

Water management as traced in the Fountains of Ancient Corinth settlement during the Ottoman times

E. I. Kanetaki*.

* Dr architect engineer NTUA, Spec. in Restoration of Monuments, Univ. degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, 6, Minoos str., Kifissia, Athens 14563, GR.
(E-mail: eleni.kanetaki@gmail.com)

Abstract

The city of Ancient Corinth in the Peloponnese area fell under the Ottomans in the middle of 15th c. (1458). The urban settlement passed into the Venetian hands two centuries later (1687), when Francesco Morosini and his army conquered the city, as the Ottomans had abandoned the place after having exploded the gunpowder warehouses of the citadel and devastated the houses located in the lower city. The region was recaptured by the Ottomans in 1715, till the beginning of the 19th c. and the Greek Revolution. The settlement was already from the first decades of the Ottoman conquest equipped with numerous secular and religious buildings, responding to the population's basic needs, since Christians, as well as Muslims, resided in the area. Fountain houses and their water reservoirs were important for the local houses' irrigation, as well as for cleaning.

Keywords

Ottoman fountains; Water management; Ancient Corinth; Acrocorinthus;

INTRODUCTION

By the time Ancient Corinth, as well as its mountain castle, Acrocorinth, fell under the Ottoman rule in 1458, the city formed a small settlement, which consisted of agricultural houses, one distinct from the other, as depicted in many of the available engravings of the time. The area was still suffering from pirates, and therefore locals felt more secure by residing in Acrocorinth, especially during summer. In the decades that followed, the area was equipped with many buildings that corresponded to the local society's everyday needs, starting from the administrative, the religious and the secular ones. There are no events of any public record referring to any evolution or even change of the settlement's urban fabric for a century and a half, until in 1612 the place was momentarily occupied by the Knights of Malta. Most of the population resided in the fortified castle of Acrocorinth, until the end of the 16th c, while it is not possible to specify these exact dates.

The Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi described the visit to Corinth in 1668 at his accounts in the *Seyâhatnâme* ("Book of Travels") from the Peloponnese voyage. According to his narrations, the lower city (*Varoş*) had 500 stone houses and sarays, all of them with tiled roofs, gardens, vineyards and fountains of running water, which were divided into five neighbourhoods. The lower settlement of Corinth had five mosques, four medreses, eight schools, three tekkes, two hans, one public and seventy private baths and one hundred shops.

A few years later, in 1676 George Wheler and Jacob Spon visited the area and in their memoirs reported that the houses were built in groups of twenty, the largest neighborhood being the one near the market (Figure 1-2).

The Venetians, under the leadership of Francesco Morosini, started by 1684 to attack the conquered by the Ottomans cities of the Peloponnese and Corinth, as well as its castle were easily taken over by the Venetians in 1687. The place was re-taken over by the Ottomans in 1715. No other record of the area was mentioned, since the Ottoman re-conquest of the land till the middle of the 18th c.



Figure 1. Plan of the city of Corinth, from *Teatro della Guerra contro i Turchi*, G.G. Rossi (1687).



Figure 2. Detail from “Città e Fortezza di Corinto occupata da Veneti, Anno 1687”, from the *Teatro della Guerra contro I Turchi*, G.G. Rossi. (1. Città di Corinto, 2. Fortezza di Corinto detta Acrocorinto, cioè Alto Corinto, 3. Castel Ebreo, 4. Castello inferiore che guarda la strada della fortezza, 5. Chiesa di San Paolo, 6. Chiesa de Greci, detta Panagia, 7. Sbarco dell’Ecc.’ Capitan Gete Morosini.

WATER FOUNTAINS IN ANCIENT CORINTH

The topographical Survey of Corinth (Dinsmor, 1964) revealed the location of its water sources that are marked in his topographical chart of Corinth, which depicts the following water sources, some of which are modern fountains of the Ottoman times (Figure 3): 1. Peirene; 2. Sacred Spring; 3. Glauke; 4. Paloukovrysi; 5. Tsibouri; 6. Kachrou; 7. Tekke; 8. Mourat Aga; 9. Kakavi; 10. Hadji Mustafa; 13. Lerna (Kriebardi); 15. Baths of Aphrodite.

