

Arařtırma Makalesi

Bath Culture: Bath Custom-Tradition in Azerbaijani National Films

Nurengiz Garayeva*

(ORCID: 0000-0001-8370-3497)

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Abstract

Bath culture emerging with the cleansing power of water is a civilizational experience coming down from past to present. The conducted archaeological and ethnographic studies have proved that the mankind have used baths since ancient times. The bath, which was highly appreciated by all nations, has been an integral part of their cultures and lifestyles. Although this concept presented as a place is a variable to be constructed and transformed, it denotes a process determining human relations and cultural manifestations in the social structure. The spread of baths is also connected with the features of migration factors transferring the mankind's experience, habits and lifestyle to new settlements.

The paper studies the emergence and development history of baths, the physiological and hygienic aspects of the effect of baths on the human body.

* Res. Assist., Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan, qarayeva.nurngiz@bk.ru.

Arş. Gör., Azərbaycan Milli Bilimler Akademisi, Azərbaycan Ulusal Tarih Müzesi, Azərbaycan.

The main role of films in the human life and the skillful illumination of bath scenes in various styles in Azerbaijani films (“Qanun namina”, “If Not That One, Then This One”, “I Want To Get Married”, “The Stab in the Back”) are noted in the article, as well.

Keywords: Bath, culture, water, Azerbaijan, cleanliness, film, ceremony.

Hamam Kültürü: Azərbaycan Ulusal Filmlerde Hamam Geleneği

Öz

Suyun temizleme gücüyle ortaya çıkan hamam kültürü, geçmişten günümüze gelen bir medeniyet deneyimidir. Yapılan arkeolojik ve etnografik çalışmalar insanoğlunun çok eski çağlardan beri hamamları kullandığını kanıtlamıştır. Tüm milletler tarafından büyük beğeni toplayan hamam, kültürlerinin ve yaşam tarzlarının ayrılmaz bir parçası olmuştur. Bir yer olarak sunulan bu kavram, her ne kadar inşa edilecek ve dönüştürülecek bir değişken olsa da, toplumsal yapıdaki insan ilişkilerini ve kültürel tezahürlerini belirleyen bir süreci ifade etmektedir. Hamamların yaygınlaşması aynı zamanda insanoğlunun tecrübe, alışkanlık ve yaşam tarzını yeni yerleşim yerlerine aktaran göç faktörlerinin özellikleriyle de bağlantılıdır.

Makalede hamamların ortaya çıkışı ve gelişim tarihi, hamamların insan vücudu üzerindeki etkisinin fizyolojik ve hijyenik yönleri incelenmektedir. Azerbaycan filmlerinde filmlerin insan hayatındaki temel rolü ve hamam sahnelerinin çeşitli tarzlarda ustaca gösterilmesi (“Kanun namina”, “O, degil, bu”, “Evlenmek istiyorum”, “Arkadan vurulan derbe”) ayrıca makalede belirtilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hamam, kültür, su, Azerbaycan, temizlik, film, tören.

Introduction

Baths hold a special place on the list of rich cultural heritage of our people. The history of the bath culture has begun since the process of people taking a bath in holy springs in ancient times and has become gradually the place where they do the cleaning.

Being a key part of social life, the bath is also a symbol of culture being passed down to the future generation. The bath culture appearing essentially as an indicator of purity is one of significant historical places coming down to the present during the social-cultural

and historical process encompassing the period more than a thousand years.

Hippocrates who is considered “Father of Medicine” notes: “Healing is in the water. As clothmakers clean the fabric from dust by shaking it out, the clean air and having a bath also purify the body.” According Hippocrates, a person should maintain his body temperature. He emphasizes that walking under the Sun and taking a bath play an irreplaceable role in this process¹. Socrates (c. 469 – 399 BCE) mentioned that the bath purifies not only the body but also the whole human soul².

Fire and water have been necessary elements both of physical and religious cleansing in all beliefs. Since ancient times the mankind has given sacred value to water and placed it to the center of life. Water holds an important place as “a symbol of life” in almost all religions, and in most cases, as the concept possessing a positive role. It is not coincidence that water is called a source of life, aliveness and youth. Water is not only the main source for farming and animal husbandry but also the key factor for cleaning the body and place³ In the old days, carrying out the ritual of being rinsed with water to get rid of sins and to purify was mentioned in the history of different nations. For this reason, the places used for being rinsed with water have been regarded as holy as temples.

