



Botanic and Poetic Landscapes

A Reading of Two Persian Texts on Early Safavid Gardens

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Abstract

Existing scholarship on Persian gardens reveals a pattern of common interest in spatial layout, formal quality, and symbolic meaning. Gardens are often depicted as symmetrically laid out enclosures, as introverted places for hedonistic purposes, as passive spaces for contemplation, and as symbolically charged, earthly embodiments of Qur'anic paradise. Such depictions present Persian gardens as salubrious oases intended purely for repose and delight. This discourse has oversimplified the history, meaning and function of Persian gardens, which were dynamic venues serving multiple and complex purposes.

Against this background, the study attempts to shed new light on Persian gardens and landscapes through a fresh reading of two key Persian texts that provide historically grounded perspectives on the gardens' botanical functions and poetical meanings. The first text, *Irshād al-zirā'a* (Guidance on Agriculture), is a botanical manual offering extensive material on the science of agronomy and gardening as well as rare agricultural instructions regarding the laying out and planting of formal gardens, taking into account both garden aesthetics and the science of horticulture. The second text, *Jannāt-i 'adan* (Gardens of Eden), is a compilation of five poems composed in 1557 by Shah Tahmāsp's court poet and historian, Navīdī Shīrāzī, to celebrate the completion of the new imperial garden city of Qazvin.

The new reading of these texts shows how Persian gardens served multiple functions ranging from the most practical to the most poetic, how formal aesthetics and paradise symbolism played only marginal roles in their design and creation, and how different considerations contributed to the creation of desirable garden environments. Adopting a historical method of analysis and interpretation, the study examines examples of both existing and imagined sixteenth-century Safavid gardens, in order to support the reading of and excerpt translations from the selected texts.

The study paints a new picture of early Safavid gardens and their centrality as dynamic and adaptable places that fulfil the needs of their patrons, courtiers, harem members, visitors, and even the citizens of their respective cities. It brings to light overlooked factors that contributed directly or indirectly to garden form, structure and meaning, while reintroducing the Persian garden as an intersection where nature,

indigenous design, local cultural and social lifestyle, economic efficiency, power, patronage and dynastic politics meet.

Declaration

I, Zahra Ranjbari, hereby declare the following thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Introduction

Introduction

Research background, aims and significance

In the heart of the Middle East, Iran has a rich history of garden making and landscape design, and the region is distinguished by substantial palatial and urban landscapes. The Persian garden, as an integral and ideal structure, exhibits clearly the fusion of culture and nature. While being a good example of the consistent compatibility of humans with the surrounding environment, Persian gardens have long played a valuable role in the home, the court and the city. While most of the surviving evidence of Persian gardens dates back to later Islamic periods; there is still much to attest to the diversity and ubiquity of garden culture throughout the history of the region, evident in archaeological discoveries, visual representations and literary works with garden imagery.

More than seven decades of research has focused on Persian gardens in terms of meaning, form, structure and architectural performance.¹ This research has generated a common approach towards the environment described by the eminent historian of landscape architecture, Attilio Petruccioli, as: “the taming and glorification of nature enclosed within four walls, juxtaposed with the hostile wilds of the outside world.”² Many of these focused inquiries have defined Persian gardens (mostly elite formal examples) as introverted, enclosed spaces, geometrically laid out and divided into four quadrants by a biaxial symmetry, a sophisticated design for hedonistic activity and a passive space for contemplation.³

¹ Attention within international scholarship to Persian gardens initiated in the early twentieth century with archaeological site excavations by some western Iranologists and orientalists. See Arthur Pope and Phyllis Ackerman’s chapter on gardens in *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, regarded as one of the earliest published studies of the topic in 1964; Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013, 3.

² Attilio Petruccioli, “Rethinking the Islamic Garden.” In *Transformations of Middle Eastern Natural Environments, Legacies and Lessons*, eds. Jane Coppock and Joseph A. Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, 349.

³ *Ibid.*, 352.

Historically, garden tradition had already reached a high level of evolution by the time the royal gardens of Pasargadae, Persepolis and Susa were constructed in ancient Iran under the Achaemenids (330–550 BC). According to landscape and garden historian, Mahvash Alemi, the Achaemenid *Pairidaeza* (ancient Persian word from which the English term “paradise” is derived, literally meaning “walled garden”)⁴ embodied all the different elements of the Zoroastrian visionary landscape.⁵ The paradisiacal concept of royal or hunting parks continued during the Parthian and Sassanian eras, and was later shaped by the invasion of recently converted Muslim Arabs during the seventh century CE. Although the Qur’anic paradise differed from the Zoroastrian paradise, the Persian garden archetype continued to inspire the design of newly constructed Islamic landscapes.⁶ Whether it be the Zoroastrian *Pairidaeza* or the Qur’anic paradise, the Persian garden is by definition an enclosed, walled and gated plot of land, symmetrically ordered by a rectangular grid of shady pathways and canals of running water. The shade bearing groves of trees, beds of flowers and central pool are often centrally oriented towards a core structure, a pavilion, which is usually located at the intersection of the two main axes (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The Chihil Sotoūn garden pavilion: a Safavid Persian garden with its central pool and core structure. Seventeenth century, Isfahan, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

⁴ See Nader Ardalan, “Simultaneous Perplexity: The Paradise Garden as the Quintessential Visual Paradigm of Islamic Architecture and Beyond,” In *Understanding Islamic Architecture*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli and Khalil K. Pirani, 75-81. London: Routledge Curzon, 2013; Sussan Babaie, “Paradise Contained: Nature and Culture in Persian Gardens.” *The Studio Potter* 25, no.2 (1997): 10.

⁵ Mahvash Alemi, “Persian Gardens and Courtyards, An Approach to the Design of Contemporary Architecture.” In *Understanding Islamic Architecture*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli and Khalil K. Pirani, 75-81.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

The idea of an enclosure as protection against the external threat of a harsh, arid climate has been contrasted with the idea of geometry as protection against internal chaos, in order to present the garden as a place with an entirely different experience. As architect and theorist, Nader Ardalan, highlights: “an ideal reflection of the cosmos, a utopia which seeks to foster order and harmony in the beholder.”⁷

Not only in Iran but also throughout the entire Islamic world, this sharp separation between the two sides of the boundaries of the garden, evoking a perception of sensory delight, symbolically recalls the idyllic image of the garden of paradise. The garden, in which the joyful pleasure of freshness, greenness, aromas and flavours are promised, is a reward for the righteous (Figure 2).⁸



Figure 2. The idea of enclosure reflected in a sixteenth century Persian miniature, from the “*Haft Awrang*” (Seven Thrones) of Jāmi, Khorasan, 1565 (Source: <http://www.spongobongo.com/>)

However, paradisiacal interpretations of Persian gardens have been widely criticised. In such interpretations, the garden is argued to be a sacred salubrious oasis, intended utterly

⁷ Ardalan, “Simultaneous Perplexity”, 10.

⁸ The Qur’anic verse “This is the Paradise which the righteous have been promised: it is watered by running streams, eternal is its fruits, and eternal is its shades. Such is the reward of the righteous.” In *The Qur’an*, translated by N.J. Dawood. New York: Penguin Books, 1974. Sura 13:35, 146.

for the purposes of repose, leisure and delight. This emphasis tends to oversimplify or overshadow other types of activities which took place in the gardens, activities that were instead dynamic and eventful. A range of sources, including historical texts, travel accounts, literary works, visual sources, archaeological documents and administrative records, reveal the varied roles and functions served by Persian gardens throughout the history of the region.⁹

By employing functional and structural analyses of early modern Persian garden examples, the main aim of this study is to explain the function, meaning and socio-economic role of Persian gardens beyond the singular concept of Islamic earthly paradise. To support this approach, the research attempts to shed new light on Persian landscapes in order to provide a fresh understanding of garden history, and offer new insights regarding Persian-Islamic garden culture, features, form, meaning, mechanism and productivity within the Safavid context. This aim is achieved by analysing related historical sources, including Persian agricultural science, poetry and literature.

The study principally focuses on studying two key early-sixteenth century Persian sources: *Irshād al-zirā'a* (Guidance on Agriculture) and *Jannāt-i 'adan* (Gardens of Eden). These sources enable a visual interpretation of the natural milieu, agricultural characteristics, botanical progress and landscape development, as well as defining and thus better understanding the meanings and functions associated with gardens and landscapes in one of the most distinguished periods of Persian-Islamic landscape and garden making history. One of the fundamental aims of this study is to put forward a plausible argument as to how the gardens were experienced and perceived aesthetically, semantically and spatially by the people who designed, built, cultivated, used and even imagined them, through an examination of contemporaneous historical accounts. Through a fresh reading of these accounts, the study aims to shift the focus from a predominantly religious perspective to a poetic-botanic perspective that allows Safavid agricultural, poetry, politics, economy, and aesthetics to be foregrounded in understanding the complexity of the garden's morphology and function.

Not denying the important role religion (theological and mystical thoughts) played in shaping the garden tradition, the study focuses on long overlooked factors which have

⁹ Jim Wescoat, Jr., "The Islamic Garden: Issues for Landscape Research." In *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1, edited by Attilo Petruccioli. Rome: Carucci Editions, 1986, 12.

contributed to garden form, structure and meaning. It reintroduces the Persian garden as an intersection of tamed nature, indigenous design, local cultural and social lifestyle, economic efficiency, power, patronage and dynastic politics. The study shows the ways in which Persian gardens were considered, from both botanic and poetic perspectives, as an integrated aesthetic and productive agricultural and architectural enterprise.

Sources and method

Research for this study is based on two sets of relevant sources: primary and secondary. Primary sources are historical Persian texts of the Safavid period, most important of which is the early Safavid manual of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* by Abū Nasrī Hiravī (late fifteenth-early sixteenth century), and the unique collection of poems of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* by ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī (1515–1580). These texts are complemented by other Persian accounts and compilations, in prose and poetry, from the early sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.¹⁰ Secondary sources comprise a large body of contemporary academic studies, in Persian and non-Persian languages, of Persian Safavid gardens and landscapes. The study examines both poetry and scientific literature as a unique lens to interpret Persian gardens (i.e. their meaning, function and socio-economic role) in the course of Persian history. The early decades after the rise of the Safavid period represent an immensely rich chapter in architecture and garden making in early-modern Iran.

Primary sources

The first key source for this study, *Irshād al-zirā‘a* (Guidance on Agriculture), is a botanical manual on the science of agronomy and brief agricultural instructions for layout and planting a formal garden.¹¹ Written and completed in 1515 in Herat, eastern Khurasan, at the time of political crisis and agrarian decline, following the Uzbek invasions of the Khurasan region, it reflects the Persian love and enthusiasm for gardening

¹⁰ Apart from *Jannāt-i ‘adan* and the poet’s other collections of lyrical poems, Navīdī wrote two other books in Persian prose. See *Takmilat al-Akhhbār* on the history of the early Safavid age, and *Sarīh al-Mulk*, a record with descriptions of *Waqf* monuments, buildings and other estates in Ardabil. These two historical texts will be considered among valuable and primary sources on the Safavid history and culture. ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhhbār: Tārīkh-i Šafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hījrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosein Navāii (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990-1991). See also *The Baburnāma, Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, edited by Wheeler M. Thackston. New York: The Modern Library, 2002.

