

WATER AS CATALYST

Int

Interventions

AR

Adaptive Reuse

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Interventions | Adaptive Reuse

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THE HAMMAM OF ERBIL CITADEL

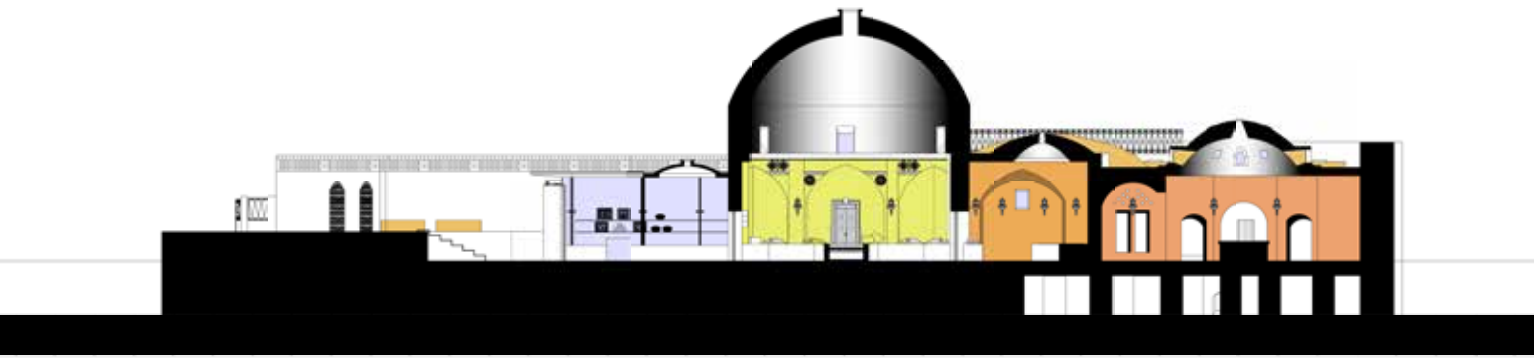
A CONFLUENCE OF PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

by AHMED ABBAS & KAREN LENS

Iraq has a very old and rich cultural history. Due to the wars in the region, much of this history has been lost. This applies particularly to the citadel in the city of Erbil, protected as one of world's oldest, permanently inhabited urban settlements. Over more than 6,000 years this UNESCO World Heritage Site has been, without interruption, a military, religious and cultural stronghold in the Kurdish steppe of northern Iraq. The fortress is situated on top of an artificial, elliptical archaeological mound, 32 meters above the flat city and its surroundings. Its dense urban fabric consists mainly of brick houses with traditional courtyards. Scattered among the town's complex fabric are a prison, seven historic graves, a Koran school, three gates and several squares. They are revealed as you stroll through the narrow streets, evidence of the citadel as a self-sustaining system with a military, political, legal, economic and housing infrastructure. The narrow streets of this age-old labyrinth provide continuous shade, induce pleasant breezes during the hot summers and give shelter during cold, hard winters. In the center of the citadel was a public bath, a Hammam, built next to one of the city's three mosques. Founded in 1775 by Qassim Agha Abdullah, who was inspired by traditional Islamic principles, this public bath was traditionally constructed with close links to its urban context and in accordance with socio-cultural norms of the society within which it operated. (A. Al-Haidari, (2014)). The well, a basic component, is still present today, but no longer in use. It provided water for drinking, cleaning and bathing in a common facility of purity, the Hammam.

Recently, an ambitious project has commenced to conserve and revitalize Erbil Citadel. This project has two main objectives. The first





comprises physical conservation procedures to preserve and improve the architectural, physical and structural quality of the citadel buildings. The second entails adaptive reuse procedures to deal with the preserved buildings. With the aim of bringing the citadel back to life as a centre for culture, recreation and tourism, adaptive reuse has been adopted as the core strategy for a culture-driven revitalization. Within this context, this paper intends to contribute to the revitalization of the citadel by focusing on an important element of its urban fabric, the public bath (Hammam). In accordance with the guidelines of the Burra Charter, our project aims to protect a significant and valuable part of this cultural world heritage site (Burra Charter, (1999)) through our design of the Hammam as a renovated bathhouse instead of as a museum as previously proposed' (Al Yaqoobi, (2014)). Once again water will connect the citizens of Erbil and its visitors as modern techniques and designs are combined with ancient traditions and architecture. This proposed adaptive reuse process not only represents a source of inspiration for revitalizing the entire citadel, but through water it also constitutes a catalyst for its redevelopment (Yaraly.B. (2001)).

