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The Historical Niksar City in Turkey

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Abstract

The author's visits to Turkey were numerous, and took place from 2005 to 2014. They mostly related to visits to Istanbul, but also to cities in the Asian part of Turkey. Apart from Istanbul, which is located in both the European and Asian parts of Turkey, the author visited the city of Çanakkale, which, like Istanbul, was developed in both the European and Asian parts of Turkey. The visits to Istanbul had different reasons: A visit to Yildiz Technical University as part of the inter-faculty cooperation between the two faculties (when the author was the dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sarajevo), a visit to the

Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) at a large number of scientific conferences (and participation in summer schools organized by IRCICA throughout Turkey) and rest and leisure. The visit to the city of Çanakkale took place from November 3 to 5, 2010, when the author participated in an international scientific symposium (with the theme "Bosnia and Herzegovina's Architectural Tradition: Bosnian Mosques"). The visit to the Niksar city was part of the "Summer School, June 20 - July 17, 2012".

Keywords: Turkey, Niksar, Synergy of Natural Environment, Social Environment and Man

1. Introduction

The author's visits to Turkey were numerous, and took place from 2005 to 2014 (Fig 1). They mostly related to visits to Istanbul, but also to cities in the Asian part of Turkey. Apart from Istanbul, which is located in both the European and Asian parts of Turkey, the author visited the city of Çanakkale, which, like Istanbul, was developed in both the European and Asian parts of Turkey. The visits to Istanbul had different reasons: A visit to Yildiz Technic University within the framework of the inter-faculty cooperation of the two faculties (when the author was the dean of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Sarajevo), a visit to the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) at a large number of scientific conferences (and participation in summer schools organized by IRCICA throughout Turkey). The visit to the Niksar city was part of the "Summer School, June 20 - July 17, 2012" (Figures 2, 3).



Source: Hadrovic, A. (2018). Architecture in the travelogues of an architect. Book 3: Asia, Faculty of Architecture University in Sarajevo, Sarajevo, pp. 1119 - 1189 (in Bosnian)

Fig 1: Map of Turkey. (The places the author visited (the European part of Turkey) are marked with red squares, and the places the author visited (the Asian part of Turkey) with yellow squares)



Source: Amir Pasic (July 8, 2012)

Fig 2: The author presents his work under the title "Public Fountains in Bosnia and Herzegovina", as part of the Summer School, June 20 - July 17, 2012 (in Niksar)

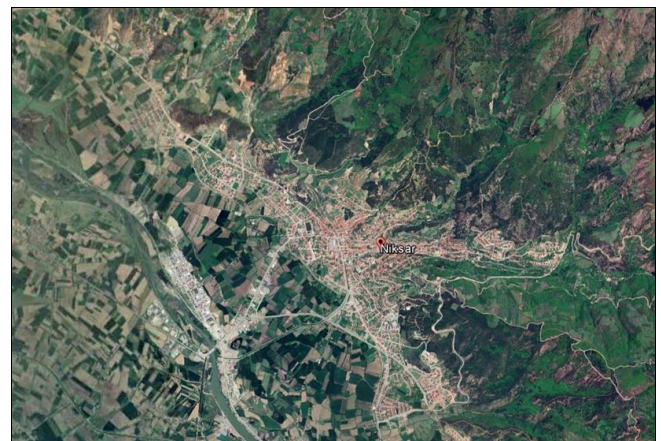


Source: Amir Pasic (July 8, 2012)

Fig 3: Author in company with Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kacar during the Summer School, June 20 - July 17, 2012 (in Niksar)

Niksar is a city (with about 40,000 inhabitants)^[1] located in the province of Tokat, in the northern part of Turkey (Geographic coordinates: 40°35'29.56"N, 36°57'18.20"E, Elevation: 423 m), (Fig 4). It is a city whose masters changed throughout its history: The Hittites (1600-1178 BC), Persia (547 BC), the Empire of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), the Kingdom of Pontus (281p BC-62), ancient Rome (71 BC.), Byzantium (395-1453, with interruptions), Seljuk Beyluks (Sultanate of Rum, 1068-1308, with interruptions)^[2], Ottoman Empire (1398-1922), modern Republic of Turkey (1923-present)^[3]. The reason for such a rich history is the favorable geographical location of the city, favorable climate and vast natural resources (especially the abundance of water and vast fertile plains)^[2]. The king of Pontus and Armenia Minor, Mithridates VI

