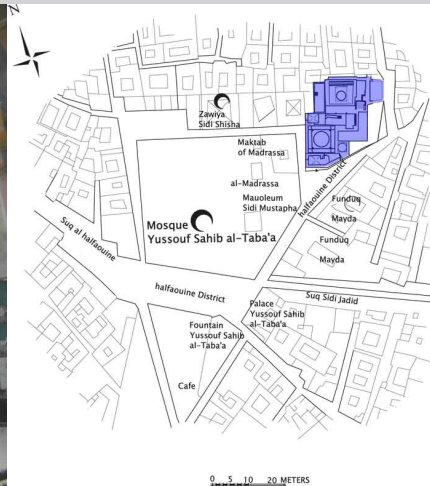
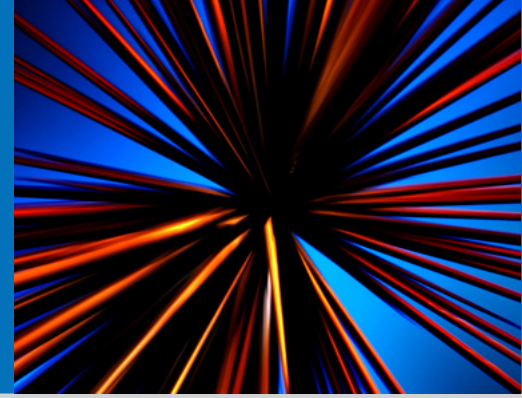


MARC Research Profile

The historic Islamic Baths of North Africa and their Survival into the 21st Century



Public baths, or hammāms (commonly know as Turkish baths) are key facilities in Islamic cities as they form part of the triad of essential urban facilities - the mosque, the hammām and the suq. They not only support hygiene for the urban dwellers but they also facilitate the accomplishment of the great ablutions prior to the act of praying (hence their location near mosques). They also have an important social function as they serve as a meeting place for both male and female society and support a rich intangible heritage associated with major life events such as weddings, births and religious ceremonies.

The aim of this research is to document and analyse the few surviving hammāms (dating from the 11th to the 19th century) that are currently operating, closed or changed function in five North African World Heritage Cities: Cairo (Egypt), Tripoli (Libya), Tunis (Tunisia), Algiers (Algeria) and Marrakech (Morocco). This selection provides the opportunity to develop an understanding of the development of this building type from the 11th to the 19th century across a wide and continuous geographical area.

This research does not deal with archaeological sites but rather with historic hammāms that have survived into the 21st century and are still evident and used in the urban fabric of the selected five cities. The following research questions are addressed:

1. How many hammāms were there originally in these cities according to historical records and how many can be located today?
2. What is their importance and location within the urban fabric and what is their current state?
3. What are the geographical and historical variations in their architectural and urban characteristics from Cairo in the East to Marrakech in the West and from the 11th to the 19th century, and how can these variations be explained?
4. What local social practices, customs and traditions are associated with the hammām and how many of these are still practiced today?
5. What are the current practices of conservation, rehabilitation and/or adaptive re-use of these structures that can be identified across North Africa?
6. What future scenarios can be identified (in collaboration with local and international stakeholders) for the sustainable conservation and adaptive re-use of this important cultural heritage building?

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