¹¹ Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” edited by Muhammad Mushiri (Tehran University, 1996).

and cultivation. The author, Qāsim Ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, documented an advanced agronomic system endangered by harsh change in both leadership and climate.¹² According to the author, the practical information which forms the main body of the work had been gathered from local experienced peasants and professionals,¹³ and the manual is dedicated to the first Safavid ruler, Shah Isma‘īl, who had already gained power over the Khurasan area and greater Iran for two years after 1513. Containing excellent examples of firsthand gardening experience, botanical practice and cultivation methods, crop storage, land preparation and management, horticulture and arboriculture, this record is evidence of the chief accomplishments of the recently declined Timurids and their highly developed state of agronomy and science of agriculture.¹⁴

Abū Nasrī had produced a unique record of a critical period in history, when the transition of power between two great empires led to certain chaos and instability in political and economic terms. This resulted in the handing over of the legacy of the former authority to the incoming rulership, while portraying praiseworthy attitudes toward the human-made environment with respect to the earth and cosmos by means of instructive agricultural literature and scholarship (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Iran and central Asia under the Timurids during the fifteenth century (Source: <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org>)

¹² D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*, 37.

¹³ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

¹⁴ Maria E. Subtelny, “The Timurid Legacy: A Reaffirmation and a Reassessment.” In *Cahiers d’Asie Centrale*, 3/4 (1997): 9-19.

What is most important about this early sixteenth century treatise is that in contrast to other similar scientific agronomical literature, which rarely defines the real appearance of an actual garden or its design and arrangement, the last chapter of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* demonstrates how to lay out and cultivate a *chāhārbāgh*, the term used for the geometrical cross-axial garden scheme, considered to be the most prominent Persian garden archetype since ancient times. Although the chapter’s focus is mainly on making an ideal cultivated garden and provides directions for accurate planting of a *chāhārbāgh*, rather than offering detailed material on architectural layout or landscape design, this information made the manual a matchless record of garden design, whereby aesthetic considerations and beneficial productivity were equally appreciated.¹⁵

About forty-five years after *Irshād al-zirā‘a* was completed, Shah Tahmāsp (b.1514, r. 1524–1576), the second ruler of the recently established Safavid empire, decided to move the capital from Tabriz northwest of Iran to a more central region, the city of Qazvin, founded on a secure site distanced from Uzbek and Ottoman pressure in 1544.¹⁶ As a royal custom, in celebration of this auspicious event, the court poet and historian, ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, was commanded by the king to compose an encomium in admiration of the newly built royal garden complex, which was called Sa‘ādat ābād (Abode of happiness) and located north of the existing city of Qazvin. The result of this regal commission was a unified compilation of five poems titled *Jannāt-i ‘adan* (Gardens of Eden), which began in 1558 and coincided with the completion of the garden city. The poems were completed and presented to the court in 1559.¹⁷

Today, little remains of the imperial complex, except the famous mansion of Arshikhānah and the entrance gate of ‘Āli Qāpū. However, the garden complex is documented in the main body of the unique poems of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, the focus of this study (Figure 4).

¹⁵ D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*, 38.

¹⁶ Colin P. Mitchell, “Tahmāsp I: Second Ruler of the Safavid Dynasty,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2009.

¹⁷ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār: Tārīkh-i Šafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosain Navāii. (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990). 266.



Figure 4. The Safavid gate of 'Āli Qāpū was the main entrance to the imperial gardens of Sa'ādat ābād, located today in the heart of the old city of Qazvin (Source: <http://www.citypedia.ir>)

According to the author's introduction, the main purpose for composing the encomium is "To describe the realm of Ja'far ābād" under the command of the King.¹⁸ Thus the poems feature the dynamic descriptions of the garden city of Sa'ādat ābād and its urban, architectural, botanical and cultural components, which have all but vanished. The poems belong to an Indo-Persian poetic genre which celebrated new cities and glorified their founder with special emphasis on architecture and gardens.¹⁹

Although the work, as a unified compilation, described the Sa'ādat ābād garden city overall as a narration, each part was devoted to a special subject. In short, Navīdī organizes a wealth of descriptive data in five volumes, independent in theme and narrative, yet unified as a whole; it is unsurpassed by other *khamasa* writers' works.²⁰ In his innovative way, Navīdī assigns a specific natural seasonal theme to each volume in a manner that depicts the garden as both an entity with a material spatial existence and as a performance unfolding in time.²¹

¹⁸ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-'i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974, verse: 94.

¹⁹ The genre and poetic structure of Navīdī's compilation is discussed at length by Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in 'Abdī Bayk Šīrāzī's Gardens of Eden." *Eurasian Studies* 2 (2003): 1-29.

²⁰ Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 5. Navīdī emulates the style of Nizāmi Ganjavi (1141–1209), a celebrated romantic epic poet, in the context of Persian literature. His work is characterised by colloquial language and realism.

²¹ D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*, 6.

Composed by a scholar of the court who had accompanied the king in his military campaigns to neighbouring countries, Navīdī’s long collection of “Gardens of Eden” (including 4135 verses), can be considered the most reliable source, picturing the newly established garden city of Qazvin, in its splendid days (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The pavilion of Arshī Khānah which today is called Chihil Sotoūn, one of the few surviving mansions of the early sixteenth century imperial gardens of *Sa’ādat ābād* located in Qazvin, central Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

Navīdī’s extensive poetry belongs to a panegyric and hyperbolic genre of descriptive expressions, yet not all is fictional and imaginative. His work provides us with detailed images of the capital’s garden city and its noble architectural elements, such as government and administrative buildings, royal residential palaces, private gardens and mansions belonging to dignitaries and courtiers, urban elements and open public areas, ornamental decorations, interior wall paintings and even information about the general layout of the garden, its pools, basins and water canals as well as its vegetation and landscaping, capturing both material and metaphorical matters.

A critical study of these poems underscores how the garden has always played a fundamental role in any historical period. In fact, from Navīdī’s perspective the allegorical and physical relationships within the garden, its components and its context, reflect various meanings. The garden is a microcosm containing the time and historical proceedings, aesthetic perceptions, symbolic meanings, man-made objects, natural-

seasonal elements, artistic-cultural values, modes of settlement, politics and bureaucracy, and finally the image of the king as the concept of rulership and patronage. Elucidation of the poet's words can shed new light on what gardens and their supplements meant to rulers, court and harem members, servants and visitors.

Although both texts of *Irshād al-zirā'a* and *Jannāt-i 'adan* are referred to in secondary studies, they have not been studied together and cross-examined as two key sources on Persian gardens of the Safavid period, except for an article by the architectural historians, Mohammad Gharipour and Manu Sobti, to be discussed later in this chapter.²² However, alongside these primary sources, there are other informative chronicles for this period, such as *Takmilat al-akhbār* also by Navīdī,²³ as well as the famous autobiography of *Baburnāma* written by the grandson of Timur (1336–1405), the great Mughal emperor, Zahir al-Ddin Muhammad Babur (1483–1530).²⁴

Secondary sources

As part of a general discovery of the east, western attention towards Islamic culture and landscape began as early as the seventeenth century.²⁵ As the landscape architecture historian, Attilio Petruccioli, states: “much of this oriental contagion was born out of pure excitement for the new and unknown, based on a few exotic-looking objects and the enchanting, passionate accounts of travellers upon their return from the east.”²⁶

However, the modern wave of scholarly study of Persian gardens started with wider investigations by art historians, western orientologists and archaeologists who excavated

²² Manu Sobti and Mohammad Gharipour, “The Hues of Paradise, Examining Color Design Layout in the Persian Garden.” In *And Diverse Are Their Hues, Color in Islamic Art and Culture, The Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art*, edited by Jonathan M. Bloom and Sheila S. Blair. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011.

²³ Another useful account along with *Jannāt-i 'adan* is *Takmilat Al-akhbār*, which is also written by Navīdī. This prose text is about the history of the Safavids from the beginning, since the reign of Shah Ismail until 978/1570. Despite its narrative style concerned with important historical events, for example, the role of commanders, rulers, grandees in these events and their relations with the court and the kings, this record provides valuable information on the critical role of the gardens and their place as the main setting for traditional, cultural and political rituals as well as royal affairs. ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār: Tārīkh-i Ṣafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosain Navāi. (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990).

²⁴ *The Baburnāma, Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, edited by Wheeler M. Thackston. New York: The Modern Library, 2002.

²⁵ See Elio Christoph Brancaforte and Sonja Brentjes, “From Rhubarb to Rubies: European Travels to Safavid Iran (1550-1700); Houghton Library. The Lands of the Sophi: Iran in Early Modern European Maps (1550-1700).” *Harvard Map Collection, Pusey Library (1550-1700)*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard College Library, 2012.

²⁶ Petruccioli, “Rethinking the Islamic Garden,” 350.

ancient sites in Iran during the early decades of the twentieth century.²⁷ Art and architectural historians, Arthur Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, and archaeologists, Ernest Herzfeld and David Stronach are credited for their first published works and historic research on Persian gardens.²⁸ Those early studies paved the way for later comprehensive research on Persian gardens, pavilions and their development procedure in the garden making history of the region. Later in 1962, the architectural historian, Donald Wilber in *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions*, a book devoted to introducing Persian gardens, presented the most famous gardens in different regions and cities of old Persia.²⁹ Although he did not discuss the origin of Persian gardens or the etymology of common terms, Wilber's monograph was a notable introduction to the development of gardens from Timurid times, that is, from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries.

In 1976, the Islamic art historian, Richard Ettinghausen, in his introduction to "The Islamic Garden," re-classified the Persian garden within a larger category he called the "Islamic garden."³⁰ He discussed the concept of "Islamic gardens" as an investigative category, of which Persian gardens were regarded as both a precedent and subset. In the same book, the architectural historian, Ralph Wilson, in his chapter on "The Persian garden, *Bāgh* and *Chāhārbāgh*," attempted to analyse the typology and principals of Persian gardens through the history of Persia's garden making.³¹

Later, scholarly discussions on Persian gardens continued to open debates on the location of gardens and the connection between gardens and the wider urban fabric. The

²⁷ Mohammed Gharipour, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia." *Garden History* 39, 2 (2011), 3.

²⁸ See A.U. Pope, A. Daneshvari, and J. Gluck, eds. "Garden." In *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present: Prehistoric Times to the End of the Sassanian Empire*. Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2005; A.U. Pope, A. Daneshvari, and J. Gluck, eds., "Tents and Pavilions," in *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present: Prehistoric times to the end of the Sassanian Empire* (Mazda Publishers, 2005); David Stronach, "The Royal Garden at Pasargadae: Evolution and Legacy." In *Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalis: Miscellanea in Honorem Louis Vanden Berghe*, vol. 1, edited by H. Meyer, 475-502. Ghent, 1989; David Stronach, "The Garden as a Political Statement: Some Case Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium BC." *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 4 (1990); David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963*, vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); David Stronach, "Parterres and Stone Watercourses at Pasargadae: Notes on the Achaemenid Contribution to Garden Design." *Journal of Garden History*, (1994):14; Ernest Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient East: Archaeological Studies Presented in the Lowell Lectures at Boston*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941; Ernest Herzfeld, *The Persian Empire: Studies in Geography and Ethnography of the Ancient Near East, edited from Posthumous Papers by Gerold Walser*. Wiesbaden, 1968.

²⁹ Donald Wilber, *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions*. Tokyo: Charles Tuttle Co, 1962.

³⁰ *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B. MacDougall and Richard Ettinghausen. Michigan: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1976.