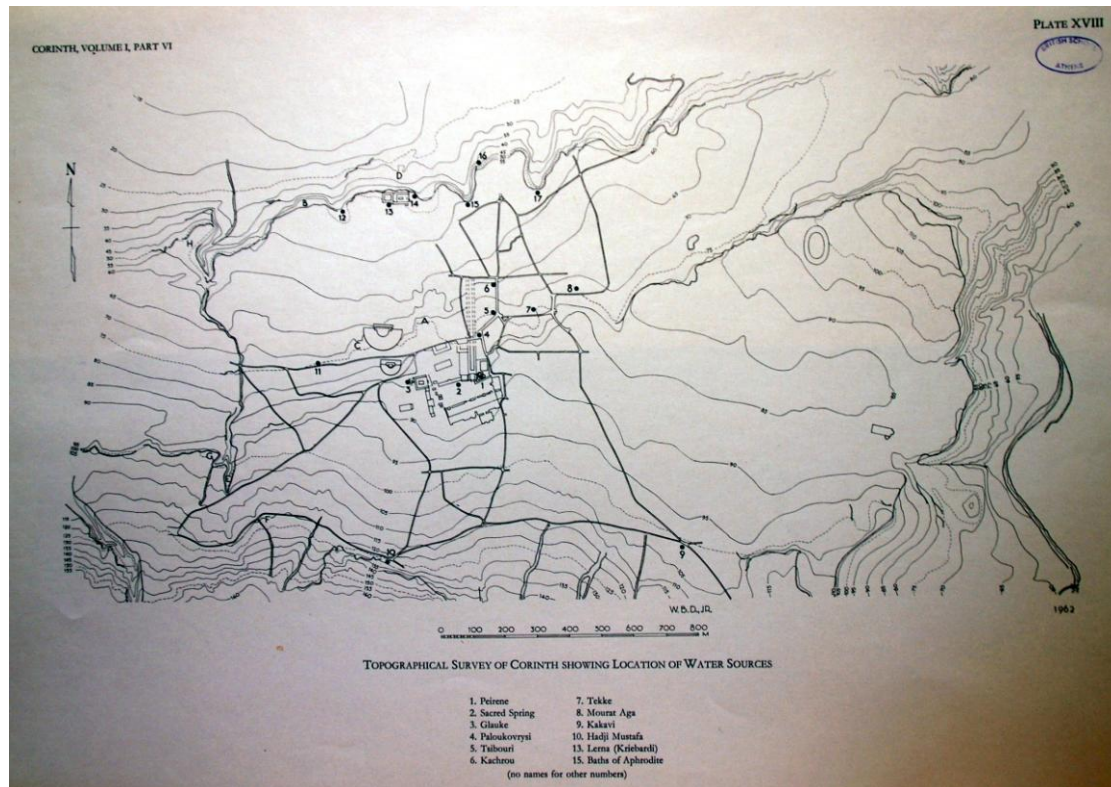


Figure 3. Topographical survey of Corinth showing the location of water sources (Dinsmoor).

The Hacı Mustafa fountain

The Hacı Mustafa fountain is set at the edge of the northern Acrocorinth slopes, below the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, at an elevation ca. 120 m above sea level, close to the old path leading up to the hill (Figure 4). The general form of the masonry structure shows the characteristic features, which are applied to a common type of Turkish *çeşme*, an architectural type often met in the area of Peloponnese.

Its collective tank, built against the hill, is covered by a lowered barrel vault, which is though hardly evident by the side facades. A small opening is found at the western flank (Figure 5). The four-sided fountain presents a 4,75 m long impressive façade of limestone, built with large porous stones of equal dimensions, and spolia (marble architectural elements in secondary use) have been incorporated in the structure. A low pointed arched contour, which consists of two successive rows of voussoirs, crowns the façade (part of it has been damaged at the top), reaching a height of 3,85 m. The protruding wings of limestone on which the arch rests, repose on two marble consoles (window pillars) set at both sides, from the early Christian period, which are decorated with a Christogram inscribed in circles in their inner side. The base of the fountain is formed by reused marble mullions, where most possibly people collecting water could sit.

Water is channelled into a large basin (*kurna*) of marble spoils placed under the fountain's base. A central spout was set over the basin, while two holes have been opened sideways, one functioning

till today. A long block of well-cut fish scale pattern stone was placed at the entire width of the recess above the basin that is surmounted by the donor's inscription. The 0,95x0,60 m slab, set in the tympanum of the 0,84 m deep recess, gives the name of the fountain's benefactor and the date of its construction. According to the transcription of the Arabic text, the fountain owes its presence to Joseph the Tailor, who had ordered its construction in 1515 A.D. The Turkish traveler Evliya Çelebi visited the city of Ancient Corinth in A.D. in 1669 and had recorded the fountain with its inscription:

"Joseph the tailor ordered the construction of this [fountain] for flowing water entirely at his own expense, for the love of God, let Him be exalted, and desiring to please the Merciful Lord, in the nine hundred and twenty-first year [of the Hegira (1515 A.D.)]."

