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## The historical antakya city in Turkey

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### Abstract

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 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 Antakya city took place as part of the Summer School, June 27 - July 29, 2011.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Antakya, Synergy of natural environment, social environment and man

### 1. Introduction

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 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 Antakya city took place as part of the Summer School, June 27 - July 29, 2011 (Figure 1). 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" [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11].



**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.

Antakya is a city (with a population of about 399,045, 2022)<sup>[12]</sup> located in a fertile and irrigated valley in the south of Turkey, between the Orontes River and the Habib Neccar Hills, as the center of Hatay Province. Under the name Antioch, this city was for centuries one of the largest cities of the Roman Empire, known as a powerful and influential center of early Christianity. Archaeological findings (at the site of Tell-Açane) confirm the presence of people in this area since 6000 BC (Calcolithic era)<sup>[13]</sup>. After the victory over the Persians (Battle of Issus, 333 BC), King Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) occupied the area around today's Antakya. The city was founded (300 BC) by Seleucus I Nicator (359-281 BC), king of the Hellenistic Seleucid kingdom. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (Heraclius, 575-641), Antioch came into the possession (in 637) of the Islamic Empire during the Caliph (634-644) Omar (Umar ibn Al-Khattab, 584-644). During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (912-969), the city was conquered (969) by the Byzantine general Michael Bourtzes (930-996) and returned to Byzantine possession. The Byzantine general, an Armenian rebel, Philaretos Brachamios (1078) took power in this area and held it until 1084, when it was conquered by the Seljuks. As the Sultanate of Rum, this area remains in the possession of the Seljuks until the invasion of the Crusaders. During the First Crusade (1096-1099), the crusaders massacred the population, both Christian and Muslim, in Antioch. Bohemond I (1054-1111), Prince of Taranto (1089-1111) and Prince of Antioch (1098-1111) was the leader of the crusaders in the First Crusade and lord of the area of today's Antakya. The reign of the Crusaders was ended (1268) by Sultan Baybars (Abu al-Futuh and Abu l-Futuh, 1223-1277), the fourth Sultan of Egypt from the Mamluk Bahri dynasty. Since then, Antioch has lost its importance as an important trading center when the city-port of Alexandretta (İskenderun) on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea takes over that role. During the reign of Sultan Selim I (1470-1520), the Ottoman Empire took over (1516) Antakya from the Egyptian Mamelukes

when Antakya became the center of the Sandzak of Antakya, part of the Damascus Eyalet<sup>[14,15]</sup>. Antakya was hit by earthquakes in a short period of time (1822 and 1872), when many of its buildings were destroyed, and many residents left the city. When the Ottoman general Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt (Kavalalı İbrahim Paşa, 1789-1848) built his palace here (1835), the city had only 5,000 inhabitants (mostly Muslims, 80% of the total population). The construction (1899) of the Euphrates railway, which connected Antakya with the port of Sueida (now Samandağı), was supposed to encourage the population to return to Antakya, which did not happen. The construction of a railway line along the valley of the lower reaches of the Orontes River (1902) was, in this respect, much more effective, when the city began its accelerated development and growth. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the founding (October 29, 1923) of the modern Republic of Turkey, Antakya became part of the newly formed state as the capital of its Hatay province.

**Natural resources and sights**

Antakya is located on the banks of the Orontes River (Turkish: Asi Nehri), about 22 km from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The city is situated in a fertile valley (Amiko's Plain) watered by the rivers Orontes, Karasu and Afrin. The plain is surrounded by the mountains Nur (ancient Amanos) in the north, Jebel Akra in the south and the 440 m high Habib-i Neccar (ancient mountain Silpius) in the east. The mountains are the generator of many water sources and the resource of the famous green marble. Climate conditions in Antakya are characterized by a warm and moderate atmosphere. Winter months are much rainier than summer months in Antakya. This climate is considered Csa according to the Köppen-Geiger climate classification. The average annual temperature recorded in Antakya is 18.0 °C, according to available data. The amount of precipitation on an annual level is 658 mm according to meteorological records<sup>[16]</sup> (Figure 2).

