

Konitsa: Introducing a Little-Known Ottoman Town in Greek Epirus

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Damnatio memoriae, condemnation of memory, as practiced in ancient Rome, was never very successful in wiping out a name in people's minds. More effective were the efforts in many successor states of the Ottoman Empire to 'cleansé' the architectural face of settlements by razing visible signs of the former Ottoman/Muslim presence, especially minarets and inscriptions. Large parts of modern Greece went through such a process of architectural 'de-Islamisation' as one of the corner stones of Greek nation building. There are, however, a few regions that escaped the rage against the country's Ottoman heritage.

A town where some monuments of Albanian-Islamic architecture are still standing is the town of Konitsa, located 45 km north of Yánnina and very close to the Albanian border. It is one of the little Epirotic towns which had once been a local centre inhabited by predominantly Albanian speaking Muslims. Between 1417 (see below) and 1913, Konitsa was part of the Ottoman Empire. My visit in 1972 established that six humble Ottoman monuments were still standing: two domed mosques (from Sultan Süleyman and from Hüseyin Şah Bey), a further four likewise domed *türbes*, one of them having once been the centre of an important dervish convent, and a neglected but structurally sound Ottoman primary school (*mekteb*), all situated in the lower part of the town. In July 2013, Süleyman's mosque was in an even worse condition than before, and the Mosque of Hüseyin Şah Bey had been demolished. The *mekteb*, however, had undergone a nice restoration and was being used as a

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small local museum. The four *türbes* had also seen some repair and consolidation work.

One kilometre below the town on a rocky outcrop on the right bank of the river Aôos (Viosa) there once stood the castle of Konitsa, maintained during the first half of the Ottoman period. It is thought to be a foundation of Emperor Justinian, replaced in the Middle Ages by a new building. Three kilometres outside the town there still stands a small late-Byzantine church called Kokkini Panagia. It has its original fresco decoration from the early 15th century partly preserved.¹ The last remains of the castle itself disappeared after 1945.

The name Konitsa is Slavic, as are the names of many villages in this area. Konitsa means horse bazaar/ market/ “cavalry place”,² pointing to an extensive settlement of Slavs from the 7th to the 9th centuries. Coin finds from imperial Rome show that an older settlement existed in Roman times.

Konitsa is said to be first mentioned in the time of the Byzantine Emperor Konstantin IV Pogonatos (654-685 A.D.).³ This account is based on the founder’s (*ktitor*) inscription in the Church of the Monastery of the Holy Virgin in Dipalitsa written in 1561. In the past Dipalitsa (now: Molyvoskepastos) was the seat of the Archbishopric Pogoniani. The place is only 13 km away from Konitsa.⁴ The church in question was built around 1300 (Gatsopoulos 1972; Vokotopoulos 1979), while its inscription refers to the year 7030 AM (1521), when the church was restored and painted with new frescoes. Thus, the text of 1561 relates to a legendary story, if the inscription is not a falsification.

The first reliable mention of Konitsa is in the year 1380, when the Chronicle of Yánnina noted that the Despot of Epirus, the Serbian Thomas Preljubović (d. 1384), ordered a castle to be built in Konitsa.⁵

According to local lore related in 1856 by Aravandinos, the “Father of Epirotic Historiography,” Konitsa went over to the Ottomans in the time of Sultan Murad II (1421-1451). A local lord, Isaim from Leskovik, was thought to have prepared the ground for the Ottoman take-over. Isaim is regarded to be the first Muslim of Epirus. It was believed that a number of inhabitants of Konitsa

1 D.I. Pallas, “Epiros,” in: *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*. II. Stuttgart 1971, p. 298.

2 Max Vasmer, *Die Slaven in Griechenland*. Leipzig 1970, p. 37. For the entire district of Konitsa, see *ibidem*, pp. 20-65.

3 P. Aravandinos, *Chronografia tis Ipeírou ton te ómóren éllinikón kai illirikón choron*. I-II. Athens 1856, Reprint: 1969.

4 Peter Soustal – Johannes Koder, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* 3, Nikopolis und Kephallinia, Wien 1981, pp. 140-141, 240.

5 L. Vranousis (Branusès) „Tò Xronikòn ton Ioannínon ka’ anékdoton dimódi èpitomís,” in: *Epetiris Mesaionikoù Archeíou* 12 (Athens 1962), pp.57-115.

embraced Islam following Isaim. However, the Ottoman population and taxation registers (*tahrir*) show that much of the story is a pious legend. Another narrative to have emerged through local legends has it that in the time of Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512) the first Bektashi *tekke* on Epirot soil was founded by the Bektashi “missionary” Hüseyin Baba, whose *türbe* is still standing today in Konitsa.⁶

The oldest preserved Ottoman register mentioning Konitsa as an administrative unit in the *sancak* of Yanya is a fragment of a *tahrir defteri*: MAD 231 from 837 H (1434). The settlement was a sizeable village with no Muslims at all (disregarding the soldiers of the small garrison of the castle). Until now it has been thought that Konitsa became Ottoman in the wake of the capitulation of the Epirot capital, Yánnina, in 1430. The register from 1434 reveals that Konitsa became Ottoman a decade and a half before Yánnina was taken, following in the wake of the capitulation of Berat, Vlore and the nearby castle of Kanina and especially Argyro-kastro, all three in 1417. The 1434 register describes over 32 pages the villages of the district of Konitsa.⁷ Their taxes served to pay the soldiers of the garrison of the Konitsa castle, who received these yearly revenues as *timar* (fief). Most of these soldiers had appointment patents (*berat*) from “our Sultan” but many others “have their *berât* from the time of ‘the late Sultan’ in their hands” (*ellerinde merhûm sultân zamânından berât vardır*). This ‘late sultan’ can only be Sultan Murad II’s father, Çelebi Sultân Mehmed (1413-1421), who in 1417 took the three important south-Albanian towns we mentioned above. Together with these three, the small and unimportant Konitsa also went over, unrecorded by the narrative sources.

It is characteristic for the early Ottoman period to find among the soldiers of Konitsa’s garrison not only Muslims but also a number of Albanian Christians. Even more surprisingly, the Bishop of Pogonia surfaces on the list, who received a *timar* as his fixed source of income.