³¹ Ralph Pinder Wilson, "The Persian Garden: *Bāgh* and *Chāhārbāgh*." In *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976.

architect and geographer, James Wescoat, introduced a new line of enquiry, wherein he applied the comparative study of functional and social aspects of Islamic landscapes, while scholar Magdy Tewfik Saad's works presented a fresh perspective on the placement of gardens of the Muslim world beyond the boundaries of cities and their complex connection with urban life.³² During the early 1990s, the main contributors to the field of Islamic garden history were art historians, Bernard O'Kane and Lisa Golombek. Their work discussed the role of Persian gardens as places for royal encampments and their impact on cultural traditions, such as pastoral nomadism in Timurid central Asia and Safavid Iran, on garden development, causing gardens to shift between royal residences and imperial encampments.³³

Concentrating on the symbolic, spiritual and hedonistic aspects of Perso-Islamic gardens and their chronological development throughout the history of the region, several independent inquiries explored the origin, design, typology, layout, aesthetic and mystical readings of gardens in local contexts.³⁴ In more recent research on Persian gardens, published by a group of three local architectural scholars, Mehdi Khansari, M. Reza Moghtader and Minouch Yavari, titled *The Persian Garden, Echoes of Paradise*, the authors applied a conventional chronological timeline to explore and visualise the Persian gardens in history and heritage during ancient, Timurid, Safavid and Moghul periods as well as early modern developments in the nineteenth century.³⁵ However, many of these studies continued to focus on formal and aesthetical aspects of gardens without considering their multiple functions in secular, cultural contexts.³⁶

³² James Wescoat Jr., "The Islamic Garden: Issues for Landscape Research." *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre*, 1 (1986): 10-19; Magdy Tewfik Saad, "Traditional Urban Gardens in Identified Muslim Environments." *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre*, 1 (1986): 28-31.

³³ Bernard O'Kane, "From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design." *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 249-269; Lisa Golombek, "The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives." *Muqarnas* 12, ed. Gulru Necipoglu (1995): 137-147.

³⁴ Penelope Hobhouse, Erica Hunningher and Jerry Harper, *The Gardens of Persia*. Kales Press, 2004; Elizabeth B. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden: In Persia and Mughal India*. London: Scholar Press 1980; Mehdi Khansari, M.R. Moghtader and Minouch Yavari, *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise*. Mage Publishers, 2004; Yves Porter and Arthur Thévenart, *Palaces and Gardens of Persia*. Flammarion, 2003; Sussan Babaie, "Paradise Contained: Nature and Culture in Persian Gardens." *The Studio Potter* 25, no.2 (1997):10-13; Nader Ardalan, "Simultaneous Perplexity: The Paradise Garden as the Quintessential Visual Paradigm of Islamic Architecture and Beyond." In *Understanding Islamic Architecture*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli and Khalil K. Pirani, 9-17. London: Routledge, Curzon, 2002.

³⁵ Mehdi Khansari, M. Reza Moghtader and Minouch Yavari, *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise*. Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 2004.

³⁶ See John Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise: The History and Design of the Great Islamic Gardens*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987; Yves Porter and Arthur Thévenart, *Palaces and Gardens of Persia*. Michigan, Flammarion, 2003; Penelope Hobhouse, *The Gardens of Persia*, edited by Erica Hunningher.

Recent contributions, however, have introduced a significant shift in focus in this field, shedding light on material utility, pragmatic aspects and functional patterns of these gardens. These include the works of landscape historians, Fairchild Ruggles, Michel Conan, Mahvash Alemi and Mohammad Gharipour. Ruggles' book *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* remains one of the first publications in the field that drew attention to other essential factors behind the creation of Islamic gardens, such as irrigation and agriculture.³⁷ Conan's edited volume, *Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity*, contained several related articles on dynamic and practical aspects of the gardens, including Alemi's paper "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy," which addressed the different cultural, religious and political ritual and reception that occurred in these gardens, and discussed how their design and layout could be affected by various practices or events.³⁸

Gharipour, in his recently published book, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*, explored and analysed the unification of Persian gardens and their pavilions, and their reflection in history, poetry, Islamic and pre-Islamic literature and arts. This is a significant new contribution in that it focuses on the social, political and economic aspects of these gardens and pavilions, key figures and patronage behind their design and construction, including the relationship between gardens and their surrounding urban environment. Gharipour compares three types of documents – poetry and literature, Persian arts, and accounts by travellers and historians – to uncover symbolic, metaphorical and historic importance of the gardens in the Persian tradition, from the early Zoroastrians to the sixteenth century.³⁹ In an earlier article, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure," Gharipour emphasized the multifunctionality of medieval Persian gardens, and the various roles and functions they served by examining various historical accounts and chronicles.⁴⁰

Kales Press, 2004; Vita Sackville West, "Persian Gardens," In *The Legacy of Persia*, edited by Arthur John Arberry. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.

³⁷ D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

³⁸ Mahvash Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy." In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*, 113-138. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007.

³⁹ Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts* London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.

⁴⁰ Mohammad Gharipour, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia." *Journal of Garden History* 39, no. 3 (2011): 249-262.

Another important contribution is Azadeh Shahcheraghi's volume on Persian gardens, "*Paradigm-hāy-i Pardīs*" (Paradise Paradigms).⁴¹ This study offered a broad review of Persian gardens in past and contemporary Iranian culture, focusing on architectural and urban planning functions as well as their role in Iranian traditional and modern arts. The author revealed new ideas on the architectural order of the enclosed Persian garden with its visual, mystical and material factors reflected in contemporary architecture. She concluded that the re-creation and reconstruction of the Persian garden in a contemporary context is feasible.

Studies of Primary Sources

The two main primary sources identified above have been the subject of scholarly studies by several contemporary landscape and literature historians, who produced a number of useful studies on these key reference texts.⁴²

Despite its importance as a key source on premodern botanical sciences, only a few Persian scholars have shown interest in *Irshād al-zirā'a*. The famous Persian historian and iconic figure in the field of Persian studies, Iraj Afshar, in his bibliography of the most important texts on agriculture in the Persian language,⁴³ has introduced this treatise among a list of existing Persian manuscripts on agronomy as: "The most famous book of the traditional agriculture."⁴⁴ Although Afshar's study does not reveal much information about the context of the treatise, and instead discusses the current editions of the text and available manuscripts in and out of Iran, it provides some useful information about the different versions of the published editions of the original manuscript. Mohammad Mushiri's work is arguably the most reliable and complete, and formed the basis for this

⁴¹ Azadeh Shahcheraqi, *Paradigm-hāy-i Pardīs*. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Jahād-i dānishgāhī, 2010.

⁴² See Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013; Mahvash Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy", 113-138; Mahvash Alemi, "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*, edited by Stephen Bann, 95-114. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2009; Mohammed Gharipour, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia." *Garden History* 39, 2 (2011): 249-262; Maria E. Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh: The Evidence from a Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual." In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli, 110-128. Brill, 1997; Maria E. Subtelny, "A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context: The *Irshād al-zirā'a* in Late Timurid and Early Safavid Khurasan." *Studia Iranica* 22 (1993): 167-217.

⁴³ Iraj Afshar, "Fihristnāma-i ahamm-i mutūn-i kishāvarzi dar zabān-i Farsi." *Āyanda* 8/10 (Tehran, 1983): 686-94.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 690.

study of the first original text, the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*. Apart from Mushiri’s introduction and a few other fragmented studies referring to the text, to my knowledge there exists no major Persian study of *Irshād al-zirā‘a*. English studies of the text do exist, however, produced in recent decades by orientalists and landscape architecture historians. The brief study of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* by landscape historian, Jorgen Jakobi, is among of the first contemporary studies of the manual.⁴⁵ In his brief analysis of the treatise, he compares the text and its contents to other, similar Persian and non-Persian agricultural literature.⁴⁶ In 1993, medieval landscape architecture historian, Maria Subtelny, offered her analysis of the text in its Timurid agricultural context,⁴⁷ followed by comprehensive studies of the Timurid period.⁴⁸ Subtelny’s significant contributions explored the transformation of the nomadic empire of Timur into a sedentary society based on the Perso-Islamic archetype by focusing on the reign of the last Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā, and his agricultural policy. In another study on Timurid landscapes, Subtelny traced one of the most important figures of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās, landscape architect of Sultan Husayn’s court, and his background as a member of a noble family of Timurid landscape architects.⁴⁹

The *Irshād al-zirā‘a* has also been discussed in several other independent studies by scholars and historians such as Mahvash Alemi, Ralph Pinder Wilson, Kristoffer Damgaard and Fairchild Ruggles, who have referred to or examined the text mainly to discuss the development of the *chāhārbāgh* archetype, its symbolic meaning and physical layout in the context of the Timurid and Mughal empires.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Jurgen Jakobi, “Agriculture between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience: The “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*” of Qāsim B. Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī.” In *Timurid Art and Culture*, edited by Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny, 201-208. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

⁴⁶ According to Jurgen Jacobi, there is also an unpublished study of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* treatise in a Ph.D. dissertation. This thesis which is not available for consideration due to the language (French) is based on Najm al-Dawla’s edition, which lacks the original fifty-two pages of the introduction of the text and the last chapter on the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* layout. See A. A. Seyed-Yacoubi, “Traduction française et étude du traité agronomique persan: ‘Ilm é zeraé v félahé’ (Contribution à l’étude de la langue française).” Ph.D. diss., University of Paris Sorbonne, 1968).

⁴⁷ Maria E. Subtelny, “A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context: the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* in Late Timurid and Early Safavid Khurasan. *Studia Iranica* 22 (1993): 167-217.

⁴⁸ Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*. Brill’s Inner Asian Library, 2007; Maria E. Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh: The Evidence from a Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli, 110-128. Brill, 1997.

⁴⁹ Maria Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture: Further Notes to A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context.” *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995): 19-60.

⁵⁰ Mahvash Alemi, “*Chāhārbāgh*,” in *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* (1966), 38-45; Ralph Pinder Wilson, “The Persian Garden, *Bāgh* and *Chāhārbāgh*.” In *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen. Washington D.C.:

Landscape theorists, Manu Sobti and Mohammad Gharipour, in their co-authored article “The Hues of Paradise, Examining Colour Design Layout in the Persian Garden,” examined both original texts of this study.⁵¹ Focusing on reconstructing the experience of the Persian garden environment, Sobti and Gharipour examined both manuals of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* and *Jannāt-i ‘adan* for understanding the usage of colour pattern within the landscaped environment, and how the arrangement of plants, flowers, fruits, and design elements may have potentially been based on a principal ‘colour’ masterplan.

Apart from some scattered Persian studies referring to poetic compilations in Persian scholarship, Ehsan Eshraqi’s two short articles on *Jannāt-i ‘adan* can be considered among the few serious scholarly readings of the poetic collection of Navīdī Shīrāzī. Eshraqi used Navīdī’s poems to piece together the murals and paintings that adorned the walls of the palaces of Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin. He offered the idea of Shah Tahmāsp’s contribution to the drawing of some of those wall paintings along with the best artists of that time.⁵² He also undertook another study of Navīdī’s work to reconstruct the general layout of Sa‘ādat ābād garden, using the information from Navīdī’s poems of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*.⁵³ In collaboration with Mehrzad Parhizkari, Eshraqi recently edited and published, for the first time in Iran, Navīdī five poems in a single volume with a brief introduction by the editors.⁵⁴

Literary scholar Paul Losensky’s valuable study of Navīdī’s poetic collection presents significant analysis of this early Safavid source.⁵⁵ Losensky’s study discusses mainly the poetic and literary qualities of Navīdī’s work, as well as its genre and structural patterns. Although it does not examine architectural and landscape aspects, it remains an informative study of the compilation and classification of the urban-topographical genre of Persian poetry during the early sixteenth century. In his study, Losensky briefly

Dumbarton Oaks, 1976; Kristoffer Damgaard, “The Paradisical Garden: Tracing the Timurid Chāhārbāgh.” *DSCA Journal* 1 (Copenhagen, 2005): 29-38; D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

⁵¹ Manu Sobti and Mohammad Gharipour, “The Hues of Paradise: Examining Color Design Layout in the Persian Garden.” In *And Diverse Are Their Hues, Color in Islamic Art and Culture, The Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium on Islamic Art*, edited by Jonathan M. Bloom and Sheila S. Blair. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011.