(Greek: Μιθραδάτης, 135-63 BC) built his palace there, as did his successor, King Polemon I of Pontus (Greek: Πολέμων Πυθόδωρος, 1st century BC-8). During the Empire of Alexander the Great, the present city of Niksar was called Cabira (Greek: Κάβειρα) and Neokaisáreia (Greek: Νεοκαισάρεια). The widow of the king of Pontus Polemon I, Pythodoris, named the city Sebaste. When it was conquered by the Roman emperor Pompey the Great (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, 106-48 BC), the city was given the name Diospolis, but the name Neokaisáreia was still often used. The founder of the Seljuk Danishmend-dynasty (ruled, 1071-1178), Melik Gümüştekin Ahmet Gazi (better known as Danishmend Gazi, ?-1105) finally occupied Neokaisáreia and gave the city the name Niksar. In the 13th century, Niksar became part of the Mongol Empire (existed 1205-1368). Niksar was then conquered (1387) by Kadı Burhanettin (1344-1398), and after his death (1398) the inhabitants of Niksar called for the help of the Ottomans, when it was occupied by Süleyman Çelebi (1377-1411), the son of Sultan Bayazıt I (1360-1403). Since then, the city of Niksar was a springboard for the further expansion of the Ottoman Empire (from there Sultan Mehmed II Fatih (1432-1481) was preparing to conquer Trabzon, and Sultans Selim I (1470-1520) and Suleiman I the Magnificent (1494-1566) for further advances in the east)^[4, 5]. During the Ottoman Empire, Niksar developed in every way, and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it was one of the main centers in the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923).



Source: Google Earth. Accessed: November 20, 2023

Fig 4: Niksar. Location

This work is the result of a series of study trips to Turkey. The aim of the study trips was to get to know the cities on the spot and through their analysis (through 'cabinet work') to contribute to the author's theory of "Architecturally defined space"^[6, 7, 8, 9, 10] (Fig 1).

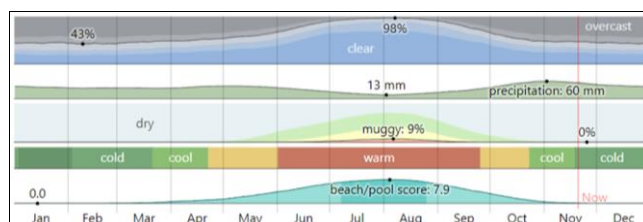
2. Natural resources and sights

According to the Köppen-Geiger climate classification, Niksar has a transitional oceanic and continental climate. The climate of Niksar has a transitional form between the climate characteristic of the Black Sea belt and the continental climate of Anatolia. The average annual temperature is 14.7 °C, and the average annual precipitation is 475.2 mm/m². It is mostly cold and snowy in winter, and hot and moderately dry in summer^[11]. In Niksar, summers are warm, dry and clear, and winters are very cold, snowy and partly cloudy. During the year, the temperature usually

varies from $-1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $29\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and is rarely below $-7\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ or above $33\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The warm season lasts 3.6 months, from June 4 to September 22, with an average daily temperature above $24\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The hottest month of the year in Niksar is August, with an average high of $28\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and low of $17\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The cold season lasts 3.4 months, from November 28 to March 9, with an average daily temperature below $11\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The coldest month of the year in Niksar is January, with the average lowest temperature of $-0\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and the highest of $7\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The brighter part of the year in Niksar begins around June 4 and lasts for 3.8 months, ending around September 27. The clearest month of the year in Niksar is August, during which on average the sky is clear, mostly clear or partly cloudy 96% of the time. The cloudier part of the year starts around September 27th and lasts for 8.2 months, ending around June 4th. The cloudiest month of the year in Niksar is February, during which on average the sky is cloudy or mostly cloudy 57% of the time.