The next source at our disposal, again never used in the historiography of Konitsa, is a fragment of an *icmal defter*.⁸ The oldest date in this register, dealing with an alteration, is from 853 H/1449. It indicates that Konitsa was divided in two parts, having together 24 households. This is incomplete, as several descriptions of the settlements include a small sign indicating that only a part of the town’s houses were written down. In later *tahrirs* this practice was eliminated.

6 Harry T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans, Religion and society between Europe and the Arab World*. London 1993, p. 127-28.

7 T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (henceforth: BOA), MAD 231, pp 128-160.

8 İstanbul, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet O.117/5.

The next source is a *Tapu Defteri* dating from 1530⁹ but reproducing the information recorded in 1520, the last year of Sultan Selim I's time, 1520. In that year, the little town was part of the *hass* (crown dominion) of the Sultan and contained 130 households, still all Christians and not a single Muslim. Remarkable is also the present of rice fields (*çeltük*) in the low alluvial plain below the town. It was the Ottomans who introduced rice to the Balkans. We find it first mentioned in 1433 for the plain of Niš in Serbia, as witnessed by the Burgundian knight Berdrandon de la Broquière. The Ottomans kept and maintained the castle of Thomas Preľjubović in Konitsa. In 1520, it had a garrison of 28 men, including a *dizdar*, a *kethüda* and an *imam*.

In 1537, during the Corfu campaign, Sultan Süleyman stayed for more than a month (mid-July–19 August 1537) in the naval base of Avlonya/Vlorë and, on that occasion, ordered a number of mosques to be built in various places in the Western Balkans, mostly at the request of the local authorities. These mosques appear in a register of the staff of all Sultanic mosques in the Western Balkans including their salaries, which is preserved in Istanbul.¹⁰ It dates from the year 1047 H/1637 and contains 188 pages. It mentions mosques across today's Albanian territories, located in Dronik, Gjirokastër, Ishm, Lesh (Alessio), Kanina near Vlorë, Peqin, and Preze. Two mosques were built in Vlorë/Avlonya, one in the newly constructed castle and one in the open town. The latter still exists today. Well restored, it may give us an idea of how the others would have looked. Some have disappeared, while others partly survive as ruins. The work of the veteran scholar Alexander Meksi made clear recently that not all the mosques of Sultan Süleyman were of the same quality as the one in Vlorë.¹¹ Most of them were built of rough broken stone and had wooden roofs covered with roof-tiles (*keramidi*). The building accounts of the mosques of Avlonya and Kanina are preserved and have been published.¹²

The Konitsa mosque and many others in the West Balkans surface in the above source,¹³ where we can read about "The noble Mosque of Sultan Süleyman in Konitsa." It had a staff of four people who were paid from the poll tax of the district of Tepedelen. The existence of these mosques indicates that some Muslims must have lived in these places in the 1530s. In 1520, Konitsa had no civil Muslim inhabitants.

9 BOA, TD 367, p. 293.

10 BOA, MAD 5625.

11 Alexander Meksi, *Xhamitë e Shqipërisë, Historia, Arhitekturam shek, XV-XIX*. Tiranë 2015.

12 Machiel Kiel, "The Building Accounts of the Castle of Vlorë/Avlonya, (S. Albania) 1537-1539," in: Ali Çaksu (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on the Ottoman Culture in the Balkans, Tirana, December 2003*. Istanbul 2006, pp. 3 – 39.

13 MAD 5625, p. 43.

The register from 972 H/1565 mentions Konitsa¹⁴ as having 91 households of Christians largely living from the production of wheat, mixed cereals (*mahlût*) and wine on a very large scale, with 95% of the agricultural taxes being raised on these crops. Muslim civil households, still lacking at this time, were to come later.¹⁵

It is not easy to follow how Konitsa developed through the 17th and 18th centuries. The most important of the Muslim travellers in the Balkans was Evliya Çelebi, who travelled in Epirus in 1669/70, passed from Yánnina to Argyrokastro (Ergiri Kasrı) via Delvina,¹⁶ but did not come through Konitsa.

A comparison between the Ottoman register from 1520 and the accounts of the 19th century show that great changes had taken place in the town as well as in the villages of its district. Roughly, half of the population had embraced Islam by then. In the 18th and 19th century Konitsa was a bulwark of the Bektashi order of dervishes, the tolerant order of old that functioned as a bridge between Christianity and Islam. The oldest *Salnâme* of the Yanya vilayeti, of 1288 H (1871), and the *Salnâme* of 1304 H (1889) list no less than four mausolea (*türbe*) of important Bektashi leaders: Nevruz Baba “from the time of the conquest,” (1430), Osman Baba and Şeyh İshak (from 1138 H/1726), Hüseyin Baba, Seyh Ahmed and Seyh Hasan (from 1228 H/1813).¹⁷ All four of these *türbes* are still standing today. In the beginning of the 20th century, the British specialist Frederic William Hasluck traced local traditions among the Bektashis of Konitsa, pointing to a very distant origin of Bektashiism in this place.¹⁸ Both *Salnâmes* also note that the town possessed two Friday mosques: “the Mosque of his Majesty Sultan Süleyman Han, [formula of blessing] and the Mosque built by a person called Hüseyin Şah Koniçalı”.

The Ottoman budget of the years 1079-1080 H (1669/70), when the Ottoman defences were on the alert against attacks from Venetian armies (the Cretan War was still going on), does not mention the castle of Konitsa. This is in contrast to the nearby Delvina or Yánnina and Arta, the latter two having each 72 soldiers as garrison.¹⁹ Hence, we may conclude that the castle of Konitsa was no longer in use. In

14 BOA, Tapu D. 350, pp. 478-79.

15 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, travel and access restrictions, I was not able to consult BOA, Tapu D. 583 from 987 H/1579.

16 Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*. Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 308 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini. 8. Kitap. Seyit Ali Kahraman – Yücel Dağlı – Rober Dankoff (eds.). İstanbul 2003, pp. 287-302. The work of Kosmas Thesprotas (1780-1852) and Athanasios Psalidas (1767-1829): *Geographia Albanias kai Ipeiros*, annotated edition of A.C. Papacharisis, Yánnina, 1964 was inaccessible for me.

17 *Salname-yi Vilayet-i Yanya*. Yanya 1288 H (1871), p. 105.

