

## HYGIENE AND HEALTH SCHOOL AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF HYGIENIC STEREOTYPE IN MODERN SOCIETY

---

Marie MAREČKOVÁ

**Abstract:** *Problems of personal hygiene, using water and baths for washing and overall body hygiene or as therapy for healing the body. Since early 19<sup>th</sup> century swimming became increasingly popular, with the result of opening of many public swimming pools and swimming schools. Since 1830s public swimming pools became accessible for women too and women learned to swim there. In relation to increasing hygienic and social demand of burghers spa was separated from indoor swimming pools and their specific architecture developed. Poor housing and hygienic conditions in the poor quarters resulted in the necessity to extend public baths with cheap showers. Schools spread education about hygiene as the necessary precondition of good health in the sense of the well known saying Hygiene – Half Health.*

**Key word:** *personal hygiene, hygienic condition, care for health, cleanness, spa, bathhouse*

Modernisation of the school system and healthcare (Rules of Healthcare of 1770, Rules of School Education of 1774) was accompanied with the concept of health as a life value linked to efforts to affect own health state by prevention and by lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> Healthy diet, body hygiene, conditioning, open air exercise and sporting activities became a stereotype in the Czech learned community. Water and baths had so far been primarily used for washing and overall body hygiene or as therapy for healing the body. Step by step a new aspect of application of spa care asserted itself, with the objective to make use of free time for body building, fitness care, conditioning and regeneration of the body and the soul (wellness). This was also reflected in transformations of the functions and the forms of public river baths in the city and the showy spa buildings.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> VÁŇOVÁ, R. et al: *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách* [Education in Czech history]. Part IV, volume 1. *Problematika vzdělávacích institucí a školských reforem (obecné školství 1848-1939, střední školství a učitelské vzdělávání 1914-1939)*. [Issue of educational institutions and school reforms (general education 1848 – 1939, secondary education and teacher training 1914-1939). Prague: Karolinum 1992. WEIS, A. *Geschichte der Oesterreichischen Volksschulen I*. Prag, 1904, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> SELEDEC, W.; KRETSCHMER, H.; LAUSCHA, H. *Baden und Bäder in Wien*. Wien, 1987.

City baths were considered by Europe important facilities with healthcare purpose. Spa buildings in mediaeval towns were used for body cleansing and hygiene, and also for therapeutic purposes. In addition to ordinary baths where visitors washed in cold water there were also steam baths. Public baths in the city offered not only water baths but also hot steam baths or application of hot air. Steam for the baths was obtained by pouring water over hot iron plates or hot stones. Spa buildings were property of the town or individual burghers, or monasteries etc. The bath manager usually did not own the baths, only rented it. He employed labourers and numerous helping hands (males and females), who worked as stokers, cloakroom attendants and massagers, hairdressers or barbers. Some employees knew how to bleed a patient, how to apply bulbs etc. They had to be able to treat and cure skin diseases, ulcers and wounds and to perform surgeries. These activities resulted in conflicts of interest between the bath operators and city barbers or doctors (surgeons). City councils issued rules for the baths specifying rights and liabilities of the bath managers and their burger customers. In 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the spread of diseases of private parts (especially syphilis) the requirements for medical knowledge of city spa managers increased.

Usual spa care included hair washing, hair and beard cutting, or shaving, certain medical prophylaxis and therapy, as well as serving refreshments and entertainment with music and dance. The baths were equipped with round wooden or stone bathtubs filled with hot water. The visitors sat in the tubs. The tubs were covered with boards for the water to keep warm as long as possible. In steam baths the visitors lied on wooden benches by the walls and often took a massage in the context of the steam bath. Special cloths were used for wiping off sweat. After the steam bath the bodies were washed in cold water. Due to poor hygiene the baths were often closed, especially during plague epidemics.