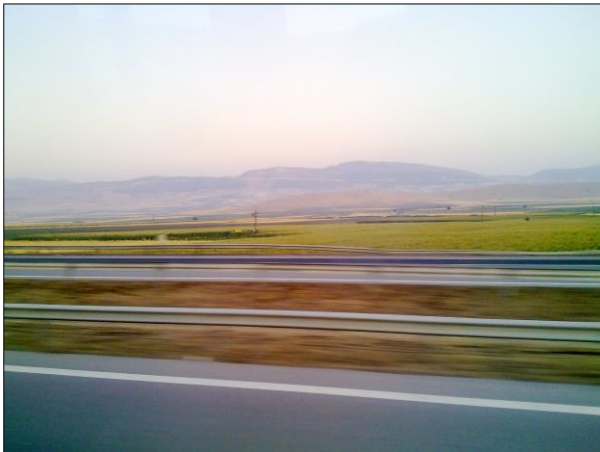
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Avg. Temperature °C (°F)	8 °C (46.5) °F	9.8 °C (49.6) °F	12.9 °C (55.2) °F	16.5 °C (61.6) °F	20.5 °C (68.9) °F	24.1 °C (75.4) °F	26.6 °C (79.9) °F	27.2 °C (80.9) °F	26 °C (77.1) °F	21.3 °C (70.3) °F	14.8 °C (58.6) °F	9.6 °C (49.2) °F
Min. Temperature °C (°F)	4.3 °C (39.8) °F	5.6 °C (42) °F	8.3 °C (46.9) °F	11.5 °C (52.6) °F	15.4 °C (59.7) °F	19 °C (66.2) °F	21.7 °C (71.1) °F	22.8 °C (72.7) °F	20.6 °C (69) °F	17 °C (62.5) °F	10.5 °C (50.9) °F	5.9 °C (42.6) °F
Max. Temperature °C (°F)	12.1 °C (53.8) °F	14.3 °C (57.7) °F	17.8 °C (64) °F	21.7 °C (71) °F	25.8 °C (78.4) °F	29.5 °C (85.1) °F	32.1 °C (89.7) °F	32.6 °C (90.6) °F	30.4 °C (86.8) °F	26.4 °C (79.5) °F	19.5 °C (67.1) °F	13.6 °C (56.6) °F
Precipitation / Rainfall mm (in)	108 (4)	107 (4)	88 (3)	59 (2)	36 (1)	10 (0)	4 (0)	4 (0)	22 (0)	46 (1)	67 (2)	107 (4)
Humidity(%)	77%	74%	70%	69%	67%	64%	66%	66%	66%	64%	65%	74%
Rainy days (d)	9	8	8	7	5	2	1	1	3	5	6	8
avg. Sun hours (hours)	5.6	6.6	8.0	9.0	10.2	10.9	10.8	9.8	9.2	8.5	7.4	5.9

Source: <https://en.climate-data.org/asia/turkey/hatay/antakya-243/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

**Fig 2:** Weather by month // Weather averages Antakya

Antakya is located in the northern hemisphere. The summer days of summer start at the end of June and end in September. This period includes the months: June, July, August, September. The most significant natural wealth of Antakya is the vast fertile plain watered by the rivers Orontes, Karasu and Afrin (Figure 3). A very efficient artificial irrigation system is arranged here. The high level of agricultural production efficiency of this plain is additionally ensured by the mild Mediterranean climate, which enables continuous agricultural production throughout the year. Here you can

see, lined up next to each other, plots that have been prepared (sampled) for sowing, plots on which sowing has just been done, plots with an early phase of cereal growth (or some other agricultural crops), plots in the maturation phase of agricultural crops, plots on which the harvest was done, and so on. The Hatay region is extremely important for the Republic of Turkey due to its wealth. The city of Antakya is famous for the production of soap with the scent of laurel (Latin: *Laurus nobilis*).



Source: Author (July 8, 2011)

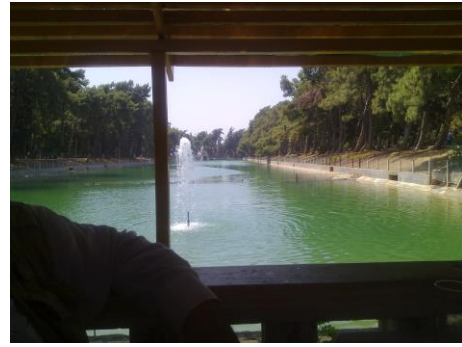
Fig 3: Vast fertile plains around Antakya

The waterfalls at the Harbiye/Daphne promenade (Turkish: Harbiye Selalesi) are located about 7.5 km from Antakya, on a wooded hillside facing the Mediterranean Sea. In ancient Rome, the waterfalls were called Daphne ("laurel"). According to legend, here the god Zeus, after a long portage, reached the nymph Daphne and turned her into a laurel tree. Seleucus I Nicator (358-281 BC), basileus of the Seleucid Empire, built the temple of Daphne here <sup>[17]</sup> (Figures 4,5).



Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/97924400@N00/8279397581>, Accessed: August 30, 2018.

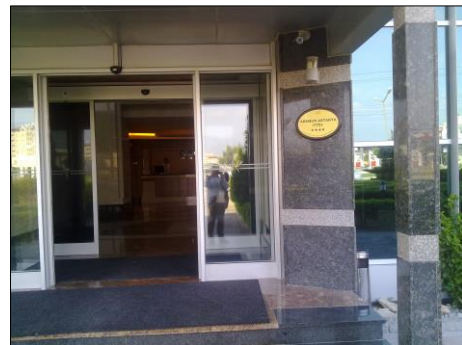
Fig 4: The waterfalls at the Harbiye/Daphne promenade



Source: Author (July 9, 2011)

Fig 5: A lake with a restaurant near Antakya

Hotel Anemon Antakya offers a 24-hour front desk, room service and a concierge. In addition, as a valued guest of the Anemon Antakya Hotel, you can enjoy the pool and restaurant located within the hotel (Figure 6). Guests arriving by car have free parking. For those who want to visit popular landmarks while visiting Antakya, Anemon Antakya Hotel is located a short distance from Hain der Daphne (2.1 km) and Habibi Neccar Mosque (3.4 km) <sup>[18]</sup>.



Source: Author (July 9, 2011)

Fig 6: Park (Exterior design of Anemone Antakya Hotel)

### 3. Architectural cultural and historical heritage

The natural wealth of the Hatay region and its exceptional geopolitical position have generated its rich history, where many peoples and civilizations have left behind a rich architectural and other cultural-historical heritage. The city of Antakya is a real cosmopolitan city due to the wealth of different ethnic groups, their cultures and traditions.

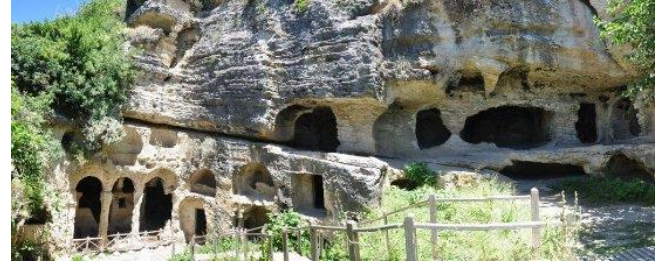
Habib al-Najjar Cave (Turkish: Habib-i Neccar) is the place where, according to the belief of many Muslims, the body of Habib-i Neccar/Habib Al-Najjar is buried (Figure 7). Habib Carpenter (Habib Al-Najjar, 5-(30-40)) was, according to the belief of some Muslims, a Muslim martyr who lived in Antioch at the time of Jesus. This assumption is usually based on Sura XXXVI (Ya Sin) of the Koran, although no name is mentioned here. In Muslim tradition, Habib believed that the message of Jesus' disciples was sent to Ya-Sin's people. He was tortured for this belief. Some sources have identified Habib with Saint Agabus of the early Christian era who was martyred in Antioch in the time of Jesus. This connection is disputed, because Christian tradition believes that Agabus was martyred in Jerusalem, not in Antioch<sup>[19]</sup>.



Source: <http://antioch-on-theorontes.blogspot.com/2013/05/habib-alnajjar-and-st-george.html>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Fig 7: Habib al-Najjar Cave on Mount Silpius (Habib-i Neccar)

Beşikli Cave and Graves (Turkish: Beşikli Magara) are located in the ancient city of Seleukeia Pierria, near the tunnel of Vespasianus Titus<sup>[20]</sup> (Figure 8). There are 12 tombs in the cave, which are believed to belong to the Roman governors of ancient Seleucus Pieria<sup>1</sup>.



Source: <http://www.bursahayvanatbahcesi.com/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.