18 F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*. Vol. II. Oxford 1929, p. 536.

19 Ömer Lütüfî Barkan, “1079-1080 /1669-1670 Mâli Yılına ait bir Osmanlı Bütçetisi,” in: *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 17 (1955/56), pp. 280 (Margaliç), 278 (Arta/Narda, Aya Mavra, İnebahtı/Lepanto, Preveza, Yánnina).

about the same years (1667/68) a survey of the 361 Ottoman *kadılıks* in the Balkan provinces of the empire notes: “*Konice, in the sancak of Yanya, 19 days journey [from İstanbul], situated between Yanya and Pogoniya.*” Konitsa ranked in the 8th place in the twelve hierarchical categories of the *kadılıks*,²⁰ giving an impression of the relative importance of the town.

Good information on Late-Ottoman Konitsa is found in the anonymous “*Description Géographique et Historique de la Turquie d’Europe par ordre alphabetique, pour suivre les opérations de la guerre actuelle*” from 1828:

“Konitzia is a town of 600 houses situated in the *sancak* of Yánina, ten miles away from that town and built multi-storied on one of the western slopes of a mountain that belongs to the Pindos Chain, whose feet are washed by the river Voïoutze. It has its own bishop and two churches and several mosques; the inhabitants speak Greek and Albanian and more than half of the population is Muhammedan. The land around the town is very high and mountainous. It produces cereals, wine and honey (*mail*, erroneously for *miel?*), but olives do not grow here.”²¹

In 1880 Colonel Kokkidis in his *Oidoporika*²² shows that Konitsa had grown into a town of real importance for the standard of this inhospitable mountain district, having “2,160 Muslim inhabitants, and 2,058 Christians.” The *salnâme* of the Yanya *vilayeti* of 1311 H²³ (1894) counts in the “Koniçe Kasabası” 1,435 male and 1,324 female inhabitants, living in 595 houses. This gives an average of 4.6 inhabitants per household. In the context of 19th century conditions this is a relatively high number and points to a growing population.

In 1896, Sâmî Bey, in his great Historical-Geographical Dictionary *Kâmûsu’l-A’lâm*²⁴ describes Konitsa as the centre of a *kaza* in the *sancak* of Yanya. The little town had grown further, now having 5,500 inhabitants, fifty-fifty Muslim and Christian. The *kaza* of Konitsa included 34 villages with a total population of around 25,000 people, partly Muslims, partly Christians speaking Vlach (a Romance language) and Albanian.

20 M. Kemal Özergin, “Rumeli Kadılıkları’nda 1078 düzenlemesi,” in: *Ord. Prof. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı’ya Armağan*. Ankara 1976, pp. 263, 274.

21 *Description Géographique et Historique de la Turquie d’Europe par ordre alphabetique, pour suivre les opérations de la guerre actuelle*” Paris 1828, p. 86.

22 I. Kokkidis, *Oidoporika Ipeiros kai Thessalias*. Athina 1880, p. 102.

23 *Yanya Salnamesi*. Yanya 1311 H (1893/94).

24 Şemseddin Sami, *Kâmûsu’l-A’lâm*. Vol 5, İstanbul 1314, p. 3781.

In the early spring of 1913, after the capture of the important and strongly fortified Yánnina, the Greek army took Konitsa. A large part of the Muslim population perished or fled to the north. Death and departure of a large part of the Muslim community during and after the Greek conquest cast a dark shadow over the town. In 1920, it had only 2,749 inhabitants and by 1928 this number had sunk to 1,959.

World War II brought the Italian invasion and the subsequent occupation until 1943, when the German *Wehrmacht* took over. In course of these actions two thirds of the town burnt down. The chaotic end of the war saw the expulsion and flight of the Muslim population, with irregular Greek nationalist forces destroying many Muslim houses. The Greek Civil War, 1945-1949, brought further destruction and suffering, especially when, in 1947, the “Democratic Army of Greece” under the communist leader General Markos tried in vain to capture the town. The recovery took more than three decades. In 1961, the town had no more than 3,541 inhabitants. Today Konitsa is a lively place of about the same number of residents as in the Late-Ottoman period. Albanian can still be heard there. It is spoken by Christian Albanians who remained behind and by visitors from the nearby Albanian territories who have been coming over the last decade to enjoy the lively market days.

In the summer of 1977, the writer of these lines saw in Konitsa several relics of the Ottoman period. As mentioned above, they were all situated in the lower part of the town. In 2013, during a repeat visit to Konitsa, the mosque was found to have further deteriorated; the *türbes* had undergone some restoration and were (from an architectural viewpoint) still in good condition. The school was well-restored and transformed into an information centre about the town’s history and monuments. An information board on the building states that the mosque was thought to have been built by Sultan Süleyman (1520-1566) The building was, it claims, mentioned in a document from the late 19th century (no source given) as being called the “Kato Konitsa Tsami, also known as Sultan Süleyman Tsami.” This is not another piece of legend but true: Sultan Süleyman had indeed built a mosque in Konitsa, as we established above.

The Mosque Hüseyin Şah Bey and the Mosque of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent

The *salnâme* of the *vilayet* of Yanya from 1888/89²⁵ confirms what we have said above, namely that Konitsa had two mosques, one built by Sultan Süleyman and one by Hüseyin Şah from Konitsa. The latter does not exist anymore. Before describing the Sultan’s mosque, it is worth saying something about the town’s second mosque because

25 *Salnâme-yi Vilâyet-i Yanya*. Yanya 1306 H (1888/89), p. 88.

its founder was a person who connects Konitsa directly with one of the most important figures of pre-Ottoman Epirus, Carlo Tocco I, Despot of Epirus. Regarding his descendant Hüseyin Şah, some written evidence as well as local memory is preserved and will now be brought together here for the first time.

The mosque of Hüseyin Şah stood in the Upper town of Konitsa, near the central square at the spot where, since the late-1970s, stands the large new church of St. Kosmas the Aetolian. The local historian Efthimiou collected over the years local oral traditions and published the results in 1997.²⁶ According to his compilation, the mosque (with the very unusual name of Hüseyin Şah) was built around the year 1500 by Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512) and was his endowment.

