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## A Safavid Royal Bathhouse Uncovered: Re-evaluation of the Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin With New Archaeological Evidence

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A Safavid Royal Bathhouse Uncovered:  
Re-evaluation of the Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin With New Archaeological Evidence

Sean Silvia

## INTRODUCTION

Last year, a team of archaeologists broke ground at the site of Sa'adatābād, a royal garden and palace complex in Qazvin. This garden palace of Sa'adatābād was built by Shah Ṭahmāsp I when he moved the capital to Qazvin in the mid-16th century, with construction finishing in 1557.<sup>1</sup> There the archaeologists discovered the remains of a Safavid bathhouse, whose floors were buried three meters below the ground's surface. Ceramics and other small artifacts confirmed the date of the site to go back to the early Safavid period.<sup>2</sup> There have been many recent efforts to reconstruct Sa'adatābād as it originally was, but none of them include the recently-unearthed baths in their models.<sup>3</sup> This paper will consider historical and archaeological evidence to incorporate the bathhouse discovery into the model of Sa'adatābād. It will situate it within the context of a garden city, it will tie in historical evidence which refers to baths at the royal complex, and it will reconstruct the bathhouse's location and layout. Finally, this paper will explore the implications of this bathhouse, including its spatial location in relation to the palace structures of the garden, how it symbolizes the power and prosperity of the Shah, and reconcile the baths with the most famous piece of literature on Sa'adatābād, *Jannat-i 'Adn*.

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<sup>1</sup> Savory, Roger. *Iran Under the Safavids*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 175 ; Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*, 2007, p. 63 ; Alemi, Mahvash. "Princely Safavid Gardens: Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy." In *Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources in a Multicultural Perspective*. Ed. Michel Conan, 113-138. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> "کشف بقایای حمام صفوی در قزوین کشف شد" October 16, 2019. *Mehr News Agency*. <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4748585/کشف-شد-بقایای-حمام-صفوی-در-قزوین> ; "Remnants of Safavid-era bathhouse (Hammam) discovered in Qazvin." *Iran Tourism and Touring Organization*. October 20, 2019. <https://www.itto.org/iran/news/remnants-of-safavid-era-hammam-discovered-in-qazvin/> ;

"کشف بقایای حمام صفوی در مجموعه دولتخانه صفوی قزوین" October 16, 2019. *Iranian Students' News Agency*. <https://www.isna.ir/news/98072418423/کشف-بقایای-حمام-صفوی-در-مجموعه-دولتخانه-صفوی-قزوین> ;

<sup>3</sup> Jayhani H, Rajabi F. "«کویچه آراسته از خرمی»، شکل و جایگاه خیابان(ها) در جعفرآباد و قزوین صفوی." *Journal of Iranian Architecture Studies* 6, no. 12 (2018): 41-65. <http://jias.kashanu.ac.ir/article-1-845-fa.html> ; Ranjbari, Zahra. "Botanic and Poetic Landscapes: A Reading of Two Persian Texts on Early Safavid Gardens." PhD diss. University of Adelaide, 2018 ; Yarahmadi, Samaneh, Ansari, Mojtaba, Mahdaveinejad, Mohammadjavad. "Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin: A Comparative analysis of 'Abdī Beig Shirazi's poems and historical documents." In *Bagh-e Nazar* 15, no. 58 (2018): 27-52.

[https://www.academia.edu/36729864/Re\\_Commentary\\_of\\_Saadat\\_Abad\\_Garden\\_of\\_Qazvin\\_A\\_Comparative\\_analysis\\_of\\_Abdi\\_Beig\\_Shirazis\\_poems\\_and\\_historical\\_documents](https://www.academia.edu/36729864/Re_Commentary_of_Saadat_Abad_Garden_of_Qazvin_A_Comparative_analysis_of_Abdi_Beig_Shirazis_poems_and_historical_documents), p. 29.

First, it is important to know the context of a Safavid bathhouse, or *hammām*.<sup>4</sup> In addition to their functional role, baths had a religious and social importance in Safavid society.<sup>5</sup> Bath activities included cleaning, sports, cosmetics, medical treatments, eating, and socializing.<sup>6</sup> Baths were also home to bathing rituals for special occasions, including weddings, childbirth, circumcision, religious feasts, departure for pilgrimage, mourning, repentance, or to ward off ill fortune or an evil spell.<sup>7</sup> Baths were an important part of Safavid urban space—in fact there were more baths in Isfahan than mosques.<sup>8</sup> They were so important that the ultra elite often had private baths, and as this paper will explore, royal complexes such as Sa'adatābād had baths as well.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper will rely on contemporary literature as well as archaeological evidence to reconstruct the baths and their placement within the context of the garden city. One of the central sources scholars have used to reconstruct Sa'adatābād is 'Abdī Bayk Navidi Shirazi's *Jannat-i 'Adn* (garden of Eden), which Shah Ṭahmāsp commissioned to celebrate his new palace complex.<sup>9</sup> *Jannat-i 'Adn*, composed between 1558 and 1559, has five poems total, four about the palaces, gardens, flowers, and fruits of the garden city, and one about the paintings of the royal loggias.<sup>10</sup> 'Abdī Bayk's poems fall under a common Indo-Persian poetic genre which lauds

