The ambition of any Ikiyaka, or indeed Kurdish, village man is to set up his own household, something common to the whole pastoral, patriarchal culture of the Central Asian or Mediterranean region. Conflicting this ambition is the duty to one's father and agnates. So it is rarely viable for a young man with a father to set up his own household. Firstly he needs his share of his father's wealth in land, livestock and money which he will only receive after his father's death. Secondly

should he rebel he will be shunned by other household heads and his new found status will be fragile economically and socially, leaving him small means to counteract the disadvantages which will face him. Upon his father's death he will strive to establish his own independent household and separate from his brothers. If his father is wealthy it is likely he will have many brothers, as a man's wealth and the number of sons he has are related, so his father's wealth will be shared to a greater extent. The inheritance arithmetic of the Oraman Kurds means that each household of Ikiyaka begins with roughly the same potential. What will influence it afterwards is the household leader's resourcefulness, work and his luck, often attributed as a divine blessing, for having sons.

No tourist had ventured down to Ikiyaka for decades apparently. Indeed I was told I was not to visit myself by the Turkish military authorities in Yuksekova which now seemed a long way away. However, I think my visit had been arranged by Hussein, his brother Yusuf and Haggi partly to entertain me and themselves and partly as a show of defiance to these authorities and the current village Muktah, who was supported by them. During the tea, later at the evening meal and that evening no mention was made of the Muktah and he made no appearance but he must have been aware of my presence. The swarthy village guard, Sadi, who visited Hussein in the zozan dropped in for some glasses of tea, propping his automatic rifle up inside the door of the room where he could see it, and he must have reported back to the Muktah. I was told there was an old Nestorian church at the bottom of the village which was centuries old but Haggi said I was not to visit as it was on the Iraqi border which was just a kilometre away. In fact I did not see that much of the village as I went straight to Megid's house and then from here went straight to Haggi's house which was perhaps in the middle of the village. What I did see though was the fabulously colourful and vibrant life in Haggi's house. After an hour of tea the trays were cleared and Gulistan organized the meal. A large tray was brought in and a pile of still steaming nan breads was laid on it. Then some 15 bowls of food were brought out by the giggling daughter-in-laws in their colourful flowing dresses. There were bowls of beans, feta cheeses with herbs mixed through them, fried vegetables, bowls of yoghurt, and various mutton dishes. I felt it was for me and was quite overwhelmed and embarrassed by the sumptuousness of it all. It must have taken a while to prepare and it had obviously been planned in advance I would eat here.



*57. Abdul Donat was Hussein's eldest son and around my age, so we became friends . He was the muleteer for the Donat household taking all the dairy produce down to Vargös to trade and then bringing up all the sacks of flour to sustain the household with nan flatbread through the winter.*

There were about 10 of us at the meal. Haggi, Yusuf, Hussein, Namen, Myself, Hussein's son Abdul and a few others of Haggi's grandsons. I was sitting next to Abdul and Namen who were looking after me and occasionally chatting to me in Turkish. If it were not for them and their consideration I would have felt a bit spare. The rest of the party were discussing something in Kurdish and I could not even guess what the conversation was about. The dishes were delicious and I followed their lead of putting the nan bread on my knee and then breaking bits of it off. I loosely folded the piece squeezing it gently between my right hand fingers, then dipped the piece into a dish and pinched the flat nan bread grabbing a morsel, before putting all in my mouth. The fried vegetables and the mutton were especially good. After a good half hour we were all finished and the colourful granddaughters-in-law all swooped in again and cleared removed everything. They topped the bowls of food up, brought in more nan breads on a tray and set up a new spread on a carpet beside us. It was now the turn of the more senior women to eat including Feda, who shuffled over from her bench by the shuttered window and sat down. Haggi's second wife, Gulistan, and Yusuf's wife also joined the small circle along with a few of the elder granddaughters-in-law. Hussein's wife, Huri and Idris's wife, Guri, were still up at the zozan overseeing the household's dairy tasks otherwise I am sure they would have been in this circle also. They were served but the same throng of girls who served us. The ladies ate in quiet conversation while the men I was sitting with continued to discuss. Eventually the dishes were taken away from the elder ladies and removed to the unseen kitchen and now the junior ladies and the children ate what was left. The whole meal had taken about 2 hours and when it was all done it was dark outside.

People now started getting ready for bed. The kerosene lamps from the main dining room were carried through to the various bedrooms and torches were flashing about in the corridor. I was shown a room next to the main dining room and Abdul pointed to the corner where I was to sleep.

