

Adaptive Reuse of the Kılıođlu Hammam in İzmir, Turkey: Conserving Earth-Based Construction Technologies in Ottoman Bath Architecture



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ABSTRACT

Ottoman hammams are unique architectural structures that have endured long-term use despite challenging environmental conditions, such as high temperatures, intense humidity, and constant exposure to water. This durability is closely linked not only to their spatial configuration but also to construction techniques and material choices specifically adapted to these conditions. In particular, the conscious use of earth-based construction technologies played a key role in achieving high environmental performance in terms of heat regulation, moisture control, and structural durability. However, due to high operating costs, evolving hygiene concepts, and socio-cultural transformations, a large proportion of Ottoman hammams have lost their original function. While some were completely destroyed, a portion still maintains its original function, and the rest, excluding these surviving examples, were adaptively reused, often through interventions that conflicted with conservation principles, resulting in significant damage to original construction techniques and substantial loss of historical and technical data.

This study examines the adaptive reuse process of the Kılıođlu Hammam, located in the Konak district of İzmir, Turkey, within the framework of preserving and showcasing original building technologies. Archaeological investigations revealed that only the hot room has largely survived, while the remaining spaces are represented by limited archaeological remains. During the restoration process initiated in 2020, the surviving hot room was conserved, and collapsed sections were exhibited under a protective roof system; hypothetical reconstructions were deliberately avoided. Reopened in 2025 with contemporary cultural functions, the building enables visitors to experience both the original bath construction features—such as structural systems and earth-based heating and water-use traces—and contemporary exhibitions through reversible metal platforms. The study demonstrates that, within adaptive reuse processes, original building technologies can be treated not only as elements to be preserved but also as legible, exhibit-worthy values within architectural conservation.

KEY WORDS:

Ottoman hammams, Kılıođlu Hammam, earth-based materials, adaptive reuse, conservation