

construction, that went through a number of alterations and interventions, during the Ottoman and Venetian dominance² (fig. 2).



Fig. 2

Near and around the castle, at the heart of the area that would become the centre of the Ottoman town, administratively defined as kaza, is where some of the latter's surviving structures can still be seen³. East of the castle are the ruins of a mosque⁴ while remnants of another Ottoman public building survived on the ground floor of a now dilapidated house. According to the account of the Ottoman traveller Evliyâ Çelebi it can probably be identified as the madrasa (Islamic school) of the town.⁵ Five Ottoman public fountains have survived too.⁶

The hamam is located on a downward slope to the west of the main cobblestone road leading towards the castle and near an Ottoman fountain (fig. 3). In a 1931 photograph it appears that a house was built above the hamam, meaning that the Ottoman structure became a part of the ground floor and basement of that house. The bath was unearthed when that residence was torn down in 1990 (fig. 4). Restoration work was limited to the debris removal and to the excavation of the main parts of the bath without expanding to the rest of the building, which continues towards the south and west sides⁷.

² Andrews 1953(1978), 85–87. Bon 1969, 669–70. Karpodini-Dimitriadi 1990, 248. Bouza 2001, 84–85. Kontogiannis 2001-2, 521, 522, 534. id. 2010, 9-14. Ioannidou 2005, 35-63.

³ For a general presentation of the topography of the town: Kalamara 2006, 465-74.

⁴ Evliyâ Çelebi (ed. 1999), 55. Kostakis 1981, 258.

⁵ The mosque, which dates probably from the First Ottoman rule, is depicted in an engraving of Coronelli (1686): *Τόπος & Εικόνα* 1978, 271, fig. 90.

⁶ Albani 2007, 98-101, ead. 2008, 154.

⁷ The excavations of the 5th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities were carried out in 1990 by K. Antonakos, P. Kalamara and V. Albani.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Ottoman baths in the broader Balkan area are well documented⁸. However, a generally acceptable typological classification is not yet in place. In Greece, about 60 such baths have been registered, many of them attributed between the 15th and 17th c. Seven are found in the Peloponnese, with two monuments in Messenia itself⁹. However, the hamam in Kyparissia remained unpublished and it is hereby presented for the first time. The oldest written testimony, possibly featuring a summary reference to it, is by the traveller Evliyâ Çelebi who visited Kyparissia in 1668. He

⁸ Kiel 1976. Ayverdi 1982. Ergin 2011 for full past bibliography.

⁹ According to Kanetaki 2004. Also ead. 2004a, ead. 2011, 211-256. Afterwards few publications came out, such as: Kousoula et al. 2013, 67-89. Androudīs 2014, 298-301, especially 298, subnote 5, where a full bibliography on Ottoman baths in Balkans and Greece in particular.

described “a hamam, which sometimes works and sometimes doesn’t”¹⁰, while other travellers also mentioned its operation up to the early 19th century¹¹.

It seems that it was a simple and small community (public) bath (fig. 5), as were most of the baths in Greece. Only a section of its main area still survives, with a size of ca. 3.8 X 6.5 m (maximum), comprising the hot room as well as two reservoirs for gathering and heating the water. Other essential areas are missing, such as the disrobing and the tepid section, which must have been on the south or west side.

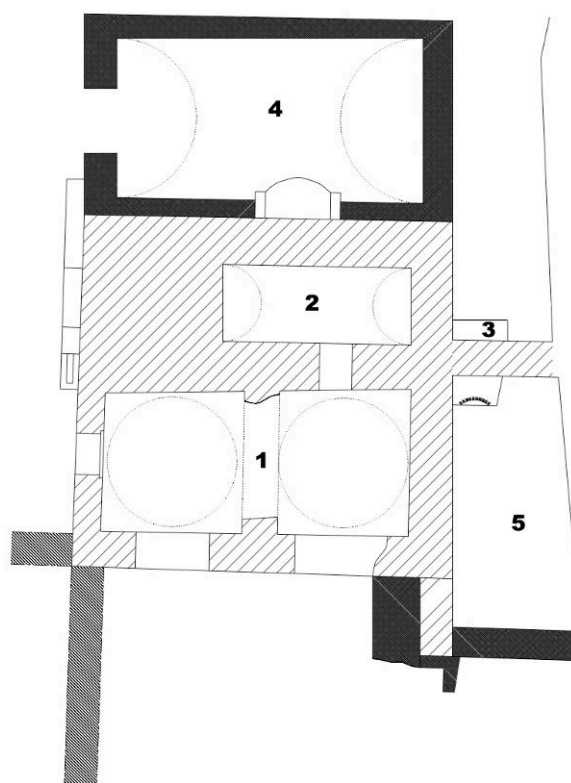


Fig. 5

The hot room (“sicaklik”), is divided by an arch in two almost square areas under lowered semispherical domes, one of which is partly destroyed today (fig. 5(1), fig. 6-7). Their octagonal base was mounted on pendentives as was customary in buildings of the 16th – 18th c.¹² Such pendentives can also be found in one of the towers of the castle, presumably remodelled under the First Ottoman rule. The

¹⁰ Evliyâ Çelebi (ed. 1999), 55.