Due to shortage water was exchanged in the baths very rarely and was not allowed to be release to the street. A special audio or visual signal informed the burghers every Saturday that the baths were ready. The spa houses used to have separate spaces for males and for females. Critical voices of Church officials and town councillors evidenced the fact that males and females also used the baths together. Some baths were also used as warehouses. In those cases the honest owners of the baths risked loss of their burgher respect and honesty. Their job was not very respected by the society of the period anyway.<sup>3</sup>

All burger classes liked to visit the baths. The town intelligentsia, officers, clergy, teachers and musicians received a subsidy from the town for spa treatment. Craftsmen visited the baths every two weeks, usually the whole guild together. Masters paid baths to their apprentices. The costs of spa operation kept increasing, though, and so towards the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century the number of city baths became very limited. This was probably partly due to an influence of the Baroque and the Rococo fashion. Hygiene was satisfied by wiping the skin with wet and dry towels. Cosmetic aids of women, together with powders and perfumes, included louse combs, head scrapers etc. Some women used must balls instead of perfumes, or suspended cases with fragrances, worn as fashionable accessories on the neck or on the waist. Flea catching was everyday job of Baroque people.

---

<sup>3</sup> DÜLMEN van, R. *Kultura a každodenní život v raném novověku*. [Culture and everyday life in early modern age] Prague: Argo 1999, p. 358. ISBN 80-7203-116-3.

However, the conservative Central European burgher environment respected traditional hygienic customs and use of baths. Towards the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century baths began to flourish again, especially with an emphasis on the healing effect of cold baths. English fashion updated swimming and the importance of swimming pools and water sports for health. While methodological teaching of swimming focused on the needs of the army and was part of the military exercise, the first private swimming schools were founded in the former half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time city baths flourished again, especially use of natural mineral springs for fitness and regeneration of the organism. Visits to famous fashionable European spas offered wealthy burghers and nobility entertainment and therapy in one.<sup>4</sup>

At that period the first indoor swimming pools were built, for the burgher society wanted to have a chance to bath and swim in winter too, in modern spa houses meeting period hygienic and social needs. The luxurious spa architecture corresponded to the new concept of spa halls and allowed for combination of baths and dance. While in the summer the indoor pools were used for swimming, in winter the same pools were used for balls and concerts. A famous spa palace was built in Vienna by the Czech cloth worker František Moravec. He spent his wife's dowry for a house (in Marxergasse 17) in Vienna where he wanted to operate his own cloth making. As the business did not go well for him, he decided to use his house for the then fashionably new development, the Russian steam bath. The choice was a success. When the illness weakened maid of archduchess Sophia was cured after the steam cure of Mr. Moravec, the customers began to pour in. The spa palace was named after the archduchess (Sofienbad), reconstructed in 1838, reopened and in 1845 changed to a joint-stock company headed by František Moravec.

Even though Mr. Moravec got blind meanwhile, he was still able to prepare a grandiose reconstruction of his spa house pursuant to a project by August von Siccardsburg and Eduard van der Nül. The reconstructed spa house included a modern swimming pool and a hall, which, after its completion on 14 June 1846, became one of the largest warehouses in Vienna of the time. In winter the hall was used for concerts, burgher mask balls, but also for meetings and assemblies. The building could accommodate 2,300 visitors to a ball. Johann Strauss usually played the dance music. Rose balls became very famous. In the course of the ball each lady received a bouquet of roses with a lottery ticket inside. The traditional main prize was a golden female watch. Reconstructions and extensions of the spa continued and in 1899, pursuant to a design by architects Dehm and Olbricht the new front facade was built (facing Marxergasse street) in the art nouveau style. Following a renovation in 1948 the swimming pool lost its relevance and the hall began to be used for dance. Since 1986 the spa was rebuilt into a hotel. However, on 16 August 2001 the memorial building was destroyed by a big fire.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> DRBAL, C. Zdraví a zdravotní politika. [Health and healthcare policy] Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1996, p. 8 and following. Further data from the same source; PETRÁŇ, J. (ed.) *Počátky českého národního obrození 1770-1791. Společnosti a kultura v 70. – 90. letech 18. století* [Origins of Czech national revival 1770-1791. Societies and culture in 1870s – 1890s] Prague, 1990; PETRÁŇ, J. (ed.) *Dějiny hmotné kultury II, 1, 2* [History of material culture] Prague, 1995, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> GANSTER, I. *Tröpfenbad – Schwimmbad – Wellnessoase*. Wien: AV Astoria Druckzentrum, s. 12. ISSN 0043-5317.