The fountain has taken the name of Hacı Mustafa neighbourhood (Figure 6), to which it belongs and is therefore known today under the same homonymous name.



Figure 4. The Hacı Mustafa fountain at the edge of Acrocorinth. **Figure 5.** The fountain's masonry.

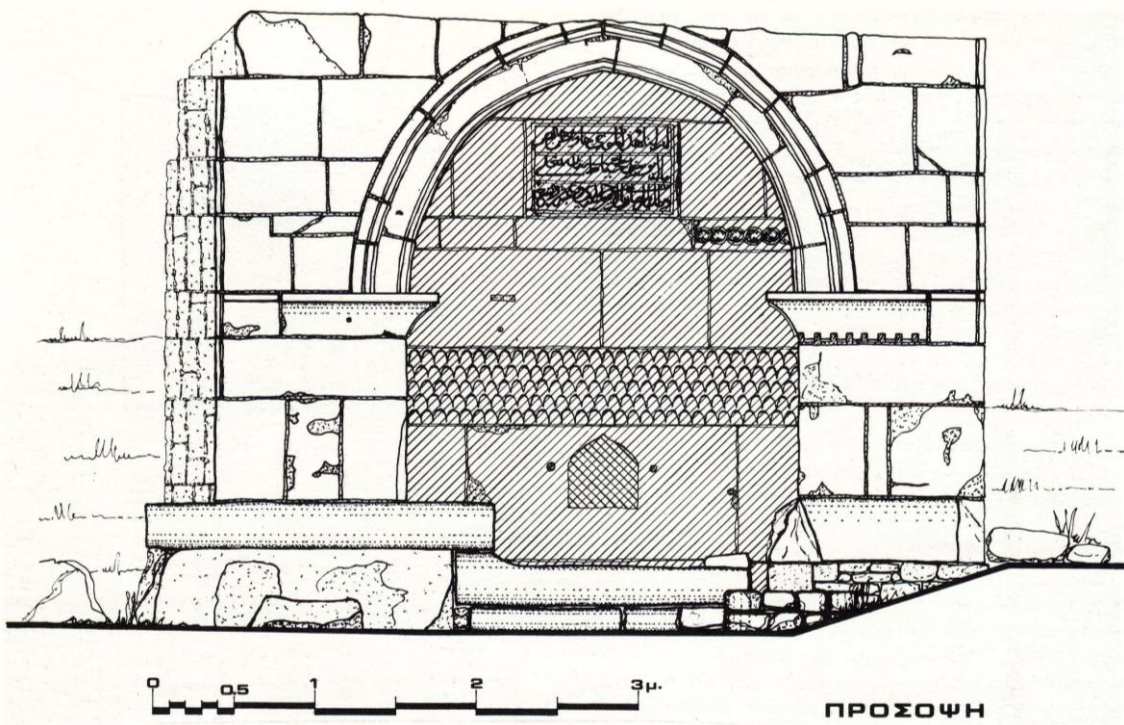


Figure 6. The Hacı Mustafa fountain's façade. Architectural survey plans: Chrysafi-Zografou M., 1984.

The Anaploga fountain

The Anaploga fountain is found on the northwestern slopes of Acrocorinth, at the outskirts and above the village of Anaploga (Haghioi Anargyroi), at an elevation 215 m above sea level. In the available literature, it is also referred as "Palaio Ydragogeio".

The general form of the masonry structure (Figure 7) presents similar characteristic features as the ones of Hacı Mustafa fountain, encountered 1 km nearby at the edge of the northern Acrocorinth slopes, morphological elements commonly found in a Turkish çeşme (fountain). Its collective tank, built against the hill, is covered by a lowered barrel vault, which is though hardly evident by the side facades and a small opening is found at the western flank.

The four-sided fountain presents a 4,90 m wide imposing façade of limestone and is built with porous stones of different sizes. A low pointed arched contour, which consists of one row of voussoirs, crowns the façade (part of it has been damaged at the top), reaching a height of 3,85 m. The protruding wings of limestone have a span of 3,25 m and are set at a recess 0,80 m. deep from the fountain's main masonry forehead. The lowered arch rests on two half damaged impost (stone cornices) set at both sides. The donor's inscription must have been placed under the keystone of the voussoir, as traces of the 0,90x0,76 m slab can be evidenced.