¹¹ Gell 1817, 48. Dodwell 1819, 350-51.

¹² Kanetaki 2004, 292. Androudis 2008, 57.

mosque, on the other hand, and what remains of the madrasa, were built using squinches.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Limited but necessary lighting was provided with the help of round openings. Ten of these survive on the eastern dome while on the half-destroyed western dome can be detected four whole openings and the contour of two more. The openings had glass covers, remnants of which are still visible around their edges. They are arranged in a symmetrical pattern, one central in the middle and the others in two concentric circles. This pattern is similar to other baths in Greece, most of which have yet to be precisely dated¹³. Nevertheless, judging from the surviving examples, the arrangement and number of such openings is not to be considered as a chronological

¹³ For example in the hamams of Chios, Platykambos in Larissa, Chania and Rethymnon in Grete, Kanetaki 2004, pl. 6.3, 6.4.

indicator; it seems rather to be random, depending on the preferences of each constructor.

The narrow entrance is 70 cm wide, built with hewn stone doorposts and a clay brick arch (fig. 8). It was most likely the door connecting the hot with the warm room. We can detect on its wall the spouts of ceramic pipes for the transfer of warm air towards the missing room. Two more arched openings are formed on the south side (fig. 9). The eastern one was opened at a later stage. The western one possibly existed in the original layout of the building but was initially smaller, widened later and then hastily covered up. On the northern wall, at about 1.5 m. above the floor, there is a small arched opening providing direct contact with the hot water container and fenced off by means of an iron grate (fig.6). The air circulated into the hot room through that opening, assisted by ceramic pipes embedded in the walls, and hypocausts, partly revealed at the west side of the building. The underfloor pillars were made of square clay bricks and only two rows of these, about 20 cm high, still survive. At the north-west corner a small section of the original floor can be seen, covered in stone slabs (fig. 10). Only six of the documented hamams in Greece preserve that type of hypocaust system¹⁴, without, yet, attesting a regional nor a chronological correlation.



Fig. 8

¹⁴ Kanetaki 2004, 297 (Ioannina, Methoni (B), Ancient Corinth, Nafpaktos, Apollonia-Volvi, Chania).



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

Parts of vertical ceramic pipes, starting from the hypocaust, survive on the southern and eastern walls of this space. These pipes would go through walls and some of them went all the way up to the roof where smoke would be released through appropriately shaped flues (fig. 11). Parallel to the ground, at a height of about 1 m. above the ground, a ceramic pipe of 13 cm diameter, embedded in the wall of the northern and eastern side, allowed the hot air to circulate (fig. 10). Water basins fed by another system of pipes were on the eastern wall of the room.



Fig. 12

To the north of the hot room there is a rectangular barrel-vaulted reservoir, the interior of which was covered with hydraulic mortar (fig. 5(2), fig. 12). Its roof, which is flat on the outside, has a glass-covered round opening, of about 30 cm diameter. The centre of the north side of the water reservoir has been adapted for the furnace (“külhan”), where a copper pot would heat the water over the fire. It is a vaulted opening with hewn stone doorposts and a brick lobe, ending in a chimney. It was originally linked with the reservoir but it was later blocked.

The hot water reservoir was fed from a smaller tank on its east side (fig. 5(3), fig. 13). It is a brick construction, whose interior is also covered with hydraulic mortar. Parts of the pipes surviving on the eastern and western walls were probably used to provide water from the nearby fountain (“Pazarovrysi”) and to channel it to the heating compartment, as well as to the basins in the hamam’s hot room.



Fig. 13

The next area, on the north side of the structure, is vaulted and has no openings, except the entrance on the west side (fig. 3, fig. 5(4)). It was perhaps added later, possibly in the mid-19th c. From the same period we can date the rubble walls that rise east of the central core of the hamam (fig. 5(5), fig. 12). They form part of the residence constructed on the site when the hamam was already dilapidated merely because of the great fire that devastated Kyparissia during the Greek War of Independence in 1825.