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<sup>4</sup> Dale, Stephen F. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. New Approaches to Asian History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511818646. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f3e9/5acbd38fc46a7df5544ce58a4db595a74e29.pdf>, p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> Kermani, Fariba. "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life." In *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 5, no. 4 (2016): 526-539. doi:10.7596/taksad.v5i4.622 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312544992\\_The\\_Role\\_of\\_Persian\\_Historical\\_Bath\\_in\\_City\\_and\\_Urban\\_Life](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312544992_The_Role_of_Persian_Historical_Bath_in_City_and_Urban_Life), p. 527.

<sup>6</sup> Kermani, "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life," p. 534.

<sup>7</sup> Kermani, "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life," p. 535.

<sup>8</sup> Kermani, "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life," p. 528.

<sup>9</sup> Gharipour, Mohammad. "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia." *Garden History* 39, no. 2 (2011): 249-62. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41411812>, p. 260. The poet is named Khaje Zein al-Abedin Ali Navidi, but is known as 'Abdī Beig Shirazi. See Yarahmadi et al., "Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin," p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens," p. 115.

newly-constructed cities and their founder, focusing especially on gardens and architecture.<sup>11</sup> While *Jannat-i 'Adn* is utopian and exaggerated—immediately evident in the fact that the garden city is compared to Eden—it is still a historically informative work because it conveys how the garden was meant to be seen.<sup>12</sup> The particularities of the genre of the work makes reconstructing Sa'adatābād somewhat difficult, but using *Jannat-i 'Adn* and other contemporary sources scholars have made notable progress. This is part of a broader field of scholarship reconstructing Safavid urban landscapes based largely on poetry, including work on the gardens of Sa'adatābād in Isfahan and Jayhani et al.'s article on the square just outside of Sa'adatābād in Qazvin.<sup>13</sup>

Jayhani et al. also reconstruct a portion of Sa'adatābād itself based on contemporary literature, as do Zahra Ranjbari and Yarahmadi et al., and this paper will rely on their scholarship to place the spatial position of the bath ruins within their original garden context.<sup>14</sup> It will also incorporate additional historical sources and passages indicating the presence of baths that these authors do not include; none of the authors—who were writing before the archaeological discovery—include the baths in their reconstructions of Sa'adatābād. About the scholarship reconstructing Sa'adatābād, Paul Losensky writes, “The lengthy and detailed descriptions of the buildings and paintings of the palace-complex [in *Jannat-i 'Adn*] help to fill a significant gap in

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<sup>11</sup> Ranjbari, Zahra. “Poetic Landscapes: Reading the Early Safavid Garden City.” In *In the Heart of Tehran*. University of La Sapienza, 2016.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318815369\\_Poetic\\_Landscapes\\_Reading\\_the\\_Early\\_Safavid\\_Garden\\_City](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318815369_Poetic_Landscapes_Reading_the_Early_Safavid_Garden_City) p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Yarahmadi et al., “Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin,” p. 29. The first poem of the five, *Rawzat al-Şifāt* is the main source for our information on the buildings and layout of the garden complex, see Losensky, Paul. “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in 'Abdī Bey Shirazi's Garden of Eden.” *Eurasian Studies* V (2003): 1-29.  
[https://www.academia.edu/5617152/The\\_Palace\\_of\\_Praise\\_and\\_the\\_Melons\\_of\\_Time\\_Descriptive\\_Patterns\\_in\\_Abdī\\_Bey\\_Shirazīs\\_Garden\\_of\\_Eden](https://www.academia.edu/5617152/The_Palace_of_Praise_and_the_Melons_of_Time_Descriptive_Patterns_in_Abdī_Bey_Shirazīs_Garden_of_Eden), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Shahidi, Nazanin Marnani. “باغ سعادتآباد اصفهان در آینهٔ مثنوی گلزار سعادت.” *Journal of Iranian Architecture Studies* 5, no. 9 (2016): 67-84. <http://jias.kashanu.ac.ir/article-1-1017-en.html> ; Jayhani H, Rajabi F. “میدان اسب شاهی: جلوخان.” *Journal of Iranian Architecture Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 43-68.  
<http://jria.iust.ac.ir/article-1-1129-fa.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Jayhani H, Rajabi F. “«کوچهٔ آراسته از خرمی»، شکل و جایگاه خیابان(ها) در جعفرآباد و قزوین صفوی.” *Journal of Iranian Architecture Studies* 6, no. 12 (2018): 41-65. <http://jias.kashanu.ac.ir/article-1-845-fa.html> ; Ranjbari, Zahra. “Botanic and Poetic Landscapes” ; Yarahmadi et al., “Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin,” p. 29.