The room was covered in carpets and bedding rolls. Some of the carpets were homemade and others were the perfunctory carpets bought in the market at Yuksekova. Abdul laid a couple of carpets out for me and then a kapok bedding roll on top of them and I laid my sleeping bag on top of the kapok roll. It seemed Haggi, Yusuf, and Hussein all had their designated places, and Gulistan was watching some of the younger girls spread the carpets and blankets out along the wall of the room where they were to sleep. A few of Haggis' grandsons slept next to me, both pinning me against the wall and putting themselves between me and any danger from the entrance. There were about 15 of us who were going to sleep in the room, including Feda and Gulistan. The others were spreading out in other rooms including the dining room and kitchen. Apparently a couple of Haggi's grandsons usually slept in the courtyard to make sure nothing out of the ordinary happened. The vibrant household was turned into a small fortress for the night. By 2100 the whole household was quiet and everyone was asleep. I would have been asleep too, but after the lamps were blown I felt something on my neck and then soon after on my back. It was the bed bugs coming out of the kapok mattress and crawling up into my sleeping bag and onto me. It was difficult to ignore them, even if I knew from experience they seldom bit me. I had to endure about two hours of it before I finally fell asleep.



58. *The terraced fields of Ikiyaka village were irrigated by a stream which came out of a cave in the mountain. It was largely vegetables which were grown in them with some cereals. Beyond are the large walnut trees of the village, under which the houses were built in their cool shade.*

The household woke early the next morning and already by 0400, before there was even a glow through the open window, people were starting to get up in the other rooms. By 0500 it was light outside but the sun had still not risen and everybody was up. Abdul was already getting the mules ready to go up to the zozan and then on to Varegös. He was encouraging me to have a quick breakfast and then accompany his caravan of mules. He said it was important to go before the sun got too strong as the near 1000 meter climb up the south facing side of the mountain became unbearably hot. Yusuf and Hussein were agreeing with him and I got the impression they wanted

me to go as soon as possible. So after a quick tea and some nan bread with feta cheese I was ready. It was a great shame as I had wanted to spend more time in the village and look at a few things especially the fields and some other houses. I felt I had become a hot potato and there was a situation brewing which they wanted to defuse by getting rid of me. Perhaps the Muktah had had a word and made them feel uncomfortable for hosting me. Abdul meanwhile was loading his mules with firewood and some sacks of vegetables to take up to the zozan. As we were ready to leave Namen came down from his house and said it was good to go now also and I trusted Namen completely so around 0600 we set off.

It did not take long for the air temperature to heat up once the sun cleared the ridge to the east. I could feel the heat on the back of my neck as we climbed and it just kept getting stronger. After a couple of hours when we were approaching the zigzag hairpin bends I could feel the heat reflecting off the light coloured rocks into my face. Perhaps I had misread the urgency to get away in the morning and it was due to the heat after all; which seemed very plausible now. It was a great relief to reach the top of the climb and have a last look down the parched, arid slope to the village far below before starting down the green pastures to Sergera zozan beside the lake. The melting snowfields feeding the green pastures soothed my soul and I was happy and relaxed again. It had been interesting in the village but it was stressful for me as I could not really communicate with anyone and never knew what was going on. We approached the camp and Abdul unloaded the supplies and turned the mules free to graze. I suspect they had not eaten since yesterday afternoon when they left here and descended to the village with sacks of flour. Hussein's and Idris's wives, Huri and Guri welcomed us with tea and started to quiz me on what I thought of the village. As we chatted some of the young men were getting a few sacks of feta ready to load onto the mules so Abdul could take them down to Varegös and return to the zozan in the evening with more sacks of flour. Once he had gone I withdrew to my tent for a nap as I had not slept well and turned my sleeping bag inside out and left it in the sun to try and get rid of some of the parasites.

Namen and Hussein returned the next morning from the village and had some bad news for me. I had to leave. Apparently the Muktah was not happy about me being in the village at all and he had reported it to the Turkish Authorities sending one of the village guards up onto another pass which led to the third Ikiyaka village zozan and then on down to Varegös. From here the guard had radioed the small military garrison at Varegös who gave him instructions that I was to return and that my permission was only for a visit to lakes and mountains for a few days and I had now been there for almost a month. It was a blow but I knew it was a risk to test the authorities ire and go to the village. It was now the middle of September and the camps would be packing up in a few weeks anyway and the herding units would be moving back to the village with the shepherds leading their now well nourished flocks. Namen said he would take me down to Varegös with his mule in two days and Hussein agreed. Later that day the swarthy village guard whom I had met a few times before and also at Haggi's house came over to the zozan from the nearby Gaveruk zozan. He greeted me in a friendly way but I am sure he came over to confirm some arrangements had been made for me to return to Varegös and Yuksekova.