During the period till the construction of the first baths, people met their cleansing needs in open areas and places near natural water resources. The history is rich with the data on the construction of pools by the Huns, the Khazars, the Greeks, the Romans, the Jews and the Arabs to have a bath.

Based on the historical sources, it is possible to say that the history of bath culture comes from the ancient Sumerians existed for six thousand years. Thus, in one of the sources, the data have been found

¹ Путешественники об Азербайджане, том I (под редакцией Э.М. Шахмалиева, составил З.И.Ямпольский), Баку, 1961. [p. 6].

² [Ibid., p. 6].

³ Taşkın D., Kocakaya E. Kültürel miras kapsamında Safranbolu’da gelenekselhamam kültürü. 2020. [2. p. 4].

on Sumerian king Bilgames being rinsed with water in a special place. Some sources say that the first covered public bath was built in 2500 BC. The construction history of the covered places for being rinsed is associated with ancient Anatolia, Rome, India, Greece, Egypt. "Hamam" (bath) is originated from the word "hamm" meaning "to heat", "to be hot", "hot place" in Arabic. Its meaning in Persian is explained as "germabe"⁴ Sayings, proverbs, songs, poets relating to hamams in the folklore of various peoples should not be considered a coincidence. Baths have existed as an ethnographic object in the history of the world nations and have been significant on the same level in different stages of the history.

There are indicated plenty of interesting information on the ancient Turks' tent houses on carts in the sources. The Chinese sources concerning the culture of the Göktürks note that they had the felt carts used as houses⁵. These houses (walking houses) allowed them to settle down easily on wherever they wanted. Hemp seeds and stones heated in the fire outside were added into the water boiler inside the tent. After the arising of the steam, they took a bath.

The great importance given by the Turks to hammams is also clearly seen in the construction of tent baths near their settlements. It should be noted that "tent baths" used in highlands and migrations in Central Asia were later developed and took a place in the front lines of the army in wars. Before each battle, it is customary to prepare for the level of martyrdom by washing, taking ghusl and praying. Thus, common superstition at that time was that if you don't enter the battle clean, you will not be lucky. That is why every soldier took a bath before going to the battle and did not come out of the bath until, as they say, "new skin" was shedded from his back. In addition, the desire to go clean to the presence of God when they reach the level of martyrdom during the war⁶ took their "bathroom pleasure" for a longer time.

⁴Semavi E. Hamam. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi. c. 15, İstanbul, 1997. [p. 2049].

⁵Bahaeddin Ogel. Türk kültür tarihine giriş C.I Ankara, 2000. [p.393].

⁶Üdeyçeman A. "Türk Hamamı", //Eczacıbaşı Sanat Ansiklopedisi, c.II, İstanbul, 1997. [p.124]

As we know, the hammam was also of great significance in the history of the Ottoman Turks and they set up large and small hammams on the area where the state borders reached. Two reasons are shown for the fact of the Ottomans to have built much more hammams in the history; the first reason was that they were a great source of income and another one was that the hammams served the mosque congregation that was the center of the structure they belonged to. Since cleanliness was one of the cornerstones of the religion in Islam, the hammams gained the importance as much as mosques and were constructed in large numbers⁷.

As in other nations, the hammams are also of exceptional significance in the life of Azerbaijani people from past to present. The hammams are architectural constructions belonging to most of the regions of Azerbaijan. Travelers visited Azerbaijan in the Middle Ages mentioned that there were hammams with remarkable structures. The Spanish traveler lived in the 15th century Clavijo stated that there were the most beautiful mosques as well as hammams in the world in Tabriz⁸. Zakariyya ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Qazvini wrote about the interpretation of the city of Tabriz: The population of the city is dense, its blessings are many, its fruits are abundant, its people are rich and artistic. The many nearby miraculous baths have strange healing properties for the sick and infirm who uses them⁹. In addition, the traveler and geographer Evliya Çelebi states while talking about the number of public hammams of Tabriz: "There are a total of twenty-one healing baths, each with one or two healing pools, gentle water equipped with semi-sofas and delicious spring water taps (kurna), clean air, chaste beloved bath attendants, and fairy-faced youths"¹⁰.