The Ottoman register of 1530,²⁷ containing the information taken in 1520, knows nothing about this mosque and in that year, the town had no civilian Muslim population at all! Hüseyin Şah is a rare name, as I have said. In fact, the only Ottoman official of any importance with this name was to our knowledge Karlızâde Hüseyin Şah Bey, a descendant in the third or fourth generation of the well-known and rather successful ruler of Epirus, Despot Carlo Tocco I (d. 1429). The latter is known to have had a number of illegitimate sons, bastards, who partly went into Ottoman service after Carlo's death and converted to Islam.

Some of Carlo's Muslim descendants became well-known personalities. In 890 H (1485), a Karlızade Ali Bey, tutor (*lala*) of Prince Cem (son of Sultan Bayezid II), finished the construction of a sizeable domed mosque in the village of Suşnica in Central Bulgaria. Soon after, this village developed into the town of Karlovo. The mosque still stands and an inscription written in Arabic and situated above the main entrance of the building relates the story.²⁸ A decade later the same Ali Bey – now serving as governor of the great province of Karaman in Central Anatolia – had the foundation charter (*vakfiye*) for his mosque drawn up. It is preserved and has been reproduced several times.²⁹ In the text, Ali Bey calls himself proudly: “*al-emir al-kebir*” and “*sahibü's-seyf ve'l-kalem [...]* *lala Ali Bey bin Karlı*” (the Grand Emir [...] and Master of Sword and Pen) according to the medieval Muslim ideal of military valour and literary ability, the “*arma et litterae*” of Christian society.

26 E. Efthimiou, *Selides apò tin istoria tis Konitsas*. Konitsa 1997.

27 TD 367.

28 See Grigor Boykov, “Karlızade 'Ali Bey: An Ottoman Dignitary's Pious Endowment and the Emergence of the Town of Karlova in Central Bulgaria,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 39 (2013), pp. 247-267

29 Boris Nedkov, “Karlovsko Vakâfname,” in: Nikolaj Todorov – Boris Nedkov (eds.) *Turski Izvori za Bălgarskata Istoriya*. II. Sofia 1966, pp.481-497. M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *XV-XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livası Vakıflar-Mümlükler ve Mukataalar*. Istanbul 1952, Section II, pp. 226-231 (including facsimile).

Shortly before the year 1500, Ali's youngest son, Karlızade İskender Bey, had a large mosque built in the town of Kazanlāk, 60 km to the east of Karlovo. This edifice stands in a rebuilt version from 1255 H (March 1839-March 1840) and is still in use as the main mosque of Kazanlāk. The long inscription recording the reconstruction of the building on order of Sultan Abdülmecid mentions its original founder and the date of construction: 902 H (1497).³⁰

In 900/1495, another descendent of Carlo Tocco, Karlızâde Mehmed Bey, was building a large and very monumental domed and vaulted mosque at the southern bridgehead of the great stone bridge over the Vardar in Skopje. Next to the mosque he founded a theological college (*medrese*). The mosque existed until 1924. Its inscription gives the name of the patron only as "Mehmed Bey" but his mosque was from the beginning known as "Karlızâde Camii." Evliya Çelebi also knew this mosque only as "the Mosque of Karlızâde" and later *vakf* documents, published by Gliša Elezović,³¹ do the same. These documents also show that Mehmed possessed extensive properties in and near Skopje. The inscription giving the name of the founder and the date of the construction is extant in the *lapidarium* of the Kurşunlu Han in the old centre of Skopje and has been published several times.³² This descendant of Carlo Tocco must have been a well-established figure in the Ottoman ruling elite. He might have been the father of another Karlızade Mehmed who started his career in the early 1500s. We find him several times in a 'Register of Benevolence' (*in'amat defteri*) of Bayezid II³³. Ömer Lütfü Barkan published a small part of it 35 years ago. There he is mentioned as "*Mehmed Bey bin Karlı ki zâ'im-i Istanbul şod 14 Rebiü'l-Evvel sene 909;*" (Mehmed Bey son of Karlı, who on 14 September of the year 1503 became *zâ'im* (high-ranking army officer) of Istanbul).³⁴

Only two months later (11 November 1503), the sultan appointed him *kethüda* of Rumelia.³⁵ In 1505 (23 July), Mehmed Bey was promoted to the governorship of Elbasan.³⁶ Two years later (9 May

30 İbrahim Tatarlı, "Kultovi sgradi i nadpisi v Bălgariya," in: *Godišnik na Sofijskiya Universitet. Fak. Po Zapadna Filologii LX* (1966), p. 611. Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimârisinde Çelebi ve II. Murad Devri 806-855 (403-1451)*. Istanbul 1972, pp. 514-515.

31 "Gliša Elezović, Turski spomenici u Skoplju," in: *Glasnik Skopskog Naučnog Društva V*, Skopje 1929, pp. 243-261 (Karlo-zâde Mehmed's mosque and the *türbe* built by Princess Hüma).

32 Franz Babinger, „Beiträge zur Geschichte von Qarly-Eli vornehmlich aus osmanischen Quellen," in: *Mninin Spirídonos Lamprou*. I. Athens 1933, pp. 140-149. Better accessible in: idem, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte Südosteuropas und der Levante*. I. München 1962, pp. 370-377. Lidija Kumbaracı-Bogoević, *Osmanliski Spomenici vo Skopje*. Skopje 1998, p. 76-78 and 100-04, with good photograph of the inscription).

33 Istanbul, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet 71.

34 Ömer Lütfü Barkan, "İstanbul Saraylarına ait Muhasebe Defterleri," *Belgeler IX/13* (1979), p. 309. Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 5b.

35 Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 9b.

36 Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 68b.

1507), he changed to a new role as the tutor (*lala*) for Prince Selim.³⁷ In early 1509 (27 February) he took the next step in his career, becoming governor of Ala'ıye (Alanya),³⁸ but only eight months later he was dismissed.³⁹ His unemployment was not to last very long; on 7 July 1510 he became governor of Vulçitrin,⁴⁰ a position he held at least until the end of the following year.⁴¹

Karlızade Mehmed Bey was married to an Ottoman princess who was a daughter of Güzelce Hasan Bey and the eldest daughter of Bayezid II,⁴² probably Fatma Sultan.⁴³ The marriage of Princess Fatma's daughter to Karlızade Mehmed Bey might already have been contracted in 1502.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the documents do not reveal her name. Hence, we cannot be sure that she was identical with Hüma Şah, the mother of Hüseyin Şah Bey.