Similar spa houses used for cultural and social purposes also existed in Prague and certainly represented a new, specific concept of architecture of European spa houses. Historic significance is ascribed to the building of St. Venceslas' Spa in the New Town of Prague (at the corner of Karlovo square and Resslova street). As a reflection of the revolutionary events in Italy and in France and initiated by the secret political club Repeal and radical democrats at their unapproved gathering on 11 March 1848 the legal and constitutional requirements of Czech bourgeoisie were formulated for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

The progress of modernisation, industrialisation and urban development was accompanied with civilisation transformations. As new industrial areas emerged, country people migration to labour colonies with poor hygiene and labour dormitories began. The poorly paid hard work in bad environment damaged health of the employed men and women. Child work began to be used more and more often. Insufficient catering, clothing, education, culture and overall low living standards of these numerous population groups reflected the existing socio-economic status of the society. Causes of death increasingly included infectious diseases, especially tuberculosis and child infections. The mean age of the population ranged around 50 years.

Under this situation it became clear that the state healthcare should focus on systematic prevention of infectious diseases, provision of basic medical care and hygiene. After pulling down the town walls the urban areas were modernised, including equipment with sewerage and water distribution systems for increased hygienic standards. Another hygienic measure was extension of the number of public baths and indoor pools equipped with numerous showers. Labour classes used these cheap public baths for the whole year for basic body hygiene.<sup>7</sup>

Schools and education system significantly contributed to implementation of hygienic measures of the state healthcare policy. The policy focused on preference of healthy lifestyle and hygienic habits. Healthcare education and habits were brought to the families of school children by the school pupils. Healthcare education deepened personal responsibility for own health state. Despite the certainly valuable contribution of charities it was in the first place teachers and their pedagogic influence that most significantly affected assertion of hygienic principles into everyday life.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> MAREČKOVÁ, M. *České právní a ústavní dějiny. Stručný přehled a dokumenty*. [Czech legal and constitutional history. Brief survey and documents] Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2006, p. 176. ISBN 80-244-1502-X.

<sup>7</sup> URBAN, O. K některým aspektům životního stylu českého měšťanstva v polovině 19. století. In *Město v české kultuře 19. století*. [on some aspects of lifestyle of Czech burghers in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century] In *Město v české kultuře 19. století*. [Town in Czech culture of 19<sup>th</sup> century] Prague, 1983, p. 36 n.; EFMERTOVÁ, M. *České země v letech 1848-1918*. [Czech lands in the years 1848-1918] Prague, 1998; LNĚNIČKOVÁ, J. *České země v době předbřeznové*. [Czech lands before March] Prague 1999.

<sup>8</sup> NIKLÍČEK, L.; MANOVÁ, I. Česká hygiena na přelomu 19. a 20. století [Czech hygiene at the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries] In *Dějiny vědy a techniky* [History of science and technology] 14, 1981, p. 146 and following. Further data from the same source; MAREČKOVÁ, M. Vliv učitelů a měšťanských elit na šíření zdravotních návyků ve východoslovenských městech raného novověku. [Influence of teachers and burgher elite on spreading of healthcare habits in East Slovakian towns of early modern age] In *Miscellany of works of Pedagogical Faculty of Masaryk University, Social Sciences no 21*. Brno: MU 2006, p. 14–15.

Finally let me summarise results of research focused on personal hygiene, use of baths and water not only for washing but also for body building and conditioning or as therapeutic means. Since early 19<sup>th</sup> century swimming became increasingly popular, with the result of opening of many public swimming pools and swimming schools. Since 1830s public swimming pools became accessible for women too and women learned to swim there. In relation to increasing hygienic and social demand of burghers spa was separated from indoor swimming pools and their specific architecture developed. Poor housing and hygienic conditions in the poor quarters resulted in the necessity to extend public baths with cheap showers. Schools spread education about hygiene as the necessary precondition of good health in the sense of the well known saying Hygiene – Half Health.