the archaeological record.”<sup>15</sup> Fortunately, those archaeological gaps are beginning to be filled, and this paper is a part of the effort to incorporate newly-unearthed archaeological evidence in Safavid urban space. In addition to the aforementioned literary reconstruction scholarship, this paper's reconstruction of the baths is also largely informed by scholarship on the typology of Safavid baths, as well as other reconstructions of baths based on archaeological evidence such as the baths at Sīrāf.<sup>16</sup> By examining the wide array of sources now available, a fuller picture of Sa'adatābād can be gleaned.

### SAFAVID GARDEN CITY - THE SETTING OF THE BATHS

Sa'adatābād is an urban Safavid type known as a *dawlatkhānah* (house of government). A *dawlatkhānah* is a royal complex made up of gardens, courtyards, royal family's residence, *divān khānah* (buildings for official audiences), *khālvat khānah* (private audiences of the king), *daftar khānah* (other office space), and service buildings. This last category of building included baths, stables, kitchens, workshops, libraries, and storage areas. A *dawlatkhānah* was also referred to as a *bāghistān* (garden city). These royal garden complexes are in the Safavid capitals of Qazvin, Tabriz and Isfahan, and even in smaller cities such as Sari, Shiraz, Ashraf, Farhabad, Kashan, Mashhad, and Khoy.<sup>17</sup> In Qazvin, the Sa'adatābād *bāghistān* was Shah Ṭahmāsp's largest addition to his new capital. The complex lies to the north of the city, linked by a *khiyābān* (promenade) and two *maydāns* (squares).<sup>18</sup> Sa'adatābād has a quadripartite layout which has ancient roots in

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<sup>15</sup> Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time,” p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Whitehouse, David. "Excavations at Sīrāf: Fourth Interim Report." *Iran* 9 (1971): 1-17. doi:10.2307/4300434 ; Whitehouse, David. "Excavations at Sīrāf: Sixth Interim Report." *Iran* 12 (1974): 1-30. doi:10.2307/4300502 ; Whitehouse, David. "Excavations at Sīrāf: Fifth Interim Report." *Iran* 10 (1972): 63-87. doi:10.2307/4300466.

<sup>17</sup> Alemi, Mahvash. “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions*, a web-based catalogue and bibliography. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007. <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/introduction/original-introduction-to-safavid-gardens> p. 1 ; Taghavi, Abed, Saman Farzin, Maryam Zoor. "Function of Iranian Cities in Safavid Era Political Cities or Commercial Cities." In *Journal of Anthropology & Archaeology* 1, no. 1 (2013): 28-40. [http://jaanet.info/journals/jaa/Vol\\_1\\_No\\_1\\_June\\_2013/3.pdf](http://jaanet.info/journals/jaa/Vol_1_No_1_June_2013/3.pdf), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens,” p. 114. For more information on the royal pavilions, see Emami, Farshid. “Royal Assemblies and Imperial Libraries: Polygonal Pavilions and Their Functions in Mughal and Safavid Architecture.” *South Asian Studies* 35, no. 1 (2019): 63–81.

Persian garden design, and a checkerboard pattern influenced by Islamic garden design.<sup>19</sup> 'Abdī Bayk identifies 23 total individual garden squares.<sup>20</sup> The newly-excavated baths are in the middle of this enclosed, private part of the complex, not the public *khiyābān* and *maydāns*, which had their own baths.