Source: <http://www.dergibursa.com.tr/bursanin-baharbahcesi/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Source: [https://www.tripadvisor.fr/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g255071-d1746920-i148522156-Rockhampton\\_Botanic\\_Gardens-Rockhampton\\_Queensland.html](https://www.tripadvisor.fr/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g255071-d1746920-i148522156-Rockhampton_Botanic_Gardens-Rockhampton_Queensland.html), Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Fig 8: Beşikli Cave and Graves

Bagras (Bakras) Castle (Turkish: Bagras (Bakras) Kalesi) was built in antiquity, and later it was rebuilt and extended several times (especially during the Crusades when it was used by the Knights Templar). The fort is located on a hill, at a distance of about 27 km from İskenderun (Alexandretta) towards Antakya<sup>[20]</sup> (Figure 9).



Source: <https://hiveminer.com/Tags/bakras%2Cturkey>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

<sup>1</sup> Seleucia Pieria (Greek: Σελεύκεια ἐν Πιερῖα), later called Suedia, was the Hellenistic seaport city of Antioch ad Orontes (Syria Prima), the Seleucid

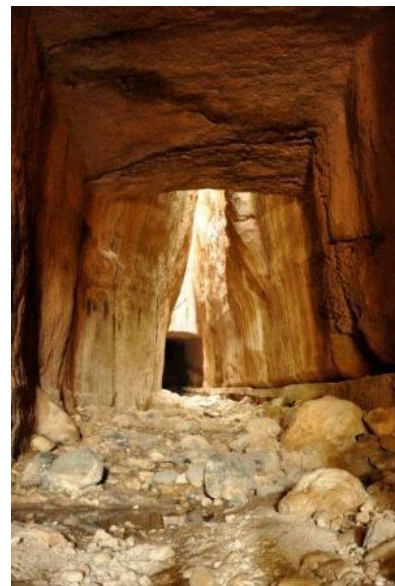
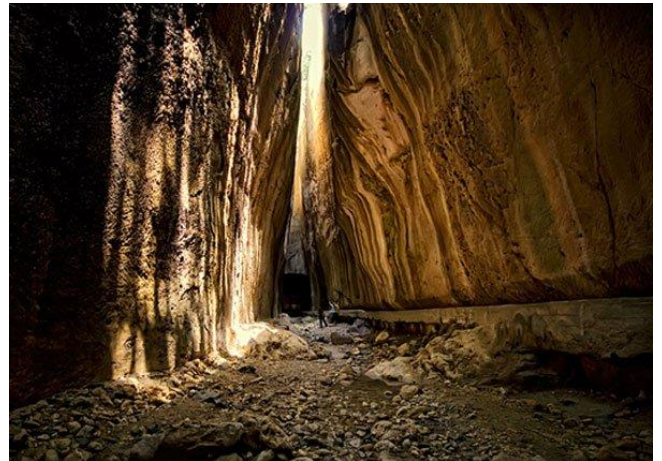
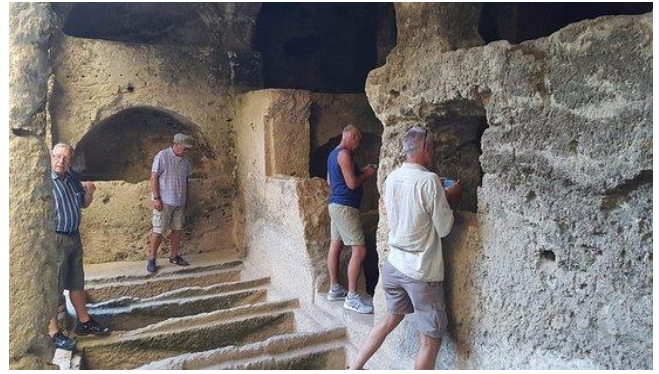
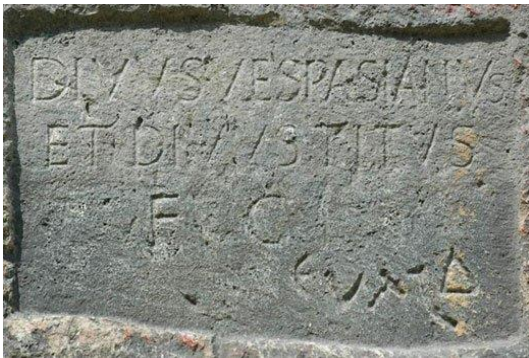
capital located north of the mouth of the Orontes River. The city was founded in 300 BC.