## Literature

- DRBAL, C. *Zdraví a zdravotní politika*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1996. ISBN 80-210-1466-0.
- DÜLMEN van, R. *Kultura a každodenní život v raném novověku*. Praha: Argo, 1999. ISBN 80-7203-116-3
- EFMERTOVÁ, M. *České země v letech 1848–1918*. Praha, 1998. ISBN 80-85983-47-8
- GANSTER, I. *Tröpfenbad – Schwimmbad – Wellnessoase*. Wien: AV Astoria Druckzentrum. ISSN 0043-5317
- LNĚNIČKOVÁ, J. *České země v době předbřeznové*. Praha, 1999. ISBN 80-85983-27-3.
- MAREČKOVÁ, M. *České právní a ústavní dějiny. Stručný přehled a dokumenty*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2006. ISBN 80-244-1502-X
- MAREČKOVÁ, M. Vliv učitelů a měšťanských elit na šíření zdravotních návyků ve východoslovenských městech raného novověku. In *Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, řada společenských věd č. 21*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2006, s. 14–15. ISBN 80-210-4002-5.
- NIKLÍČEK, L.; MANOVÁ, I. Česká hygiena na přelomu 19. a 20. století. *Dějiny vědy a techniky* 1981, 14, s. 146 n.
- PETRÁŇ, J. (ed.) *Dějiny hmotné kultury II, 1, 2*. Praha, 1995, 1997. ISBN 80-7184-086-62
- PETRÁŇ, J. (ed.) *Počátky českého národního obrození 1770-1791. Společnosti a kultura v 70. – 90. letech 18. století*. Praha, 1990.
- SELEDEC, W.; KRETSCHMER, H.; LAUSCHA, H. *Baden und Bäder in Wien*. Wien: Europa Verlag GesmbH, 1987. ISBN 3-203-50995-4
- URBAN, O. K některým aspektům životního stylu českého měšťanstva v polovině 19. století. In *Město v české kultuře 19. století*. Praha: Národní galerie v Praze, 1983.
- VÁŇOVÁ, R. a kol. *Výchova a vzdělání v českých dějinách. Díl IV, sv. 1. Problematika vzdělávacích institucí a školských reforem (obecné školství 1848-1939, střední školství a učitelské vzdělávání 1914-1939)*. Praha: Karolinum, 1992.
- WEIS, A. *Geschichte der Oesterreichischen Volksschulen I*. Prag, 1904.

## ČISTOTA PŮL ZDRAVÍ. ŠKOLA A PROMĚNY HYGIENICKÉHO STEREOTYPU V NOVOVĚKÉ SPOLEČNOSTI.

**Souhrn:** Problematika osobní hygieny, využívání lázní a vody nejen k čistotě, ale i k posilování a otužování těla či jako léčebného prostředku. Od počátku 19. století se začalo rozvíjet plavání, vznikaly veřejné plovárny a školy plavání. Od třicátých let 19. století byly zřizovány veřejné plovárny i pro ženy, kterým sloužily zejména k výuce plavání. V souvislosti s rostoucími hygienickými, ale i společenskými nároky měšťanstva se od poloviny 19. století v soukromých lázeňských budovách oddělovaly lázeňské prostory od zastřešených plováren a rozvinula se jejich specifická architektura. Špatné bytové a hygienické podmínky v chudinských čtvrtích vedly k nutnosti rozšiřovat veřejné lázně i se sprchami. Zejména prostřednictvím škol se šířila osvětová kampaň o čistotě jako nezbytné péči o vlastní zdravotní stav, tedy ve smyslu známého hesla čistota - půl zdraví.

**Klíčová slova:** osobní hygiena, hygienické podmínky, čistota, péče o zdravotní stav, lázně