The wet season lasts for 8.6 months, from October 1 to June 21, with a greater than 17% chance that a given day will be a rainy day. The rainiest month in Niksar is May, with an average of 8.1 days with at least 1.00 millimeters of precipitation. The drier season lasts 3.4 months, from June 21 to October 1. August has the fewest rainy days in Niksar, with an average of 2.7 days with at least 1.00 mm of precipitation. Among rainy days, we distinguish those that have only rain, only snow or a mixture of the two. Only in Niksar, the month with the most rain is May, with an average of 8.1 days. According to this categorization, the most common form of precipitation throughout the year is rain itself, with a peak probability of 27% on May 21. It rains in Niksar throughout the year. The heaviest rain in Niksar is November, with an average amount of precipitation of 56 millimeters. The least amount of rain in Niksar is August, with an average amount of precipitation of 16 millimeters. As with rain, we consider snowfall accumulated over a 31-day sliding period centered around each day of the year. Niksar experiences some seasonal variation in monthly snowfall. The snow period of the year lasts for 3.3 months, from December 5 to March 13, with a rolling 31-day snowfall of at least 25 millimeters. The most snow in Niksar is February, with an average snow depth of 57 millimeters. The snow-free period of the year lasts 8.7 months, from March 13 to December 5. The least snow falls around July 23, with an average total accumulation of 0 millimeters. We base the humidity comfort level on the dew point, as it determines whether sweat will evaporate from the skin, thus cooling the body. Lower dew points appear drier and higher dew points appear wetter. Unlike temperature, which usually varies significantly between night and day, dew point tends to change more slowly, so although the temperature may drop at night, a sultry day is usually followed by a sultry night. The perceived humidity level in Niksar, as measured by the percentage of time the humidity comfort level is muggy, oppressive, or miserable, does not vary significantly over the course of the year, remaining within 4% to 4% year-round. The average hourly wind speed in Niksar experiences mild seasonal variation over the course of the year. The windiest part of the year lasts for 4.5 months, from November 20 to April 3, with an average wind speed greater than 2.9 meters per second. The windiest month of the year in Niksar is February, with an average wind speed of 3.4 meters per second. The calmer

time of the year lasts 7.5 months, from April 3 to November 20. The calmest month of the year in Niksar is May, with an average hourly wind speed of 2.3 meters per second. The prevailing hourly mean wind direction in Niksar varies throughout the year. The wind is most often out of the north for 5.8 months, from April 27 to October 20, with a peak percentage of 76% on July 26. The wind is most often from the south for 6.2 months, from October 20 to April 27, with a peak percentage of 63% on January 1. Niksar is located near a large body of water (e.g. ocean, sea or large lake). This section reports the average surface temperature of that water over a wide area. The average water temperature experiences extreme seasonal variations throughout the year. The season with warmer water lasts 3.1 months, from June 24 to September 28, with an average temperature above $21\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The hottest month of the year in Niksar is August, with an average temperature of $25\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The colder water season lasts for 4.0 months, from December 24 to April 24, with an average temperature below $11\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. The coldest month in Niksar is March, with an average temperature of $8\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ [11] (Fig 5).