In the year 960 H(18 Dec. 1552 – 7 Dec. 1553), Hüseyin Şah Bey, presumably a son of Karlızâde Mehmed Bey and Bayezid II's granddaughter, had completed a nice domed mosque, a similarly domed mausoleum and a *medrese* in the village of Saray near Skopje. In this village, he had a large estate with a palace in it. Its name and the date are given in an Arabic inscription above the main entrance. The date of construction is written in numbers and as a chronogram (“*mecmu'â al-abrâr, dârü'l-âbidîn*). Although the chronogram correctly presents the date as 960, the date in numbers gives the same date as 961(1554), which means that the chronogram was made before the building was entirely ready. The completion slipped into the new year, which was duly recorded on stone. It is a practice we often encounter in Ottoman epigraphy. The village of Saray owes its name to the palace, which the Habsburg army destroyed in 1689. In the great war of 1683-1699, Piccolomini, its commander, pushed on with his troops as far as Skopje and devastated the city in a great fire.

According to Mehmed Süreyya, in August 1538, during the Ottoman Venetian war of 1537-1541, Hüseyin Şah Bey was *sancakbey*

37 Muallim Cevdet, 71, fol. 102b.

38 Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 156a.

39 This does not imply that he fell into disgrace. The sultan gave the *mir-i köhne-i Ala'ıye* Mehmed b. Karlı 7,000 akçe and a robe of Bursa voided velvet (*çatma*); Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 174b.

40 Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 200b.

41 Muallim Cevdet 71, fols. 231a, 247b.

42 This marriage between Bayezid's daughter and 'good-looking' Hasan had ended between February 10th and 16th 1505: on 6 Ramazan 910 (10 February 1505) the register labels her *duhter-i büzürg hullide mülkühü, zevce-i Hasan Bey Güzelce*. Six days later, she appears as *zevce-i köhne-i Hasan Bey Güzelce*. Nearly four months later, on 28 Zilhicce 910 H (1 June 1505) “the daughter of his Majesty, the former wife of Hasan Bey Güzelce” received 40,000 akçe for the purchase of a house. Muallim Cevdet 71, fols. 49a/b and 60b.

43 Çağatay Uluçay, “Bayazid II.in Âilesi”, *Tarih Dergisi* X (1959), p. 120.

44 The entry *ibtidâ-i adet-i boğça-i zevce-i Mehmed Bey b. Karlı, fi 24 Cemâzi II sene 908* (“begin of the customary bundle gift to the wife of Mehmed Bey b. Karlı, on 25 December 1502”), Muallim Cevdet 71, fol. 267b, suggests that the couple had married on this date or shortly before.

died in 1504.⁵⁴ Hüseyin Şah Bey's father was, as far as we know, the provincial commander Karlızade Mehmed Bey. Being the offspring of an imperial princess, Hüseyin had the right to put the honorific title "Şah" behind his name.⁵⁵

Hüma Sultan founded a dervish convent (*zaviye*) and a primary school behind the great mosque of Karlızade Mehmed Bey in Skopje. A well-built hexagonal *türbe*, once part of the dervish convent, stood until 1924 next to the Karlızade Mosque in Skopje and is known from a number of old photographs.⁵⁶ With an eye on the perfect form and proportions of Hüseyin's mosque and *türbe* in the village of Saray we might expect that his Konitsa mosque was also a building in the classical Ottoman style of the mid-16th century. The note on Konitsa in the *Salnâme* of 1871 makes Hüseyin Şah a native of Konitsa, as this would explain why he built a mosque in this particular town. It is more likely, however, that the construction of his mosque in Konitsa took place during his term as governor of the *sancak* of Yanya, around 1545. Relying on the solid research of the veteran scholar Gliša Elezović, Lidija Kumbaraci-Bogoević concluded that Hüseyin Şah was a relative of Karlızade Mehmed Bey.⁵⁷ He is at any rate the most important son of Konitsa, intricately tied to the history of this town.

The mosque of Hüseyin Şah Bey in Konitsa was demolished in the summer of 1970. Just before that date, the writer of these lines had been able to make a ground plan of the building. In 1976, a great new church, dedicated to St. Kosmas the Aetolian was erected on the same site. What we see today in the lower Town of Konitsa is thus without doubt the Mosque of Sultan Süleyman. Yet this building is definitely not a 16th century construction but one of the second half of the 19th century, from the time of Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876) or even from the first part of the rule of his successor Abdülhamid II (1876-1909), as the architectural features shows in an unmistakable manner. It would be nice to find the original 19th century Sultanic order to restore or rebuild this mosque – a research task for the future.

The remains of the structure we see today looks as if the mosque had been blown up with dynamite or TNT (trotyl). Another story has it that, in the 1920s and 1930s, the local population used the unguarded building as quarry for building stones for their new houses. However, as the well-known German Ottomanist Franz Babinger saw it still standing in the 1930s, the destruction must have

54 M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*. Ankara 1980, p. 27.

55 Babinger, „Beiträge zur Geschichte von Qarly-Eli, *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen*, p. 375, n. 1.

56 Elezović, „Turski spomenici u Skoplju,“ pp. 243-261. Kumbaraci-Bogoević, *Osmanliski Spomenici vo Skopje*, p. 76-78 and 100/04,

57 Kumbaraci-Bogoević, *Osmanliski Spomenici vo Skopje*, p. 77, n. 186.

taken place during the events at the end of World War II, or later. It is very likely that both stories are correct.

The mosque was a square building measuring 9.78 x 10.02 m with a relatively lofty inner square space of only 8.02 x 8.02 m, covered by a dome. As such the mosque could accommodate 85 to 90 adult males as well as a much smaller group of women, accommodated at the usual wooden gallery on the inside of the front wall. Today the dome of the mosque is gone and the front wall, as well as the left lateral wall of the building, have collapsed, taking with them the porch in front of it and the building inscription over the entrance gate. The dome rested on four squinches (tromps), an element unknown in the Roman and Byzantine building tradition. The squinch to the right of the *mihrab* is still intact. Of its counterpart to the left of the *mihrab* only the lower segment is in place. The minaret still stands for the greater part. It has a square base with the entrance from the inside of the building. The shaft of the minaret is sixteen-sided and built from porous *tufa*, which was plastered over. The balcony rests on a simplified form of stalactite corbelling. The masons were visibly unable to make the classical, very intricate, Ottoman *muqarnas* decoration. The top and the conical cap of the minaret are of stone, a product of local Epirot workmanship. The conical cap has meanwhile disappeared. This and other damage occurred during an earthquake in 1996.