⁵² Ehsan Eshraqi, “Towsif-i Naghāshihāye Emārat-i Dowlatkhāneh Safavi dar ash‘ār-i Abdi Bayg Navīdī.” *Farhang* 71 (Tehran, 2009): 1-13.

⁵³ Ehsan Eshraqi, “Towsif-i Dowlatkhāneh va bāgh-hāye Safavi dar Manzūmehāye Abdi Bayg Navīdī, Shā‘er-i dōwrān-i Shah Tahmāsp I.” *Farhang* 68 (Tehran, 2008): 41-58.

⁵⁴ *Jannāt-i ‘adan, ‘Abdī Bayk Shīrāzī*, edited by Ehsan Eshraqi and Mehrzad Parhizkari. Tehran: Sokhan, 2016.

⁵⁵ Paul Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in ‘Abdī Bayk Shīrāzī’s Gardens of Eden.” *Eurasian Studies* 2 (2003): 1-29.

reviewed Navīdī's poems and proposed the time–space framework for the composition of *Jannāt-i 'adan*'s five volumes with reference to seasonal patterns. Presenting a brief overview of the content of each volume, Losensky also provides translations of some verses to compare the structure of Navīdī's poetry with the genre to which it belongs.

Landscape historian, Mahvash Alemi, in several scholarly articles presented insightful analyses of *Jannāt-i 'adan*. In addition to her noteworthy contributions to Safavid garden typology and its functional classification, she examined Navīdī's poetry in her article "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy," wherein she emphasized the political function of Qazvin Sa'ādat ābād garden and its major role in symbolizing the king's power.⁵⁶ She drew attention to the political and celebratory uses of gardens in the early Safavid period by analysing Navīdī's poems and other related historical and pictorial documents. She also explained how the design of Safavid gardens in Persia could be understood with respect to the practices that occurred in the early stages of the Safavids in Qazvin, as well as later in Isfahan during the reign of Shah Abbas. In her contribution to the recently published book, *Interlacing Words and Things*, Alemi specifically examined Navīdī's poems and highlighted the multiple "things" that were assembled in Persian gardens and how this multiplicity produced unity.⁵⁷ She discussed the different functions and names, the metaphorical and cosmological aspects, and different elements and events in the gardens, which she gleaned from Navīdī's descriptions. She also presented a detailed picture of Qazvin's Sa'ādat ābād garden, reconstructed from western travellers' accounts. Alemi concluded that gardens lead to delight in the presence of the idea of creation: "The garden is a place with an ontological potential and does not represent essence, even in a symbolic way. Only through the imaginal activity of a true believer whose heart mirrors God, can the garden be perceived as a mirror of the creation."

Considering the above studies of the two key sources used in this research, the need remains for a more in-depth study of garden history in specific geographical and local contexts. Such an in-depth study must at once make use of and complement the above studies, while shedding light on aspects long neglected by the generalized symbolic interpretation of the "Islamic paradise." This study addresses this need.

⁵⁶ Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy," 110.

⁵⁷ Mahvash Alemi, "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*, edited by Stephen Bann, 95-114. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Research scope, limitations and contributions

In her insightful studies, Ruggles has argued that the emphasis in landscape studies on extant early gardens can lead to an unsound understanding of historic garden culture. This is mainly due to the common tendency of interpreting current visible surviving gardens as a continuation and accurate representation of bygone garden traditions.⁵⁸ Consequently, analysis of existing gardens, which are not archeologically examined, is inevitable while most garden elements, whether architectural or botanical, may have undergone significant change or been replaced by modern features over time. Equally distorting is the heavy reliance on travel accounts by European merchants and ambassadors whose perception of the garden was heavily filtered by their completely different taste in landscape or spatial composition (Figure 6).⁵⁹

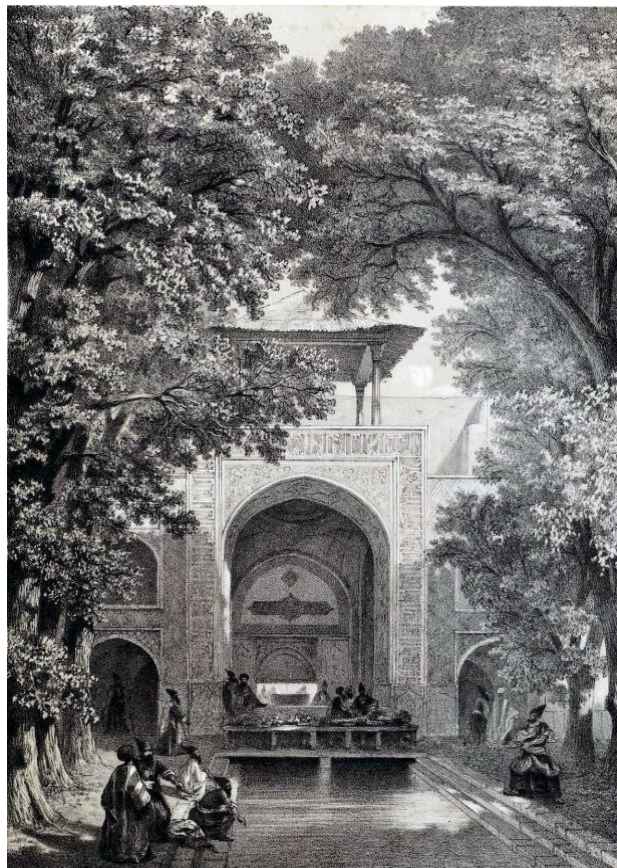


Figure 6. Interior garden of Madrasa of Shah Sultan Husayn by Eugène Flandin, French painter and architect, Isfahan, 1840 (Source: *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851)

⁵⁸ D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*, Preface, x.

⁵⁹ Jim, Jr. Wescoat, “The Islamic Garden: Issues for Landscape Research”, 12.

Taking these reservations into account, the scope of this study is limited to Persian gardens as depicted and discussed in primary Persian sources during the Safavid period. As the key primary sources of this study deal with two contrasting aspects of garden-making culture, the “scientific” practice of agriculture and poetic descriptions and appreciation of landscape, the scope for discussion has been restricted to unveiling and therefore understanding botanic and poetic aspects of Safavid gardens in their historical settings. The main contributions of this study lie in the ways in which two primary Persian sources, seemingly different in nature and focus, have been brought to bear on the reading of Safavid landscape history. Through a new unveiling of the botanic and poetic aspects of Safavid gardens, a better, historically-grounded understanding of Persian gardens is achieved.

Persian gardens and their legacy continue to be celebrated in contemporary international scholarship.⁶⁰ Temporally, this study with its focus on early Safavid gardens and landscapes of early modern Iran, extends from the early to mid-sixteenth century, covering the respective reign of the first two Safavid rulers, Shah Isma‘īl I (reign 1501–1524) and his son Shah Tahmāsp I (reign 1524–1576). Hirāvi’s *Irshād al-zirā‘a* was written in 1515, while Navīdī’s *Jannāt-i ‘adan* was completed in 1560. Geographically, the study covers the region extending between the two main centres of Safavid rule, Herat in eastern Khurasan and Qazvin in central Iran.

The importance of Persian gardens resonates in various efforts dedicated to the documentation, preservation and restoration of diverse garden types and their attendant

⁶⁰ A.U. Pope, A. Daneshvari and J. Gluck, eds. *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present: Prehistoric Times to the End of the Sassanian Empire*. Mazda Publishers, 2005; Penelope Hobhouse, Erica Hunningher and Jerry Harper, *The Gardens of Persia*. Kales Press, 2004; Mehdi Khansari, M.R. Moghtader and Minouch Yavari, *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise* Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 2004; Yves Porter and Arthur Thévenart, *Palaces and Gardens of Persia*. Flammarion, 2003; Donald Newton Wilber, *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions*. Dumbarton Oaks, 1979; Ralph Pinder Wilson, “The Persian Garden, Bāgh and Chāhār-bāgh.” In *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen. Dumbarton Oaks, 1976; Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013; Mahvash Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity*, 113-138. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007; Mahvash Alemi, “The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilio Petruccioli, 72-96. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997; Heidi Walcher, “Between Paradise and Political Capital: The Semiotics of Safavid Isfahan.” *Middle Eastern Natural Environments* 103 (1997): 330-348.

pavilions.⁶¹ Yet, despite these traditions of garden making, the pressure of urbanization presented an ongoing threat to many of these ephemeral open spaces. Many gardens have undergone considerable change or they have been lost altogether. Acknowledging the wealth of scholarly discussion of Persian gardens which draws on diverse sources (from Persian miniatures and illustrations to European travel writing), this study contributes to highlighting the significance of Persian gardens by providing a new perspective on their centrality as arenas for diverse social, cultural and political affairs, as well as botanical and agricultural activities during the early sixteenth century. This represents a splendid period in the history of early modern Iran, regarded by architectural historian, Sussan Babaie, as “the largest and most systematic campaign of garden construction in the history of Islamic Iran.”⁶²

However, studying the spatial qualities and layout of Safavid gardens and landscape involves various lines of inquiry, not only the history of Islamic gardens, landscape and town planning, but also urban and architectural context, horticulture and cultivation, patronage and political significance. Hence, scholars have highlighted the need for a longitudinal survey of Ilkhānid, Timurid, Safavid and Mughal landscapes and gardening culture, in order to pursue a larger set of relationships where garden, city, horticulture, cultural environment and territory intersect to show how they recursively influenced each other. Safavid garden-city culture can be related to trends perpetuated through this complex intersection, whereby the garden drives city design and its pre-eminence in relation to political and cultural life, rather than being of subsidiary importance or conceived of as a marginal addition to the design of the urban fabric.⁶³ The study contributes to this line of inquiry by exploring aspects of the multidimensional history of Persian gardens.

As one focus of this study is to explore early Safavid Persian gardens in early modern Persian poetry, the main challenge lies in interrogating the multifaceted layers of

⁶¹ See UNESCO, The Persian Garden, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1372>; and, not least, the recent compilation on Pasargadae, Ali Mozzafari ed. *World Heritage in Iran: Perspectives on Pasargadae*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016.

⁶² Babaie, “Paradise Contained: Nature and Culture in Persian Gardens,” 11.