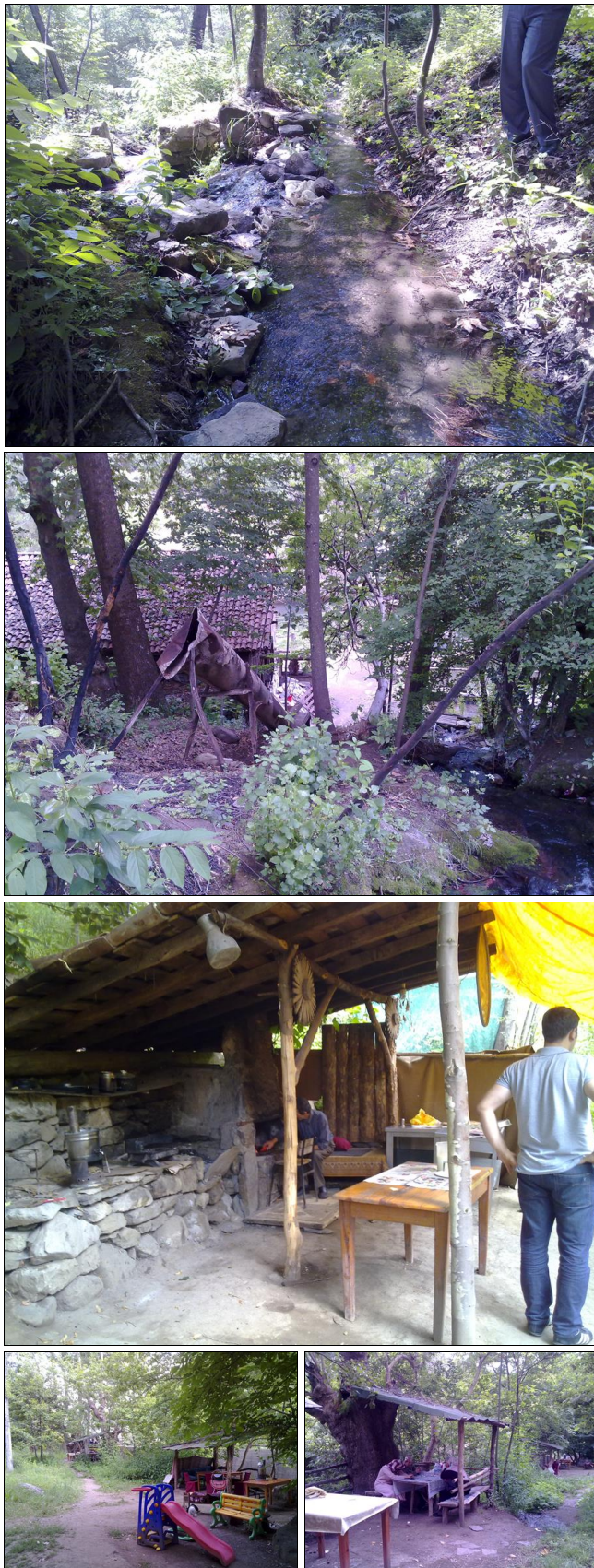


Climate and Average Weather Year Round in Niksar Turkey. <https://weatherspark.com/y/99894/Average-Weather-in-Niksar-Turkey-Year-Round>, Accessed: November 20, 2023.

Fig 5: Niksar weather by month

Niksar has an extremely favorable geographical position, where the proximity of the Black Sea (distance about 65 km) is of great geopolitical importance and importance for the climate of Gred and its surroundings. Niksar is known as the "city of water", because of its great potential (Figures 6, 7, 8) [12]. In addition to the fact that water (in the form of numerous springs, larger and smaller watercourses, where the Kelkit River is the largest) was compatible with the vast plains (which occupy 32% of the municipality's surface, with the possibility of their irrigation) in the agriculture of the inhabitants of Niksar, water was also the main the driving force for many mills and various types of workshops (forges, for example) [13]. At the time when the city was governed by ancient Rome, Niksar was considered one of the most important "industrial centers" of the Roman Empire, thanks to the potential of water as a driving force [14]. Forests cover 53% of the area of Niksar municipality (with extremely diverse flora and fauna), and pastures cover 12% (Figures 7, 8) [15].





Source: Author (July 8, 2012)

Fig 6: Niksar – „City of water“



Source: Author (July 8, 2012)

Fig 7: Fertile fields in the vicinity of Niksar

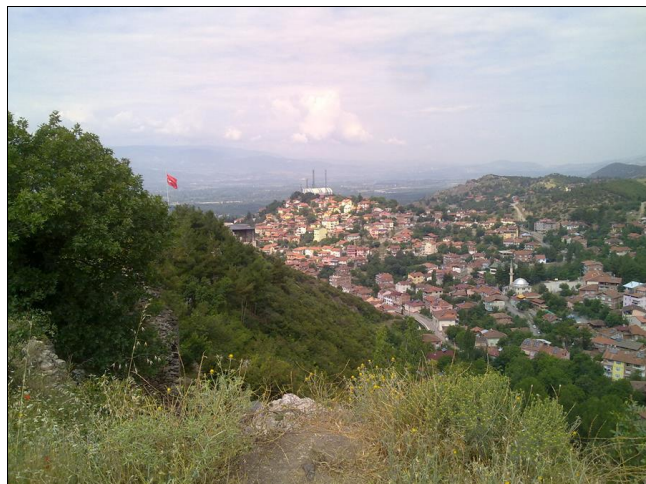


Source: Author (July 8, 2012)