Source: <http://www.bakraskalesi.com/bakrasgaleri.aspx>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

**Fig 9:** Bagras (Bakras) Castle

Vespasianus Titus Tunnel-Samandağı (Turkish: Vespasianus Titus Tüneli-Samandağı) is located in the town of Çevlik in Samandağ District at the foot of Nur Mountain, about 35 km from the center of Antakya. The tunnel is part of the system used to deliver water to the city, from the dam, a short access channel, the first part of the tunnel, a short intermediate channel, the second part of the tunnel and the second discharge channel. The tunnel was built according to the orders of the Roman emperor Vespasian (Caesar Vespasianus Augustus, 9-79) in order to divert the waters that flow down the mountain during heavy rainfall and endanger the port. The construction of the tunnel began during the reign of Vespasian, continued during the reign of his son, Titus (39-81) and his successor, and ended in the 2nd century during the reign of Antoninus Pius (Titus Aurelius Fulvius Boionius Arrius Antoninus Pius, 86-161). The closed part of the tunnel is 130 meters long, 7 meters high and 6 meters wide <sup>[21]</sup> (Figure 10).



**Fig 10:** Vespasianus Titus Tunnel-Samandagi

Source: <https://www.ancient-origins.net/ancientplaces-asia/ancient-vespasianus-titus-tunnelturkey-001799>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/263953228141395087/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

The rock-carved Church of St. Peter (Armenian: Knisset Mar Semaan Kefa, Turkish: Senpiyer Kilisesi) is located near Antakya. The church is carved into the rock, at a depth of 13 m, a width of 9.5 m and a height of 7 m. The church has a network of shelters and tunnels carved into the rock. The church is a place of Christian pilgrims and is considered one of the oldest churches in the world. Along the banks of the Orontes River there are a large number of tombs carved into the rock <sup>[22]</sup> (Figure 11).



Source: [https://yellali.com/turkey/places\\_page/7/sight-seeing/antakya](https://yellali.com/turkey/places_page/7/sight-seeing/antakya), Accessed: February 7, 2024.



Source: <http://spenglerspanglergenealog.homestead.com/Church-of-Saint-Peter-Antioch-Turkey.html>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Fig 11: The rock-carved Church of St. Peter

The Monastery of St. Simeon Stylites the Younger (Turkish: Aziz Simon manastır) is located on a hill, about 29 km southwest of Atakya and 6 km east of Samandığ. The monastery is the "sanctuary of the pillars" where Simeon Stylites the Younger (521-597) lived. It is believed that St. Simon had the power of draining water. There were three churches inside the monastery. The first church contains the remains of mosaics, and one of the other two churches was decorated with frescoes. The third church was, by all accounts, a modest building used by monks in their daily service. Until the 13th century, the monastery was a place of pilgrimage for Christians <sup>[23]</sup> (Figure 12).



Source: <http://turkisharchaeonews.net/site/monastery-st-simeon-near-antakya>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Fig 12: The Monastery of St. Simeon Stylites the Younger

Old market district (Turkish: Uzun Çarşı) is the place of a large number of traditional shops, located in the center of the city of Antakya (Figure 13).



Source: <http://www.manzara.gen.tr/uzuncarsiresimleri>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.



Source: <http://www.privadoturizm.com/tur/43/antakya-mersin-tarsus-adana-turu-4-gun-595-1/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

Fig 13: Old market district

The seedy Gündüz Cinema (Turkish: Gündüz Sineması antakyası) is arranged in the former parliament building of the Republic of Hatay, located in the city center. The first cinema performance was held (1927) during the French occupation (1920-1939) of the Antakya region <sup>[24]</sup> (Figure 14).



**Source:** <http://kisacames.blogspot.com/2016/12/birzamanlar-antakya-1800-1900ler-once.html>, Accessed: February 7, 2024



**Source:** [https://levlakdali.blogspot.com/2017/08/5-geleneksel-bacisal-seyahat-etkinligi\\_16.html](https://levlakdali.blogspot.com/2017/08/5-geleneksel-bacisal-seyahat-etkinligi_16.html), Accessed: February 7, 2024.