⁶³ The Safavid landscape and gardening culture is logically the result of a long journey of transitions and evolutions of the city and its rural spaces during the centuries, especially the decades after the Mogul invasion to Persia in the thirteenth century. Gaining power by the Safavids in the sixteenth century, produced some remarkable remodelling of landscape and urbanism which formed the Isfahan urbanism school, starting with Shah Tahmāsp’s new urban development project and reaching its highest point, completed by his grandson, Shah Abbas, in the Isfahan reconstructing project.

meanings and complex imagination involved in traditional Persian poetry, and interpreting them as key sources for garden history. Persian poetry is a highly sophisticated, creative and imaginative cultural expression that can reveal significant aspects of gardens and pavilion design, as well as their relationship to the social and cultural life of the city. Poetry employs fluid terminology and poetic expression that lacks historical precision; thus, interpretation varies widely and can be problematic. While the poems of *Jannāt-i 'adan* display these typical characteristics, the descriptive nature of Navīdī's poems provide less contentious material for historical interpretation.⁶⁴

Similar textural complexity is associated with *Irshād al-zirā'a*, which features a pompous, official style of writing, especially in its introduction which contains important information on the author, his occupation and his method of collecting practical information from those with local expertise. The use of vague terminology throughout the main body of the work, which includes instructive data on agronomy, cultivation and horticulture, presents interpretive challenges that this study attempts to address.⁶⁵

Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into four parts. Part I (Texts and Landscapes: A Historical Overview), consists of one chapter presenting a historical background of the study. Chapter 1 investigates famous Islamic and pre-Islamic Persian gardens, focusing on their history, structure, layout, and function in four significant historical epochs. The chapter is divided into two sections: before and after the emergence of Islam. The pre-Islamic eras chosen for this study, that is, the great empires of Achaemenids (550–330 BC) and Sassanians (224–651 AD), are highlighted as the most advanced periods in garden making in ancient Iran. The first chapter also provides background information on the history of garden making and the culture of Persian garden design. In Islamic Iran, the two glorious Timurid and Safavid empires are briefly introduced drawing on original Persian sources and also contemporary studies. A comparative study of the history of Persian literature and the characteristics of Persian poetry during sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Iran is

⁶⁴ Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*, 27.

⁶⁵ An extensive range of those applied terms, vocabularies and expressions, which apparently were the common technical verbal language among the local peasants of the Herat region and nearby villages, are not being used anymore in the contemporary official or spoken Farsi language today.

included. This shows how Persian literature and poetry reflect the social and political milieu and provide the main sources for understanding Safavid gardens and landscapes.

Part II (The Science of Gardening: *Irshād al-zirā'a*), is devoted to examining the historical manual of *Irshād al-zirā'a*. It is divided into two chapters. Chapter 2 is concerned with agricultural methods, botanical progress, horticultural innovation and the science of gardening in the context of the late Timurid and early Safavid periods. Chapter 3 is concerned with the text of *Irshād al-zirā'a*. Part II discusses aspects of pre-modern Persian gardening as well as productivity and aesthetic preferences in terms of agricultural and botanical practices. It explores the importance of agriculture and horticulture in the early sixteenth century, the important roles gardens played in shaping the agricultural economy, the attitudes toward gardening and landscape at a time of crisis and transition of political power between Timurids and Safavids. It presents a detailed study of the *Irshād al-zirā'a* manual, its structure, contents and author, as well as a critical interpretation of the treatise. Chapter 3 presents a detailed study of *Irshād al-zirā'a* together with an analysis showing what this unique text can offer for understanding the meanings and physical structure of the Persian *chāhārbāgh*, the most renowned model of Persian garden design.

Part III (The Poetics of Gardening: *Jannāt-i 'adan*), is divided into two chapters (4 and 5) and focuses on theoretical analyses of Navīdī's five poems. It examines the form and contents of the second primary source and presents a detailed analysis of the poems, as well as interpretations of some parts of the work. Part III explores the possibilities of presenting, from *Jannāt-i 'adan* and other related historical sources, a better mapping of the city of Qazvin and the vanished imperial garden of Sa'ādat ābād, with its private and formal gardens and urban environment, including extracts from Navīdī's text.

Part IV (Rethinking Persian Gardens) includes chapter 6, which presents critical analyses of the two main original texts alongside others to show the overall character of early modern Persian gardens and their diverse role and function at the social, cultural, political and economic levels. Drawing on primary sources, it presents Safavid gardens in the new light revealed through this study.

Part I

Texts and Landscapes: An Historical Overview

Chapter 1
Persian Gardens and the Emergence of Islam

1 Persian Gardens and the Emergence of Islam

Historical archaeological research discovered that agriculture and gardening became the basic incentive to civilization when the first hunters settled on the Iranian plateau more than six thousand years ago. With its fairly arid climate, Iran features high mountains, vast deserts and harsh winters. In this regional context trees, plants and water were considered as symbols of life and civilization from ancient times. Later, with an increase in population and social, political and economic developments, gardens took on different meanings and functions, apart from their basic role as the main source of income from food production. In more civilized societies gardens could reflect spiritual and religious beliefs, symbolize the perfection of the universe, leisure, as well as displaying wealth, power and protection.⁶⁶

In most recent scholarly studies of Iran's history, there has been a division between two major historic periods based on the dominance of Islam, which is regarded as an important factor in the history of the whole region. Although there is a long held tradition of Persian gardening and landscape design since ancient times, and while this region has endured numerous dynasties with many lasting orders and styles throughout the course of time, only four significant epochs in Persian garden culture will be reviewed briefly in this chapter. The first two periods belong to the pre-Islamic era (the ancient dominant empires of Achaemenids (550–330 BC) and Sassanians (224–651)), and the other two periods belong to the post-Islamic era (the medieval history of Iran, the great Muslim empires of the Timurids (1370–1507) and Safavids (1501–1736)) (Figure 1-1).

⁶⁶ Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013, 1.

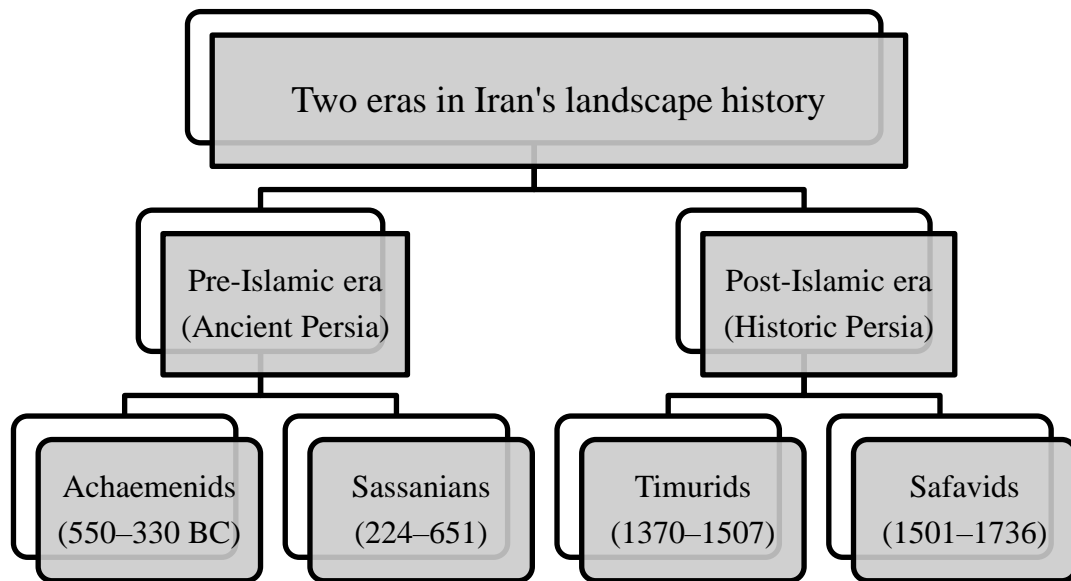


Figure 1-1. Two eras in Iran's landscape history

1.1 Pre-Islamic Persian gardens and landscapes

The earliest discovered gardens in the region, which have completely vanished with no remaining archaeological or physical evidence, were raised in Mesopotamia.⁶⁷ The tradition of creating pleasure in royal gardens and hunting parks was passed to the first Persian Empire, the Achaemenids, and were later continued by the Parthian and Sassanian great kings.⁶⁸

Achaemenid Empire

The Achaemenid Empire (Figure 1-2) was the largest in the ancient world.⁶⁹ Founded in 550 BC by Cyrus II, “the Great” (r. 559–530 BC), this great empire extended from the Balkans and Eastern Europe proper in the west, to the Indus Valley in the east. This empire is equally notable for its successful model of a centralized, bureaucratic

⁶⁷ The Hanging Gardens of Babylon is regarded as the most famous example, described by the Greek historian and geographer, Strabo, in 22 CE. Yet a genuine study seems to have been affected by the mythologizing of these gardens with nonfactual data by the orientalist and turning them into mysterious icons of the ancient world. See Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013, 179.

⁶⁸ Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions*, 1.

⁶⁹ The Achaemenid territories covered about three million square miles and spread from Anatolia and Egypt across western Asia to northern India and Central Asia. See Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1996.

administration (through satraps⁷⁰ under the rule of a king), for building infrastructure such as a postal system, roads, the use of an official language across its territories, and for a large, qualified army and public services (inspiring similar systems in later empires). Achaemenids are also noted in western history as rivals to the Greek city states during the Greco-Persian wars and for the release of Jewish exiles in Babylon.

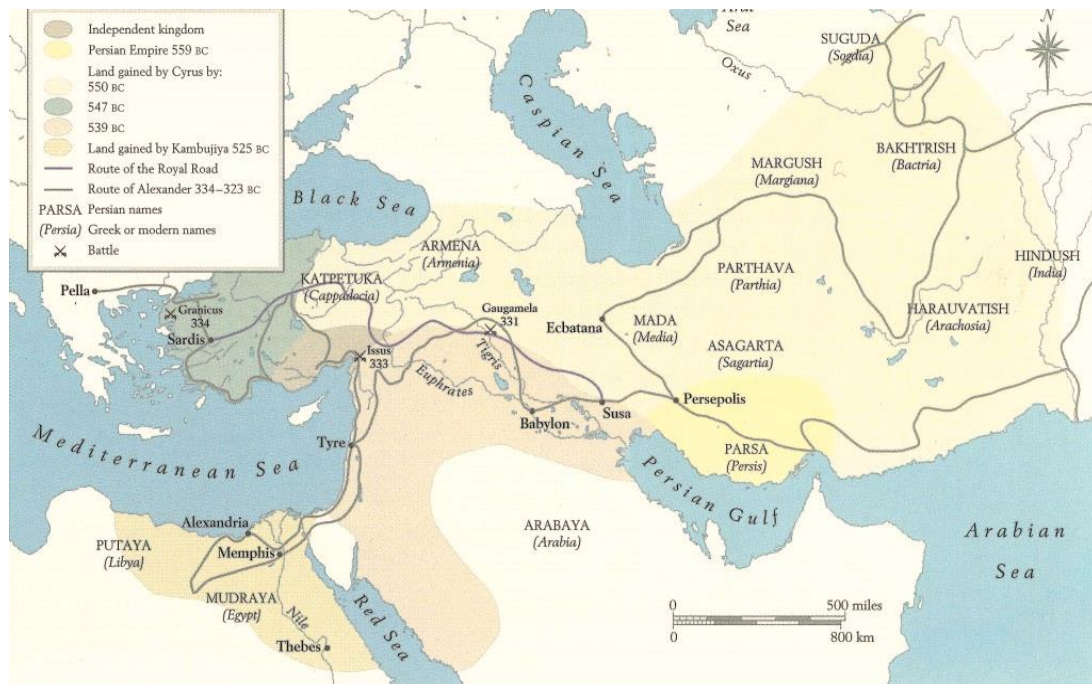


Figure 1-2. Achaemenid Empire territories (550–330 BC) (Source: *Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War* by Kaveh Farrokh, page 87, 2007)

Persians had settled in southwestern areas of the Iranian plateau in the region of Persis by 7th century BC. From this vast region, which came to be their heartland, Cyrus the Great successfully defeated the Kingdom of Media,⁷¹ the Kingdom of Lydia,⁷² and the

⁷⁰ Satraps were the provincial governors of the ancient Median and Achaemenid Empires and in several of their successors, such as the Sassanian and the Hellenistic Empires. The satraps were normally members of the royal family or of Persian dignity. Being selected directly by the king, they usually held office indeterminately. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “satrap” <http://www.britannica.com/topic/satrap>.