Water was supposed to be channelled into a centrally placed basin (kurna), which is now missing from the fountains' main structure. At the tympanum of the recess two small niches are found (26x36 cm), crowned with an ogee arch, where people quite possibly used to leave their vessels while waiting for their turn. Between the niches, at a lower level, a rectangular stone plaque is placed with the end hole of a water pipe. As evidenced from the right pilaster, the small raised areas at both ends (0,80x0,78 m) must have been used for people to rest or even sit after collecting water.

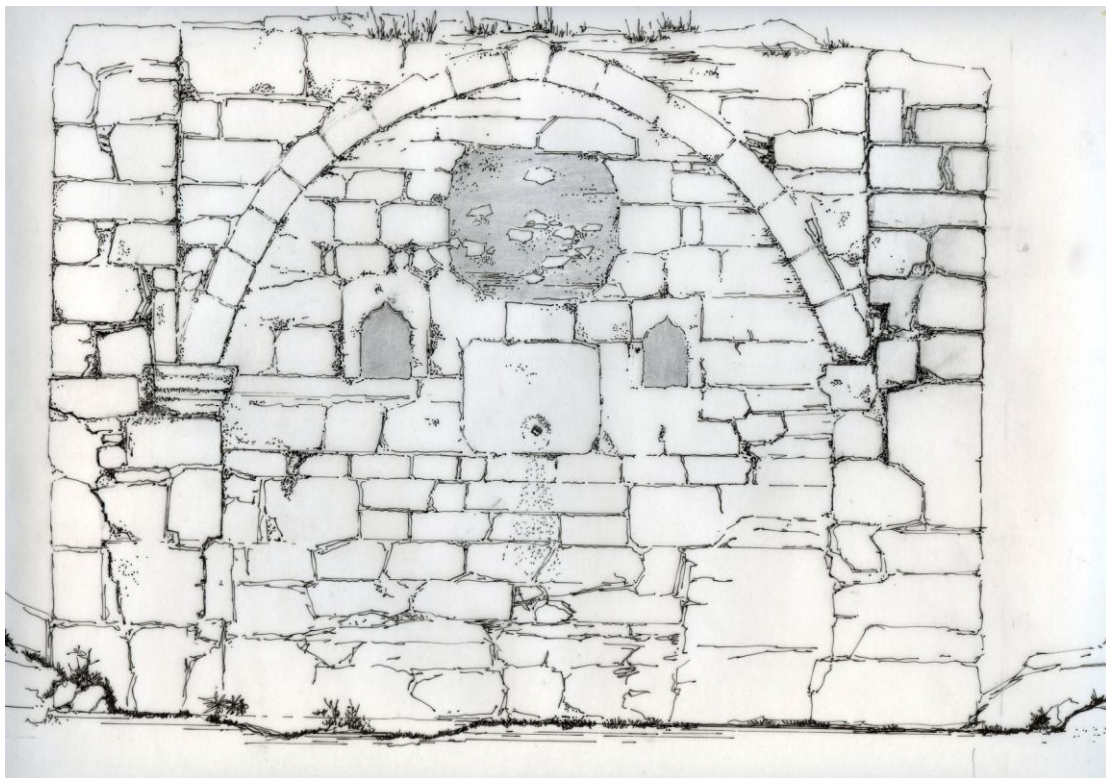


Figure 7. The façade of Anaploga fountain. Architectural survey plans: Kanetaki, E. 2015.

The Anaploga fountain situated at the steep foothill is in a state of decay and has not undergone any restoration works (Figure 8-9).



Figure 8. The façade of Anaploga fountain.



Figure 9. The fountain's masonry structure.

The Murat Ağa fountain

The Murat Ağa fountain is situated at the upper terrace east of Lechaion Road, circa 375 m northeast of the Ancient Corinth village square. It is set at an elevation of 70 m above sea level and it is easily found at a lower plateau alongside the main provincial road (Figure 10).

Its masonry structure differs from the other monumental ottoman fountains traced in Ancient Corinth. The simple façade is made out of limestone measuring 2,90 m wide and 1,30 m thick. It is crowned by a triangular pediment at a small recess 5 cm deep, reaching a 1,70 m height. Two small marble basins, partly damaged, were used for the provision with water, while two shallow niches were set at the main forehead of the façade (Figure 10-11). As two big stone laundries were placed under the basins, this indication may imply that the fountain was quite probably used for the washing of clothes. The fountain's catchment tunnel is no longer visible, as it seems to have been abandoned in the past centuries. It is connected with two adjoining water reservoirs, measuring 4,60x6,60 and 6,60x6,60 m.

