

HOSPITALITY CUSTOMS OF THE GANJA CITY POPULATION

B. Amanova

ANAS Institute of History and Ethnology named after A.A. Bakikhanov

Senior researcher of the "Historical ethnology" department (Baku, Azerbaijan)

E-mail: baharamanova@bk.ru

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5011-7820>

Annotation. The article is devoted to the hospitality customs of the population of Ganja, one of the oldest and most prominent cultural centers of Azerbaijan. Ganja is the homeland of the genius poet Nizami Ganjavi, as well as well-known poets and public figures such as Mahsati Ganjavi, Mirza Shafi Vazeh, Ahmad Javad, Javad Khan, Deli Ali, and İsrail Mammadov, whose heroic deeds became legendary among the people. The study highlights the traditions of welcoming guests, providing them with shelter, organizing festive gatherings in their honor, and setting abundant and generous tables as an expression of respect, goodwill, and mutual trust. Special attention is given to the symbolic role of hospitality in shaping social ties, strengthening collective identity, and preserving cultural values within the community of Ganja. At the same time, the article underlines the significance of historical references, noting that many foreign travelers and authors widely described the openness and sincere hospitality of the peoples of the Caucasus, including Azerbaijanis. Their comparisons between the customs of local inhabitants and those of their own countries further reveal the uniqueness, richness, and depth of Azerbaijani traditions. Thus, the hospitality of Ganja's population is presented as both cultural heritage and a reflection of universal human values.

Keywords: Azerbaijan; Ganja city; population; hospitality; foreign authors

Introduction

The custom of hospitality holds one of the most prestigious and honorable places in the family and social life of the Azerbaijani people, including the population of the city of Ganja, which forms an integral part of this cultural tradition. Hospitality and respect for the guest are universal phenomena that, to a greater or lesser extent, can be observed among all nations of the world. Nevertheless, in the Azerbaijani context, and particularly in Ganja, these traditions have acquired distinctive forms and symbolic significance. The literary and historical materials collected in the course of research confirm this viewpoint and provide abundant evidence for the deep-rooted nature of such customs.

Scholars emphasize that the ancient traditions of patriotism, respect for other peoples, hospitality, hard work, humanism, commitment to justice, reverence for elders, and other universal human qualities possess a progressive and enduring character. Of course, it would be inaccurate to claim that these traditions belong exclusively to a single nation, since similar values exist among most peoples of the world. However, national specificity, cultural individuality, and local adaptation can be clearly seen in the Azerbaijani case. These features highlight the unique character of Ganja's hospitality traditions and their contribution to the wider cultural heritage of Azerbaijan (Shukurov, 1981:37).

Material and method

In the research, a wide range of oral and written sources, including archival documents, manuscripts, folklore samples, and memoirs, were collected and analyzed. Field-ethnographic studies, conducted in different periods and with the participation of local informants, provided valuable firsthand data on the customs and daily practices of the Ganja population. The research

employs a combination of complex ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, and comparative description of rituals and traditions.

Alongside ethnographic data, the study applies historical-comparative analysis, allowing the identification of common features and distinctive aspects of Ganja's hospitality practices in relation to the broader Caucasian and Azerbaijani cultural context. A scientific-critical approach to the available literature was also implemented in order to reassess existing interpretations and to integrate them with newly collected materials.

Presenting the studied issue in this integrated manner has created conditions for a holistic understanding of the hospitality customs of the Ganja population, highlighting their continuity, symbolic meaning, and social functions. This methodology not only reveals the uniqueness of these traditions but also contributes to the broader study of cultural heritage in Azerbaijan.

Discussion

The custom of hospitality was considered an important norm of social life in the traditional life of every nation, as well as Caucasians (Anchabadze, 1985:110-120). The mentioned opinion is also brightened by the notes of an American scientist who was a guest in the family of Caucasians and was impressed by their generosity, openness, and hospitality. He writes: "To show the importance of hospitality, just as the Greeks made Zeus the "god of hospitality", the Caucasians also created the tradition of hospitality. They said, "A guest is a guest of God, you should not touch him or hurt him." Thus, hospitality was shown to the stranger, and his safety was ensured in these places far from his home and homeland. The host had to protect his guest even at the risk of death" (Benet, 1989:97). An episode in the play "Khanlar" by our immortal poet S.Vurgun shows that the above idea is true. The response of his mother, Gızyetər to the gendarmes, who asked the location of the Khan's friends-guests who were hiding from the government, is a clear example of the heart and hospitality traditions of our people:

Oğul! Bir qayda var eldə, obada:
Qonaq əziz olar, qaçaq olsa da,
Onu ələ vermək namərdlik olar.

