

Safranbolu, a city in the Black Sea region in Turkey popular with its rich culture and Islamic Heritage, took its name from Saffron flower

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During my visit to EMITT, I met with Ms. Katia who is doing a job on behalf of WTO to promote Safranbolu city and its culture, buildings and folklore. I have time to visit their stand at EMITT and impressed with the posters and images that placed in their stand, I really liked the nature of the city even without visiting it. However, I believe that its my duty to focus on sch cities which remind us of our roots, culture and our history.



The Location of Safranbolu
Safranbolu is a sub-provincial
centre in the north-western Black
Sea region, According to the
present administrative system the

neighbouring provinces are:
Zonguldak, Kastamonu, Çankırı,
Bolu; and the sub-provinces are:
Karabük, Eflani, Ulus, Bartın, Araç,
Eskipazar, Bulak, Tokatlı, Gayıza





(İncekaya), Danaköy, Çiftlik, Kirpe (Düzce), Yazı, Konarı, Yürük, Akveren, Oğulveren, Davutobası, Çerçen, Hacılarobası, Bostanbükü, Karıt, Başköy, Kılavuzlar and Kapullu are some of the villages in the same region. Among these Bulak, Tokatlı, Gayıza, Danaköy, Yazı, Konarı, Yürük, Karıt, Bostanbükü and Kılavuzlar are of special significance to Safranbolu (Safranbolu Map).

HISTORY

The environs of Safranbolu have been an area of settlement ever since the Paleolithic Age. There are three large tumulus around Eflani. Homeros refers to this area as Paphlagonia. After the Persian and Hellenistic periods it became an even more densely populated region during the Roman and Byzantine eras. The 24 tumuli in the Safranbolu-Eflani region various rock-tombs, reliefs and a Roman temple in the village of Sipahiler, south of Safranbolu, are

among the tangible evidence of these periods. There is no trace of either the Roman or the Byzantine era within the city of Safranbolu; neither is there any reference to its name during these periods. The historian Leonard suggests that Safranbolu could be the old Germia, while according to Ainsworth, as the city was formerly named Zafaran Boli, it could well have been Flaviopolis which literally has the same meaning: city of saffron. Osman Turan writes

that the city was named Dadybra before it was taken over by the Turks.

Sources of Building Materials Stone

The stone used in building construction is obtained from the limestone rocks in the area. This hard, blue stone is utilized also for the manufacture of good quality lime. Another local material, «küfünk», a porous, lightweight stone is used as infill in the wood-





frame construction and also for building chimneys; being easily sawed into shape.

Tiles

Roof tiles were hand-shaped in the villages of Çerçen, Bostanbükü and Çamlıca, and burnt in kilns.

Wood

Looking at the houses in Safranbolu we can see that very good quality wood has been generously used. Even today,

more than half of the surrounding area is covered with forests. We can definitely say that this ratio was much higher in the old days. Today, 38 percent of the trees within the Karabük Forestry Management Area are firs, 30 percent beeches, 20 percent pines and 9 percent oaks.

Mortars Lime: Good quality lime is produced from the blue limestones in the area which are burned in the forest land near Gayıza.

Mud mortar: It is produced from every type of soil in the same way as adobe clay is prepared.

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

No records have yet been encountered regarding any buildings from the Byzantine times in Safranbolu. Probably, the Hagios Stephanos church (Ulucami) in Kıranköy was built by Theodora. The Eski Cami mosque may have been transformed from

a Byzantine church. The remains of buildings belonging to the Turks start from the Candaroğulları period. These have undergone various repairs and transformations through time. Only the most significant buildings are listed below.

Religious Buildings

There are around 30 mosques. The oldest one is the Süleyman Paşa Camii (Eski Cami) mosque from the Candaroğulları period (14th century). The other most





important ones are Köprülü Mehmet Paşa mosque (1662), İzzet Mehmet Paşa mosque (1779).

Educational Buildings

The Süleyman Paşa Madrasa (14th century) of which only the foundations exist today, is the only educational building worth noting.