The hamam's walls are 60 cm thick and constructed using rubble and, occasionally, brick and tile fragments. Rectangular cut stone blocks were used for the corners. A horizontal recess, discernible on the door opening at the west side, bear evidence for the use of a wooden framework. Internal surfaces were covered with multiple layers of mortar, in order to provide protection from high levels of humidity. The opening arches and domes were constructed using bricks. Wooden centring was used for the domes, while their exterior was coated by waterproof plaster.

Due to the hamam's dilapidated state and probably because of the simplicity of the construction, the interior is not adorned by any painted or sculpted decorative elements. Exception are fragments of glazed tiles, widely used in hamams for covering floors and walls (fig. 14). The assemblage of the finds, associated with the period during which the hammam was in operation, are few in number and fragmentary, but of great variety: ceramic ware, glazed pottery dating from the late 16/17th c. to the end of the 19th c.¹⁵, pieces of glass vessels, pipes and conduits, a silver brooch. Among the numerous coins we can identify two Venetian copper coins

¹⁵ The study of the pottery is still ongoing.

of 1684-1710¹⁶ and a silver Ottoman coin from the 18th century (kurush, Egypt -Cairo Mustafa III (1757-1774)). Of particular significance are the clay tobacco pipes that date from the late 17/18th c. to the 19th c.¹⁷ as well as a smoking water pipe (*narghile*) of the 18th c. (fig. 15)



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

Two Ottoman baths are located within the walls of the castle in Methoni, the biggest port town in Messenia, built some 200m. from each other.¹⁸ Evliyâ Çelebi, who visited the castle in the mid-17th c., mentions the existence of only one public bath¹⁹. The first (A), northern building consists of 4 rooms and a vaulted reservoir with the furnace (fig. 16 - 17). On the north side there is a vaulted two-part room which could be identified as the tepid room, an antechamber for the two hot rooms. Light enters the space through round openings in the vault and the space is heated with ceramic pipes running along the walls and coming from the hot rooms. The latter are almost square and joined with a low arched door. They are vaulted and the octagonal base of the domes is mounted on squinches while large glass-covered round openings allow for proper lighting. The domes were constructed by rough-hewn stones with fragments of bricks in the same way as the rest of this building's walls. A double row of bricks on the eastern side of the structure is still visible.

¹⁶ Papadopoli Aldobrandini 1919, 927-933, 939 nr. 95, tav.CXLIX (5), CXLVIII.

¹⁷ Gerolymou 2014. Some bear pipe maker stamps, while the traces of gold plating in few of them display an attempt of a more sumptuous and elegant manufacture.

¹⁸ For a general overview of the Methoni castle and its buildings see: Kontogiannis – Grigoropoulou 2009.

¹⁹ Evliyâ Çelebi (ed.1999), 55. Kostakis 1981, 263.



Fig. 16

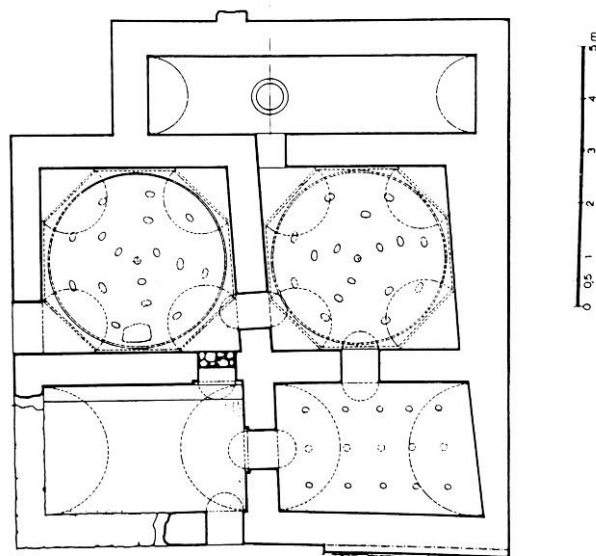


Fig. 17 (Kanetaki 2004)

The second (B), southern hamam presents a more complex structure with additional and smaller auxiliary spaces (fig. 18 - 19). Three basic compartments can be seen: the furnace with the water reservoir, the tepid and hot rooms and a small vaulted antechamber along the eastern side of the building. A further small private hot air compartment (“halvet”), is formed next to the eastern hot section. An interesting detail is a small niche with a stone arch used for depositing functional bath objects. The hot rooms are covered by semispherical domes with rectangular light holes and mounted on pendentives. We can still detect some interesting morphological features such as the hypocaust heating system under the floors, traces

of basins on the side walls of the hot rooms, the rectangular light holes in the domes and the vault of the tepid room. Similar openings have only been found in one other Ottoman bath in Chania, which was constructed between 1669 and 1898²⁰. The masonry is of rubble stone with the occasional use of brick and tile fragments.