Although the gendarmes punished Gızyetər, he did not mince his words, surprising these executioners, ignorant of humanity, with his answer:

Fələyin zindanı kürəyimdədir,
Zalımın zənciri biləyimdədir,
Qonağın yerini soruşursunuz?-

Yarın ürəyimi, ürəyimdədir! (Vurgun, 1988:209-213).

Such positive features testify to the rich inner world of all Caucasians, as well as the people of Azerbaijan and the young people who are part of it, and their loyalty to the traditions of hospitality.

According to informants, the people of Ganja have always been generous, attentive and caring towards guests. According to them, as a proof of this, it is enough to show the guesthouse built by Shah Abbas for the overnight stay of foreign guests coming to Ganja, as well as travelers, travelers and merchants passing through here - Caravansaray. Mashadi Asgar Alakbarov, Isa Alakbar oğlu Aliyev, Deyirman Isa, Mashadi Kazim etc. are among the residents of Ganja city. such hospitable people are still remembered today.

In this regard, the information found in the ethnographic literature is also interesting. It is mentioned there that according to the question asked by E.Abdullabey oğlu, a resident of Boyuk Bagman district, Ganja region, there were more noble and generous people in Ganja provinces: "These include Khudadad bey Rafibeyov, Ismayil bey, Hasan bey, Jahangir bey, Mehdi bey Aliyev, etc. . an example can be given. I remember Governor Khudadad Bey well. He studied medicine in Germany. He was a very progressive man. In Ganja, he headed the "Charity" society. He gained great respect among the people with his kindness and hospitality. It was the spring of 1918. The hospitality he gave to his friends from foreign countries for the sake of the Democratic Republic organized in Ganja is still not erased from my memory. More than 50 types of pilaf were brought to the table at this meeting" (Salehov, 1995:73-74).

The hospitality of the people of Ganja can be seen in the examples of folklore. For example, let's follow the tale "The Generous Butcher": "... Evening falls, the butcher's shop closes. They want Shah Abbas and the vizier to leave. Butcher Ahmad says:

- I have been paying attention to you for a long time: I see you are a stranger. Don't go anywhere, you are both my guests.

Ahmed the butcher brings the guests to his house. Baridan informs his cousin that I have a guest, prepare food. The girl prepares food and drink and gives it to Ahmed. The guests fall asleep after eating and drinking. When the morning dawns, they want to leave. Ahmed says:

You are my guest for three days, this is my custom. Don't go, stay" (Ganja folklore anthology, 2003:240).

The hospitality mentioned above is also highlighted in the works of Nizami, an eminent poet and genius thinker who opened his eyes to the world, lived in Ganja, and contributed to the development of Near and Middle Eastern literature. For example, in the example taken from the poet's poem "Seven Beauties", we read:

Dedim ki: - Ey gözəl, kölgən yarındır,
Tacım sənin ayaq torpaqlarıdır.
Canıma and içib, dedi o gözəl:
-Sənə yar olaram bir gün, yaxın gəl,
Sən mənim hörmətli bir mehmanımsan,
Əziz tutulmalı daima mehman (Ganjavi, 2004:141).

Or,

Onun vardı əvvəl bəzək paltarı,
Bəzən al geyərdi, bəzən də sarı.
Bağ qönçəsi kimi qonaq sevəndi,
Yanağı gül kimi gülürdü, şəndi.
Vardı işrət üçün mehman otağı,
Göydə sürəyyaya dəyərdi tağı.
Süfrələr salmışdı, döşənmiş yerə,
Ədəb öyrətmişdi xidmətçilərə.
Gəlsəydi bir nəfər uzaqdan əgər,
Cilov tutub, qonaq eyləyərdilər.
Süfrə salardılar otaqda layiq,
Yemək verərdilər qonağa layiq (Ganjavi, 2004:129).

