

# Traditional Healing Centers in The Turkestan Region

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## ABSTRACT

Until the end of the nineteenth century, modern medical institutions in the Turkestan region were unable to fully serve the local population. Consequently, the inhabitants of Turkestan largely relied on traditional healers (tabibs) and other practitioners involved in treatment, such as barbers, herbalists, blacksmiths, and similar occupations. Within the healthcare practices of the region, tabibs represented an essential component and maintained their own spaces for receiving and treating patients. These locations were deliberately selected in areas that were easily accessible and convenient for the public. In addition to practising in their own homes, many Turkestani healers were actively engaged in providing medical services in bazaars.

Alongside state-established hospitals (Dorush-Shifo), public bathhouses played a significant role in maintaining public health in Turkestan. Historically, bathhouses were regarded as vital institutions within both healthcare practices and urban life. Medical activities such as tooth extraction, the sale of medicinal herbs, and massage therapies were also conducted in these establishments. Men and women in Turkestan used public bathhouses on designated days and, in addition to ritual cleansing, received various health-restorative treatments. This article analyses the traditional healing spaces of the population of Turkestan and examines their distinctive characteristics.

**Keywords:** Hospital, Dorush-Shifo, bathhouse, bazaar, caravanserai, tabib, folk medicine.

## INTRODUCTION

The main medical institutions in the Turkestan region were state-built hospitals, whose activities were financed from endowment funds. Since ancient times, the health and treatment of the people were directly the responsibility of the ruling authorities and the head of state at that time.

For example, Rashid al-Din, who lived in the 13th century, wrote, "...Caring for the sick is the duty of Islamic gubernators, rulers, and those who govern the country"[13:152]. It is clear from this that since ancient times, protecting people's health and protecting them from various health-damaging threats has been considered one of the main tasks of the state.

By the late Middle Ages, medical institutions in Turkestan could be conditionally divided into three groups: hospitals, baths where medical treatments were performed, and, as an exception, the houses and special places of healers.

Hospitals. Hospitals have existed in Turkestan since ancient times, including centers where patients were treated by the atashkadar mentioned in the Avesta[5:142]. By the Middle Ages, building hospitals had become a tradition, and governors and state leaders, along with building various scientific centers and monuments, paid great attention to building hospitals on their territory. For example, according to the endowment documents, Ibrahim

Tamgach Khan, who ruled Samarkand from 1046 to 1068, established a hospital (darul - shafaqa ) in the middle of 1066 on Rivdad Street in the city[21:35].

The process of building hospitals was also based on the status and capabilities of visitors. For example, during the reign of Mirzo Ulugbek, the architect suggested building a three-story, stately hospital in Samarkand. However, the doctor appointed to head the construction of the hospital objected, saying, "...patients come there not to be surprised, but to be treated, and it is difficult for them to climb to the upper floors"[1:64]. So, according to tradition, a representative of the field for which a building is being built usually monitors the construction of the future building from a professional point of view.

In 1682, the Dorush-Shifo Hospital was built in Registan Square of Bukhara . The hospital building is one-story, has the appearance of a madrasa[19:13]. Most hospitals were affiliated with madrasas, and madrasa teachers provided students with both theoretical training and practical training in treating hospital patients. In the field of medicine, Mulla Abdurakhmon Tamkin Bukhari served as a teacher on the eve of the Russian Empire 's invasion[3:247].

Such hospitals served as a hospital and maternity hospital for women in the old ark complex in Khiva[9:22]. Similar institutions were also opened and operated in Kokand, Tashkent, and other regions. Traditionally, most of these hospitals were staffed by prominent physicians of their time, who also taught medical secrets to students. For example, according to the aforementioned condition of the Darush-Shifo davafq, the most powerful healer in the emirate was to be a mudarris[3:247]. Typically, these hospitals had special rooms for inpatient and outpatient treatment, pharmacies, baths, kitchens, and head rooms[19:18].

In the 19th century, the number of hospitals in Turkestan was small compared to the needs of the population. Unfortunately, their financing was not as good as before, and as a result, the medical sector in the region stagnated, and the population sought treatment in places where doctors accepted patients rather than in government-built hospitals.