59. *The women of Gaveruk zozan milking the sheep in the morning before they went off to graze on the pastures around the head of the basin. They would return in the evening for another milk. The goats would also be milked here twice a day, but not always in such an orderly fashion.*

I spent the next two nights with the shepherds, Idris, Namen and Sabri who were grazing their sheep near the largest lake Buyuk Golu. It was quite a short distance for the milking ladies of each household to cover in the morning and evening to milk the sheep and return to the zozan with full pails. The sheep were now always milked in a more organized way with Idris sitting on a boulder while a line of sheep shuffled towards him. He would then distribute the sheep to the individual households to milk. Once the milking was over in the evening the shepherds would eat their meal and then light a small fire and boil a kettle for tea. Most of the time I could easily imagine I was from a scene in the Old Testament, but none more so that in the evenings when we drank glasses of tea beside a blackened wall and then huddled up in our thick felt cloaks called kapanaks as the temperatures fell.

On my last day I felt I had to climb up the peak above Gaveruk zozan again. I had been up about 10 times over the last 2 years and it was my special place. The walk up took me past the slightly larger Gaveruk zozan between the small lakes. Here all the kids swarmed out to meet me as usual when I went past and their colourful mothers in bright flowing robes shouted at their children and then giggled. The dogs at Gaveruk now ignored me unless I went near the sheep. I then started up the steep slope beneath the cliffs where there were still large patches of snow lingering. The tall summer plants had long since blossomed and were now wilting and withdrawing all their essential nutrients back into their rootstock again to overwinter under a new snowpack. At the top of the slope I turned and headed past the highest tarn in the bowl before climbing the stony slopes up to the pass again where I could look across the valley to the other path from Varegös to Ikiyaka where the village's third and largest zozan was. It was the way I went when I tried to climb Samdi Dag. From the pass it was a short climb up across gravel slopes riddled with cushion plants and browning alpines to the summit of the easy peak. There were other peaks in the vicinity but they would have

all required technical climbing to get up. At the top I could look down on the two zozans far below and spot the 2 flocks of sheep. Part of the Gaveruk flock often gathered together as a cluster on a patch of snow, either to cool down or escape the flies. All around me were craggy mountains of the Cilo-Sat range and across all these mountains I knew there were summer zozans leading a millennia old way of life. This was indeed a special place and I felt home here.



*60. Idris, Myself and Isalm after a night spent looking after the sheep in a coral not far from Sergera zozan. I spent many nights sleeping with these shepherds beside the sheep curled up under my felt kapanak cloak which kept the near zero temperatures out better than my sleeping bag.*

After the last night with the shepherds in my kapanak I returned with Namen to Sergera zozan. I had very little to pack really as I was leaving my tent, my kerosene stove, pots and pans and the rest of my fried food. I had no need for anything now except my sleeping bag, and I wanted to take my kapanak, or felt cloak, I had bought off Hussein. The rest of my possessions I gave away to Namen and Hussein. So it was a small sack which I loaded onto Namen's mule for the 3 hour walk down to Varegös. It was sad saying goodbye to everyone and even Hussein grabbed my hand with both of his and wished me luck. I shook all the women's hands which initially seemed too forward but they responded heartily. I wanted to give some, like Fatima, a hug but that would have been a step too far. Namen had put on his best clothes to walk me down with clean trousers and a new jersey and for the first time I saw him wearing a pushi, or headscarf. We left the camp with the ladies waving and a swarm of kids following up for half a km to the lip of the hanging valley. Here many grabbed my hands and arms saying "bye bye Cemis" I had a lump in my throat. On the way down we passed a few mule trains on the way up, often laden with bags of flour. The path soon climbed down from the mountain and met the track on the valley floor which we followed down for 4-5 km to reach the trading post at Varegös, with the military post nearby. I said goodbye to Namen here possibly with a tear in my eye and certainly with a lump in my throat. In both my summers up at the zozans on Samdi Dag, Namen had been my guardian angel and friend. This kind, generous, honourable, and

simple man had made sure I had come to no harm and had always made me feel welcome. I did not know when I would see him again but I was sure it would be soon.