Within the context of Sa'adatābād, the recently-discovered baths are easily classified as a 'garden bath' type according to Fariba Kermani's useful classification schema. Garden baths were baths only for the Shah or the ultra elite, located in garden city palatial complexes. Thanks to the work of the archaeologists, scholars can now add the baths of Sa'adatābād to Fariba Kermani's comprehensive list of Safavid garden baths.<sup>21</sup> Beneath this umbrella category, the architecture of garden bathhouses could vary regionally. In the warm dry climates of central Iran, for example, baths were more elongated and built above ground. By contrast in the more northern region where Qazvin is located, baths were smaller and located below ground.<sup>22</sup> Building baths underground made water and temperature management easier and helped conserve the heat or the cold in the winter and summer months respectively. This underground construction is why the Sa'adatābād baths are currently buried beneath the ground level of the other surviving buildings from the garden complex.<sup>23</sup>

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[https://www.academia.edu/40092010/Royal\\_Assemblies\\_and\\_Imperial\\_Libraries\\_Polygonal\\_Pavilions\\_and\\_Their\\_Functions\\_in\\_Mughal\\_and\\_Safavid\\_Architecture](https://www.academia.edu/40092010/Royal_Assemblies_and_Imperial_Libraries_Polygonal_Pavilions_and_Their_Functions_in_Mughal_and_Safavid_Architecture), p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> Alemi, Mahvash. "The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models," in *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli, 72-96. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997.

<https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/media.archnet.org/system/publications/contents/4275/original/DPC0498.pdf?1384782716>, p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens," p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Kermani, "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life," p. 532.

<sup>22</sup> Ajorloo, Bahram, Roshan Mojtaba. "The Analytical Revisiting of the Structure Known as Ilkhanid Bathhouse in Rabe Rashidi Tabriz." *Bagh-e Nazar* 15, no. 68 (2019): 5–14. doi:10.22034/BAGH.2019.81653.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332422693\\_The\\_Analytical\\_Revisiting\\_of\\_the\\_Structure\\_Known\\_as\\_Ilkhanid\\_Bathhouse\\_in\\_Rab'e\\_Rashidi\\_Tabriz](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332422693_The_Analytical_Revisiting_of_the_Structure_Known_as_Ilkhanid_Bathhouse_in_Rab'e_Rashidi_Tabriz), pp. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Kermani, "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life," p. 536.

## BATHS IN THE HISTORICAL RECORD

The historical record has several references to the recently uncovered baths of Sa'adatābād. For example, in Mohammad Yusuf Vale Isfahani's "Khelde Barin" (the Highest Paradise) he writes about the royal court in Qazvin and the royal palace's great baths, which he reports came about through Shah Ṭahmāsp's high ambition.<sup>24</sup> The great baths of the royal palace to which he refers in this passage are likely the recently-excavated baths. Historian Qazi Mir Ahmed Hosseini Ghomi in *Kholasat-al-Tawarikh* (Epitome of History) writes about the square shapes of the gardens, and how between the gardens were great halls, courts, ponds, and buildings. As aforementioned, baths were a standard part of the ancillary building ensemble of garden palace complexes, and as the upcoming spatial reconstruction will show, Ghomi's description of the buildings' spatial location corresponds with the position of the baths.<sup>25</sup> Finally, Iskandar Beg Munshi writes in "Tarikh Alam Araye Abbasi" (World-Adorning History of 'Abbās) of how Shah Ṭahmāsp's corpse was washed at the royal court and placed in the Shirvani House.<sup>26</sup> This ritual act of funereal washing would have necessitated a bath. All of these different sources help to place the baths in the historical record, and underscore that they were a known quantity.

## RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BATHS' TOPOGRAPHY AND LAYOUT

Firstly, the baths can be placed into their original topography within the gardens. In Ranjbari's take on Sa'adatābād, the 3D reconstruction of the 'Āli Qāpū and the *khiyābān* is well done, but the layout is limited to the southwestern part of the garden which does not include the bath site, and a building is misidentified.<sup>27</sup> Jayhani et al.'s efforts to reconstruct the topography

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<sup>24</sup> Vale Esfahani, M.Y. *Khelde Barin*, Compilation by Mirhashim Mohades. Tehran: Endowment Foundation of Dr. Mahmoud Afshar, 1994, p. 398.

<sup>25</sup> Ghomi, Q. *Kholase-al-Tawarikh*. Vol. 1. Translated by Ishraghi, E. Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 2005, pp. 312-313.

<sup>26</sup> Turkaman, E. B. *The Alam Araye Abbasi*. Volume I. Tehran: Amir Kabir Press Office, 1966, pp. 123-124.