Bathrooms. In Eastern countries, including Turkestan, baths have long been known as places for treating patients. The great healer Ibn Sina, in his book "The Canon of the

Medicine", spoke about the virtues of the bath, and its benefits are to improve sleep, cleanse the body, and prevent fatigue[4:55]. wrote and recommended the use of baths in the treatment of most diseases . That is why Alisher Navoi built his "Shifoia" and "Safoia" hospitals next to the baths[19:15]. Because in addition to treatment , it was possible to diagnose some diseases here. The attitude of society towards baths is clearly expressed in the following statement by Herman Vamberi: if they want to show the superiority of a city in the East, they first write about its baths. On the contrary, if they want to discredit a city, they spread rumors about its filth[7:34]. It can be seen that the sanitary condition of the area, the cleanliness of the population and the activity of the baths, which were considered a place for the treatment of certain diseases, determined the rating of the city, in today's language.

If we look at the history of baths in Turkestan, their organization and operation are similar to the operation of hospitals. Most baths in cities were built near or next to hospitals. Usually, the state covered the operation of baths, as well as maintaining their cleanliness and heating, as they required a lot of money. The construction of baths was usually carried out on the initiative of state leaders. One such bath, the Anushakhan bath, was one of the famous spots in Khiva, and was built in 1657 during the reign of Abulghazi Bakhodir Khan[9:21]. This bath served all residents, except slaves, and became famous as a center that included several types of treatment.

By 1848, there were 16 baths in Bukhara Emirate. This At that time, hamams were considered the main sanitary centers in cities[15:133]. The hamams operating in the emirate were mainly visited by men. It was considered indecent for women to visit[10:151]. However, other sources note that in the Bukhara region, a woman who had recently given birth came to the hamam with her mother-in-law and other close relatives on the occasion of her coming out of the "chilla". According to ancient customs, after being treated with medicines prepared from desert herbs in a greenhouse, she was immersed in water and brought out of the "chilla"[20:290]. Here we can see that women did not regularly go to the hamam, but rather used these institutions as a place for rituals of both physical and spiritual purification, observing certain traditions. If we look at the general structure and functioning of the hamams in Turkestan, it is worth noting that in most cases, facilities intended for men were created.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, changes also occurred in the

activities of the baths. They also passed into the hands of certain individuals and became a source of income. For example, in the work "Tarihi Jadidayi Tashkent" it is noted that the baths in Tashkent were private and named after the owner, and the author mentions the names of 5 such private baths[18:38]. In Margilan, baths were also dedicated to madrasahs built by individual individuals. For example, a bath was built next to the Khishtin madrasah in the Grand Bazaar and that madrasah was dedicated to him[11:88]. Baths also played an important role in the social life of the city of Samarkand. The total number of baths in the "Old City" was 7, and in the New City – 4[16:18]. The reason for such changes was the needs of the population and its there was also the issue of trust in ground services. So, in Turkestan during that period, baths also performed the function of "medical institutions" protecting the health of the population.

In the baths, people received various treatments in addition to cleansing. For example, the famous Anushakhan bath in Khiva had a separate massage room, where, in addition to these treatments, there was the opportunity to extract teeth and draw blood[9:21]. An interesting feature was that this bath had a special herbal shop, and visitors also treated various diseases by drinking teas made from these herbs. Herbal infusions and the air of the bath caused the human body to sweat, which led to relief from pain.

Into account the treatment and specialized treatment procedures. Baths had large open rooms with a large platform where massage and treatment procedures were performed. There was also a specific procedure for receiving these treatments. Each bathhouse was staffed by several experienced masseurs and other workers who, along with the massage, cleaned the body of dirt[20:290]. The masseur widely used yogurt, bird fat, and horse fat in the massage, taking into account factors such as the age of the client and whether he was sick or not. The work of the masseurs in the baths shows that they had knowledge to the point of being able to diagnose a person's condition, the sensitivity of his skin, and the condition of his internal organs and determine the treatment based on this. Thus, in addition to the doctors or other people involved in treatment mentioned in the sources, there were professionals among the people who, without claiming to be doctors, were engaged in maintaining public health. Given the lack of doctors and the limited number of medical institutions in society, public health in Turkestan is maintained at a reasonable level thanks to the work of hamams and similar health centers, as well as various

representatives of the profession, whose activities are related to healthcare, although they consider themselves to be of a different nature.