The walls of the mosque consist of coarse broken stone with an uneven surface. Only the four corners of the building and the rectangular window frames are executed in finely cut stone of different colours. The windows are not crowned with the specifically Ottoman four-centre-arch. Instead, lintels made of one large piece of stone with a crude segment arch, protected them from the downward pressure of the masonry. The open windows are shielded by grids made of thin iron rods instead of the much more robust Ottoman rods. They also lack the dice-like joints connecting the rods of the grid. All this is highly un-Ottoman and is a strong indicator that we have to date the mosque in the advanced 19th century. The four corners project a little beyond the surface of the walls and so form flat pilasters of a kind. These elements, i.e. the window frames, thin iron rods and flat pilasters, date the building with great certainty in the second half of the 19th century. The dome and the shoulders of the cube were originally covered with large slabs of stone in the same way as the four mosques still standing in Yánnina. The building must have had a porch preceding the entrance. Whether this has been a porch of two units covered by small domes or a wooden portico can only be established with help of old photographs, which are not (yet) at our disposal.

Nine meters south-west of the mosque stands a domed *türbe*. It is a modest hexagon covered by a dome. The six sides measure 2.88

m in width each. The *türbe* is somewhat better constructed than the mosque, being made of small cut blocks of hard grey limestone. The arches above the five windows, one in each flank, besides the door, do not show the obligatory Ottoman four-centred arch but are rounded, another sure indication that this building is also from the second half of the 19th century. The dome of the *türbe* is covered with a sloping roof of large slabs of stone that begin above a small, profiled cornice. The hexagonal form of the *türbe* seems to have been particularly popular in Epirus as a resting place for mosque founders or dervish saints. We find the same form in Gjirokastër at the great Bektashi *tekke* north of the town, and in Yánnina flanking the Arslan Pasha Mosque. Today the Konitsa *türbe* stands empty, without a function. The cracks visible in 1977 have since been carefully restored and the building is structurally sound. In 1977, it served as a stable for goats. The identity of the person buried in this *türbe* seems to be unknown.

The Mekteb of Şeyh Turabi

Some 50 meters below the Süleyman Mosque and the *türbe* stands the primary school (*mekteb*) built by Şeyh Turabi, a relatively small building, two stories high, looking like a traditional Epirot manor. The classroom proper is placed on a cellar-like substructure that brings the actual floor high above the ground level and creates a feeling of separation from the world below, an essential feature of an Ottoman primary school. The classroom is reached via a double flight of steps. Beside the entrance of the classroom an elaborate Ottoman inscription of six lines is preserved, bearing the date of 1286 H (1869/70). It is carved in a slab of stone and very well readable but written in a curious kind of Turkish full of minor mistakes, but in a correct metre. In English translation it reads as follows:

1. Look at the pains and efforts (of) Şeyh-i Turab for the good work
 2. Such a *mekteb* he wanted to call into existence.
 3. The noble person, exercised concerning the subject of liberality and zeal,
 4. the excessive generosity of Hatem ⁵⁸ without mentioning and remembrance.
 5. The intention of the date of the *mekteb* is a prayer for Rif'at:
 6. "This place, which makes happy and renowned, is a hearth of knowledge and science"
- 1286 (1869/70)

58 Hatem is a figure from Arabian history, proverbial for his generosity.

The Türbe of the Bektashi Tekke of Hüseyin Baba and Turabi Baba.

About 200 meters down from the Mosque of Sultan Süleyman, in what is now a sparsely inhabited peripheral quarter of Konitsa near the famous arched stone bridge over the Viosa River, stands a remarkably well-preserved *türbe* from the last phase of Ottoman architecture. It was once part of a large *tekke* of which only the gate remains. The *türbe* stands in the garden of a private house and is used as a barn. It is built following the octagonal plan, measuring 6.30 m in diameter with all sides 2.55 m wide. The structure is very regular, the walls made of broken stone and smoothly plastered in white and divided into eight by neatly built flat pilasters of yellow cut stone. The dome is covered with the usual gently sloping roof, covered with concave-convex roof tiles. The windows are not crowned by the obligatory Ottoman four-centre arch but with a flat lintel, and the iron bars to prevent undesired entrance are not the solid and thick Ottoman bars but very thin ones. Both elements are very un-Ottoman and doubtlessly of late and local origin.

Judging by the characteristics of style and workmanship, this *türbe* dates from the sixties or seventies of the 19th century. Traveling in the first decade of the 20th century, Hasluck mentions that there was but one Bektashi *tekke* in Konitsa. The *türbe* of this convent contained the tomb of Hüseyin Baba and, at his side, that of Turabi Baba. The *salnâme* of 1871 speaks of the *tekke* of Hüseyin Baba as harbouring the youngest of the Bektashi *türbes* in Konitsa, built “sixty years ago” (= 1228 H/1826). The *tekke* is supposed to have been founded in the time of Bayezid II, being the first Bektashi centre in all of Epirus.⁵⁹ Only this convent can be meant, because the three other sacred places of the Bektashis located there were only the tombs of saints, not *tekkes*.

Hüseyin Baba is reckoned among the oldest Bektashi propagators in Albania and most probably lived in the 16th century as a contemporary of Kasım Baba, who is known to have spread Bektashism in Eastern Albania and Western Macedonia.⁶⁰ Kasım Baba’s four-pillared canopy *türbe* in Kastoria (Kostur, Keşriye) at the border between Greek Macedonia and Albania was still standing in 1959, located just outside the walls of the town near the lake. The *tahrir defters* of Macedonia of the 16th century mention Kasım Baba and his *vakf* in Keşriye. The *tekke* of Konitsa must have been built around the tomb of Hüseyin Baba, which had been venerated long before. The *türbe* we see today must have come into being in the time of Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876), when the previously oppressed Bektashi movement (since 1826) was again more or less tolerated.⁶¹

59 Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*, p. 127-28.