In the Middle Ages, the rules of sanitation and hygiene were so strictly followed in Azerbaijan that even foreign caravans arriving in the

⁷ Yegül F.K. Anadolu su kültürü: türk hamamları ve yıkanma geleneğinin kökleri ve geleceği. 2009. [5. p. 752].

⁸ Путешественники об Азербайджане, том I, Баку, 1961. [p. 54].

⁹ Vəlixanlı N. Azərbaycan VII -XII əsrlərdə : tarix, mənbələr, şərhlər. Bakı, 2016. [p.335].

¹⁰ Evliya Çələbi səyahətnaməsində Azərbaycan. Nəşrə hazırlayan Mehmet Rıhtım, 2012. [p.62].

city were sent to the bath after customs and were allowed to enter the city only after cleaning¹¹.

According to the traditions of Islam, the hammams were usually built in the territories of mosques, palaces and religious complexes and of course, near entrance gates of the city, close to the caravan routes. Because of being constructed in various centuries, the baths vary from each other.

The hammams built in the Middle Ages are mainly divided into public and palace types. The public hammams were associated with the name of the person who had the bath built. For example, "Gasim bey bath", "Agha Mikail bath", "Haji Gaib bath", "Topal Movsum's bath", "Imamli bath", "Khanbaba bath" in Shamakhi, etc.

Palace hammams were built on the order of rulers (shahs) by paying a certain amount to master craftsmen. Only the family members of the ruler could utilize these hammams. One example of the palace hammams is the construction belonging to the Palace of Shirvanshahs. It should be mentioned that the bath consisting of 26 rooms has been discovered during the archaeological excavations carried out in the palace complex concerning the 15th century in 1939.

The baths are of great importance not only with regard to the art and architecture in the history but also with regard to the culture. Azerbaijani hammams are considered gems of the Eastern architecture due to their construction.

As well as being simple in terms of architectural elements and interior design, the hammams were constructed in the magnificent design structure. They were built from mainly water and moisture resistant stones. Icherisheher, which is the stone memory of Azerbaijani people, and the Maiden Tower, Fortress walls, the Shirvanshah Palace Complex, mosques, caravanserais, hammams and other architectural monuments in its territory hold a special place among pearls of mankind culture for their originality and unequalled beauty. Visiting Azerbaijani towns, the German traveler S.G.Gmelin, who started the journey in Russia in the 17th century, talked about

¹¹ Fərhadoglu K. Bakı. İçərişəhər. Bakı, 2006. [p.100].

some issues in his work and also described the beauty of the Eastern hammams¹². The roof of the hammams built in Azerbaijan was in the shape of the dome. The purpose of constructing the ancient hammams roof in the dome shape is to make the stream pour down from walls, not onto people after its turning into water.

With the dome shaped roof and other architectural features, the hammams are kind of the reminiscent of mosques. There were no windows in the baths, light came in through the round windows of the domes. The impressive volumes of the domes, dominating the clear facade and roofing in national architectural forms, formed the basis for the bathhouse design.¹³ After sunset, lamps were lit to illuminate the bath. Baths were usually built in a line, defining the flow of underground rivers. Their construction along one line was convenient in terms of the possibility of bringing water there and making dirty water flow through other channels. In many cities, especially in Baku, in addition to natural watercourses, there were also water channels built underground using special methods.

Elegantly composed prayers in Arabic and Persian languages are written on the entrance doors and walls of the ancient baths. The interior of the baths has also had an attractive appearance. Their walls were decorated with tiles, lime and alabaster. City baths built in Azerbaijan and neighboring countries are similar in regard to the interior structure, and it can be said that they were constructed according to the same project¹⁴. Cold and hot water containers - "khazna" are located in the bathing hall of each of the hammams built in the Eastern architectural style. The building of the baths consisted of an outer and an inner part. The outer part was intended for undressing, and the inner part for taking a bath. The inner part was composed of square or octagonal halls. In order to provide hot and cold water, pools were placed in the bathing area and they was

¹² Гмелин С.Г. Путешествие по России для исследования всех трех царств природы. Часть III, половина I, С-Петербург, 1785. [p.417-419].