The significance of the Citadel hammam has its origin in the various functions and purposes, which are accommodated historically on its grounds. As a place of entertainment, this bathhouse, just like the fountains in the courtyards of the townhouses, acted as a source of cooling and relaxation (Al Yaqoobi. (2012)). In addition, the hammam complex was a place of hygiene as it was built originally to support the Citadel's citizens physically as well as spiritually. The Hammam's spatial organization incorporated a purifying religious force for both mind and body. As one of its many functions, the Hammam stimulated the senses. The further one entered the successive areas, the more the world quieted; filtered light is reflected, complex scents of herbs and soap are identified, hot air envelops the visitor, and sins are washed away. The purifying effect of the hammam was not only physical but also held a deeper and religious significance: a cleansing of the mind by scrubbing the sins of the body. (A.Al-Haidari. (2014))

From its inception, the hammam was also a place of social significance. The water brought together citizens without distinction, even the most isolated women. Public bathing and traditional massage formed an important weekly or even daily ritual. As such this facility had a strong social function. Waiting times for bathing created social opportunities. The hammam became a meeting place for both men and women. Visitors exchanged news items; dissatisfaction and political unrest in the city are discussed among all sections of the population. The bathhouse was even the only social gathering place for isolated Muslim women, who lived permanently in the seclusion of their houses. It was the single place where they could come into contact with other women outside their immediate family circle.

Islamic bathhouses often function as a public forum. Hammams were used for all kinds of ceremonies of great significance in the lives of ordinary Muslims. People usually gathered here during the day, but they also organized events or even prayer services in this public space next to the mosque. The hammam was the location to assess the physical qualities of a prospective bride by their new female relatives. When a potential daughter-in-law had been selected, she was invited to visit the hammam with her family-to-be. This 'test' was critical for the marriage to be concluded. This was followed later by an inspection of men in the bathhouse in preparation for their wedding. (Derbandi,N.A., (2008)) One of the most important ceremonies at the hammam took place when a baby was 40 days old. The child was brought to the bathhouse to undergo a traditional washing ritual in order to become a member of society. Different festivals took place with music, drinks and food, such as henna, farewell and birthday parties and so on. People who converted to Islam were taken to the bathhouse. And finally, residents came to bathe when they experienced difficult or decisive moments in their lives. When war or disease hit the country, people tried to find peace in the comfortable hot steam of the hammam.

The functions of Hammam previously mentioned are supported and, in fact, accomplished overall by its spatial organization: the Camekan, the Westani, and

the Harret. A normal bathhouse consists of three major components that are interconnected. The first room a bather passes is the 'Alberani', which is the cool or lukewarm space combined with the 'Camekan' or the entrance area. This area serves as a social meeting point and dressing area where a visitor drapes a pestemal or a traditional flat-woven Turkish towel around the waist over a cloth of silk or cotton. The next space, which is called the 'Westani' or 'the middle', is a warmer room. The middle room may not be of high importance to visitors, but, in fact, it is most essential to the hammam. Without the 'Westani' the bathhouse misses a certain rhythm necessary for its proper functioning. The human body can cope with very high and low temperatures as long it has the time to adapt or to recover. When going from a dark to a light place or the other way round, one's eyes need time to acclimate. The long corridor of this middle room serves as a place for adjusting to the differences in both temperature and lighting. For this reason, the Westani is irreplaceable in the hammam's process. After having adjusted gently to the heat and light in the lukewarm middle room on one of the massage beds, one can spend time in the hottest space of the facility, the 'Harret'. This space is permanently filled with steam, the place where people wash and cleanse themselves, not only physically but also mentally. In the ceiling of this room there usually is a dome with small windows to let in filtered natural light into an otherwise dark space below. In the middle of this space there is a platform

with a marble surface, referred to as the belly or sweat stone used for the traditional rough massages. In the corners of this space are water fountains or showers for washing and rinsing of the body and hair. Large hammams have two of these areas, one for men and one for women, whereas the smaller hammams use a strict separate time schedule for each sex. (E.Resul. ((2005)) After the thorough treatment, a bather walks slowly back to the Alberan, where one can dry while drinking a cup of tea or milk.

In order to be an integral part of the Erbil Citadel Revitalization Project, our project, in conformity with the Burra Charter guidelines, proposes a policy for the Hammam that identifies a use or combination of uses to retain the cultural significance of the place and specifically its social significance. The basic idea of the design is to reshape the building and to make it operational as a hammam once more. As a principal criterion for achieving this objective, the proposed interventions on any level and any scale should be minimal. A restored use of the place, with minimal changes to the principal physical structure and uses, should respect associations and meanings and, where appropriate, should provide for the continuation of practices which contribute to the local culture. As respect for culture and existing valuable elements must be the most natural approach in this process (Plevoets, B., & Van Cleempoel, K. (2013)), it is crucial to use material from the area itself. Such an approach keeps the design close



Built in seats inside the hammam



the traditional bathhouse. Instead, we introduce environmentally respectful methods for heating the water through the use of the sun and the wind, combined with a minimum of electricity and gas. The tunnels remain the same although they now contain a modern ventilation system. The thickness of brick walls and other passive cooling techniques, such as semi-basements like the tunnels and small windows, offer added advantages. The old and the new strengthen each other.