**Fig 14:** The seedy Gündüz Cinema

The Ottoman Habib-i Neccar Mosque (Turkish: Habib-i Neccar Camii) is the oldest mosque in Antakya and one of the oldest in Anatolia. It is believed that the mosque was built on the place where a temple stood in ancient times. During the Christian domination of the city, the ancient temple was transformed into a church dedicated to John the Baptist. In the Middle Ages, the city was conquered (637) by the Rashidun Caliphate, then by Byzantium (969), the Seljuks (1084), the Crusaders (1098), the Baybars of the Mughal Sultanate (1268)..., where each of the new conquerors turned the temple into a church, the church into mosque, mosque to church (...) and so on. There is an inscription on the current construction of the mosque, which states that the mosque was rebuilt (1275) during the Baybarian period. The mosque was destroyed in an earthquake (1853), after which it was rebuilt. Its minaret is an older construction, and the fountain is a newer construction <sup>[25]</sup> (Figure 15).

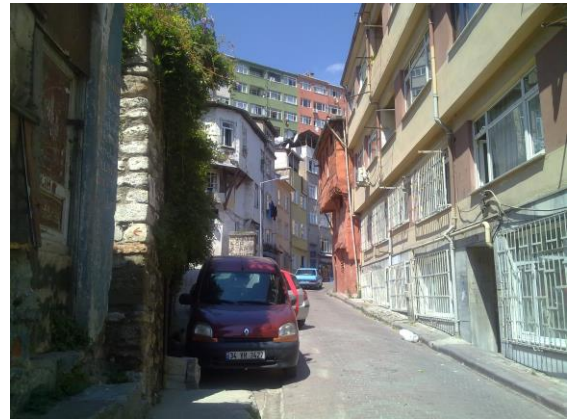
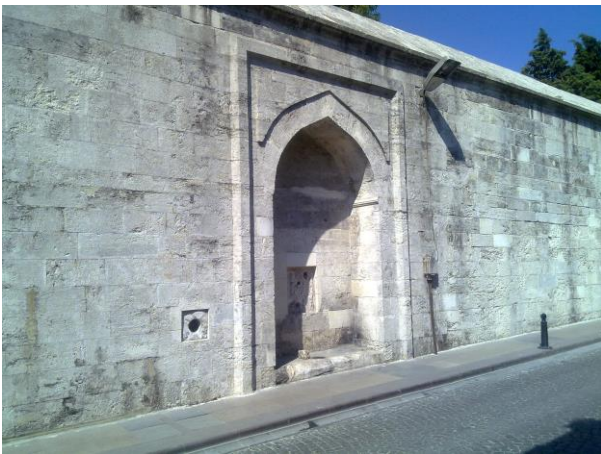


**Fig 15:** The Ottoman Habib-i Neccar Mosque

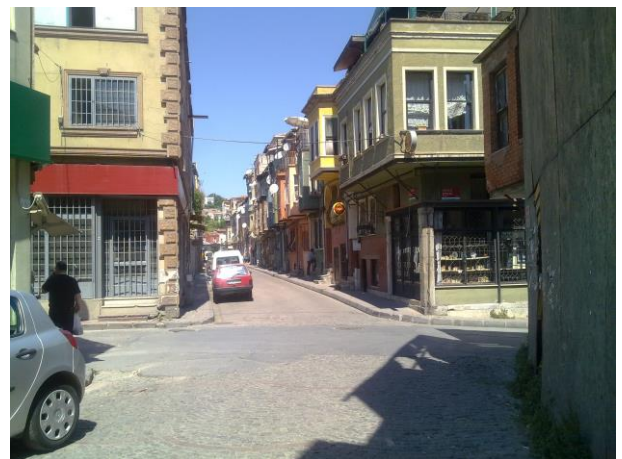
**Source:** <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/190277152989721666/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

**Source:** Author (July 9, 2011)

The labyrinth of narrow streets and old Antakya houses (Turkish: Dar sokakların ve eski Antakya evlerinin labirenti) is, in fact, the old city of Antakya. Today, this is one of the best-preserved residential complexes from the Ottoman period (Figure 16).