<sup>27</sup> Ranjbari, "Botanic and Poetic Landscapes," pp. 152-154.

are more accurate, and they generate a more complete reconstruction of the garden, but they do not include the section of the garden where the Sa'adatābād baths are located.<sup>28</sup> The best reconstruction is by Yarahmadi et al., as they deftly interpret the poetic and visual evidence and reconstruct the entire garden space (fig 1). It will be to their model of the gardens' layout that I will be adding the baths.<sup>29</sup> Overlaying their model onto google maps, which has satellite imagery of the uncovered bath's location, we can get a good approximation of the location of the baths in relation to the rest of the original garden (fig 2-5). This location slightly off of the main promenade makes sense, as it allows for room for the row of trees which many sources identify lined the main walkways of the garden complex. As far as the baths' water source, though Qazvin did not have a permanent river, it had an impressive water supply system using *qanats* which kept the baths fed.<sup>30</sup> 'Abdī Beig writes in *Jannat-i 'Adn*:

نام باغش سعادت آبادست آب او از قنات اقبال است باغی اینسان که خلد تمثالست

(The name of his garden is Sa'adatābād, his water is from the Iqbal qanat)<sup>31</sup>

It is likely that the Iqbal qanat which fed the garden of Sa'adatābād, including its pools and water channels, also fed its baths.

Moving on to the bathhouse itself, large parts of the original building have been destroyed, as have many of the original elements of Sa'adatābād in the over 450 years since its construction.<sup>32</sup> Bath buildings are especially at risk of damage because of constant exposure to moisture, hot water, steam and corrosive substances.<sup>33</sup> Essentially, only the foundation and some

<sup>28</sup> Jayhani H, Rajabi F. «بهشت ثانی» و «کوچه آراسته از خرمی»، شکل و جایگاه خیابان(ها) در جعفرآباد و قزوین صفوی. *Journal of Iranian Architecture Studies* 6, no. 12 (2018): 41-65. <http://jias.kashanu.ac.ir/article-1-845-fa.html>, p. 60.

<sup>29</sup> Yarahmadi et al., "Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin," p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> Akbari, P., Laleh, H., Shojaei Esfahani, A. "حمام حاج میرحسن قزوین؛ گرمابه‌ای از اوایل دوره قاجار." *Journal of Archaeological Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 193-219. [https://jarcs.ut.ac.ir/article\\_28863\\_en.html](https://jarcs.ut.ac.ir/article_28863_en.html), pp. 198-199.

<sup>31</sup> 'Abdī Beig, *Jannat-i 'Adn* line 141. Translation from Abdi Bayk Shirazi. *Jannat Al-asmar/Zinat al-awraq/Sahifat al-ikhlas*, ed. Abu'l-Fazl Hashim Awghili Rahimuf. Moscow: Danesh, 1979.

<sup>32</sup> Yarahmadi et al., "Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin," p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Akbari, P., Laleh, H., Shojaei Esfahani, A. "حمام حاج میرحسن قزوین؛ گرمابه‌ای از اوایل دوره قاجار." *Journal of Archaeological Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 193-219. [https://jarcs.ut.ac.ir/article\\_28863\\_en.html](https://jarcs.ut.ac.ir/article_28863_en.html), p. 195.

wall elements of the baths survive intact, but even with this minimal surviving evidence the original layout of the building is evident. The baths would have originally been highly decorated with paintings and lavish tiles, which synthesized ancient Persian and Islamic traditions.<sup>34</sup>

However since these aspects of the bathhouse do not survive, and no historical authors describe the bathhouse' interior, one unfortunately cannot tell much about what the decoration depicted, only that it would have existed (fig 9-10).

In terms of the baths' internal layout, the bather entered down into the subterranean bath building through an entryway called a *sardar*.<sup>35</sup> In all Safavid baths, the visitor then emerges into the *sarbina* (apodyterium), then the *miāndar* (medial hall), and then lastly the *garmkhāna* (caldarium). These passageways were designed to manage temperature changes, as swift shifts in ambient temperature jeopardized the health of the bather. To avoid the humid hot air of the baths and the cold outside air abruptly rushing together, Safavid *miāndars* were often curved, and the internal structure of the bathhouse was closed with a vaulted covering; this is the case with the Sa'adatābād baths.<sup>36</sup> Also present is the standard Safavid bath feature of alcoves for different cosmetic and health purposes, which included activities such as hair clipping, skin treatments, and even certain surgeries.<sup>37</sup> Finally, in comparison to other Safavid baths, this structure has a mid-range area—this is a private bath not a massive *maydān* bath or a small neighborhood bath. In medium-sized Safavid baths, the caldarium tends to be slightly smaller than the apodyterium, and that is indeed the case with these baths (fig 6-8).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ghasemi, M., Hatam, G., Tehrani, F. "A Survey of Persian Historic Bathhouses from the Safavid to the Qajar Period (With an Emphasis on Decorations and Architectural Features)." In *Iranian Journal of Archaeological Studies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 43-56. doi: 10.22111/ijas.2018.5124. [https://ijas.usb.ac.ir/article\\_5124.html](https://ijas.usb.ac.ir/article_5124.html), p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> Ajourloo et al., "The Analytical Revisiting of the Structure," p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ajourloo et al., "The Analytical Revisiting of the Structure," pp. 9-10.