⁷¹ The Medes (Old Persian *Māda*) were ancient Iranian people, including six main tribes, who lived in northwestern areas of Iran, known as Media and spoke the Median language. Their arrival in the region is allied with the first wave of migrating Iranian Aryan tribes into Ancient Iran from around 1000 BC (the Bronze Age collapse) through to around 900 BC. In later periods, Medes and especially Mede soldiers are identified and portrayed prominently in ancient Persian archaeological sites such as Persepolis, where they seem to have had a dominant role and presence in the military of the Persian Empire's Achaemenid dynasty. See I. M. Diakonoff, “Media.” In *The Cambridge History of Iran 2*, edited by Ilya Gershevitch, 36-148. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

⁷² The Lydians were Anatolian people living in Lydia, a region in western Anatolia, speaking the distinctive Lydian language, an Indo-European language of the Anatolian group. The Lydian capital was at Sardis or

Babylonian Empire, founding the Achaemenid Empire. This newly established kingdom at its peak included the territories of modern-day Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan—all dominant civilized centres of Ancient Egypt as far west as eastern Libya, Thrace-Macedonia and Paeonia, the Black Sea coastal regions of Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, and Russia, all of Abkhazia, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, parts of the North Caucasus, and much of Central Asia, encompassing about 8 million square kilometres across three continents,⁷³ making it the most powerful empire in the ancient world.⁷⁴ The Achaemenid Empire, considered the most inhabited kingdom of the ancient world, had the biggest share of the global population (50 million in 480 BC).⁷⁵

Perhaps the allocation of authority and power to the local state governments or satraps should be considered as the most significant reason leading to the disunity of the region and eventually fall of the empire (at the time of Alexander the Great's⁷⁶ invasion in 334 BC). Declining the king's authority, this approach initiated the expansion of armies in an attempt to subside various local uprisings and revolts, and eventually caused the fall of the Persians.⁷⁷

However, this debate is challenged by some historians who argue that only internal struggles over the throne within the royal family ever came close to weakening the empire, and the Achaemenid realm did not face any such crisis around the time of

Sardis. Their power came to a sudden end with the fall of Sardis in the Battle of *Halys* in 585 BC and with the defeat by Cyrus the Great in 546 BC. See Christopher Roosevelt, *The Archaeology of Lydia, From Gyges to Alexander*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 11-32.

⁷³ Aedeon Cremin, *Archaeologica: The World's Most Significant Sites and Cultural Treasures*. Global Book Publishing Pty Ltd. 2007, 224.

⁷⁴ David Sacks, Oswyn Murray and Lisa R. Brody, *Encyclopaedia of the Ancient Greek World*,. Facts on File, 2005, 256.

⁷⁵ Ehsan Yarshater, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 7. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1996, 47.

⁷⁶ Alexander III of Macedon (20/21 July 356 BC – 10/11 June 323 BC), commonly known as Alexander the Great, was the King of the Ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon and a monarch of the Argead dynasty (808-306 BC). Born in Pella in 356 BC, Alexander in his twenties succeeded his father, Philip II, to the throne. He spent most of his ruling life on military campaigns in Asia and northeast Africa, which eventually led to the establishment of one of the largest empires of the ancient world by the age of thirty, stretching from Greece to Egypt into northwest India and modern-day Pakistan. In 334 BC, he invaded the Achaemenid Empire, starting a series of campaigns which lasted about ten years. Alexander finally broke the power of Persia in a series of vital battles, most remarkably the battles of Issus and Gaugamela. He subsequently conquered the Achaemenid Empire in its entirety and deposed the Persian King Darius III, enlarging his empire from the Adriatic Sea to the Indus River. He is regarded as one of history's most successful military commanders due to being undefeatable in various battles. See Waldemar Heckel and Lawrence A. Tritle, *Alexander the Great: A New History*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

⁷⁷ David Sacks, Oswyn Murray and Lisa R. Brody, *Encyclopaedia of the Ancient Greek World*, 256.

Alexander the Great.⁷⁸ Alexander, an avid admirer of Cyrus the Great,⁷⁹ eventually conquered the empire in its entirety by 330 BC. Upon his death in 323 BC most of the empire's former territory came under the rule of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and Seleucid Empire until such time as the Persian population of the central plateau eventually reclaimed power by the second century BC under the Parthian Empire (247 BC–AD 228).⁸⁰

Achaemenid gardens

The garden, whether in royal or vernacular form, has been a fundamental part of Achaemenid architecture since the first millennium BCE. Fortunately archaeological evidence of Achaemenid gardens still remains at Pasargadae, Persepolis, Susa, and other ancient sites in addition to existing written historical references.⁸¹

The Achaemenid administration policy towards horticulture and agriculture was to support and encourage the satrapies (the sub-provinces) regarding innovative practices in agronomy, arboriculture, and irrigation.⁸² Developing a sense of the Achaemenid “paradise gardens”, plentiful varieties of plants and trees were introduced throughout the various countries of their realm.⁸³

The most basic historical records on the Achaemenid *Paradeisos*⁸⁴ belong to the Greek historian, Xenophon (ca 431–355 BC), a follower of Socrates. In 401 BC he describes the passion of Darius I for gardens: “in all the districts he resides in and visits, he takes care that there are “paradises” as they call them, full of all the good and beautiful things that

⁷⁸ Ibid., 256.

⁷⁹ Ulrich Wilcken, *Alexander the Great*: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967, 146.

⁸⁰ David Sacks, Oswyn Murray and Lisa R. Brody, *Encyclopaedia of the Ancient Greek World*, 256.

⁸¹ David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963*. Oxford University Press, 1978, 107-12.

⁸² Mehrdad Fakour, “Garden I, Achaemenid Period.” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* X/3 (2000), 297-298.

⁸³ Elizabeth Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India*. New York: George Braziller, 1978, 1-2, 20, 25.

⁸⁴ Based on Fakour’s study, the idea of an earthly paradise spread to the literature and languages of other cultures from the time of the Achaemenid Empire. Used in Avesta twice, the term *pairidaēza* is formed in two parts, Pairi, which means the surroundings, and Daeza, which means to pile up, or to surround by walls; together, the terms mean planting flowers or trees around the building. Old Persian: *paridaida*, Median: *paridaiza* (walled-around, i.e. a walled garden), was transliterated into Greek *paradeisoi*, then rendered into the Latin *paradisus*, and from there entered into European languages such as French *paradis*, and English paradise. The word also entered Semitic languages later: Akkadian *pardesu*, Hebrew *pardes* (Nehemiah 2:8; Ecclesiastes 2:5; Song of Solomon 4:13), and Arabic *ferdaws* (The Qur’an 18.107, 23.11). Mehrdad Fakour, “Garden I, Achaemenid Period,” 297-298.

the soil will produce...”⁸⁵ Again in his *Anabasis*⁸⁶, Xenophon admires Cyrus, the younger (424–401 BC) son of Darius, for the way he “looked after his large garden at Sardis which he had designed himself and in which he had planted some of the trees with his own hand [sic].”⁸⁷ The other Greek historian traveller to Persia, Herodotus,⁸⁸ admiring the Persians’ love for trees and vegetation, writes how Xerxes, the successor of Darius, stopped on the royal route during his long campaign against the Greeks in 480 BC, upon seeing a plane tree, the sacred tree of the Iranian plateau, which was so majestic and beautiful that he decorated it with golden ornaments and appointed a lifetime guard to watch over it.⁸⁹ Such paradises gradually multiplied as the empire grew even richer from the tributes of its satrapies.⁹⁰

What gave Achaemenid gardens their shape and style that survived in Persian garden culture during the centuries that followed was that for the first time the garden became not only a crucial part of the architecture, but its focus. From that time on gardens became an essential part of Persian culture.⁹¹

The royal gardens of the Achaemenids also unified political, ideological and religious symbolism. The idea of the king making a desert bloom, forming a fertile garden out of barren land, bringing symmetry and order out of chaos, and presenting the divine paradise on earth, established a powerful statement symbolizing authority, fertility, and legitimacy.⁹²

The Achaemenids are known as the builders of the kingly scales. Cyrus began the re-establishment of the old Elamite capital at Susa. Darius and Artaxerxes expanded the capital to a city of palaces and courtyards covering more than seven acres; the newly restored capital was organized around a central royal garden.⁹³

⁸⁵ Mehdi Khansari, M. Reza Moghtader and Minouch Yavari, *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise* Washington D.C. Mage Publishers, 2004, 40.

⁸⁶ The most famous work (in seven books) by the Greek professional soldier and writer, Xenophon. The journey it narrates is his best-known accomplishment and “one of the greatest adventures in human history,” as Will Durant expressed. Although the book’s content is lively and written in the style of someone who has participated in the adventures he describes, the story recounted in the *Anabasis* is completely uncorroborated. See Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: The Life of Greece*, vol. 2. Simon & Schuster, 1939, 489.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁸ The Greek historian and contemporary of Socrates (c. 484–c. 425 BC) born in Halicarnassus, Caria (modern-day Bodrum, Turkey). He is widely referred to as “The Father of History” (first conferred by Cicero). See T. James Luce, *The Greek Historians*. Psychology Press, 1997, 26.

⁸⁹ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 40.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹¹ Fakour, “Garden I, Achaemenid Period,” 297.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 297.

⁹³ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 40.

Located in a warm climate, Susa was a winter administrative capital. To avoid the summer heat on the plain, the court moved to the ancestral capital of the Medes, Ecbatana, located on the six-thousand-foot-high slopes of Zagros. In the heart of the city, protected by seven layers of surrounding walls, magnificent terraced gardens with symmetrical rows of trees and aromatic plants had been constructed under the command of various kings. Following the same model of garden-palace construction in different satrapies all over the empire, the design idea and variety of plants spread throughout the ancient world.⁹⁴

The establishment of Persepolis, the other ancient Achaemenid capital, by Darius, was developed by Xerxes and Artaxerxes I. Seized and burned in 330 BC during Alexander of Macedon's invasion and conquest of Persia, the ruins of Persepolis, the only living trace of the Achaemenids, remain as the icon of the empire's former glory (Figure 1-3).



Figure 1-3. The ruins of Persepolis or “Parse” palaces, one of the capitals of the Achaemenid Empire (Source: irandestination.com)

Beside the seemingly impregnable fifty-foot-high raised platform, with its reversing staircases wide enough for eight men to walk abreast, its lofty gateways and the fallen columns of the palaces, the vanished paradise gardens are not so difficult to imagine through the engravings of such plant forms as the lotus, the rosette, the palm, and the fir tree (Figure 1-4), among the endless procession of subjects bearing gifts, the winged

⁹⁴ Ibid., 40-41.

Assyrian bulls that guard the gatehouse, and the enormous mythological animals and griffins that served as capitals for the columns.⁹⁵



Figure 1-4. Plants and trees engraved on Persepolis stone walls (Source: photograph by Robert Preston uploaded August 31st, 2013)

Pasargadae

The most famous and probably the earliest gardens discovered on the Iranian plateau associated with the Achaemenids are located at Pasargadae, the royal residence of Cyrus the Great (ca. 559–530 BC), founder of the Persian Achaemenid Empire. The royal palaces at Pasargadae were conceived and constructed as a series of palaces and pavilions placed among geometrically designed gardens, parterres, and meticulously hewn and dressed stone watercourses, set in a large formal park containing various flora and fauna.⁹⁶

Pasargadae was visualized as a genuine imperial capital and emblematic heart of the Local Empire. Its palaces and other monumental structures, including the tomb of Cyrus

⁹⁵ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 43.

