

Women | The Private Lives of Muslim Women

'Even matchmaking took place and the dower discussed at the hammam.'

Once a week a visit to the bathhouse (hammam) provided the women of an extended household or neighbourhood with an opportunity for a get-together when they would pamper themselves and exchange the latest news. Even matchmaking took place and the dower discussed at the hammam. Hammams were designed so that bathers were able to move gradually from hot areas to cooler ones. Many such complexes had painted or frescoed interior walls that showed scenes from daily life and other motifs, contributing to the bather's rejuvenation of spirit and sense of well being.



Name:
Hammam (Arab Baths)

Dynasty:
Fatimid / Norman

Details:
Cefalà Diana, Italy

Justification:
A well-preserved hammam which gives a good indication of the sophisticated design of such complexes in the Islamic world.



Name:
Fresco panel: 'Tall Standing Woman at the Edge of a Pool'

Dynasty:
Hegira first third of the 2nd century / AD second third of the 8th century Umayyad

Details:
In situ at Qusayr 'Amra
Amman, Jordan

Justification:
A rare fresco of bathers decorates the inside of a royal Umayyad Bath Complex.



Name:
Frescoed architectural fragment from a bathhouse

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Royal bathhouse complexes also provided the space necessary for an audience with the Sultan or a banquet, a fact reflected in the fresco fragment seen here of a reveller, which once decorated a hammam.



Name:
Bowl (settle)

Dynasty:
Hegira 925–1245 / AD 1519–1830 Ottoman

Details:

National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:

All the items needed for visiting the hammam were carried in a receptacle like this.

**Name:**

Armlet

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Late Fatimid or Atabeg

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

Exquisite and expensive pieces of jewellery were among the items discussed during matchmaking and dower negotiations.