A proper system like the hammam of Erbil does not require essential changes in order to revive on an architectural and social level. Its manual is easy to read when one feels the original atmosphere of the various rooms. In the restored monument, the historical operation remains identifiable to the local residents to whom the site has special associations and meanings. Like the Burra Charter predetermines, the people of Erbil are invited to assume the essential social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities of the place by integrating it back into their lives. However, the minimal changes provide the opportunity for visitors of this heritage to experience foreign cultural values in a climate of co-existence without the loss of the original, social and spiritual characteristics.

This adaptive reuse proposal of minimal intervention reveals a central thread, which can be translated to similar heritage sites. Muslim communities from North Africa, the Middle East to Central Asia share the same architectural principles. Their constructions all try to secure functional necessities through standards and systems at home, at work and in public spaces. In spite of these similarities, local surroundings, culture and art have a physical impact on all constructions. Typical materials, space formations, architectural elements, decorations and inscriptions create clear distinctions. Furthermore, public and religious sites, including hammams, received additional attention during their building process because they visualised the nature and spirit of its users. The bathhouses combined daily and sacred life by providing water to support body and soul. Therefore, remaining hammams should be regarded as gems of cultural heritage that reconnect people to their past but also to their future. The cultural and artistic elements have a better chance of being maintained for following generations if they remain in use. The water in the hammam becomes a catalyst for rebuilding both the heritage and the community in the citadel of Erbil without any loss of identity. A judicious, adaptive reuse is the only method for maintaining specific, vulnerable sites within society in order to preserve contemporary rituals.

to the culture of the place and preserves the identity of the historical city and hammam as a typical Islamic construction. The bathhouse functioning once again as a real hammam instead of the proposed new use of museum enables a first-hand experience of the cultural past. At the original open courtyard of this public space, we placed traditional trees, benches and a small water source to invite people to come and gather as they used to. Through maintaining the existing conditions

and spaces, the infrastructure will welcome the visitor through a confluence of past, present and future.

The exterior of the hammam will maintain its current and traditional appearance through restoration, whereas the inside will be almost entirely recoated, using typical Iraqi and Kurdish materials and modern techniques. The new design maintains the apertures and skylights that allow natural lighting from above. Spatial interventions into the interior include the introduction of

new seating in the changing room, lockers, a footbath, a division of the harret to create two contemporary saunas, updated toilets and a small shop.

Interventions are also made to update the water heating system. Historically, heat was produced by burning manure and waste, which was subsequently transported under the building through tunnels based on the system of the Roman thermal baths. The biggest fire burned under the hot belly stone or the center of

ENDNOTES:

1 From an interview with Mr. Al Yaqoobi Dara (Head of High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization) in 4/17/2014

PROJECT CREDITS, INFORMATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

EDITORIAL

Project Name_ Projecting Change

Image Credits: Neethi Abraham, Angelica Carvahales, Udeeta Jain, Mengran Jiang, Vinoti Kabara, Krishna Lingutla, Sneha Mathreja, Hana Mehta, Gloria Ramirez, Eshank Rishi, Eder Romero, Yinghua Tan, Rohit Vantaram, Ananya Vij, Plub Warnitchai, Mengyue Zhou

BREATHE, LOOK, STAND UP

Project Name 01_ DC ExchangeProject_Site_ McMillan Slow Sand Filtration site_ Location_ Washington DC_ New use 01_ Community center, marketplace, performance_ Project Name 02_ People's Liberation Army No. 1102_ Location_ Shenyang China_ Original architect_ Communist Party China_ Rehabilitation architect_ META-Project_ New use 02_ Exhibition space, mini theatre

Image Credits_ Figure 01,02, 08_ McMillan slow sand filtration site, Washington, DC, Lewis Francis; Figure 03 –07_ Public Folly, Shenyang, China, META-Project; Figure 09_ Courtesy of Lindsay Winstead

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THE TEARS OF THE U.S.S. ARIZONA

Project Name_ A tomb that lives; Location_ Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Image Credits_ Figure 01_ View of USS ARIZONA taken from Manhattan Bridge on the East River in New York City on its way back from sea trials. December 25, 1916, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print;photographer_EnriqueMuller,Jr./E.Muller;1916;Wikimedia; Figure 02_ A TOMB THAT LIVES Monument proposal, illustration by author; Figure 03_ An aerial view of the USS Arizona Memorial, U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Jayme Pastoric, Wikimedia

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THE EDGE OF CONDITION

Project Name 01_ Three Mills_ Bromley-by-Bow_ River Lee_ London, England_ Project Name 02_ The White Building_ Lee Navigation Canal_ Hackney Wick_ Stratford, England_ Project Name 03_ The Marine Engine House_ Walthamstow Reservoirs

Image Credits_ All images courtesy of the authors; Figure 01, 02_ Three Mills Island, London_ Figure 03_ White Building_ Hackney Centre Wick_ Stratford_ Figure 04_ The Sinking Future Post Apocalyptic Flood Survival Centre.