Folklore

Safranbolu owns the richest heritage of folklore in the area. Its

traditions, customs, folk-tales, folk-songs, music and folk-dances are each worth thorough research. We can trace the characteristic features of the Turkish society behind each and every one of these folkloric items.

Saffron:

As the city takes its name from this flower and as it is still grown in the area, it will be appropriate to dwell in more detail on saffron. A member of the iridaceae family, saffron is a

bulbous plant, in many ways resembling colchicum, with its pinkish purple flowers. It blooms in the months of September and October. The tips of its female organ (the stigma) are picked at dawn. The plant flowers a year after being planted. After its flowers have been picked for two succeeding years, the plant is rooted out. Tips gathered from 100,000 flowers add up to only a weight of 1 kg.

Animal Husbandry

In general, each household in the city owns a cow which is mainly kept for its milk. Every morning the herd is collected by a cowherd. The Angora goat is the most extensively husbanded animal in the area. Yogurt and butter are produced from milk. The male animals are preferred for slaughter. In Safranbolu, it is not customary to consume mutton. In autumn, «kavurma» a braised preserved meat, is prepared from goats





meat, to be consumed during the months when no fresh meat is available. Animal husbandry is also important for the other by-products: wool, hair and hide.

Leather Manufacturing

The most significant area of production in Safranbolu was leather and leather goods. There is no records as to when leather production actually began in Safranbolu. It can be assumed however that the valley of the

Tabakhane stream has been used for leather-tannig, being extremely suitable from many aspects: the topography both conceals the unattractive sight of the tannery and prevents the unpleasant odours from reaching the mean settlement areas while the stream provides a natural recipient for contaminated water.

Farriers

As each household owned at least one or two saddle-horses, there

was a sufficient number of farriers engaged in horse-shoeing.

Coppersmiths

Safranbolu was the copper market of the area. The shops which sell ready-made copperware today formerly produced all these themselves.

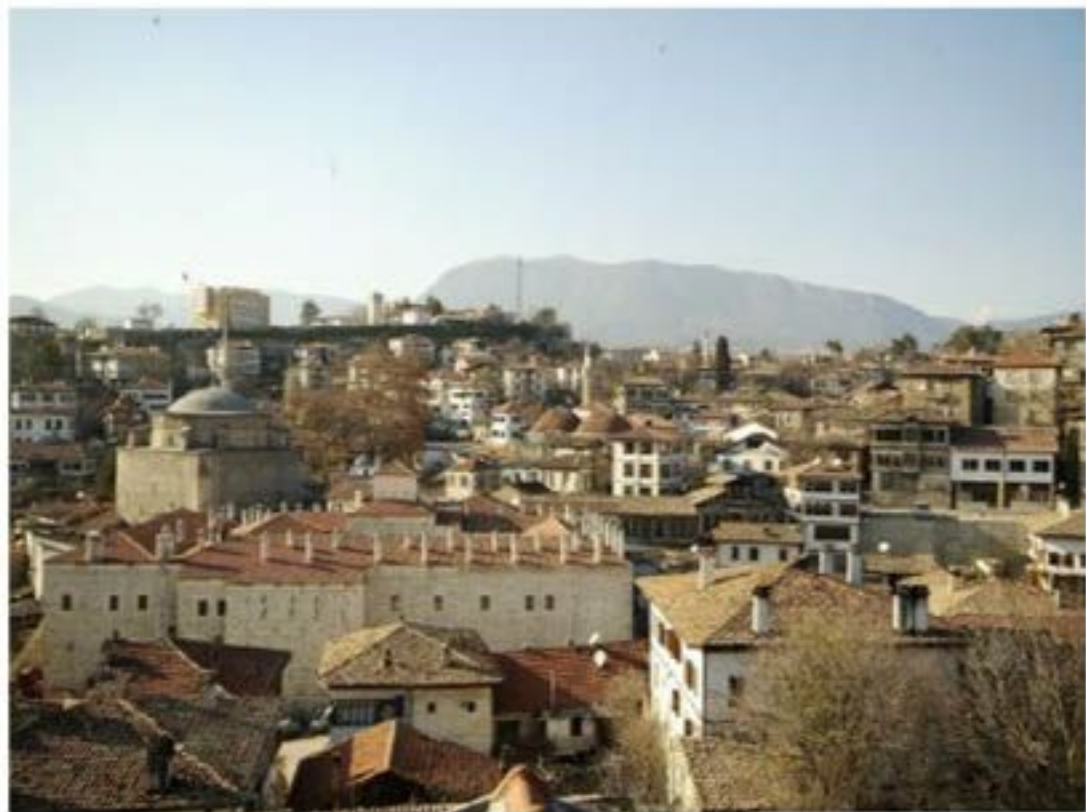
TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS AND RELIGION