¹³ Fetullayev S.S. Bakinin Memarlıq Ensiklopediyası - Baki-2013. . [p.95].

¹⁴ Məmmədova İ. Təbriz şəhərinin maddi mədəniyyəti. Çasıoğlu, 2016. [p.197].

covered. To heat the water, they utilized a special fireroom, which was stoked with white oil or wood, and was also called "kulkhana"¹⁵.

In the dressing rooms, sidewalks and niches were made 60 cm above the floor for hanging clothes. Those who came to bathe in the hammam hung their clothes from these niches. In the area where the wealthy undressed, carpets were laid on the sidewalks, washtubs (lakhan) were placed for washing feet, and all kinds of conditions were created for relaxation.

Each bath has its own employees: a kisechi (the one who rubs people's bodies with a pouch or glove in the bath), a bath attendant, a person pouring water, etc. Each bath worker was charged with a tax in the Middle Ages. This tax was abolished by the decree issued by Shah Abbas I in 1629¹⁶. The owner of the bath managed the treasury. Woman for women and man for men.

Bathing days were divided; one day women, one day men. H. Sarabski writes in –"Old Baku": – When the bathroom was zanana (for women – F.S.), they would take the kulkhanchi (stoker) or jamadar (bathroom attendant) to the roof and start playing trumpets. The people would understand that today the bath is for women. At the door of the bathroom, they would hang a red cranberry on a whistle so that men who passed by and did not hear the sound of the trumpet would know that the bathroom was for women¹⁷. Women coming to the bath in the Old City wore their most beautiful clothes and jewelry. Most of their shopping would be in the bathroom¹⁸. There was more noise in the bathroom on the day when there were women. They bathed their children and washed their own dirty clothes.

Since it was considered impolite to take a bath naked in the hammams, the bath attendant gave an apron (fite) to everyone who came. Those who came to bathe tied these aprons around their waists and went inside. Those who came to the bath brought a boghcha or a

¹⁵ Qılman İ. Bakı və Bakılılar. Bakı, 2006. [p. 163].

¹⁶ Məmmədova İ. the work shown [p. 130].

¹⁷ Sarabski H. Köhnə Bakı, Azərb SSR EA nəşriyyatı, 1958. [p. 168].

¹⁸ Quliyeva N. XIX-XX əsrlərdə Bakı şəhər əhalisinin ailə və ailə məişəti. Bakı, 2011. [p.129].

Bakı, 2011. [p. 129].

bath chest with bath items. In the men's box brought to the bathroom, there would be everything except scissors, razors. They would take musk, perfume, ambergris, and soap that gave good smell to the bath. From sneezing grass, everything such as apron, gilabi (clay used as a soap), pumice stone was in place. Trimming nails in the bathroom was obscene.

In addition to being used for bathing and purification, the bath was a common place that incorporates entertainment, healing functions, and various other traditions as well. Considering the bath as a hygienic and health product, Ibn Sina called it a cure for many diseases. He believed that moderate use of the bath helped to prevent nervous disorders, insomnia, paralysis, catarrh of the upper respiratory tract after asthma. According to Ibn Sina, the basis of treatment for jaundice is to take a bath frequently in the hammam¹⁹.

The bath culture possessing nearly a thousand years of history and being passed down from past to present thanks to our customs and traditions is necessary in respect to bringing an environment in which interpersonal communication is frequently used. The Turkish historian F.Yegul mentions that the bath culture and communication is equal for me. That is probably not possible to communicate during the 10 minute-break of activities such as cinema, theatre. Nevertheless, that could be easy to communicate in the hammam. The hammam impacts positively the interpersonal communication²⁰. In ancient times, poets, darvishes gathered in the hammams and delighted people there with their beautiful conversations. Ertoghrlul notes that the hammams provide socialization of people like coffee houses that are public places and especially, are the places where poem and literature discussions are conducted in the winter²¹.