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

Image Credits_ Figure 01_ The Big U, Courtesy of Bjarke Ingels Group; Figure 02, 03, 05) by Julia Casol; Figure 04_ Courtesy of H+N+S Landscape Architects; Figure 06_ Dijkdoorbraak bij Bemmel, 1799, Christiaan Josi, naar Jacob Cats (1741 – 1799), 1802, source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

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THE OYSTER BLOCKS PROJECT

Project Name_ The Oyster Blocks Project

Image Credits_ Figure 01 – 07_ courtesy of the author

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THE HAMMAM OF ERBIL CITADEL

Project Name_ Hammam of Erbil; Location_ Erbil, Iraq

Image Credits_ Figure 01 – 04_ courtesy of the authors

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(re)MADE BY WATER

Project Name_ New World Mall, Bangkok, Thailand

Image Credits_ All images courtesy of the author; Figure 01_ Mall; central court, Photograph by Perfect Lazybones; Figure 02_ Floating market in Bangkok, Photograph by Georgie Pauwels; Figure 03_ Mall, escalators, Photograph by Olga Saliy; Figure 04_ Mall, koi, Photograph by Olga Saliy; Figure 05_ Mall, escalators, Photograph by Olga Saliy.

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T-HOUSE

Project Name_ T-HOUSE, theoretical project; Location_ Hains Point, Washington, D.C.

Image Credits_ Figure 01 – 08_ courtesy of the authors

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THE BLUE LINE

Project Name_ blue developments; Location_ Battir, Palestine; Qeparo, Albania

Image Credits_ Figure 01- illustration by author

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ENVIRONMENTAL IDENTITY

Project Name 01_ Caiaques kayaks; Location_ Pinheiros River, São Paulo, Brazil; Artist_ Eduardo Srur; Project Name 02_ Pets; Location_ Tietê River in São Paulo, Brazil; Artist_ Eduardo Srur

Image Credits_ All photos courtesy of Eduardo Srur; Figure 01_ Caiaques, kayaks, Pinheiros River, photo_ Eduardo Nicolau; Figure 02_ Caiaques, kayaks, Pinheiros River, photo_ Alexandre Schneider; Figure 03_ Pets, Tietê River, photo_ Eduardo Srur; Figure 04_ Pets, Tietê River, photo_ Almeida Rocha

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A METROPOLITAN PARK OF WATER

Project Name_ Metropolitan Water Park project, Location_ Saragossa, Spain

Image Credits_ Figure 01_ Bridge Pavilion & Third Millennium Bridge, Río Ebro, Zaragoza, España, Source_Pabellón Puente y Puente del Tercer Milenio, Author_ Juan E De Cristofaro from Zaragoza, España, CC-BY-SA-2.0; Figure 02_Google Earth aerial view of Zaragoza, Spain; Figure 03_ Plano topográfico de la ciudad de Zaragoza del siglo XVIII, Wikimedia;

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BETWEEN RESILIENCY AND ADAPTATION

Image Credits_ All images courtesy of the author; Figure 01_ by author, background_ by Aleks Dahlberg at www.unsplash.com; Figure 02_ by author; Figure 03, 04_ graphic by author, background_ by Frantzou Fleurine; www.unsplash.com

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WATER AS MEDIUM

Project Name 01_ Water tower in Delft, Architect_ Rocha Tombal; Location_ Delft, NL; Project name 02_ Water tower in Brasschaat, Architect_ Crepain-Binst Architects; Location_ Brasschaat, Belgium; Project name 3_ Water tower Sint-Jans convent, Overijssel; Architect_ Zecc Architects; Location_ Overijssel, NL

Image Credits_ All images courtesy of the authors_ Figure 01_ typological evolution of the water tower, Source: Ingeonné; Figure 02_ Water tower in Delft (NL), photo by Christiaan Richters; Figure 03, 04, 05_ Water tower in Brasschaat (BE), Crepain-Binst Architects, photo_ Crepain Binst; Figure 06, 07_ Water tower Sint-Jans convent, Overijssel (NL), Zecc Architects, photo_ Stijn Poelstra, <http://www.stijnstijl.nl/>;

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