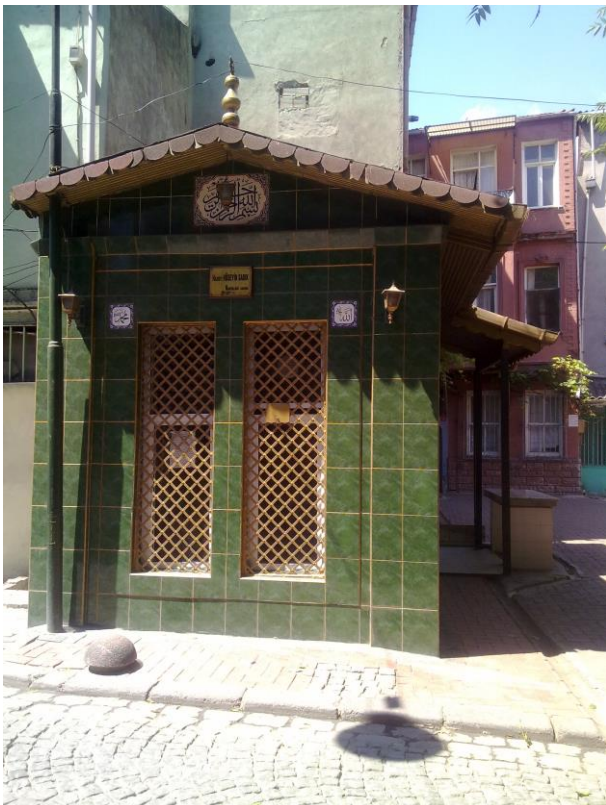






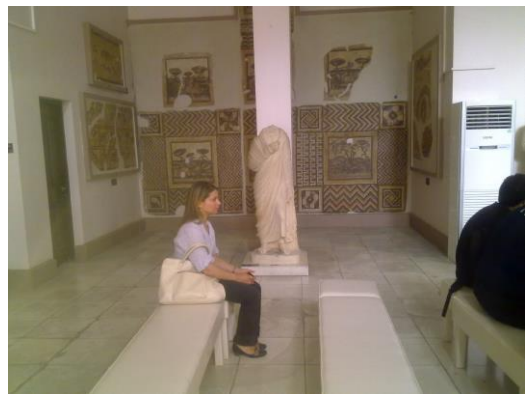
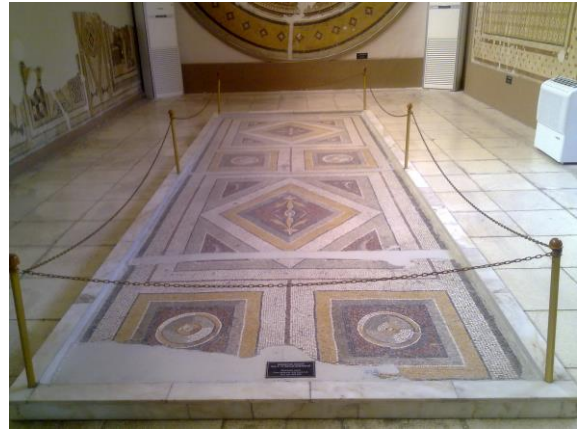
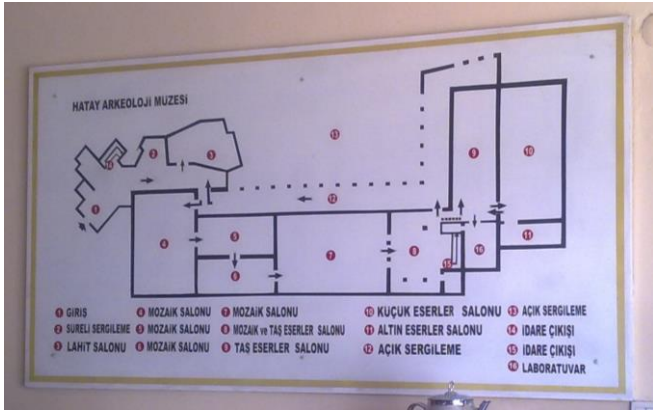
Source: Author (July 9, 2011)