So, before the introduction of modern medicine to the country, Turkestans treated some personal hygiene and cold-related diseases in hamams, and specialists who knew special treatment methods were established here. Taking into account the methods of serving the population in the hamams, it can be said that their activities were more focused on treating various diseases of the human body than on keeping it clean. Therefore, the state paid special attention to the construction of hamams in all cities and ensuring their regular operation. True, the hamams could not fulfill the function of hospitals, but nevertheless, the hamams had a special place among the population as a place for seeking treatment.

Healers' houses and offices. Treatment The next of the institutions were the healers' reception points and homes. Naturally, not all healers worked in hospitals. Since most of them were engaged in independent treatment, they received patients in places that were easy for everyone to find or in their homes. Patients who came in serious condition and needed treatment under the supervision of a healer stayed temporarily in the healer's house or nearby. Usually, doctors specialized in treating certain diseases. Therefore, the neighborhood or street where he lived was named after that healer. During this period, there were masseurs, skin disease specialists, blood donors, hysteria therapists, dentists and other specialized healers[12:160]. The need for special equipment for the urgent treatment of certain patients (sprains, fractures, poisonous insect bites) or other diseases, the need to store medicines in certain conditions and prepare medicines from them with the necessary materials led doctors to introduce treatment rooms in their homes in the form of small hospitals. As a result of doctors' practice of home treatment, the name of the street where they lived or received patients also changed. As a result of doctors living in the same neighborhood or street according to their specialties, "healers streets" or separate guzars emerged. For example, in Bukhara, the Registan was divided into 19 quarters and included guzars called "shikastabandon" and "tabibon"[17:136]. Or in Tashkent, the moshtabib doctor was famous among the people for receiving patients in his courtyard on the street[3:8]. If we consider the name of the guzars in this way as a result of the long residence of this profession in this area, it becomes clear that by the 19th century, medicine had retained its dynastic appearance.

Also, doctors usually worked in places where the population was large and people could easily find them. In very many cases, the main “place of work” of doctors was in the bazaars and city streets. Most doctors received patients and treated them in their “shops” located in the bazaars. Usually, the shops of doctors working in Bukhara were located in the bazaars, where the population was also concentrated[6:19]. The same situation was observed in Khiva, and for many years the bazaars served as hospitals and pharmacies for the population[9:28]. M. Galkin, a participant in the military campaigns to conquer Turkestan, says that “healers mainly practiced medicine in the bazaars, each doctor had a special shop in the bazaar, where medicines for various diseases were sold, and the doctor could see the patient and make a diagnosis, extract teeth, dislocate bones, and treat fractures right there”[8:156]. The sources mention that the Mashtabib dynasty, which had been active in Tashkent for several centuries, also operated in the bazaar and were engaged in trade there in addition to medicine[3:12]. In Khorezm, healers also sold various medicinal salts, mouse medicine, sulemani, and even prayers to patients in the bazaar. The people called these shops “customized pharmacies”. Among the people, such shops were called “square palaces” and were usually located in closed bazaars - tims. In Kokand, bazaars were also the main center for selling medicines, where it was easy to find the necessary herbs or other medicinal preparations. By the 19th century, all residents of the khanate could buy the necessary medicines in the central bazaars. In particular, when Muhammad Khakimkhan, who lived at that time, fell ill, his servants brought medicines from the bazaar several times[22:10].

As a result of natural needs, healers established their own small specialized centers in various regions. In addition to the markets, doctors' activities were also established at large caravanserais to serve tourists and visiting merchants, and pharmacy services were organized. The caravanserais had special rooms for doctors[14:54] and were engaged in treating guests from far and near when their caravans arrived. In some cases, healers visited the caravanserais only when they were called, and they were not always busy there, but also received patients at other points.

## CONCLUSION

One of the reasons for healers to go to markets and markets to work independently and to organize small treatment units in special places for themselves was the small number of hospitals and the lack of sufficient staff and vacant space

in those institutions. Later, due to various political and economic reasons, the state's attention to hospitals decreased and material needs arose. Also, the large population and the inability of existing hospitals to meet their needs led to the emergence of various private medical institutions.

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