<sup>37</sup> Kermani, "The Role of Persian Historical Bath in City and Urban Life," p. 534.

<sup>38</sup> Neyestani J, Amirhajloo S. "The Analysis of Factors Affecting the Architecture of Isfahan Bathhouses from Safavid to Qajar via SPSS." *International Journal of Humanities* 17 (1): 109-125. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340478579\\_The\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Factors\\_Affecting\\_the\\_Architecture\\_of\\_Isfahan\\_Bathhouses\\_from\\_Safavid\\_to\\_Qajar\\_via\\_SPSS](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340478579_The_Analysis_of_Factors_Affecting_the_Architecture_of_Isfahan_Bathhouses_from_Safavid_to_Qajar_via_SPSS), p. 118.



Fig. 1

Left: Reconstruction of Sa'adatābād by Yarahmadi et al.<sup>39</sup>

Center and Right: The Sa'adatābād complex today, and a view of the archaeological site. Google. (n.d.). "Safavid Royal Precinct." Retrieved from [shorturl.at/iszFP](http://shorturl.at/iszFP).

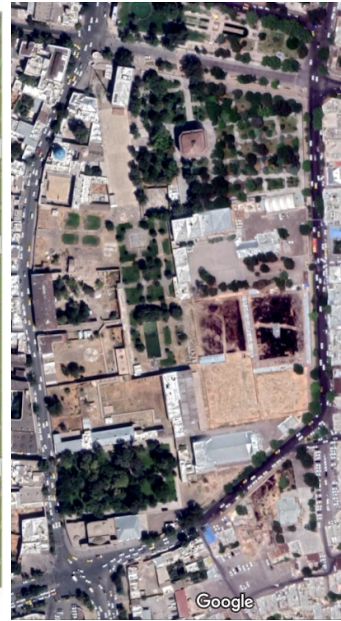


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Left: Simplified version of the Yarahmadi et al. reconstruction overlaid over google maps to line up the location of the archaeological site.

Right: Location of the bath complex added in to the reconstruction of Sa'adatābād.

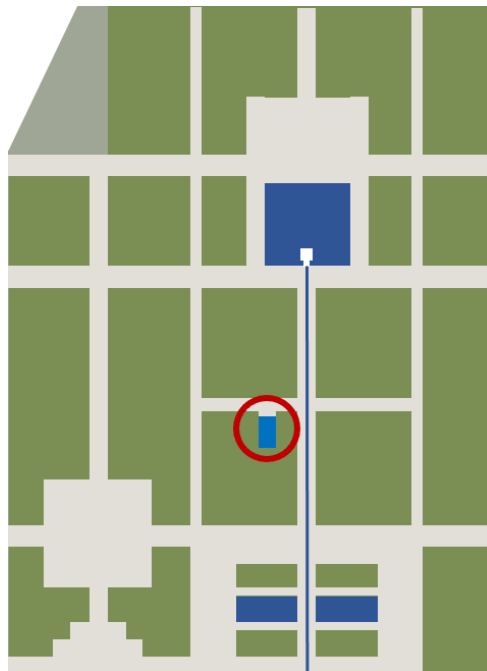


Fig. 5

<sup>39</sup> Yarahmadi et al., "Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin," p. 50.

