



Bathroom in Medieval Islamic Medical Texts: Theory and Practice

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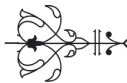
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Abstract

Concerning the theoretical origins of the bathroom formation in Islamic civilization, from antique natural sciences (medicine) viewpoint, there are trivial researches. Although most of the Medieval Islamic medical texts dealt with the various aspects of human - environment interaction for health, the instructions of these texts in assessing the theoretical tenets of architectural creation have not been studied from the interdisciplinary links of natural sciences and architecture history perspective. The trace of architecture and medicine connection can be found in the medical texts of ancient Greece and *Ten books on architecture*. Vitruvius viewed the knowledge about different climates and healthy/unhealthy places quite essential for architects and believed that without these sorts of knowledge the adequacy of a residence was not provided. Following the predecessors, Medieval Islamic physicians supposed medicine as a science for the elements and temperaments of a human and considered its objective as health maintenance while being healthy and recovering while being patient. Bathing and bathrooms are interdisciplinary fields linking architecture and medicine; hence most of the antique physicians devoted some part of their works to the role of them. Since long time ago, beside the ceremonial, social, and hygienic functions, bathing has had direct impact on health protection (body/spirit) and the treatment of some illnesses. Although for the predecessors bathing originally pertains to the excretion of waste matters from body, additionally most physicians have focused on its advantages and disadvantages of health and the cure of diseases as well as some features of bathroom architecture. From all these instructions we perceive that besides cleanliness, refreshment, body recovery and some pain relieving functioning of bathing and bathroom architecture, in fact, they are reminiscences of natural and gradual return of moderation into body and self, based on natural philosophical theories towards human-cosmos affinity.

In this article I try to delineate the theoretical origins of bathroom's formation in Islamic civilization by taking the Medieval Islamic medical texts into consideration. The major question is: what is the scientific origins and principles of the formation of bathrooms?

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This article approach is historical interpretation of Medieval Islamic Medical texts about the role of bathing and bathrooms in preventing and paving the way for the human physical-spiritual moderation. The theoretical framework on which this study has been formed is the scrutiny of architecture general pattern and painting in bathrooms based on the instructions of the two fields of Physical Medicine (al-Tibb al-Jesmani) and Spiritual Medicine (al-Tibb al-Ruhani). Since according to ancient Medicine the human health relies on the moderation of human strengths and temperaments through the coordination and adaptation of body and mind with the nature, hence this article claims that the structure of different sections in bathrooms of Islamic civilization is in harmony with human body (temperaments) and the themes of the paintings in these bathrooms are in accord with human selves. The findings of this study indicate that the formation of Medieval Islamic bathrooms has been based on the instructions of natural sciences, due to the interactions amongst physicians with artists and architects of senior rank in their castes. In fact, the creators of paintings and bathrooms founded the professional tenets and concepts of their crafts by imbibing the instructions of natural sciences sages and translating them into their profession jargon. Based on the medical knowledge, the most significant theoretical origin of Islamic artists and architects in the formation of bathrooms is justifiable due to the structural resemblance of a human and cosmos. In other words, bathrooms are in accord with body elements and types of self, in essence with cosmos. These resemblances include the correspondence of bathroom sections and human four temperaments as well as the correspondence of bathroom paintings and human triple self. The basic objective of these resemblances, structural and thematic, in bathrooms has been the creation of an environment in accord with human nature for keeping the temperament moderation and durable health.

Keywords: Four Temperaments, Health, Bathroom (Hammām), Painting in Bathroom, Medieval Islamic Medicine.