60 John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London 1965, p. 72, n. 1, p. 81, and 79-81.

61 Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London 1965, p. 81. and 79-81.

Turabi Baba must be identical with the Şeyh-i Turab mentioned in the inscription of the still standing *mekteb* in Konitsa, from 1286 (1869/70). A specialist like John Kingsley Birge counted Turabi Baba among the three most famous Bektashi poets of the 19th century. According to three experts of Bektashi literature, Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergin, Cahid Öztelli and Cengiz Gündoğdu, Turabi Baba started his journey on the path of mysticism in Skopje/Üsküp under the spiritual guidance of the Melami leader Muhammed Nuru'l-Arabi. Then, he had been head of the great Bektashi *tekke* of Şahkulu Sultan in the Istanbul suburb Merdivenköy. In 1849, he became head of the Bektashi Order and *postnişin* of the main-*tekke* of Hacı Bektaşköy in Central Anatolia. He died in 1285 H (1868).⁶² Ergin was familiar with the Turabi buried in Konitsa but did not know the 1869/70 inscription on the Konitsa *mekteb*, where Turabi is mentioned as being alive. Öztelli wrote that Turabi either came from Ankara, or from Yánnina or Konitsa. The great “*Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*” mentions five different poets with the name Turabi/Türâbî, two of them lived in the 15th century, one in the 16th and one in the 18th century.⁶³ “Our” dervish leader and poet is the only one living in the 19th century. His full name was Turabi ‘Ali Efendi. The difficulty in locating him most probably stems from the way the sources give the name of the place as “*Koniçe tabi-i Yanya*” or “*Yanya’yı yakın Koniçe*.”

The existence of two Bektashi leaders, who were contemporaries and at the same time great mystic poets, seems to us rather improbable. Turabi’s *divan*, his collected poetry, was printed in Istanbul in 1877. His poetry shows the influence of the great 16th century poet Fuzuli of Baghdad (d.1556)⁶⁴ as well as traces of the outspoken heterodox teachings of Hurûfiism, preached by Fazlullah Hurûfî (d.1394) and propagated among the Turks by the poet Nesimi in the most beautiful early Turkish poetry thinkable.⁶⁵ Hurûfiism was, at least among Turkish literary circles in the Balkans; particularly popular as an underground current. It can be detected deep into the 19th century.

The Albanian Bektashis not only composed religious texts in Albanian to propagate Bektashism among the local population, they also translated works written in Turkish or Persian. Best known is the *Hadikatü’ş-Şuâda* (“Garden of the Bienheureux”) of the famous classical Turkish poet Fuzuli of Baghdad, which was dedicated to the martyrs of Kerbala. Large parts of this “classic” were recited during the *matem*, the first ten days of the month Muharrem.

62 Perteve Naili Boratav, *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenti*. II. Wiesbaden 1964, p. 141.

63 *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*. *Devirler/İsimler/Eserler/Terimler*. Ezel Erverdi et al. (ed.). 7. Istanbul 1998, p. 399.

64 E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*. III, London 1904, (repr. 1965) p. 70-101.

65 Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*. I. London 1900 (repr. 1958), p. 336-368. See also: Hellmut Ritter, “Die Anfänge der Hurufi Sekte,” in: *Oriens* 7, (1954), p. 1-54.

In Albania, the “*Hadika*” was translated entirely, or in parts, and new elements were added to it. We know of a version of the adapted *Hadika*, with many interpolations, written by Dalip Frasherri from the village of Frasher, which was the birthplace of so many poets, scholars and activists.⁶⁶ Dalip wrote the greater part of this work in the *tekke* of Hüseyin Baba in Konitsa, where he lived in banishment. This relegation is the reason behind his nickname Hicreti. The rare name Dalip goes back to a contraction of the Arabic name Andelip: Nightingale. Dalip’s work, which ran to 60,000 lines of poetry (*beytlik*), was written in 1842 and had a large circulation in Southern Albania and the western part of what is today the Republic of (Skopje) Macedonia.⁶⁷ In the last part of the 20th century, the famous Baba Rexheb Beqiri from the Bektashi *tekke* in Detroit, USA, made a new translation of the *Hadika* because many people no longer understand the language of Dalip.

The question why all the preserved Ottoman monuments in Konitsa date from the 1860s and ‘70s is easy to answer: on 10 and 15 April 1860, Konitsa was hit by two terrible earthquakes and on 16 April by aftershocks. They could be felt in Leskovik and Tepelene in Albania and in Yánnina in the south.⁶⁸ All destroyed monuments were rebuilt afterwards. Because one of the six edifices was built by a ruler of the Ottoman dynasty it is very well possible that the building order and the accounts of the construction of Süleyman’s mosque in Konitsa can still be found in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul.

Lack of time prevented me from examining two more *türbes* standing in Konitsa. However, recently taken photographs suggest that these two were also rebuilt after the 1860 earthquakes. Both are octagonal and appear to be of much better masonry than the two already discussed. One of the two *türbes* photographed was in a rather good condition; the other, showing masonry of the most excellent quality and correct Ottoman-style pointed arches over the windows, had been badly damaged not long ago, most probably during the 1996 earthquake. Its dome had collapsed, but work was then carried out to prevent further deterioration. Here we thus find a situation which is the very opposite of that of the Ottoman monuments of Chamouria (Çamlık). In that district the sad memories from the atrocities in 1945 are still too strong, whereas in Konitsa the people

66 Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*, p.180-181.

67 Nathalie Clayer, „Bektachisme et nationalisme Albanais,“ in: A. Popovic et G. Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachiyya, Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis*. Istanbul 1995, p. 279, note 5. Osman Myderrisi, “Letërsia Shqipe me alfabetin arab,” in: *Buletin për Shkencat Shoqërore 2* (Tirana 1955), pp.148-155. Osman Myderisi, “Letërsia fetare e Beksashive,” in: *Buletin për Shkencat Shoqërore 3* (1955), pp. 131-142. Dh, S. Shuteriki, *Shkrimet Shqipe së vitet 1332-1850*. Tirana 1965, pp. 158-159.