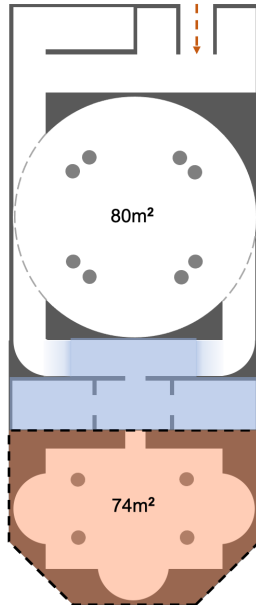


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

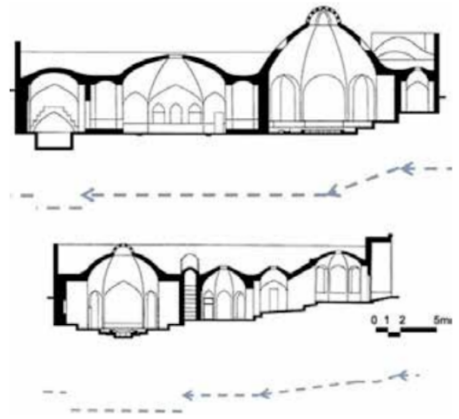


Fig. 8

Left: Model of the Sa'adatābād baths, *author*. The red represents the *garmkhāna*/caldarium, the blue represents the *miāndar*/medial hall, the largest space is the *sarbina*/apodyterium, and the *sardar* entryway is indicated by an arrow. Middle: Models of other Safavid bathhouses to compare, with the same color system.<sup>40</sup>

Right: A cutaway diagram showing the descending structure of two examples of subterranean Safavid baths.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Left/right: photography from the archaeological excavation of different sections of the bathhouse.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ajourloo et al., "The Analytical Revisiting of the Structure," p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ajourloo et al., "The Analytical Revisiting of the Structure," p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> "بقایای حمام صفوی در قزوین کشف شد" October 16, 2019. *Mehr News Agency*.

<https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4748585/بقایای-حمام-صفوی-در-قزوین-کشف-شد> ;

"کشف بقایای حمام صفوی در مجموعه دولتخانه صفوی قزوین" October 16, 2019. *Iranian Students' News Agency*.

<https://www.isna.ir/news/98072418423/کشف-بقایای-حمام-صفوی-در-مجموعه-دولت-خانه-صفوی-قزوین>

## IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of implications that arise from the presence of the uncovered bath complex. Firstly, the baths are spatially located equidistantly between the *arshikhaneh* (royal residence, known today as the *Chehel Sotoun*) and the *shervani* house, which acted as a pleasure pavilion for food, reception, and athletics.<sup>43</sup> However, the baths have their entrance oriented towards the *arshikhaneh* and are located along the central axis of Sa'adatābād, both suggesting a relationship between the baths and the royal residence rather than with the *shervani* house. The square in which the baths lie then, we can infer to be spatially associated with the central palace grounds. It is likely that other service buildings besides the baths were also located in this region of Ṭahmāsp's garden city.

Secondly, the baths are within the greater setting of “garden, palace, and city,” all of which “represent Ṭahmāsp's power.”<sup>44</sup> 'Abdī Beig writes

آب فزون گشت به هر جوی او

(The water increased everywhere)<sup>45</sup>

when describing the splendor Shah Ṭahmāsp brought to Qazvin by making it his capital. It is indicative that 'Abdī Beig singled out water to represent the city's emergent prosperity. Water held many symbolic connotations in Safavid Iran, including representing the ruler's control over resources and rivers of paradise. The flowing water of the royal bath complex would have been one of many water features in Sa'adatābād such as the water channels or lakes, all of which implied the power of the Shah and the connection of his idealized garden city to paradise.

Furthermore, important rituals took place in the baths, such as the aforementioned washing of the

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<sup>43</sup> Yarahmadi et al., “Re-Commentary of Sa'adatābād Garden of Qazvin,” p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time,” p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> 'Abdī Beig, *Jannat-i 'Adn* line 105. Translation from Abdi Bayk Shirazi. *Jannat Al-asmar/Zinat al-awraq/Sahifat al-ikhlas*, ed. Abu'l-Fazl Hashim Awghili Rahimuf. Moscow: Danesh, 1979.

Shah's corpse. By having a private bath structure within the broader palatial complex, the Shah had direct control over bath-related ceremonies for him, his family and his court. Finally, cleanliness was valued in Safavid Iran, and private bathhouses were a convenient way for the Shah and his entourage to wash themselves day-to-day. For all of these reasons, a bathhouse was standard for a Safavid royal *bāghistān*. The archaeological discovery of baths was indeed to be expected, and for there *not* to have been a bathhouse in a royal garden city would be far more surprising.<sup>46</sup>

All of this meshes together well. Baths were an expected feature. They fit in well spatially with the original layout of the gardens in which they were built. There are pieces of historical evidence that reference the bathhouse's presence. However, one aspect of these baths is difficult to reconcile: their absence in *Jannat-i 'Adn*. This omission is especially striking because 'Abdī Beig devoted 55 verses to the public baths of Bājī Hātūn located in the *maydān* just outside Sa'adatābād. It is challenging to narrow down an explanation as to why 'Abdī Beig does not write about the Sa'adatābād baths, but there are a number of possible reasons.