Fig 8: Forests and pastures around Niksar

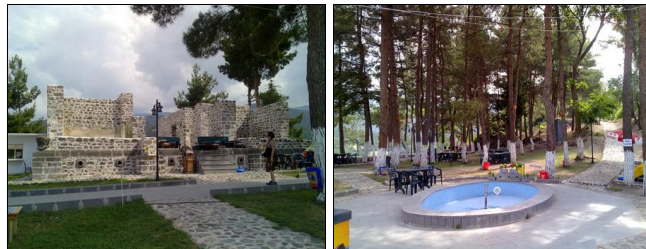
3. Architectural cultural and historical heritage

Each of the numerous peoples left traces of their culture through the rich history of Niksar [2]. Niksar Fortress (Turkish: Niksar Kale, English: Niksar Castle) was built during the reign of ancient Rome (71 BC-395) in Niksar, but was extended and renovated by the later masters of Niksar (Byzantium, Seljuk Beyluks, Ottoman Empire). A palace, treasury, grain storage, water cistern, baths and fountains were built within the fortress... During the Seljuk beyluks, a mosque and a madrasa (Yağbasan madrasa) were built. For the citizens of the city of Niksar, the Niksar fortress means much more than an architectural, cultural and historical heritage [16]. It is a favorite place to stay in nature, where the city of Niksar and its surroundings can be seen as if in the palm of your hand (Figures 9, 10).



Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 9: View from Niksar Fortress on the city and its surroundings





Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 10: Niksar fortress

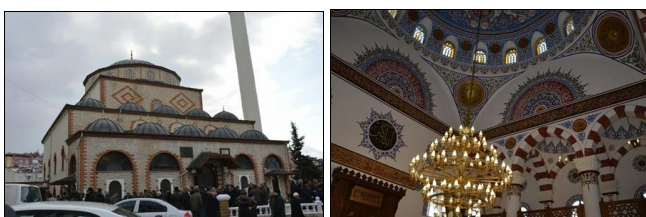
Yağbasan Medrese (Turkish: Yağbasan Medresesi) has a special place in the rich cultural heritage of the city of Niksar. The madrasa was built (1157-1158) as the first madrasa of the Anatolian Turkish civilization [17]. The Danishmendid dynasty made a huge contribution to the education and development of science (especially medicine) and philosophy of Muslims in Anatolia by introducing the institution of madrasa. In this madrasa, Davis Kayseri, the famous Sufi scholar and founder of the Ottoman madrasa system, raised and educated numerous generations of young people and completed his first work in philosophy. The building of the madrasa has an inner courtyard with two wings, without a porch (Fig 11).



Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 11: Yağbasan Medrese

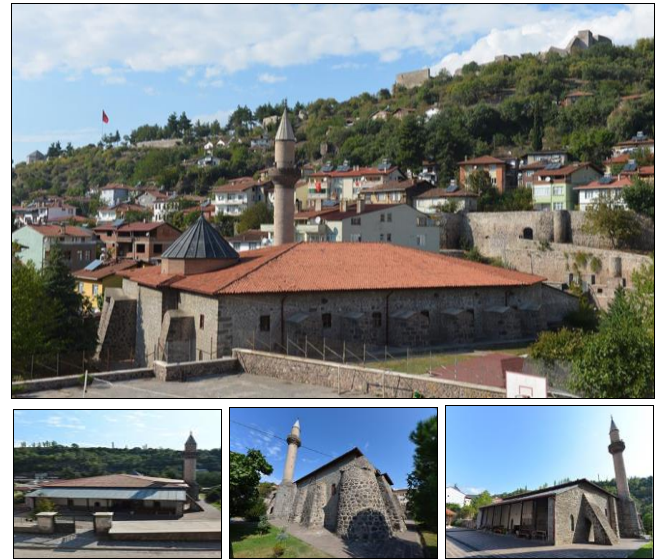
Keşfi Osman Effendi Mosque (Turkish: Keşfi Osman Effendi Camii) is located outside Niksar Fortress. It was built during two construction projects, in 1078 and 1102 [18] (Fig 12).



