A CONTEMPORARY HAMMĀM: WELLNESS CENTRE IN BODRUM, TURKEY

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Abstract

The article presents and reviews the design of a contemporary hammām and wellness centre in Bodrum, Turkey. The project conceived in Ortakent (near Bodrum), was designed to serve mainly tourists during the summer holiday season and residents of the region in the off-season periods. The complex consists of the main component; the hammām, and also includes other components such as a sauna, steam bath, massage parlour etc. The design concept provides flexibility and adaptability to allow the fluctuations caused by seasonal variations in both type of activities and the frequency of usage during the intended year-long operations of the facilities. The ground floor, where the administrative section is located, has been architecturally designed with integral solar energy panels in order to offset a very significant portion of energy expenditures, which constitutes an important part of the total operating costs of the complex. Water re-use and local construction materials are used in this project. In essence, this project attempts to offer new solutions and opportunities for architects and designers to improve the performance of contemporary building in order to reach an optimum of sustainability levels for the building. It combines modern technology and architectural techniques adapted to the hammam spaces and ambiences. The design is inspired from traditional architectural concepts adapted to today's technological developments.

Keywords:

Contemporary hammām, wellness eco-tourism, modern baths architecture, sustainability.

Introduction

Located on the shores of the Aegean Sea in the southwest corner of Turkey, the Bodrum peninsula is among the most popular holiday destinations in the country. The permanent population of the peninsula grows by a factor of 4-5 in summer months due to the influx of both foreign and domestic holidaymakers.

Project Brief

The project of the "hammām-complex" presented here was conceived to serve mainly tourists during the summer holiday season and local residents during the off-season periods when the influx of visitors decline. The complex was designed to be accommodated on a 6000m2 plot of land. It is owned by an investor in the Ortakent-Müskebi region, which lies at the geographic centre of the peninsula.

In addition to the hammām which is the main component of the complex, other facilities

compose the wellness centre (Figure 3), and are as follow:

- A sauna, steam bath, and various massage facilities
- A beauty and cosmetics salon
- A multi-purpose venue, where yoga and meditation can be practiced or meetings and seminars can be held
- A central courtyard with a pool
- A café/restaurant, and
- An administrative block for offices

Figure 1: Site Vew (Source: ğdirligil, 2006).

Figure 2: Hammām Complex Site Plan (Source: ğdirligil, 2006).

Figure 3: First Floor Plan of the Project- Spaces and Functions. (Source: ğdirligil, 2006).

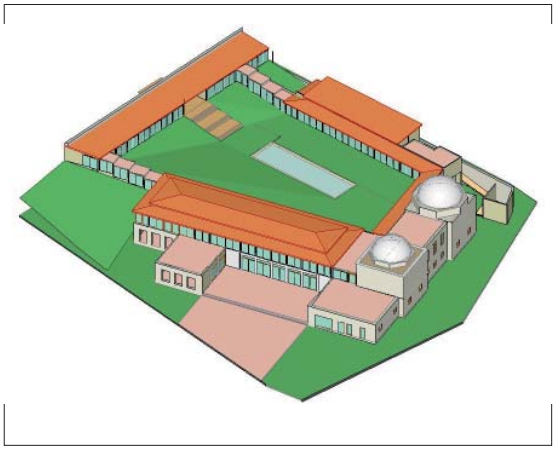

Figure 4: Aerial 3D View of the Complex. (Source: ğdirligil, 2006).

Problem Definition and Solutions

Taking into consideration seasonal variations in both types of activities and the frequency of usage during the intended yearly operations of the facilities, the design concept provides flexibility to allow these fluctuations. For example, the washing facilities of the hammām have been divided into two separate sections. This division allows one section to operate independently from the rest of the complex during the off-season periods. Thus, it will provide significant energy and labour savings, since there is only one section being used, and hence only one section needs heating and cleaning.

For the same reasons the sauna has been designed as two separate sections rather than one large venue. The main aim of this separation and division is to permit the independent flawless functioning modes of the various sections of the complex, while preserving the overall scale even when some units are not in use.

An extensive use has been made of readily installed/removed separator modules which, for example, allow variations in number and size of a venue to accommodate tourist groups coming for massage. On the other hand, a different installation of the separators will allow larger spaces to be created for such activities as table tennis, fitness exercising venues, gymnastics or yoga which are more often practiced by local winter residents.

Sliding glass panels which separate the outdoor central courtyard from the surrounding covered corridor, allow flexibility in the use of the combination of interior and exterior spaces, an important factor in a climate amenable to outdoor living at least seven months of the year (figure 5).