From the description mentioned above by N.Ganjavi, we can witness how the people of Ganjali value the guest and hospitality.

The expression "Guest is God's guest" which has found its place in the thinking of the people of Ganja, and the people of Azerbaijan in general, indicates a great meaning. At the core of this saying are hidden positive features such as purity, moral education, generosity, hospitality, etc. Respecting a guest, forgiving his debt when appropriate, taking care of him, and protecting him from enemies are human qualities. From this point of view, a story given in "Gabusnama" which is a book of advice is interesting. Since it is relevant to our topic, we think it is appropriate to mention it here:

"I have heard that İbn Mughla assigns Nasr ibn Mansur Tamimi to work on the divan of Basra. After a year, he called back and demanded a report from him. He was a man of many states and his state had the eye of the caliph. As he calculates, it turns out that he has a lot of money left at his feet. İbn Mughla says: "Either pay this money or go to prison"! Nasr says: "O Mavlana, I have property, but it is not here, spare me for a month. It is not appropriate for me to go to prison for so many goods."

Mughla's son knew that the man had the ability to give so many goods and he was telling the truth, so he said: "There is no order from Amir al-Momin, and you cannot go anywhere else until you give these goods. For now, sit here in one of the cells in my palace, and be my guest for a month." Nasr says: "I agree to your order." Then he stays as a prisoner in the palace of İbn Mughla. Coincidentally, it was the beginning of Ramadan. When it was evening, İbn Mughla said: "Bring so-and-so, let him break his fast with us." In short, Nasr breaks his fast with him throughout the month

of Ramadan. As soon as the fasting holiday ends and a few days pass, Mughla's son sends a message that "they are delaying the delivery of the goods, what should we do?" Nasr says: "I gave the gold." Mughla's son says: "Who did you give it to?" Nasr says: "I gave it to you." Mughla's son is surprised and calls Nasr and tells him: "Man, who did you give the gold to?" Nasr says: "I didn't give the gold, but I ate your bread for free for a month, I broke the fast with your bread for a whole month, and I was your guest. Now that the holiday has arrived, my right to work is that you want gold from me?" Mughla's son laughed and said: "... go safely, I gave you that property for rent, I will give you that gold myself" (Gabusnama, 1989:70-71). Apparently, the phrase "I was your guest" saved Nasr from paying a huge debt and confiscating his property.

We learn about the hospitality of the people of Ganja from the conversations of old people, as well as from ethnographic literature: "... the people of these places would love guests and hospitality. They would invite singers and musicians to make their parties more cheerful. H.Shushinsky, who has an unparalleled voice, describes a visit to Ganja as follows: Ganja people love melody, poetry, art, especially music, they trust the success of other singers, and they openly compete with them. Once, they sent a telegram to Mashadi Mammad Farzaliyev, a famous singer from Ganja, my colleague living in Tbilisi, and brought him to Ganja. An unusual party was organized. A hundred kinds of blessings were brought to the table" (Salehov, 1995:74).

From the surveys we conducted, it is clear that guests who knock on the door of any family in Ganja, visiting at any time, are kindly received and properly entertained. According to the custom, the guest was seated at the four (upper) heads of the table. His sitting at the top was considered a sign of respect for both the host and the guest. Regardless of the influence and social status of the visiting guest, delicious dishes (sabzi plov, kuku, kalapur, dolma, kabab, dovga, etc.) were cooked in his honor in exchange for his ability and financial status. First, jam and tea were brought to the table, followed by dishes and various sweets and sherbets.

According to the information we obtained during the ethnographic visit, the host endures all difficulties in order to provide the guest with good rest, food and drink, as they say, to be treated like a "master", and is even ready to spend his wealth and borrow money from others, open his mouth to relatives and neighbors would be. In this regard, the memory of Hasan agha Giyasbeyli, who was originally from the village of Kamarli in Gazakh district and had close friendships with our immortal poet S.Vurgun, is interesting: "Three or four brothers and sisters were orphaned. Although our name was Bey, we were poor. A few months after my father's death, one day we saw five to ten horsemen coming down the dirt road from the hill on the other side of the river that runs through the middle of the village. My mother put her hand over her eyes and looked for a long time, and suddenly spoke in a panic:

- Oh boy, these riders are coming to us, they are the man's friends. There is nothing in our house, we are ashamed.