*61. Leaving Sergera zozan for the last time with Namen, my patron and guardian, escorting me down to Varegös with his mule in tow. Behind Namen is Sergera lake and the tents and just beyond is the ice covered lake near the snow drift.*

Namen returned back up the mountain with a sack of flour while I walked to the junction of the road to wait for the next jeep to Yuksekova. Unfortunately, the Captain of the army post spotted me and called me over. For the next half hour I was quizzed by him as my rucksack was searched. Luckily they missed my Kurdish-English dictionary again as it was a banned item in Turkey and would have no doubt caused some problems. I still remember the Captain saying to me “Why do you stay up there, they are just savages”. I did not feel confident enough to defend them. Luckily a jeep appeared and the Captain ordered it to stop and take me back to Yuksekova. It was a bumpy 3 hours to get there and when I arrived in this small bustling town I felt a bit bewildered. I spent a night here and then took the bus the next day to Van where I had a couple of days and met a few European backpackers. After slowly easing back into travelling mode I decided to take the train from Van to Istanbul which was an incredibly uncomfortable and slow 3 days. I was lean and agile so I managed to sleep in the luggage rack above the corridor, wrapped up in my kapanak which still smelt of the zozan.

Over the next two decades the political situation in Kurdistan became very turbulent. The Iran-Iraq war of the Early and Mid 1980's had greatly distracted and weakened Saddam Hussein, the Arab leader of Iraq. The Kurds led by the KDP of Masoud Barzani and the PUK of Jalal Talabani saw their opportunity and both sided with the Iranians launched their own rebellions against Saddam Hussein and these were largely unsuccessful. Once the war was over Saddam Hussein turned his attention to the Kurdish north of Iraq and launched the terrible vengeance of the Al-Anfal campaign and genocide in the Late 1980s. During the Al-Anfal Saddam Hussein's government killed possibly

200,000 Kurds in southern Kurdistan, often as massacres or with chemicals as in Halabja. The campaign also saw Kurdish towns and cities cleared and repopulated with Arabs from south Iraq. This continual insurgency in Northern Iraq against Saddam Hussein lasted through the First Gulf War in 1991, where the US, under George Bush, encouraged the Kurds to rebel and then abandoned them to the Second Gulf War in 2003. After this a very fragile Kurdish autonomy was established in Northern Iraq which still clings on.

Concurrent with Kurdish uprisings in Iraq another rebel group, the PKK, was becoming established in the Kurdish areas of Turkey and in the lawless mountain areas of Northern Iraq. It advocated revolutionary socialism and Kurdish independence in reaction to the cultural and ethnic suppression of all things Kurdish in SE Turkey. The PKK operated in Turkish Kurdistan from the early 1980's but was swiftly hounded by the Turkish military so it disappeared underground in Turkey and fled to Northern Iraq also where it established training bases. Turkey often invaded Northern Iraq to root out these training bases with ground forces and air strikes. The PKK often launched attacks in Turkey from their hidden bases in Northern Iraq with the main targets being government and military posts in remote locations. The army post at Vargös was a typical target. This conflict between the PKK and Turkey continued on and off from 1980 until 2015 with tens of thousands of casualties. From 2015 the focus of the PKK was turned towards the Islamic State in Northern Iraq and Syria and the conflict with Turkey subsided but there is always the potential for it to flare up again especially after another US President, Donald Trump, again betrayed the Kurds, this time the Syrian Kurds and YPG in 2019.

Against this background the mountainous border regions between Turkey and Iraq were completely closed just after I left in 1986 and provinces like Hakkari were off limits to all visitors, as conflicts between the PKK and Turkish military escalated. The area was closed for 3 decades from 1987 until 2018 when the Turkish military wrestled back control of its borders and suppressed PKK activity in Northern Iraq with airstrikes and negotiation. It is a remote and mountainous area so a situation can flare up and the area could easily be closed again. During these 3 decades I had no information on how life in Ikiyaka was faring as they were in the heart of the conflict. I assumed that life was going on as normal and that in each spring Namen, Hussein, Idris and all the inhabitants would emerge from their snowbound houses in the village and graze their flocks on the nearby spring pastures and start cultivating their terraced fields before moving up and over to the zozans on Samdi Dag for the glorious summer. When I did get some information in 2019 it was very bad news indeed.

