

SUMMARY

Hamam III is situated to the west of the Isa Bey Mosque of the modern town of Selçuk; it was erected after the mid-14th century in the settlement of Ayasoluk, which at that time was the most important Seljuk-Ottoman site within the cultural sphere of ancient Ephesos. Within the framework of archaeological research at Ayasoluk, this extensive bathing complex was also studied: In spite of the poor state of preservation of the architectural remains, interesting conclusions were obtained. The structure contained all of the technical and spatial elements suitable for a comfortable Hamam, and was decorated on the interior with splendid Mukarnas. An additional extension to the north-west is most probably to be interpreted as a bathing complex for women. The warm water reservoir (09), with its associated Praefurnium, is found in the southern area of the site, while the cold water depot (12) represents an extension to the structure and lies to the west. The original entrance from the east – where evidently the changing room and relaxation room were found – is destroyed, and can only be indicated archaeologically.

In 2005, a well was encountered to the south of the cold water depot; based on the coin finds, it was probably put into use either at the time of the construction of Hamam III towards the end of the 14th century, or shortly before then. The finds from this well, which it was possible to document during the excavation, constitute the central theme of the present publication: Of particular interest are the complete skeletons of two human males, as well as of a horse and a dog; these were excavated from the filling material of the well. Due to the fact that the skeletons are completely preserved, and that all four horse-shoes were found with the horse, it is likely that they did not find their way into the well as skeletons. An intentional deposition of corpses and animal cadavers into the well is much more likely.

On the basis of a coin (M6), the burials could date to the beginning of the second reign of Mehmed II (1451–1481). This is supported by numerous coins of the same mint. The well had probably stopped functioning as a regular water reservoir already before the burials occurred, but was instead used as a rubbish pit. These burials, however, which were sealed with building rubble and pottery, certainly prohibited any further usage of the well.

An additional group of bones, a group which is very interesting for the overall interpretation, was found in front of the Praefurnium of the warm water reservoir: Here, embedded in alluvial sand layers, were found two horses' skulls which were placed on both sides of the opening of the heating unit when the bathing complex was no longer in use. The careful, almost parallel placement of the skulls, both oriented to the south, can only be interpreted as an intentional act, and one which apparently seems closely related to the burials in the well. The collection of bones found in the layers where the horses' skulls were found, the pottery in the layers of debris above, as well as finally the coin finds, suggest that both events – the burials in the well and the placement of the horses' skulls – probably were contemporary; in any event first after the conclusion of the operation of the baths and, at the latest, during the rule of Bayezid II (1481–1512), therefore suggesting a separation in time of 30 years at most.

Historical circumstances might perhaps shed light on who the male individuals deposited in the well actually were. After a number of altercations, the town of Ayasoluk finally fell under the domain of the Ottoman empire in the period around 1425/1426. Shortly thereafter, as Mehmed II obtained the throne for the second time in 1451, a renewed serious insurrection of the old Turcoman ruling families, under the leadership of Karamanoğlu İbrahim Beğ, nonetheless took place against the Ottomans. These historical circumstances therefore coincide with the date of the burials. As far as the identity of the corpses, they may represent members of the families of the *Aydinoğulları*, who had taken part in the rebellion against the Ottomans. The violent nature of their deaths – gashes on their ulna bones and their almost completely burned skulls – point to a politically motivated execution. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that no personal effects – such as clothing, belts, or similar objects – were found with the dead. In the case of a political execution, such objects became the property of the executioner. The corpses, however, might have been bought by him and

buried. There would have been no evidence for the location of the burials, had not both the horses' skulls been set up in the immediate vicinity of the well.

So who, then, buried the dead in the well and set up the horses' skulls? Upon consideration of the city's history, two possibilities present themselves: On the one hand, the victors of the rebellion, the Ottomans, could have deposited the two naked men together with the horse and the dog into the well. In that case, the horses' heads are to be understood as a memorial, intended to keep alive the memory on the part of the rebels and also the victors; this hypothesis, however, seems less likely. On the other hand, it is possible that the families or others connected to the executed men caused the burial to take place. The typological investigation of the animals deposited with the corpses has revealed that they were certainly no old nag and a street mongrel, but instead quite the opposite: they were valuable, thoroughbred companions for fighting and hunting. This conclusion makes the second hypothesis concerning the burial seem more likely.

The name Burak Beğ, later simply Burak, can be gleaned from the tax registers from Ayasoluk for the civic region where Hamam III is located. Hamam III might therefore be named Burak Beğ Hamamı. Since, however, Burak is thus far unattested as a personal name in Ayasoluk in this time, this might also represent a code-word for an earlier designation for the district, which fell victim to *damnatio memoriae* with the onset of Ottoman rule. In Islamic mythology, Burak is the name of the horse upon which Mohammed ascended to heaven. The horses' heads, therefore – completely in keeping with the shamanistic tradition of the Turkic peoples – might be understood as a connecting element between this life and the afterlife, and therefore the ruins of the baths can be interpreted as the site of ritual memorials for those buried in the well.