⁹⁶ Fakour, "Garden I, Achaemenid Period," 297.

(Figure 1-5), were established in a fertile area on the Murghāb plain in southwestern Iran's Fars province, partially exposed through archaeological excavation and survey.⁹⁷



Figure 1-5. The tomb of Cyrus the Great (ca. 559–530 BCE) at Pasargadae (Source: Pasargadae. Negative no. 448. Ernst Herzfeld papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives)

The defeat of the Achaemenid Empire by Alexander the Great and the burning of Persepolis in about 330 BC are both well documented in the European tradition, helping to root this site firmly in European memory. Far less attention has been paid, however, to the comparatively poorly preserved remains of Pasargadae (Figure. 1-6), despite its status since 2004 as a UNESCO World Heritage site; its monumental park is probably the earliest of the Achaemenid period, and the site has been referred to as an unprecedented “garden capital.”⁹⁸ The “royal garden” at Pasargadae is often cited as a key innovation of the Persian Empire that was to last for centuries to come; it provides an opportunity to investigate in-depth both the realities of the Achaemenid Empire and how history interprets these realities.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963*, vol. 1. Clarendon Press, 1978, 8.

⁹⁸ David Stronach, “The Royal Garden at Pasargadae: Evolution and Legacy,” in *Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalis: Miscellanea in Honorem Louis Vanden Berghe*, vol. 1, ed. Meyer, Haerinck (Ghent, 1989), 475-502.

⁹⁹ Fakour, “Garden I, Achaemenid Period,” 297.



Figure. 1-6. The Royal Palace of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae (Source: <https://bento.si.edu>, photo by Alex Nagel)

The central “royal garden” at Pasargadae was designed to reflect the new glorious empire. Recent international collaborative archaeological fieldwork incorporating surface, geophysical, and aerial surveys has modified earlier ideas about this formally laid out, irrigated area.¹⁰⁰

Excavations in the 1960s uncovered a system of limestone channels, twenty-five centimetres wide and punctuated with a deep, square basin every thirteen to fourteen meters, thus dividing the area into two rectangles.¹⁰¹ The channels probably sat flush with the ground surface. At the edges of this garden were three structures: the palace, and two smaller pavilions (Figure 1-7). The main portico of the palace opened directly onto the garden; a throne carved of stone was fixed at its centre, giving the ruler an uninterrupted view. Some scholars have assumed that the central placement of the throne implies a second axial division of the garden into four quadrants.¹⁰² Recent work however indicates that this space may have incorporated a much greater area, including both a pool-like construction crossed by a bridge and other monumental structures. In this scenario, the

¹⁰⁰ Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations*, 105-110.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰² David Stronach, “The Garden as a Political Statement: Some Case Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium BC.” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 4 (1990): 171-180.

pool would have acted as a channel, its embankments also lined with stone, drawing water from the nearby Pulvar River. The classical historian, Arrian, writing in the second century AD, left a snapshot of the park in his description of Cyrus' tomb: located approximately one kilometre from the palace, it was set in a "royal park at Pasargadae, and around it a grove of all kinds of trees had been planted. It was also watered by a stream, and high grass grew in the meadow."¹⁰³ Over time, however, it is now difficult to identify exactly what these species were.¹⁰⁴

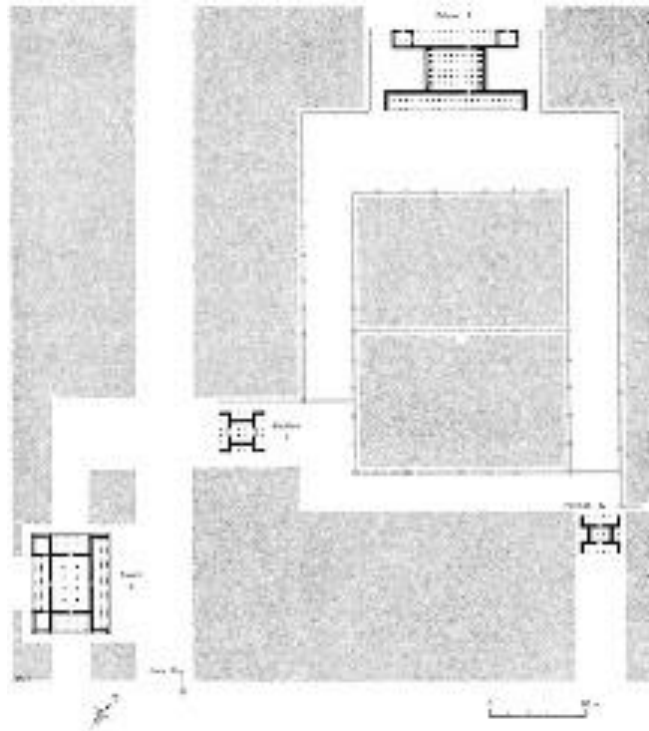


Figure 1-7. Sketch plan of the "royal garden" based on archaeological excavations (Stronach) (Source: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/pasargadae>)

As mentioned previously, the very idea of the garden reflects a Near Eastern imperial tradition, so vividly depicted in the carved stone reliefs of Assyrian rulers such as Sennacherib (704–681 BC) and Ashurbanipal (668–627 BC) at Nineveh, as well as, of course, the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon, usually attributed to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562 BC).¹⁰⁵ These traditions continued well into the

¹⁰³ Christopher Tuplin, "The Parks and Gardens of the Achaemenid Empire." In *Achaemenid Studies*. Franz Steiner Verlag, 1996, 125.

¹⁰⁴ See: Ali Mozaffari, "World Heritage in Iran: Perspectives on Pasargadae." Routledge, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Stephanie Dalley, *The Mystery of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon: An Elusive World Wonder Traced*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 245.

modern period and they are lavishly captured in various media across the Islamic world. At Pasargadae the formal design of the garden demonstrates a high degree of planning, reinforcing the imperial symbolism of the site. Several features differentiate the Pasargadae garden from its Near Eastern predecessors: the incorporation of the palace and garden; the unifying role of the water channels lined with stone across the royal garden; and its geometric layout.

A possible connection between the proposed four quadrants and the “four quarters” of Cyrus’ empire, to which he referred in his famous Cylinder text, has been suggested by some scholars.¹⁰⁶ It still remains ambiguous as to whether the royal garden of Pasargadae with its fourfold design, or *chāhārbāgh*,¹⁰⁷ is the earliest example of a feature that became a dominant characteristic of Persian garden design in the centuries that followed (Figure 1-8).

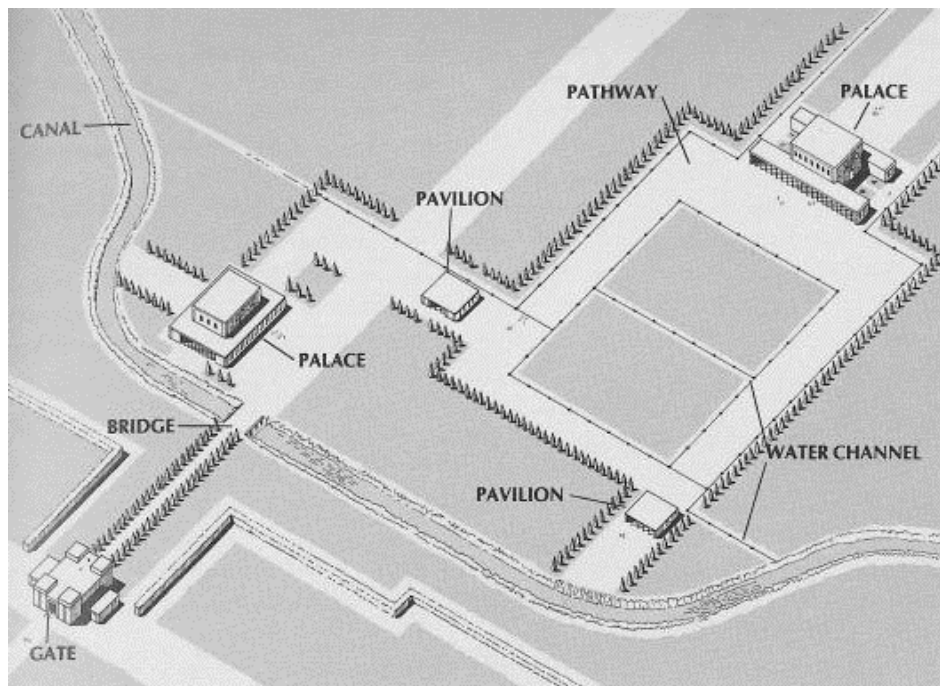


Figure 1-8. The “royal garden” of Pasargadae based on archaeological excavations (Source: <http://kavehfarrokh.com>)

¹⁰⁶ David Stronach., “The Garden as a Political Statement: Some Case Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium BC.” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 4 (1990): 171-180.

¹⁰⁷ *Chāhārbāgh* literally means “four gardens”, a rectangular garden divided by paths or waterways into four symmetrical sections.

The royal garden at Pasargadae has been cited as an early example of the *chāhārbāgh*, which later became well known.¹⁰⁸ However, the identification of this design at Pasargadae is not directly supported by archaeological evidence, as stone-lined water channels divide the garden into two rectangular sections, not four. The division into four is speculative, based on the position of the throne in the main palace overlooking the central axis of the garden.

Being regarded as one of the first central imperial allegories of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, it is possible to see the symbolism of Pasargadae through additional aspects of the site: the degree to which Cyrus' architects planned to modify the natural landscape was remarkable, and the visual impact of thriving land must have been impressive, especially against a backdrop of barren mountains. The absence of a monumental fortification wall protecting most of the site may have been a conscious design decision to promote the idea of Cyrus as an accessible ruler without enemies. The functional and decorative infrastructure, such as the stone-lined water channels, remains a testimony to the creativity and ingenuity of the garden's designers. The presence of stone conduits is noteworthy for another reason: evidence of a dressed-stone tradition of architecture in Iran prior to this period is minimal; while indigenous architects cannot be excluded, the presence of specialist stonemasons from other regions, in particular the western region of the empire, should also be considered. In this case, the power of the ruler is demonstrated by his ability to draw on specialists trained in diverse skills from across his empire.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Stronach suggests that this garden may have been the model for the subsequent *chāhārbāgh* and *hasht behesht*. The Qur'anic conception of the "eight gardens of Paradise" may thus have been partly connected with an evolved formal garden of this type with eight plots, already well represented in the Near East at the beginning of the Islamic era. Based on his excavations at both Pasargadae and Susa, he also suggests that the history of the *chāhārbāgh* begins in the Achaemenid period. His clearest evidence comes from the Palace Area at Pasargadae. There the surviving elements of several stone water channels help to define the plan of a major garden, founded in the later years of the reign of Cyrus the Great. Those stone channels uncovered so far describe the outline of two contiguous rectangular garden plots and a broad pathway that once enclosed the whole area on at least three sides (Stronach, 1978, pp. 107-12). Furthermore, a fresh analysis of the plan of the palace area reveals that a required "line of sight" down the long axis of the garden, as defined by the fixed throne seat of the king within the "garden portico" of Palace P, would have bisected the long sides of the two rectangular plots (Stronach, 1989, fig. 3). Such dispositions would necessarily have provided four separate plots, each nearly 70 x 50 m in area, within the confines of a rectilinear garden flanked not only by Palace P but also by two ancillary "garden pavilions."