Source: <http://www.erbaagundem.com/?d2522/gundem/kesfi-camii-ibadete-acildi>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 12: Keşfi Osman Effendi Mosque

The Grand Mosque (Turkish: Ulu Camii) was built (1145) outside the fortress. It is a very stable building, basilica-style, with walls of dark gray granite [19] (Fig 13).



Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 13: The Grand Mosque

Cin Mosque (Turkish: Cin Camii) is physically small, but of exceptional historical value. The mosque has a rectangular base with a vaulted roof, the section of which is a broken arch. The mosque was built in 1160 [20] (Fig 14).



Source: <https://www.posta.com.tr/galeri/tokat-niksar-da-858-yillik-cin-cami-ismiyle-dikkat-cekiyor-1387707>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 14: Cin Mosque

Çöreği Büyük Mosque (Turkish: Çöreği Büyük Camii) is an important building built by the Ilkhanate in the 13th century. The mosque was originally built as a zawiya and hanikah with an inner courtyard^[21] (Fig 15).



Source: <https://www.kizlarsoruyor.com/tatil-seyahat/a133356-danishmentlilerin-baskenti-tarihi-ilce-niksar>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Source: <https://esrabakir.wordpress.com/2017/05/14/coregi-buyuk-cami/>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 15: Çöreği Büyük Mosque

Sungur Bey Zawiya and Tomb (Turkish: Sungur Bey Zawiya ve Türbesi) were built (1164-1169) for Sungur Bey of the Danishmendid dynasty^[22] (Fig 16).



Source: <https://www.turkiyenintariheserleri.com/?oku=68>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 16: Sungur Bey Zawiya and Tomb

Nizamettin Yağbasan Tomb (Turkish: Nizamettin Yağbasan Turbesi) is located within the fortress of Niksar in the immediate vicinity of the madrasa and mosque of which he is the founder. Turbe is a typical construction from the era of the Danishmendid dynasty^[23] (Fig 17).



Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 17: Nizamettin Yağbasan Tomb

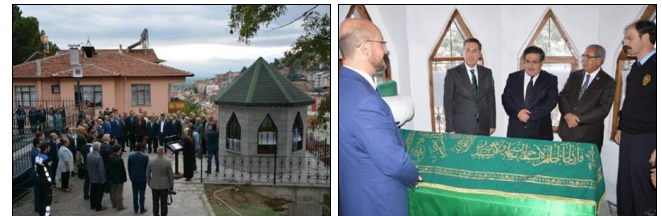
Kırkkızlar Tomb (Turkish: Kırkkızlar Türbesi) was built (1220) from a specific Anatolian brick. The construction of the octagonal base was developed through two floors, where the tomb is on the ground floor and the gallery on the first floor. The inner surfaces of the walls are decorated with glazed ceramic tiles^[23] (Fig 18).



Source: <https://www.turkiyenintariheserleri.com/?oku=59>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 18: Kırkkızlar Tomb

Ahi Pehlivan Zawiya and Tomb (Turkish: Ahi Pehlivan Zawiya ve Türbesi) were built in the 13th century and are an example of early Anatolian Seljuk complex architecture (kulliye)^[24] (Fig 19).



Source: <https://www.yeniemlak.com/tokat-niksar-ahi-pehlivan-anit-mezari-acildi-3443-diger-haberler>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 19: Ahi Pehlivan Zawiya and Tomb

In addition to the above, there are many other turbes in Niksar, among them the following turbes: Fahriye Hatun, Mühür Kesen and Şeikh Bolat. Many turbets are located in the old cemeteries of Niksar, some of which are masterpieces of this type of architecture.