According to the existing bibliography, archaeologist A. M. Skias alleged that the fountain was most likely to derive its supply from the ancient fountain of Peirene (Figure 3), an identification which was though not testified due to the limited trial excavations made by Skias for the Greek Archaeological Society in 1892 since he failed to find evidence of the Agora.



Figure 10. The plateau where Murat Ağa fountain is found. **Figure 11.** The present condition of the fountain.



Figure 12. The masonry at Murat Ağa fountain's façade.

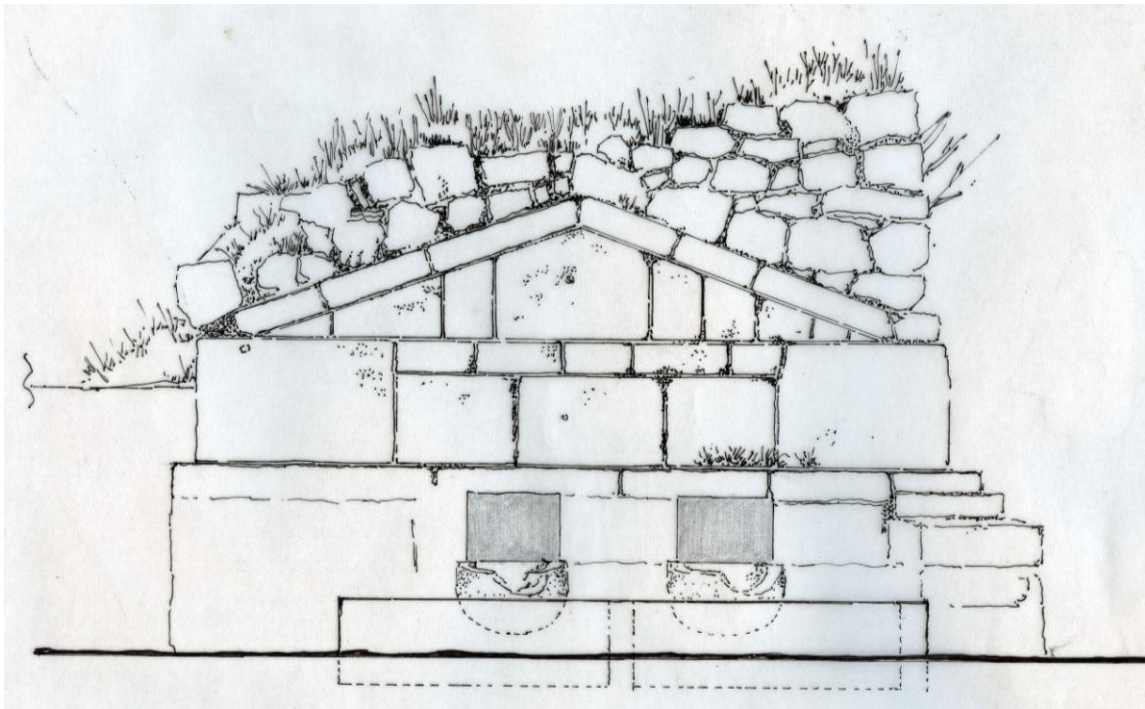


Figure 13. The façade of Murat Ağa fountain. Architectural survey plans: Kanetaki, E. 2015.

The Tekke fountain (remains).

The tekke fountain was situated at the upper terrace east of Lechaion Road, circa 150 m northeast of the Ancient Corinth modern village square. It was set at an Elevation 70 m above sea level, constructed behind the religious Ottoman building of Tekke, which stands alongside the main provincial road.

The fountain doesn't survive till today, although it was registered as one of the once surviving water sources of the area. Only its reservoir tank can be still traced (Figure 14) as it has been incorporated into a modern private property, behind the Sezai-yi Gülseni Türbesi.

Other fountains were traced in the area of Ancient Corinth (Figure 15), some of them are still reachable, while a few more are found in Acrocorinthus castle.



Figure 14. The remaining water reservoir of Tekke fountain behind the Sezai-yi Gülseni Türbesi.