Figure 5: 3D Model View of the Outdoor Central Courtyard with Sliding Glass Panels (Source: ğdirligil, 2006).

The integration in the general street plan and the external appearance of a traditional hammām (mainly because of its domed roofing), has always distinguished it from among all nearby structures, making it readily identifiable for its function. Additionally, traditional hammāms are inward-oriented or intra-muros, shielding the interior from the outside world.

The Ortakent Hammām Complex design adheres to these historic distinguishing marks, making the building recognizable as such even from a distance. This is achieved first by the high stone walls of the hammām units on the street side which serve to screen out external noise and give privacy to the activities in the open-air central courtyard and the surrounding space (figure 6). Distinctive visual recognition is further attained by incorporating the highly symbolic hammām domes (cupolas) with their characterized embedded translucent hemispherical glass ports. These latter ones admit soft natural light to bathe the interior in an aura of leisure and tranquillity, as it used to be in the old traditional hammāms of the Islamic world.

The ground floor, which also includes the administrative offices of the establishment, has been architecturally designed with integral solar energy panels in order to offset a very significant portion of the energy expenditures which form a large part of the total operating costs of the complex. Water used in the whole facility will be treated in a biological waste-water treatment plant within the establishment and reused, thus permitting important savings in water consumption which is most significant in a region known for its scarce water resources, providing additional economic and ecological benefits. Native stone will be the construction material for the hammām, while light materials such as wood and glass steel will be used to build the remaining sections.

Summary

The main roles of the hammām in the Mediterranean region, has been to provide a venue for people to keep their bodies clean, and to socialize in circumstances where very few homes had bathing facilities. In the modern era where bathrooms are common, the personal hygiene function of the hammām may no longer be a priority, but the institution itself remains a highly attractive health-oriented social place, especially for tourists.

While some individual visitors may prefer the ambience of the old historical hammām, of which very few remain in existence, tourists coming in groups are usually conducted on organized tours which, aiming to satisfy varied interests, require the addition of a broad range of activities to the traditional hammām concept. So besides body cleansing, sweating and the rub-down with kese the visitor is free to choose the sauna, have cosmetic beauty treatment, body care, manicure or pedicure, as well as enjoy food and drinks available on the premises and thus spend the whole day in an enjoyable relaxing environment.

a.

b.

Figure 6 a. and b.: 3D Model Views of the Hammām Unit from the Main Street Side (Source: ğdirdligil, 2006).

The Turkish public's continued fondness for the traditional hammām also includes the consumption of food and beverages, though in recent years, physical exercise and sport activities have gained importance. In summary, a hammām facility designed to cater for the

modern public has to include all of these considerations. The family social structure that has undergone transformation, at least since the 19th century, continues change with weakening of familial bonds. It seems desirable to provide venues and spaces which will be attractive to whole families for weekends and holidays thereby strengthening social cohesion. As a result of this, newly designed hammām facilities will inevitably differ from the traditional ones.

These differences will find expression in the architectural solutions chosen to accommodate the addition of new activities to the core hammām function. Hence, taking all these factors into consideration, the project presented, was designed using natural stone in the hammām structure and, incorporated the distinctive domes, as seen in traditional historical practice. In order to house other activities to take place within the hammām complex, we have resorted to contemporary building materials such as steel, glass or plywood, emphasizing lightness of structure and versatility. The choice of materials responded to the architectural expression of the old hammām tradition rooted deeply in history and yet modified to incorporate new contemporary requirements.

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Ahmet ğdirligil is graduated M. Architect in 1983 from M. Arch Mimar Sinan University in Istanbul, Turkey. After working with Arch. Şevki Pekin, in Istanbul, and Prof. Rolan Rainer's Architectural office in Vienna, he received Encouragement Award from the "Foundation for The Protection of Monuments and Environment in Turkey". In 1983, employed with Arch. Walter Steizhammer, he began Ph.D. research for thesis in Vienna Technical University (1984). Relocated to Bodrum (1989), he founded Şans Architecural Office. In addition to architectural design and application published in number of journals, he participates to conferences and seminars, delivering lectures in national and international institutions. Specialist in building stone houses and in restoration, he is also consultant for national and international Hammam, Spa and thermal care centers. He participated and accomplish Hammam specific journeys and studies under the EU - Project "Hammam Aspects and Multidisciplinary Methods of Analysis for the Mediterranean Region" between 2005-2008.