My mother was a careful wife. He quickly sent one of us to the neighbor to borrow a bowl or two of flour. He sent one of us to buy an animal. We were in debt until the end. In summary, until the horsemen crossed the valley and reached our house, the neighbors joined hands, the hearth was left, the iron was hung, the dough was kneaded, and the animal was slaughtered. The samovar steamed when riders fell off their saddles in the yard. My mother said "welcome" and invited her inside. Not even five minutes passed, the numerous men of the village arrived, they drank tea, the table was opened, kebabs were made, and hot fatir was brought out. There was food and drink in our house for a week. We did not know who called the lover. Who sent the men fighting in the yard, who sent the sacks full of flour, carts full of firewood, who emptied them into the yard. We didn't know who are the ones who give us hands and feet, make firewood, slaughter animals and cook kebabs, knead dough and roll it into logs, hang sackcloth and spread fatir, carry water from the spring and boil samovar? After the guests left, we sat and caught our breath as if we had just finished the wedding and saw that we had three or four months of food in our house. From that day, God gave us our sustenance. Our table was always full of guests (Shikhli, 1992:56-57). The events unfolding in this story, which is very rich in ethnographic materials, are characteristic of Ganja and the entire population of

Azerbaijan. Here we witness how our people welcome and appreciate guests, their humane character, openness, and neighborly attitude.

"Gabusnama" contains interesting information about how to receive a guest: "When a guest comes to your home ... be kind to him. Give everyone the care they deserve, as Abu Shukur says:

Qonaq ya dost olsun və yaxud düşmən,
Gərək layiqincə hörmət edəsən.

If there is fruit, bring fruit and eat it before the meal, take a little break, then the food is ready on the table, but do not sit down yourself, let the guests say "sit" once or twice, if the guest is not too big and it is suitable for you to sit, only after that they accept your offer and eat and sit lower than everyone..., don't say "so-and-so" every hour, you don't eat at all, eat well, don't be ashamed, forgive me, I couldn't prepare something for you... Such words make people feel ashamed and cannot eat bread, and they leave your table half-hungry and half-full" (Gabusnama, 1989:69-70).

According to the old residents of Ganja, it was believed that the table opened in the name of the guest would bring sustenance and blessings to the family. The idea that guest houses could not be without joy created enthusiasm in the population. The following lines taken from S. Vurgun's poem "Aygün" are an example of what is said and thought:

Bu axşam Aygünün evində gülən
Bu şənlik, bu büsat, bu cəlal nədir?
Ürəkdən-ürəyə axıb süzülən
Söyləyin, şeiridir, yoxsa nəğmədir?
Başdan ayağadək geyib qırmızı,
Məclisə gün kimi şölələr yayır.
Gələn qonaqlara bu ellər qızı
Üstü zəfəranlı plov paylayır.

Conclusion

As everywhere in Azerbaijan, the living room was separate in Ganja. This room, with carpets hanging from its walls, was given to the guest, and neatly packed woolen blankets were opened to the guest. S.Benet, who witnessed such positive features, writes that "one of the most respectable issues in the Caucasus is having a separate guest house... If the family does not have a separate guest house, one of the rooms is definitely reserved for guests. Here the guest rests" (Benet, 1989:98).

It is no coincidence that A.Duma did not hesitate to say a good word about our people with such a large heart: "If you knock on any door in Azerbaijan, as well as in the entire Caucasus, and say that I am a foreigner, I have no place to stay, the owner of the house will give you the biggest room at that hour. will give He and his family will live in a small room. Moreover, if you stay in his house, let's say, for a week, two weeks, a month, he will take care of you and will not let you suffer from blindness" (Duma, 1985:17). In this regard, the opinion of French sociologist and geographer of the 19th century E. Reclu is also interesting. Referring to the book of S. Bunyadova, we consider it appropriate to mention the conclusion reached by the same author based on his observations: "Azerbaijani living in Transcaucasia (South Caucasus - B.A.) have qualities that are not unique to any people of the Caucasus. Such rare sincerity and integrity away from greed, extreme kindness and hospitality can be found only among them. Azerbaijanis are considered the spreaders of culture in the Caucasus" (Bunyadova, 2005:8).