68 Nicholas Ambraseys, *Earthquakes in the Mediterranean and Middle East. A Multi-disciplinary Study of Seismicity up to 1900*. Cambridge 2009, p. 697. A. Perrey, “Note sur les tremblements de terre an 1862,” in: *Mémoires de l'Academie Royales de Bruxelles* 16/6, pp. 3-179.

responsible evidently wish to preserve their Ottoman monuments and have recognized them as part of their town's heritage.

From an architectural point of view, the remains of the Konitsa Bektashi *tekke* and, in particular, the other *türbes* are not of great relevance. Nevertheless, they deserve to be preserved and restored because of their cultural value, reminding us of such eminent figures in Ottoman literature as Dalip Frasheri and Turabi Baba. Moreover, they represent a vital part of Albanian Muslim culture in general.

While many areas of the Balkans tacitly struggle to eliminate relics of the Ottoman past, the region Epirus (first and foremost Yánnina) has tended to integrate this heritage into its own cultural tradition. The reason for such divergent approaches is for historians hard to fathom, even on the micro-level. A study broad in scope that applies the tools of sociology, political science and psychology, might yield some highly valuable insights. This is, however, a future topic for a young generation of scholars.

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Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's mosque & türbe of an unknown personality
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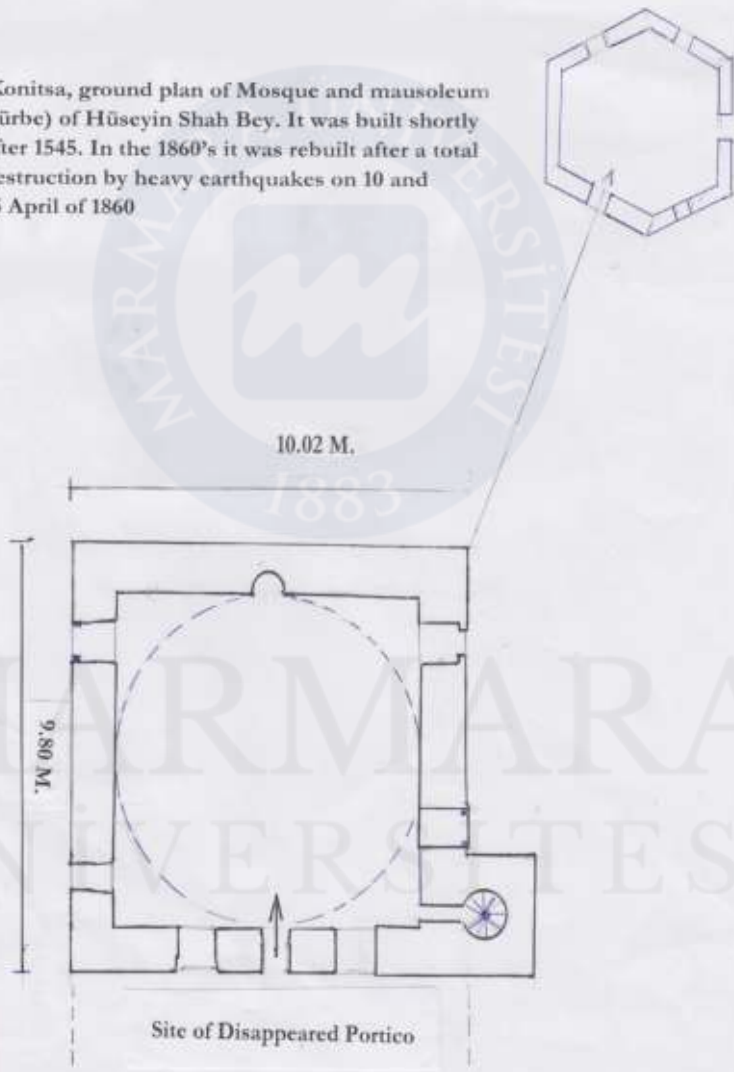


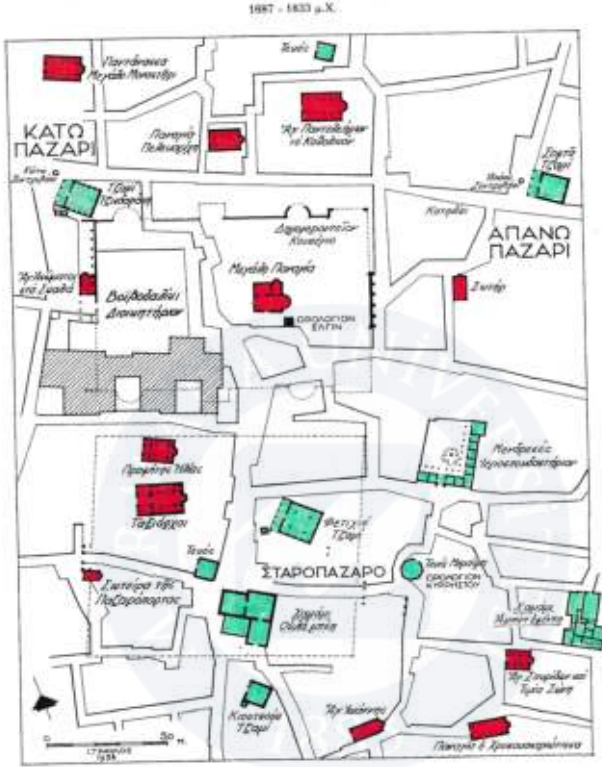
Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent's mosque seen from below (1972, © M.Kiel)



Türbe (second half of the 19th century), originally part of the Bektashi *tekke*, now used as a barn, (1972, © M. Kiel)

Konitsa, ground plan of Mosque and mausoleum (türbe) of Hüseyn Shah Bey. It was built shortly after 1545. In the 1860's it was rebuilt after a total destruction by heavy earthquakes on 10 and 15 April of 1860





Το Παζάρ, η Αγορά των Αθηνών τον 18^ο αιώνα της Τουρκοκρατίας.

Στέφανος Τριαντάφυλλος, Παιδαγωγική εφημέριος των Αθηνών, 3^η έκδ., εκδ. Καστανί, Αθήνα 1993, σελ. 211.

Muslim & Christian Neighborhoods in the 18th century- The City Map of Athens

