CHAPTER 3
INVESTIGATIONS AT THE LOWER CITY CHURCH SITE (1836-2009)

This chapter provides a narrative history of the discovery and investigation of the Lower City Church site at Amorium in modern times. This story begins with the modern rediscovery of Amorium by William J. Hamilton in 1836, followed by a account of the vicissitudes of the church site, its visitors, and discoveries made during the late 19th and the 20th century prior to the arrival of the Harrison expedition in 1987. The rest of this chapter is devoted to an historical account of the scientific survey and excavation of the church complex from 1987 through 2009. The goals of this chapter are to orient the reader to the history and historiography of the church site by providing a narrative explaining how the complex has been investigated over time, and the when various portions of it were discovered and excavated. By doing so, this chapter seeks to contextualize the excavations within a chronological frame, whilst also providing a critique of the evolving preliminary interpretations of the monument prior to this publication.

The Rediscovery of Amorium: Hamilton’s Churches

The first western European visitor to identify ruins as churches at the site of Amorium was the British explorer William J. Hamilton, who visited in 1836. Hamilton's account appeared in the first volume of his book *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus and Armenia*, published in 1842. Hamilton was the first traveller to correctly identify the site as that of Amorium, and he referred to the ruins by their contemporary descriptive toponyms of ‘Hergan Kaleh’ (‘Hergan Castle’) and ‘Assar Kieui’ - the latter place name surviving as the name of the village of Assar founded in 1892, and now rendered as Hisarköy or just Hisar (literally, ‘fortress-village’ or ‘fortress’). Hamilton wrote:

...proceeding over the hills, on which the peasants were threshing out their corn, we reached the deserted and dreary site of what was once a populous city; and seldom have I witnessed a more striking scene of solitude and desolation: a few cattle were grazing amongst the ruins, and a rank herbage and numerous wild flowers grew in profusion amidst the fallen buildings.

The ‘solitude and desolation’ observed by Hamilton was, in fact, a relatively recent development in the long history of Amorium. Although scanty traces of post-mediaeval activity have been found in the Lower City, excavations on the Upper City have uncovered evidence of Ottoman occupation until the late 18th century, when the site was finally abandoned.

Hamilton described the ruins of what he called the Acropolis (now designated the Upper City), noting the standing remains of the surrounding (middle Byzantine) fortification wall and towers, and that within these walls, ‘all was ruin and confusion, though the lines of streets and houses were still visible.’ On the ‘northern slope’ of the Upper City, Hamilton came across, ‘...a solitary arch, probably of church, built of stone, with its piers deeply buried in the debris, which had fallen down the steep slope of the hill; beneath the arch, which appears to have been employed for the sake of greater strength, is a straight architrave, which formed the top of an entrance, and in which I was struck with the peculiar formation or dovetailing of the key-stone, on which also a small cross

1. Hamilton 1842, 449-50. Hamilton’s description was later repeated by the French traveller Charles Texier (Texier 862, 472), who did not actually visit Amorium. Hamilton approached the site of Amorium from the north, proceeding southwards from the village of Hamza Hadji (the modern Hamzahacih), which still exists today. The location of Amorium had been posited by earlier travellers who passed close by, namely Richard Pococke, who passed through nearby Eski Yuldutsch, *en route* to Sivrihisar in 1740, and Colonel W.M. Leake, who passed through nearby Beiaid, at the northern foot of the Emirdağ, *en route* to Bolvadin/Polybotos in 1800. Neither Pococke or Leake appear to have visited the site itself; see *Amorium* 3, 469, and fns. 2 and 3, and Leake 1824. On Leake’s ‘Essay of a Map of Asia Minor, Ancient and Modern’, dated 1822, that accompanied his *Journal of a Tour in Asia Minor* published in 1824, Leake placed the caption ‘Amorium’ in the vicinity of the ancient city, but he did not identify it with the settlement of Hergan (Hamilton’s correct identification of Amorium), which Leake tentatively identified as the ruins of ancient ‘Anabura’?

2. For the latest Ottoman period finds from Amorium, see with references: for Upper City: *Amorium* 1, 8 and fn. 35, and page 17 and fn. 91; also *DOP* 1998, 326 (silver *para* coin SF3422, dated 1769), and pages 91-92, nos. 1-2 (buckle plates SF2578 and SF3947, 17th or 18th century); for Lower City Church: *Amorium* 1, 15 and fn. 69 (17th-18th century clay pipes); for Lower City Enclosure: *Amorium* 3, 86 (silver *para* coin SF3762, dated 1757). For Kutahya blue-and-white and polychrome wares of 17th-first half of 18th century, mostly from Upper City trenches and surface finds, see *Amorium* 1, 108-9, 111-13, nos. 24-40; for tobacco pipes from Amorium of the 17th and 18th centuries see *DOP* 1999, 346-47, and fig. 8.