Let's also say that the beauty of the city, the houses built in the national architectural style, and the baths attracted the interest of the guests. Literature materials also show this: "The city's handsome two-three-story houses built of baked bricks, well-kept comfortable hotels, and baths with all kinds of facilities for relaxation would attract the attention of visitors to the city" (Shushinski, 1986:69).

The hospitality of the Turkic peoples, as well as the carriers of that culture - Azerbaijani Turks with rich spirituality, as well as the young people from the branches of that body, shows what moral standard they have. This cannot be considered a coincidence. Such greatness is in the soul and blood of the Turkish people, due to their attachment to the historical roots of their traditions, which their great-grandfathers passed down from generation to generation, from memory to memory. The

information we received from the "The Book of Dede Gorgud" saga about hospitality also says this: Bayindir Khan, the Khan of the Khans, would visit the Oguz Beys once a year, "he would slaughter a stallion from a horse, a bull from a camel, and a ram from a sheep and entertain them." (The Book of Dede Gorgud 1988:132). Of course, there are enough questions in the current direction in our classical literature.

According to the given information and ethnographic literature survey (Allahmanlı, 2011:157), if a person walking along the road knocked on a door and asked for water, it would be thought that he was hungry. The owner of the house would definitely bring that person home as a guest and feed and drink.

As in other regions of Azerbaijan, among the people of Ganja, the heart of the guest who came to the house was not touched, he was treated as a holy and dear person. If the guest reached for any object and said that he liked it, that object would be given to him. No one would be embarrassed to offend a guest visiting the house. Such situations were alien to Azerbaijani Turkish families. S.Vurgun also mentioned this respectable custom, the tradition that has been lived since ancient times in his poem "I remembered":

Sən bizim ellərin ruhuna bir bax!

Bizdən inciməmiş bir əziz qonaq (Vurğun, 2005:220).

According to the old people, when a guest expressed his desire to leave, they would ask him to stay for a few days. If the guest agreed and said that he had to go, then food and drink would be put on his way, and he would be sent away with certain gifts and lots. Relatives and neighbors would also participate in the "farewell ceremony".

By the way, let's note that among young people there are a number of proverbs and sayings related to guests. Although some of them have all-Azerbaijani characteristics, some of them belong only to the local population. In this regard, the following examples are of interest:

Qonaq evin yox, elin qonağıdır.

Qonaq umduğu yerdən küsər.

Qonagın ruzisi özündən əvvəl gələr.

Qonaq girməyən evə vay girər.

Qonaqdan qayıdacağı günün tarixini soruşmazlar.

Qonaq düşmən də olsa, gəldiyi evdə ona toxunmazlar.

Qonaga çörək yeyirsənmi deməzlər.

Atlı gələn qonaga atsız yola salmazlar.

Qonagın sözün yerə salmazlar.

Bir ev qarşılayan qonağı bir el yola salar və s.

The result

As in all regions of Azerbaijan, hospitality customs have a special place in the public life, household and culture of Ganja city population. This tradition, passed down from generation to generation, is kept alive and constitutes one of the cores of people's national and moral values. Hospitality, which instills humanity, kindness, humanism, openness, generosity, mutual trust, respect and love for each other, has practical significance in the education and upbringing of the young generation, in their attachment to the roots, and in their warm relations with the elders.

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List of informants

- Ismayilova Gulnara Veysel gizi - born in 1972, Ganja city.
Abdullayeva Gumru Elman gizi - born in 1985, Ganja city.
Aliyev Yunis Isa oglu - born in 1951, Ganja city (Garachil district).
Aliyev Gabil Islam oglu - born in 1953, Ganja city (Old district).
Guliyeva Asya Majid gizi-born in 1966, Ganja city (Bala Bagmanlar district).
Alakbarova Gulnaz Ajdar gizi - born in 1984, Ganja city.
Guliyeva Ruziyya Zaman gizi - born in 1955, Ganja city.
Alakbarova Zemfira Alakbar gizi - born in 1957, Ganja city.