Most of the artists have created incredible works on the hammam themes. The hammam paintings preserved in the funds of the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan could be presented as an example for this.

¹⁹ Галицкий А.В. Щедрый жар: Очерки о русской бане и ее близкиих дальних родичах. - 4-е изд., перераб. - М.:Физкультура и спорт, 1986. [p. 96].

²⁰ Üdeyçeman A. the work shown [p. 104].

²¹ Ertoghrlul A. Hamam Yapıları ve Literatürü. Türkiye Araştırmaları, 2009. [p.243].



Ancient women's bath.

FAMF/ inv. №146 (photo 1)



Ancient men's bath

FAMF/ inv. №145 (photo 2)



DRF, inv. №225/4 (photo 3)

We should mention that the hammam paintings preserved in the museum belong to Azim Azimzadeh (photo 1, 2) and Dmitri Yermakov (photo 3).

Bath custom-tradition in Azerbaijani national films

The hammam theme has been elucidated extensively in films including in the Azerbaijani films. Talking about hammams, Tashchioghlu states them to be a theme for songs and films²².

²² Taşkın D., Kocakaya E. The work shown. 2020. [p.223].

Films are powerful ideological weapons shaping the outlook of people, keeping our history and national customs and traditions alive, and influencing all fields of our life. As well as embracing artistry, history, culture, public appearance of the period, national mentality, fantastic thinking style, philosophical views, the films are the best relaxation form for people.

As mentioned above, baths also have a special place in people's private lives. Here, women often talked with relatives and friends, recommended girls to their boys. Ethnographer Shirin Bunyadov notes that casting eyes on girls happened mostly at weddings and holidays, even in the bath²³. Such cases have not escaped the Azerbaijani directors' notice. They tried to illuminate such situations in films. Director M. Mikailov illuminated skillfully the scene of girls being admired in the women's hammams in his 1934 film dedicated to Leyla Mammadbeyova, the first female aviator of Azerbaijan. Likewise, the expression from the film "The Stab in the Back" filmed by director A. Babayev in 1977 "The daughter of Sarvinaz was betrothed to the son of Abbasali. He is an idler. Pity for that girl. She is a good girl. I have seen her in the hammam" once again emphasizes the scene of liking girls in the hammam with screen language.

Moreover, it is possible to find cases where women highlight their social status in films. For instance, the film "Qanun namina" filmed by the director Mukhtar Dadashov based on the writer Suleyman Rahimov's work "Mehman" ("Guest") in 1968 is an example to that. So, in the bathroom scene played by the director, the funny conversations of women showing off their jewelry can be regarded one of the interesting hammam sequences.

Hammams are also considered to be the place of many ceremonies. Although the bathhouse had the meaning of cleanliness in people's everyday life, it was also considered a place where certain ceremonies were performed. Thus, the bathhouse became an integral part of marriage customs, which is one of the important phenomena in the social structure of society.²⁴ For example, bridal bath, groom's bath,

²³ Bünyadova Ş. Orta əsr Azərbaycan ailəsi. Bakı, 2012. [p.70].

²⁴ Qarayeva N. Hamam mədəniyyəti, Bakı, 2022. [p.8].

holiday bath, etc. It is gratifying that the holding of such ceremonies in the hammam has also been illuminated in the films. The groom's bath of the period was screened masterly by the directors in the film "If Not That One, Then This One" filmed based on the motifs of the operetta of the same name by Uzeyir Hajibeyli, which is considered the pearl of Azerbaijani cinematography. The hammam sequence in the film was shot in the bath built by Agha Mikail, a resident of Shamakhi, in Icherisheher in the 17-18th centuries. By the way, the 11-meter-high hammam consists of 2 large and 4 small rooms. The "Agha Mikail" hammam, which combines all the subtleties of the medieval Eastern architecture both in its external appearance and internal architecture, is protected as a cultural example in the balance of the Icherisheher State Reserve. As a monument of national importance, the "Agha Mikail" hammam was restored thoroughly in 2010. Among the people, the hammam is mostly called by the name of the comedy's main character- "Mashadi Ibad hammam".