Firstly, it is possible that since bathhouses were so standard for royal garden complexes, the Sa'adatābād baths were not worth commenting on. When 'Abdī Beig refers to 'other buildings' of the complex, the baths would have been encompassed in this ancillary category. A support for this theory comes in a section from the final poem, *Ṣaḥīfat al-Ihlās*, which compares Sa'adatābād to the gardens of Herat, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Isfahan, with the conclusion that Ṭahmāsp's Sa'adatābād is more wonderful than all of them. All of these complexes which the poet compares to Qazvin had royal baths.<sup>47</sup> To write details about a standard feature of royal

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<sup>46</sup> Wilber, Donald Newton. *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions*, 3rd edition. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company of Rutland, 1994, pp. 67, 76, 224.

<sup>47</sup> Alemi, Mahvash. "A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran," 2007 ; Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, 137.

garden complexes like baths may not have helped support 'Abdī Beig's narrative of Sa'adatābād's supremacy, because it does not set Sa'adatābād apart from the rest.

Another possible reason for the bathhouse's omission is that the baths may not have been finished or built yet during the composition of the poems in 1558-1559. Later descriptions of Sa'adatābād by Pietro della Valle from his early 17th century visit differ from earlier descriptions and show change over time in the garden city's structure; part of these renovations may have been the construction of the recently-uncovered bath complex.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, all of the written historical evidence referring to the baths came after 1558/9 when 'Abdī Beig was writing. However, this hypothesis is unlikely, because baths in royal complexes were to be expected, and as aforementioned for there not to have been a bath from the garden city's inception would have been a strong break from the norm.

A more plausible possibility is that the baths may not have been a point of emphasis in 'Abdī Beig's personal experience of Sa'adatābād or within his poetic vision of the garden city. It is feasible that in the tour of the grounds which the poet writes he received from the Shah himself, the baths were not demarcated as a point of interest and possibly not even entered. The subterranean construction of the baths also meant that they were largely hidden from view, and the structure may not have stood out to the poet. Additionally, in his poetry 'Abdī Beig has richly layered thematic organization schemes such as the four core poems following the four seasons, and in the midst of 'Abdī Beig's many symbolic arcs a description of the baths may not have fit the poetic structure.<sup>49</sup> He may also have wanted to save a 'bathhouse description section' for the

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<sup>48</sup> Della Valle, Pietro. *Viaggi Di Pietro Della Valle, Il Pellegrino: Descritti Da Lui Medesimo in Lettere Familiari All' Erudito Suo Amico Mario Schipano, Divisi in Tre Parti Cioè: La Turchia, la Persia, E L'India, Colla Vita E Ritratto Dell' Autore*. Brighton: G. Gancia, 1843.

<sup>49</sup> Alemi, Mahvash. "The Garden City of Shah Tahmasb Reflected in the Words of His Poet and Painter," in *Interlacing Words and Things: Bridging the Nature-culture Opposition in Gardens and Landscape*, ed. Stephen Bann, 95-114. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2009.

public bath of Bājī Hātūn, which was larger, more widely known, and allowed 'Abdī Beig to wax poetic about the beauty of the women attending Bājī Hātūn.

Though some theories are likelier than others, it is unfortunately impossible to definitively say which reason or reasons are behind 'Abdī Beig's decision to relegate the baths of Sa'adatābād to the category of unnamed buildings in the complex, and this is an area for further inquiry. However, it is most likely that to 'Abdī Beig either the baths were so standard a feature as to not be worth composing a description and/or that they did not fit within the poet's personal experience or poetic envisionment of the Sa'adatābād garden city.

## CONCLUSION

In sum, the archaeological evidence uncovered at Sa'adatābād in Qazvin adds valuable information to our knowledge of the royal complex. The bath fits within its garden city context as a garden bath type, and it pairs with evidence from the written sources. Pairing the archaeological evidence with scholars' study of Sa'adatābād and Safavid bath typology allows for the reconstruction of the mid-sized baths' layout and location in the complex. These reconstructions generate important implications, such as that the garden square the baths are in were spatially tied to the main residential structure, there were probably other such service buildings in this area of the garden, the baths were part of a symbolism of the Shah's control over water and manifestation of paradise on earth, and possible theories as to why 'Abdī Beig left the royal bathhouse out of his work. Finally, there is significant room for further research. More Archaeological work can be done in Sa'adatābād and other Safavid palaces to give scholars further insight into the complexes' original layout. This physical evidence should be pursued and incorporated into the field of historical reconstruction to get the best possible view into what the garden cities of Safavid Iran were like at their height, and how they reflect Safavid society.

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