



BATHHOUSES II. THE LAYOUT OF RURAL BATH STRUCTURES

ii. The Layout of Rural Bath Structures

A few related bath structures from different settings will be presented here: a village bath, the baths of a royal hunting lodge, and the bath in a caravansary, as well as a bath belonging to a complex that also included a caravansary, a palatial structure, and a large village. (For urban and other baths before the Qajar period see i above, with bibliography.)

The bath structures to be discussed all belong to the general category of steam baths, rather than hot springs. They are unfortunately largely in ruins, and, as their superstructures have generally collapsed, the structural details are almost entirely lost. All were vaulted structures built of brick (especially the vaults), rubble concrete, or a mixture of rubble and bricks; wooden construction could not be used because of extreme moisture from the steam. Furthermore, these buildings included only those rooms that have been considered, since antiquity, necessary for an Oriental-style bath, so that among them not a single latrine facility could be recognized. Nevertheless, all examples contained, in independent or partly combined form, the basic complex of apodyterium (dressing and resting room), tepidarium (transitional, or cool, room, usually combined with the apodyterium), and caldarium/sudatorium (hot room), with associated hot-water pools. The ancient frigidarium (cold room) plays no part in the Oriental steam bath,



which also does not include the unroofed cold swimming pool of antiquity. The latter would be contradictory to the moral ideas of Islam, as well as to the purpose of the Oriental bath. A modest community bath of the 18th-19th centuries was preserved until quite recently outside the deserted village of Dīdgān in Fārs. The village itself was in a former caravansary built of mud brick at the point where the road from Shiraz branches to Ābāda and Yazd. This bath was built almost completely underground. A bent staircase passage led down into a domed apodyterium with two large wall niches for the bathers' clothing (Figure 30). This dressing room opened into the tepidarium through a doorway set in one corner, so that it was difficult to catch a glimpse from one room to another. The maximum dimensions of the rooms were 3.40 x 3.20 m. The tepidarium, with only one small wall niche, also functioned partly as a caldarium; an axial passage led directly from it to the hot-water pool. Only this pool was heated, from a subterranean heating chamber outside the building; this chamber is now badly destroyed. There was no system for heating the floor and walls. The small scale of the installation makes it clear that men and women could use it only at separate times.

More noteworthy architecturally is the bath of Dehgerdū, preserved in ruined condition on the shorter caravan route from Isfahan to Shiraz, on the stretch between Īzadk^vāst and Marvdašt (Figure 30). It is much too large and spacious for a normal village bath. Stylistic features point to a construction date in the seventeenth century. The building was set only about half below ground, so that the visible part must have been impressive, especially as it stood apart from other buildings. It consisted essentially of only three rooms plus the heating chamber. An octagonal domed room 5.40 m in diameter with eight radial spaces—four tall *ayvāns* alternating with four enclosed corner rooms—served as apodyterium. From the southeast corner a passage led to the tepidarium, which was divided by four octagonal stone piers into a central space and an ambulatory. Three hot-water pools were installed on the northwest side of the tepidarium, which thus had already taken on half the function of the caldarium. Only these three pools, were heated, from below. The bath at Dehgerdū forms part of a complex containing a caravansary, a ruined building resembling a palace, and a large fortified village; its impressive architecture suggests that it must have been intended for important travelers on this caravan route, even including the Safavid court.

Aside from the Qajar palace baths, there were two in the hunting lodge of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah Qājār in Šahrestānak, northwest of Tehran. The lodge was



laid out in about 1878 and has since been largely destroyed. The smaller bath, which was accessible only from the main courtyard of the palace, was an elegant two-room installation with walls lined with tiles and a western extension for the heating chamber. It consisted of an apodyterium and a caldarium, the latter with a statue niche on the west wall (Figure 30, Šahrestānak I). This bath could have been for the occasional use of the ruler or his hunting guests. There was also a somewhat larger bath off the domestic courtyard of the palace, which probably served the sovereign's entourage (Figure 30, Šahrestānak II). It also consisted of only two rooms and a hot-water pool, which was heated from the north. All the fittings have been destroyed; the function of the installation is nevertheless clearly recognizable from the water-resistant plaster on the walls.

Finally, there was a bath within the Dayr caravansary (Dayr-e Gač) on the old road direct from Verāmīn to Qom (Figure 30), a rare example of a bathhouse inside a caravansary. The large caravansary at Dayr must have been built in Safavid times inside a Saljuq *rebāṭ*. The bath was in the southwest corner and opened on a court, which led to the latrines and from which the bath was also heated. It consisted of two octagonal domed rooms with a maximum diameter of 4.50 m, which were heated by a hot-water duct under the floor. The two hot-water pools were on the south side of the tepidarium. The bath was built entirely of brick and was about half underground. Its rooms reached a height of 4.10 m, and the domes were without windows.