Fig. 18

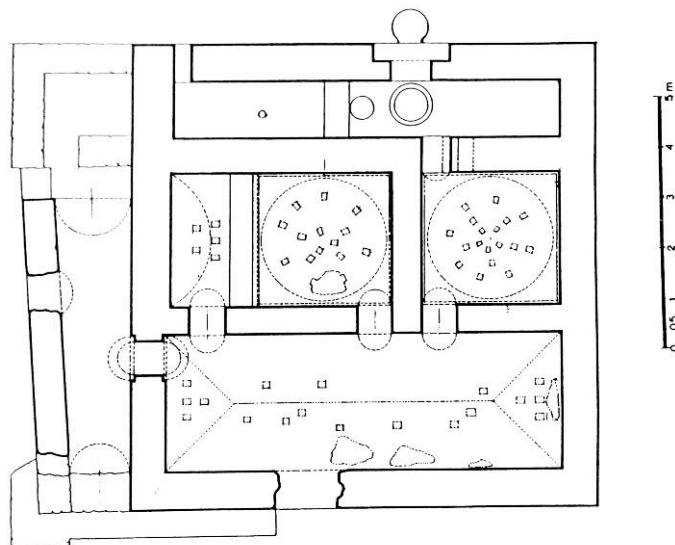


Fig. 19 (Kanetaki 2004)

The similarities observed in the construction of both hamams in Methoni led scholars to include them in the same typological category and considered them as constructions of the Second Venetian rule (1715-1825).²¹ Nevertheless, the northern

²⁰ Kanetaki 2004, 269, 294, fig. 6.1.76-77.

²¹ Kanetaki 2004, 200.

one is possibly older and could be identified with the one mentioned by Çelebi.²² The extended use of clay bricks in its walls further provide an additional evidence to support this dating.

When comparing these structures with the hamam of Kyparissia some common elements appear: the use of rectangular hewn stones on corners and openings as well as the mortar-coated domes with their octagonal bases, made however of rough hewn stone in Methoni baths. Pendentives and hypocausts are used both in the Kyparissia and the southern hamam in Methoni. On the other hand, in the Kyparissia hamam we notice a greater use of bricks, which were employed in the construction of the domes and the lobes of the openings.

It is worth mentioning that, according to Çelebi, there were hamams in other Messenian towns he visited, like Koroni, the second in scale and importance port town, Navarino, Niokastro and Nisi (known today as Messini)²³. Remnants of the hamam in the castle of Navarino (Niokastro) are possibly preserved²⁴, while the existence of the hamam in the castle of Koroni has been confirmed but only the roof of the dome is still visible, since it still remains essentially unknown and unexcavated²⁵.

Despite the incomplete preservation of the Kyparissia hamam, we can conclude that its architecture consists of simple structural forms not only owing to financial reasons but also following the general tendency of bath constructing during the 17-18th c.: large domes and elaborate buildings were gradually abandoned in favour of smaller and less costly constructions. Most of the hamams built in the provincial urban centres conquered or annexed by the Ottomans were constructed with only the essential spaces (disrobing, tepid and hot rooms, water reservoirs) and with no special decorative elements. Such an observation is confirmed by the surviving specimens in Messenia.

The hamam's dilapidated state makes it difficult to classify it in one of the existing types of Ottoman baths in Greece, especially since the construction methods used in the various types did not present significant differences. The use of rectangular ashlar appears to be more common in Ottoman baths of the 16th and 17th c. while the hamams of the 18th and 19th c. were mostly constructed with rubble

²² Kontogiannis – Grigoropoulou 2009, 51.

²³ Çelebi (ed. 1999), 57, 60, 74, 75.

²⁴ Zarinebaf – Bennet – Davis 2005, 257, fig. III. 23.

²⁵ A reference of it as a “complex” is made in Kontogiannis 2014, 224, 232 and plan, fig. 5.12.

masonry²⁶. The combination of rubble and hewn stone blocks in corners and openings in the baths of Methoni and Kyparissia probably indicates the scarcity of building material, which led to more inexpensive solutions. Its small size, simplified construction, extended use of bricks, undecorated surfaces and pottery related with Çelebi's reference of the hamam seem to support its dating to the first half of the 17th century.

Research on Ottoman baths in Greece can be particularly interesting and rewarding. The study of the hamam in Kyparissia adds one virtually undocumented structure to the catalogue. Together with the two baths of Methoni as well as the undocumented and unexcavated hamam of Koroni and Niokastro they establish an important testimony to Messenia's Ottoman past. At the same time, they partook in a civic, cultural and social fabric whose study and understanding advances rapidly in the recent years with interesting results.

²⁶ Kiel 1976, 94.

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