Б. Аманова

Әзербайжан ҰҒА Тарих және этнология институты, Баку, Әзербайжан

ГЯНДЖА ҚАЛАСЫ ХАЛҚЫНЫҢ ҚОНАҚЖАЙЛЫҚ ДӘСТҮРЛЕРІ ТУРАЛЫ

Аңдатпа. Мақала Әзербайжанның ең көне әрі ірі мәдени орталықтарының бірі болып табылатын Гянджа қаласы халқының қонақжайлық дәстүрлеріне арналған. Гянджа — әлемдік поэзияның жарық жұлдызы Низами Гянджевидің, сондай-ақ Махсати Гянджеви, Мирза Шафи Вазех, Ахмед Джавад, Джавад хан, Дели Али және халық арасында ерлігі аңызға айналған Ибраһим Мамедов сияқты әйгілі ақындар мен қоғам қайраткерлерінің отаны. Зерттеуде қонақты қарсы алу, оларға пана беру, құрметіне мерекелік жиындар ұйымдастыру және сыйластық пен жомарттықтың белгісі ретінде дастарқан жаю дәстүрлері жан-жақты сипатталады. Сонымен қатар, қонақжайлықтың әлеуметтік байланыстарды нығайтудағы, ұжымдық бірегейлікті қалыптастырудағы және мәдени құндылықтарды сақтаудағы символдық маңызына ерекше көңіл бөлінеді. Мақалада көптеген шетелдік саяхатшылар мен авторлардың Кавказ халықтарының, соның ішінде әзербайжандардың ашықтығы мен қонақжайлығы жайлы кеңінен жазғандығы атап өтіледі. Олардың жергілікті салт-дәстүрлерді өз халықтарының әдет-ғұрыптарымен салыстыруы әзербайжан мәдениетінің бірегейлігі мен байлығын тереңрек танытады. Осылайша, Гянджа халқының қонақжайлығы мәдени мұра ретінде ғана емес, сонымен бірге әмбебап адамзаттық құндылықтардың айнасы ретінде ұсынылады.

Түйін сөздер: Әзербайжан; Гянджа; халық; қонақжайлық; шетелдік авторлар, Низами Гянджеви, әдет-ғұрып.

Б. Аманова

Институт истории и этнологии НАНА, Баку, Азербайджан

О ТРАДИЦИИ ГОСТЕПРИИМСТВА НАСЕЛЕНИЯ ГОРОДА ГЯНДЖА

Аннотация. Статья посвящена обычаям гостеприимства населения Гянджи – одного из древнейших и наиболее значимых культурных центров Азербайджана. Гянджа является родиной гениального поэта Низами Гянджеви, а также известных поэтов и общественных деятелей, таких как Махсати Гянджеви, Мирза Шафи Вазех, Ахмед Джавад, Джавад хан, Дели Али и Ибрафим Мамедов, подвиги которого стали легендарными среди народа. В статье подробно рассматриваются традиции встречи гостей, предоставления им приюта, организации праздничных мероприятий в их честь и накрытия богатых и щедрых столов как проявления уважения, доброжелательности и доверия. Особое внимание уделяется символическому значению гостеприимства в формировании социальных связей, укреплении коллективной идентичности и сохранении культурных ценностей внутри гянджинского общества. Отмечается также важность исторических свидетельств, где многие иностранные путешественники и авторы описывали открытость и искреннее гостеприимство народов Кавказа, включая азербайджанцев. Их сопоставления местных обычаев с традициями собственных народов позволяют глубже понять уникальность, богатство и самобытность азербайджанской культуры. Таким образом, гостеприимство жителей Гянджи предстает не только частью культурного наследия, но и отражением универсальных человеческих ценностей.

Ключевые слова: Азербайджан; Гянджа; народ; гостеприимство; зарубежные авторы; Низами Гянджеви; обычаи и традиции.

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Бахар Аманова – Әзербайжан ҰҒА Тарих және этнология институтының «Тарихи этнология» бөлімінің аға ғылыми қызметкері (Баку, Әзербайжан).

Сведения об авторе

Бахар Аманова – старший научный сотрудник отдела «Историческая этнология» Института истории и этнологии НАНА (Баку, Азербайджан).

Information about the author

Bahar Amanova – senior researcher of the "Historical ethnology" department of the Institute of History and Ethnology of ANAS (Baku, Azerbaijan)

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