Sometime in late September 1989 some PKK militants crossed the border from Iraq and raided the village of Ikiyaka trying to steal some sheep. One of the village guards, Sadi Aykut, who was 45, collected a few other village guards together and he led a small group who pursued the PKK militants and shot 2 of them dead. The PKK had always hated the village of Ikiyaka which was pro Turkish and whose Kurdish village guards had been trained and retained after their 3 year conscription in the Turkish army. The PKK must have perceived these guards as traitors to their autonomous Marxist cause. The death of two of their militants at the hands of Sadi Aykut prompted them to plan a terrible vengeance. Two months later, on the 24th of November, 37 members of the PKK crossed the border again into Turkey to avenge the earlier skirmish. As they approached the village they captured 8 shepherds guarding 300 sheep. They were 1)Kemal Doğan, 2)Mehmet Reşit Aykut, 3)Abdurrahman Gezginci, 4)Mehmet Kirbiş 5)Nurettin Balci, 6)Cafer Boz, 7)Enver Babat and 8)Ikram Boz. They tied the shepherds' feet and hands together. Then the PKK militia of 37 split into two, with a group under their commander called Hogir continuing up the valley to Ikiyaka village, and a group remaining with the captured shepherds and the 300 sheep.

Hogir led his men into the snow covered village under light of the half moon and went to the house of Sadi Aykut. They stormed into the house raking it with automatic rifle fire and a rocket launcher. They captured Sadi Aykut, his wife and some other relations, and then discovered 2 women and 5 children who were huddled terrified in a corner. They were all dragged outside, and all 14 of them

were lined up in the snow and shot dead. They were Sadi Aykut (b.1944), Emine Aykut (b.1947) Zuleyha Aykut (b.1942), Cemil Aykut (b.1959), Mehmet Aykut (b.1978), Hazal Aykut (b.1931). Ismet Aykut (b.1982), Enver Aykut (b.1982), Burhan Aykut (b.1981), Namet Aykut (b.1982), Halime Aykut (b.1985), Rifat Aykut (b.1986), Mustafa Aykut (b.1987), Elife Aykut (b.1988).

Meanwhile another group of PKK attacked the house of Huseyin Boz. Here they discovered 7 people hiding, all belonging to the Boz family. Huseyin was not at home and survived the attack. The PKK strangled all the other members, most of whom were women and children and then set the house on fire. They were Nami Boz (b.1935), Esat Boz (b.1958), Cebal Boz (b.1965), Fatma Boz (b.1968), Selime Boz (b.1982), Cebrail Boz (b.1985) and Muhammet Boz (b.1987). After 15 minutes the attack on the two houses was over 21 people were murdered in the brutal massacre. The PKK attack force retreated back to the defence force who were guarding the 8 shepherds. Hogir shouted at the shepherds saying they were all traitors and lined them up on the ground a metre apart and strangled them with their own headscarves or pushi. The 37 PKK then fled back into Iraq driving the 300 sheep before them and 29 villagers from Ikiyaka dead.



*62. A shepherd's life in the summer in the beautiful Cilo-Sat mountains was nearly idyllic. It was an eternal lifestyle which had not changed since Abraham of the Old Testament some 250 generations ago. It is our cultural DNA, which is just under the surface;- even in the most developed of cultures.*

Due to the remoteness of the village the military authorities were not alerted until midday the next day when a village guard ran up to the snow covered pass and radioed down to the military outpost at Varegös. It was not until the next day again that a military unit was sent to the traumatized village to see what had happened. Graves were dug beneath the walnut trees for those who had been murdered by the PKK that evening but the village never really recovered and despite an increased Turkish military presence, the village was abandoned in 1992. Some of the inhabitants went to Northern Iraq, some including many of the village guards, went to a new village for displaced people called Üzümkıran, near Şemdinli, and some went to Yuksekova. I have researched as to what might

have happened to the Donat and Dugran families but have found no leads yet. However I was relieved to see that I recognized no one on the list of names of the people who were murdered that fateful night in 1989. I think the village guard who occasionally visited Hussein might have been Sadi Aykut as he fit the description and I know he was mostly involved with the third unit of Ikiyaka on the north side of Samdi Dag. The Muktah's extended family was also in this herding unit and I suspect the Aykut and Boz families who were targeted belonged to this herding unit. Sometime in the near future I will have to go to Yuksekova to continue my research before the people who were so kind to me, notably Namen and the Donat family, get too old.

James Baxter. 2020.