The philosophy of life inspired by traditions, customs and religion is

to be content with very little. People of Safranbolu are thrifty; they have no tendency for luxury. Simplicity is everywhere. They sit and work on the floor, sleep in laid on the floor and eat at low tables. There is not much furniture in the homes. Even ornamentation is mostly limited to the properties such as color and texture of the materials used, thus preserving their natural appearance. Consequently it is difficult to tell a rich man's house from a poor man's. In spite







of simplicity, however, there is an evident abundance. Food is plentiful and lots of variety; rooms are many and large; even their houses are double. It is a healthy, problem-free society all in all.

Harem-Selamlık (Women's Quarters-Men's Quarters):

Religion and traditions close the house to the outside world. For this reason the gardens and interiors of houses are separated from the streets by high walls; the

windows are latticed. Women are not seen by men outside the household. Sometimes, even in the same house, men and women live in separate quarters. There are examples of such houses in Safranbolu, divided into men's and women's quarters (selamlık, harem). Usually, it is only the very rich who can to have this spatial organization. The Hacı Memişler summer house is comprised of a harem and selamlık built side by side. Among the examples studied

in this book, the Kaymakamlar house is unique in that it is provided with separate entrances for the harem and selamlık quarters, on different floors and openings onto different streets. In the Hacı Salih Paşa house also, there two separate entrances and staircases for the harem and selamlık quarters. In other houses although there is a single entrance, a room which is easily accessible from the staircase, without unnecessary

intrusion into the family life, is used as a selamlık. The selamlık rooms are treated with special care. In the older examples these rooms have top windows and their ceilings are decorated in a more sophisticated manner.

The Revolving Cupboard: As in the old days, it was not desirable that a woman be looked upon by a man from outside the household, even in her own home. Therefore





special arrangements were made to secure her privacy. One of these was the revolving cupboard, designed so as to enable serving the men in the selamlık from the harem quarters, without being seen. The plates, tableware or cups used for serving food, coffee, syrups etc. were placed on the shelves of this revolving cupboard which was built in a cabinet between the harem and selamlık quarters, with doors opening to

both sides. After turning the cupboard manually, anything on the shelves could be fetched from the other side. This design shows how the houses which do not have separate harem and selamlık or separate servants for each, conform to traditions.

The Selamlık Pavilion:

Some houses have a separate selamlık pavilion in their gardens with one or more rooms. In most of

them, there is a pool in the main sitting area. Pools are also to be found in the selamlık rooms on the middle floor of some houses.

There are such pools in both of the «şehir» houses of the Asmazlar. The parapet wall is about 50 to 60 cms from the floor. There are divans(sitting platforms) along the walls on all three sides. In the selamlık pavilion of Kurtlar summer house there is a raised platform with pillars along the window wall and a small fireplace for making

coffee at one end of the pool-room.

Ablution

The Moslem religion demands that ablution should be performed five times a day, before each ritual prayer. There are washrooms and ablution closets within the house for this purpose. Each room, which is the basic living unit is provided with an area and facilities for the performance of total ablution; a well thought- out solution from the point of view of the intimacy of





family life. Considering the close relation between the two, the toilet is generally combined with the wash-room.

As a consequence of traditions, water used for washing dishes is never mixed with the sewage. It is either collected in a separate pool

or runs freely through a wooden gutter into the garden. No specific space has been allocated for worship within the house. It is believed that the ritual prayers (namaz) can be performed anywhere that is clean enough.

<http://www.safranbolu.gov.tr>