The coming of Mashadi Ibad, who plays the role of a groom in the film, to the hammam with his friends is considered one of the interesting episodes. The groom and the ones accompanying him enter the bath to the sound of music. The bath attendant: "Come on! Hammam is really a beautiful place, a place to relax"; "Where can you cool off in this hot weather, where can you warm up in the cold of winter?" In the hammam, of course. If that's so, then tell him to come," he said, telling the bathhouse workers to express the irreplaceable role of the bathhouse in relaxing the human soul through dancing. A few bathhouse workers with red apron tied around their waists:

In the Hammam's inside and beyond the door,
Spring, summer, winter they all hot and cool.
No matter, if you are rich or just a poor.

By singing and dancing, they emphasize the importance of taking a bath in the hammam. The bath attendant: "Undress the new groom!"

Saying, he turns to the bathroom staff. In the sequences, the scenes of Mashadi Ibad being bathed, the porter rubbing himself with all his might, the friends who came with the groom (Mashadi) making excuses not to pay for the bath and making Mashadi pay for it can also be considered interesting shots.

It should be noted that the hammam scene, which was illuminated in the film "I Want To Get Married" filmed by director Jahangir Mehdiyev in 1983, is also one of the commendable episodes. The film reflects the life and national customs of Azerbaijani society at the beginning of the 20th century. The men enjoying relaxing under the music and singing songs in the film;

Your place is set, you'll be welcomed for sure.

One goes, another comes, they are in a fuss.

Dirt, filth, others escaped from us.

No burrden of sword, no weight on my chest,

All I need here is

Just a little rest.

I'm higher than you,

Yiur perfectly know that

Hey rubber, come

Close and scrub my back.

Ouch, what an

Unbearable pain is this,

Cuts like a knife, the pain it gives.

The enjoying of the bathers being rubbed is interesting, too.

Both in the past and now it was possible to drink tea and smoke hookah in the baths. It should be noted that the bathers drinking tea with pleasure was skillfully filmed by the directors in the film "I Want To Get Married".

The song sung by the bathhouse staff in both the films "If Not That One, Then This One" and "I Want To Get Married" seem to reflect the ease and comfort of the bath, the sound of water that relaxes the human soul, and the purity that the bath gives to a person.

In 1897, the "Fantasia" bathhouse was built in Baku according to the project of the German-born architect Nikolay von der Nonne. The bath is built in European style. It should be noted that at the beginning of the 20th century, there were two types of baths in Baku - Asian and European. European-style baths differ from Asian-style baths in that they have private rooms other than large rooms dedicated to bathing. Fantasia bath was also the first commercial building in Baku where a power plant was built²⁵. Fatullaev-Figarov Sh.S. Architectural encyclopedia Baku. Baku-2013] Until 1914, there was no aqueduct in Baku, so fresh water imported from abroad was used in the bath.

"Don't be afraid, I'm with you!" A scene of the movie "1919" was filmed. It should also be noted that the building of the Fantasia bathhouse, despite being included in the list of local monuments, is currently in a neglected state.

Conclusion

Thus, in addition to holding a place in our memories as a socialization environment where public memory is created, hammams also contributed to the formation of folk culture and helped to continue these traditions from yesterday to today. In the article, the role and essence of baths in everyday life, its place in material and spiritual culture, and at the same time showing traditional features, have been tried to be brought to the attention of the people as an important tool in determining the healthy way of life for centuries.

Although the hammams have undergone certain changes, maintaining their existence till today as in the past, they remain an important part of our culture,. The hammams are considered one of the main factors of cities and settlements. In different areas of Azerbaijan, there are baths that were created in the Middle Ages and have remained until now, which are currently protected by the state

²⁵Fetullayev S.S. Bakinin Memarlıq Ensiklopediyası- Bakı-2013, [p. 254].

Despite the comfort baths provided with new equipment in houses, as well as vip-saunas and cleaning places in separate areas in modern times, there are still many people going to old baths. From ordinary citizens to officials, intellectuals and doctors - everyone who has time goes to the baths in the cold season. Today, as in the past, hammams are valued as places of healing.

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