Melik Ghazi Tomb (Turkish: Melik Ghazi Türbesi) is the burial place of Ahmed Ghazi, the conqueror of Niksar. Here you can see the so-called "Turkish triangles" in diamond shapes characteristic of the Seljuk architecture of the 12th and 13th centuries. Turbe was rebuilt after the arrival of the Ottomans (after 1392), which speaks of their care and respect for their ancestors^[25] (Fig 20).



Source: <https://twitter.com/gunerahmed60/status/1082734092163137536/photo/1>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 20: Melik Ghazi Tomb

The Doğan Şah Alp Tomb (Turkish: Doğan Şah Alp Türbesi) was built in the 12th century as an early example of the turbet form that would later be used ^[26] (Fig 21).



Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/459957280842078/posts/520395744798231/>, Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 21: Doğan Şah Alp Tomb

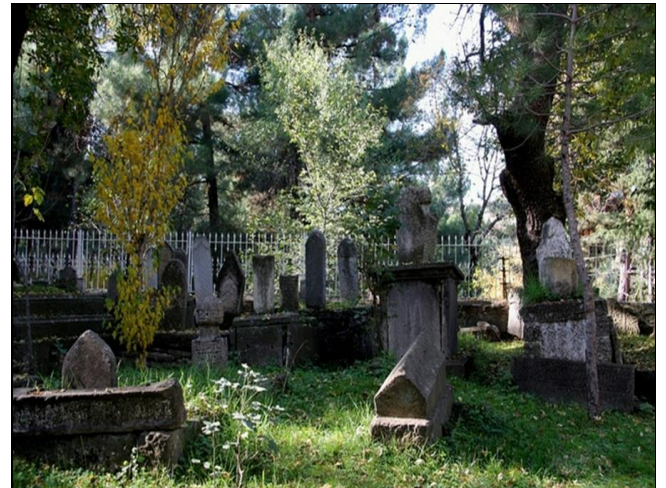
The historical house of Niksar is specific in that its most important space is the kitchen, the central room which is also the living room (Fig 22). A typical kitchen has a fireplace with multiple uses (space heating, food preparation, laundry preparation). The space with the fireplace occupies one half of the central room, while the other half is arranged as a pantry where dry food, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, grain (in special wooden containers) are stored...



Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 22: Historic houses in Niksar

The Kale Anatolian Civilization Stone Works Museum (Turkish: Kale Anadolu Uygarlikari Taş Eserleri Müzesi) is located in Niksar Fortress. The museum exhibits exhibits of Anatolian art in stone, mainly tombstones ^[27] (Fig 23).



Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g3526336-d4738953-i258959891-Niksar_kalesi-Niksar_Tokat_Province.html Accessed: November 21, 2023

Fig 23: Kale Anatolian Civilization Stone Works Museum

The Clock Tower (Turkish: Saat Kulesi) is, in fact, a monument to fallen fighters in the Turkish War of Independence. The clock tower (monument) was erected in 2008 ^[28] (Fig 24).



Source: Author (July 9, 2012)

Fig 24: Clock Tower

4. Conclusion

The author's visits to Turkey were numerous. They mostly related to visits to Istanbul, but also to cities in the Asian part of Turkey. Apart from Istanbul, which is located in both the European and Asian parts of Turkey, the author visited the city of Çanakkale, which, like Istanbul, was developed in both the European and Asian parts of Turkey. The visits had different reasons: The visits to Yıldız Technical University, Karadeniz Technical University, Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University, for example, took place within the framework of the inter-faculty cooperation of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Sarajevo (when the author was the dean of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Sarajevo) with the aforementioned universities, with the coordination of the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) and Professor Amir Pasic. The visit to the Niksar city was part of the "Summer School, June 20 - July 17, 2012". The modern Republic of Turkey is a geographical space on which rich layers of material culture have been "stacked" (and preserved), from the earliest prehistory to the present day. It is safe to say that 'Turkey is the world museum of culture'. Professors from Turkey and all over the world, as well as students, participated in the mentioned summer schools as lecturers. What the professors and students saw on the spot greatly enriched their knowledge that they had acquired at 'their faculties', to their own benefit and to the benefit of the new generations that they will teach.

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