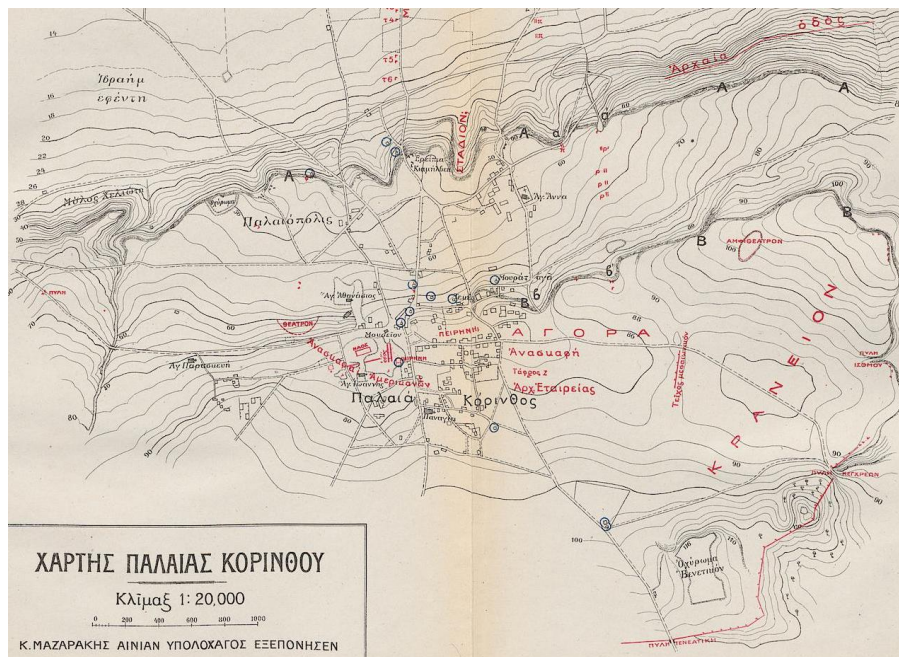


Figure 15. Map of Ancient Corinth, where the Tekke fountain was registered. After Skias A., “Χάρτης Παλαιάς Κορίνθου”, Πίνακας Ε’, *Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας*, Athens 1906.

Fountain at the 2nd precinct of Acrocorinth, situated between the two towers outside of the third Gate

The fountain is situated between the two towers flanking the southern facade of third Gate (Figure 16), which leads to the 3rd enceinte. The general form of the fountain’s structure shows the characteristic features, which are applied to a common Turkish çeşme: it presents a square shaped form of general dimensions 3,10x2,90 m., and is covered with a stone vault. Its façade was decorated with an arch -as evidenced by the surviving impost, which has though been damaged in great extent and only the remains of the internal “tympañon” may detect its initial semicircular or segmented form. A small niche 0,30x0,35 m. is placed at the central façade.

Its collective tank is covered by a lowered barrel vault (Figure 18), which is though hardly evident by the side facades. A small opening is found at the western flank. Water was channelled into a basin (*kurna*), which is now hidden by the vegetation that covers the fountain's base, as a small hole-spout was set over the basin, that is still provided with water (Figure 17).



Figure 16. The fountain situated between the two towers of the fortifications' third Gate.



Figure 17. The fountain's façade.



Figure 18. The low barrel vault covering the water tank.

Fountain at the 3rd precinct of Acrocorinth, situated inside the third enceinte, close to the church of Ag. Dimitrios

The fountain stands at the area of the former Muslim quarter of the northern Acrocorinth slopes, close to the Fetihye mosque, the hammam located in the inner area of the third Gate and opposite of Ayios Demetrios Venetian church. The general form of the masonry structure (Figure 19) shows the characteristic features, which are applied to a common type of Turkish *çeşme*, like the Haçi Mustafa (Josef the Taylor's) and the Anaploğa fountains.

Its collective tank was covered by a barrel vault, that has though collapsed (Figure 20). A small maintenance window is found at the northern, as well as another one at the eastern flank.



Figure 19. The facade, as well as the masonry structure of the fountain.

Figure 20. The collapsed barrel vault of the water tank.

The four-sided fountain presents a 4,85 m long façade of limestone, built with small porous stones of unequal dimensions. An arch must have crowned the main façade of the fountain (the fountain may have been crowned with a low pointed arched contour), as a row of voussoirs –as well as the arch’s impostes, suggest. Part of this arch though survives till today. Two small (0,40 and 0,30 m. long) shallow niches decorate the main façade of the fountain, presenting ogee arched contours.

There is no indication of the central spout, neither of the fountain’s basin (kurna), since a large part of the façade has collapsed.

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