

### This and that in Gaziantep, Turkey

I spent about 1 month in Gaziantep in Turkey in order to explore measures for supporting Syria which has been struggling under prolonged civil war and chaos since 2011. While I will write more about the nature of the work on another occasion, here I would like to introduce various things in Gaziantep.

Gaziantep is located approximately 50 km from the Turkey - Syria boarder and about 100 km from the 2nd largest Syrian city Aleppo as the crow flies. Despite this proximity, unlike Aleppo from where lots of people fled as internally displaced people, Gaziantep remains very peaceful. The differences between the two cities are so stark that we cannot help but feel the complexity of Syria's situation.

Gaziantep used to be called Aintap (Antep). The name conjures images of water and agriculture as the name includes "ain" which means spring in Arabic. The population of Gaziantep is estimated to be around



The Gaziantep Castle

1.3 million and it is the 6th largest city in Turkey. In some ways it is a very modern city with trams crisscrossing the city. It has a museum with a collection of mosaic work from the Roman era. It also has the Gaziantep Castle which was constructed during the Byzantine period in the 6th century. Around the castle, there are public baths called *hamam* and a historic old town with artisans making copper ware, souvenir shops etc, looking rather similar to Aleppo.

Incidentally, I would have expected that there would be at least one or two Chinese restaurants given the city's size however to my surprise there were none. Restaurants are almost all Turkish and all offer kebabs. Turkish cuisine is said to be one of the three world's best cuisines and there are many kinds of delicious dishes. Among them stewed dishes in local eateries are particularly delicious and one cannot get tired of them even if one eats them every day. Many stews are tomato based with vegetables such as okra, various beans, potato, eggplant etc.



Stew, salad and ayran

Many include mutton and chicken and usually come with salad, pulao (rice) and *ayran* (drinking yogurt).

A Gaziantep special is a sweet called baklava and there are specialized baklava shops all over the town. Pistachio is another local product, and there are many nut shops with pistachio displayed along with other nuts such as almonds, walnuts and raisins.



At the nuts shop

All around Turkey, and Gaziantep is no exception, one can often see solar water heater on the rooftops of buildings. Satellite dishes, chimneys and solar heaters form the rooftop three piece suite!



Solar heater on the roof

Turkey is promoting use of renewable energy such as hydropower, wind and geothermal power. By 2023, the country aims to achieve a 30% renewable energy share of the total national energy consumption. On the other hand, the country is dependent on imports of oil, and the petrol price is around 5 lira per liter (circa 250 yen) which is more expensive than the price in Japan. The interest in solar water heating shows peoples' wisdom to utilize the offerings of nature for their daily lives.

During my stay this time, I often reminisced about the scenery of towns around Syria such as Aleppo and life in those places in times past. When will those towns regain their peaceful days?



"Gipsy Girl" – an iconic masterpiece at the Mosaic Museum in Gaziantep



The cheerful sign of EFES (It is a liquor shop.)

(By Akira Koto, May 2014)