Fig 16: The labyrinth of narrow streets and old Antakya houses

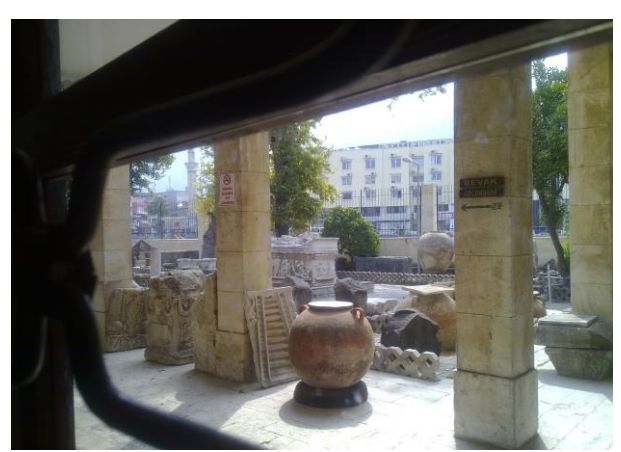
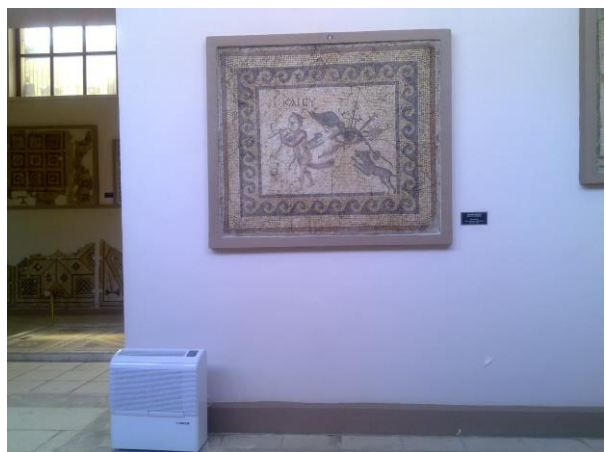
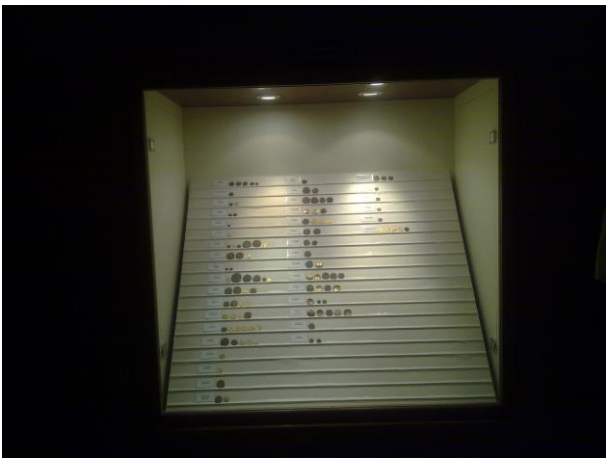


Hatay Archeology Museum (Turkish: Hatay Arkeoloji Müzesi) has the second largest collection of Roman mosaics in the world. The construction of the museum began in 1934 on the recommendation of the French archaeologist M. Prost, and was completed in 1938 and came under Turkish administration after the unification (1939) of the Republic of Hatay with the Republic of Turkey. The museum was first opened in 1948, and after its reconstruction and expansion, it was reopened in 1975 [26] (Figure 17).











Source: Author (July 9, 2011)

Fig 17: Hatay Archaeology Museum

Mustafa Kemal University, MKU (Turkish: Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi), has several faculties including engineering and medicine, while the campus (Tayfur Sökmen) is located in Serinyol district, about 15 km north of Antakya. The university was founded in 1992, and currently more than 32,000 students study there <sup>[27]</sup> (Figure 18).



Source: <https://kampuszgazete.com/hatay-mustafa-kemal-universitesi/>, Accessed: February 7, 2024.

**Fig 18:** Mustafa Kemal University, MKU

A panoramic view of the Antakya city from the hill Habib-i Neccar (Habib An-Najar)<sup>2</sup>, (Figure 19).



Source: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/jacqueline\\_poggi/14726217912](https://www.flickr.com/photos/jacqueline_poggi/14726217912), Accessed: February 7, 2024.

**Fig 19:** Panoramic view of the Antakya city from the hill Habib-i Neccar (Habib An-Najar)

## 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 Gaziosmanpaşa University, for example, were arranged within the framework of 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 Antakya city took place as part of the Summer School, June 27 - July 29, 2011. The modern Republic of Turkey is a geographical area where rich layers of material culture are "stacked" (and preserved), from the earliest prehistory to the present day. It is safe to say that 'Turkey is the world's 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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<sup>2</sup> It is believed that the 13th ayah (verse) from the Qur'anic Sura al Yassin refers to the city of Antakya: "he cites the inhabitants of a city as a lesson when the messengers came to them"... In quoting these verses, the Author

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