¹⁰⁹ Ehsan Yarshater, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 497.

Sassanian Empire

After the death of Alexander in 323 BC, Iran fell into the hands of the Seleucids, his grand commanders and generals. This period of Hellenism (317 BC–AD 138) ended with the uprising of peoples in the Khurasan region, the Parthians from Partowa (located in north-eastern Iran), who drove out Antiochus IV, the last of the Seleucid rulers, and founded the Arsacids dynasty. The Arsacids built important cities such as Ctesiphon beside the Tigris, Dura-Europos beside the Euphrates, and palaces such as Kūh-i Khawje (Mount Khawje), Hatra, and Assur, applying their own architectural styles.¹¹⁰

The Sassanian Empire, known as the last great Persian Empire before the Muslim conquest and the adoption of Islam, was founded by Ardashir I (180–242 AD), after the fall of the Parthian Empire and the defeat of the last Arsacid king, Artabanus V. The Sassanian Empire during Late Antiquity is considered one of the leading world powers alongside its neighbouring superior rivals of the Roman-Byzantine Empire, for a period of more than 400 years.¹¹¹ Inspiring Roman art and culture, this period is regarded as the peak of ancient Iranian sophistication in many ways. It is assumed that the Sassanians cultural influence extended well beyond the empire's territorial boundaries, reaching Western Europe, Africa, China and India.¹¹² Sassanian culture thus played a significant role in the formation of both European and Asian medieval art. Some notable orientalists believed that much of what later became known as Islamic culture in art, architecture, music and other subject matter was transferred from the Sassanians throughout the Muslim world (Figure 1-9).¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 45-46.

¹¹¹ A. Shapur Shahbazi, "Sassanian Dynasty." *Encyclopædia Iranica* (online edition, July 2005), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sassanian-dynasty>

¹¹² Will Durant, *Age of Faith*. Simon & Schuster, 1950, 150.

¹¹³ Abdolhossein Zarinkoob, *Ruzgārān: tārikh-i Iran az āqāz ta soqout saltant-i Pahlavi*. Intishārāt-i Sokhan, 1999, 305.



Figure 1-9. Ghal'eh Dokhtar (or “The Maiden's Castle”) in present-day Fars, Fīrūzābād, Iran, built by Ardashir in 209, before he was finally able to defeat the Parthian empire (Source: <http://www.salfbase.com>)

Sassanian gardening and architecture styles

With the growth of empire, Parthian art gradually liberated itself from the influence of Hellenism. Parthian art was called ‘an art of evolution’ by scholars, a transition from Greco-Iranian to neo-Iranian art.¹¹⁴ Following the architecture styles of the Achaemenids, Parthian royal palaces were also built on huge man-made platforms surrounded by gardens and parks. It was the Parthians who invented the use of *iwān* or porticos, an architectural element brought from Khurasan to Mesopotamia: a high room covered by a barrel arch attached to the main structure, opening outwards to the gardens. Later the use of *iwāns* (porticos) continued and was propagated by Sassanians, some of which still remain. Like the colonnade porches of the Achaemenids, those high-arched spaces that opened out to the gardens served as a transitional space from inside to outside.¹¹⁵ Another example of ancient Persian architecture employed by Sassanians was the squinch,¹¹⁶ a simple arch placed at the angles where walls meet in a square building, which supported the dome and significantly distributed the weight of such a superstructure. These innovative elements are assumed to have defined the character of the palaces and mosques of Islamic Persia in later periods.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 46.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹¹⁶ The Persians solved the problem of constructing a circular dome on a square building by employing squinches, or arches built across each corner of the square, thereby converting it into an octagon on which it is simple to place the dome. The dome chamber in the palace of Fīrūzābād is the earliest surviving example of the use of the squinch, suggesting that this architectural technique was probably invented in Persia. See Mohammad Karim Pirnia, *Sabk Shināsi Me'māri Irani*, edited by Gholamhusain Memarian. Intishārāt-i Soroush-i Dānish, 2004.

¹¹⁷ Pirnia, *Sabk Shināsi Me'māri Irani*, 107.

One of the earliest uses for these high-arched spaces can still be observed at the remains of The Palace of Ardashir I (Artaxerxes I) on the Plain of Fīrūzābād in Fars (Figure 1-10). Being a third century imperial residence, the palace is a massive collection of *iwāns* and arched halls, raised on a platform 180 by 340 feet and facing a natural spring, which, according to Arab historians' records, was diverted to water channels for the king's royal garden.¹¹⁸



Figure 1-10. The Palace of Ardashir I (*Dezh-i Ardashir Pāpakān*), also known as the *Atash-kadeh*. Built in AD 224 by King Ardashir I of the Sassanian Empire, the palace is located two kilometres north of the ancient city of Gur, the old city of Fīrūzābād in Pars, Iran (Source: <http://www.salfbase.com>)

The other Sassanian palace complex attributed to Khosrow I, on the banks of the Tigris River to the south at Ctesiphon, are the ruins of Tāq-i Kasrā, or Kasrā Arch (Figure 1-11), a lofty elliptical arch soaring 120 feet above ground level that served as the roof of the king's audience ceremonial hall,¹¹⁹ wherein laid his famous carpet "*Bahār-i Khosrow*."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 49.

¹²⁰ The backdrop of this carpet, which depicted an idealistic garden of four seasons, has been embroidered in gold, and its margins inlaid with turquoise. It covered an area of about 72 sq. m. The carpet, made of gems and colored silk, has been divided into four parts: flowers and blossoming spring trees, summer fruits, an autumnal scene, and a winter scene. Paths and gutters were marked with colorful precious stones. UNESCO, *The Persian Garden*, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1372>.

This magnificent structure located in the middle of a vast, green deer garden, enclosed within high walls, fascinated architects in the centuries that followed. These ruins are considered one of the most important examples of ancient Persian architecture.¹²¹



Figure 1-11. *Tāq-i Kasrā*, located near the modern town of Salman Pak, Modern Iraq. It is the only visible remaining structure of the ancient city of Ctesiphon (Source: <http://www.britannica.com/place/Taq-Kisra>)

On the western slopes of the Zagros Mountains lies another Sassanian garden complex, Imārat-i Khosrow and Hawsh-Kuri, palaces built by Khosrow II for his lover, “sweet, beloved Shirin the Christian.”¹²² According to historical accounts they lay together in a walled paradise three hundred acres wide, overlooked by covered passages and cool rooms,¹²³ which the thirteenth-century Byzantine historian, Yāqūt¹²⁴ later referred to as “one of the wonders of the world.”¹²⁵ According to Ibn-i Faghīh-i Hamidānī, this building

¹²¹ Julian Reade, *The Seventy Wonders of the Ancient World: The Great Monuments and How They Were Built*, edited by Chris Scarre, 185-186. London: Thames & Hudson, 1999.

¹²² Shirin was the wife of the Sassanian, Khosrow Parviz. In the revolution after the death of Khosrow's father, Hormizd IV, the General, Bahrām Chobin took power over the Persian Empire. Shirin fled with Khosrow to Syria, where they lived under the protection of Byzantine emperor Maurice. In 591, Khosrow returned to Persia to take control of the empire and Shirin was made queen. Long after her death, Shirin became an important heroine of Persian literature, a model of a faithful lover and wife. She appears in the *Shahnameh* and the romance of Khosrow and Shirin by Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209). See Wilhelm Baum, *Shirin: Christian, Queen, Myth of Love, a Woman of Late Antiquity, Historical Reality and Literary Effect*. Gorgias Press, 2004.

¹²³ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 49.

¹²⁴ Yāqūt ibn-‘Abdullah al-Rūmī al-Hamawī (1179–1229) was an Arab biographer and geographer of Greek origin, renowned for his encyclopedic writings on the Muslim world.

¹²⁵ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 49.

had one of the largest, most beautiful paradise gardens, decorated with two stunning watercourses. He states that the whole structure had the general look of a royal garden, with a walled, rectangular area in front of the palace, divided into four parts by paths and watercourses, and various trees were planted in each quarter.¹²⁶

Located on the road from Babylon to the Median capital, Ecbatana, and on to Rages (Rey), the great city on the Silk Route, is another large Sassanian “paradise garden” of Bāghastānā (Sacred Mountain), today called Bihīstūn or Bīsutūn, twenty miles east of the modern city of Kermanshah. A huge mass of rock encircled a large royal garden with its eternal spring that poured into a sacred lake, which is the principal attraction of this historic landmark today.¹²⁷

Another garden, not far from Kermanshah, is Tāq-i Bustān or Bustān Arch (Figure 1-12), carved into the Zagros Mountains, with its sacred crystalline spring and famous grottos, engraved with images of women playing harps while the king is engaged with a royal hunt.¹²⁸

Tāq-i Bustān is one of thirty surviving rock reliefs. Sassanian kings chose a beautiful setting for their rock reliefs. Located along the historic Silk Route caravan waypoints and campgrounds, these reliefs are usually found near sacred springs.



Figure 1-12. *Tāq-i Bustān* or *Bihīstūn* near Kermanshah, Iran (Source: <http://images.fineartamerica.com>)

¹²⁶ UNESCO, *The Persian Garden*, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1372>.

¹²⁷ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 50.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

The Sassanian kings regarded themselves as successors of the Achaemenids, after the Hellenistic and Parthian interlude, and believed it was their destiny to restore the grandeur of Persia.¹²⁹ Reliving the glory of the Achaemenids, they revived the beliefs of the past and established state religion. Having undergone a number of changes over the centuries, this religion developed under the famous prophet Zarathustra, better known by the Greek form Zoroaster,¹³⁰ and achieved a philosophical sophistication well in advance of its time.¹³¹

The Zoroastrian religion placed a high value on nature, especially admiring and respecting the water guarded by the Goddess of Anahita; its mythical role has had a great influence on the palace gardens of this era. Most were established near springs and ponds, such as Takht-i Suleymān (also known as Āzar Gushnasb) (Figure 1-13), Fīrūzābād palace and Bihīstūn.¹³²



Figure 1-13. The archaeological site of *Takht-i Soleyman*, also known as Āzar Gushnasb, literally “the Fire of the Warrior Kings” in West Azarbaijan, Iran (Source: http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Archaeology/Sasanian/takhti_soleyman)

¹²⁹ Parviz Marzban, *Kholaseh Tarikh-i Honar*. Tehran: Ilmi va Farhangi, 2001, 36.

¹³⁰ Zoroaster, a shadowy figure reputed to have lived sometime between the tenth and the sixth century BC in north-eastern Iran, incorporated elements of the poly-theistic faith of the early Persians into a religious system based on two opposing cosmic forces: *Ahura Mazda* representing light and truth, and *Ahriman* representing darkness and the lie. It was man’s moral responsibility, he said, to choose between them. Each person would be judged after death and rewarded in a sweet-smelling paradise or punished in hell, according to his choice. The ethical dualism and the concept of reward and punishment after death were both revolutionary. All of nature is holy in this system and fire is considered to be the holiest which has the power to dispel darkness. Water is concentrated in a sea called *Vourukasha*, the source of light; two rivers meet in this sea, thus quartering the world, and at its centre grows the world tree, source of all plants, known in Persian as *Simorah*. See Peter Clark, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010; Michael Stausberg, *Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism: A Short Introduction*. London: Equinox Publishing, 2008.

¹³¹ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 50-51.

¹³² Homa Irani Behbahnai, Fakhri Khosravi, “Persian Garden between Permanence and Innovation from Ancient to Contemporary Period.” *Tuba-ke* 9 (2011): 250-260.

1.2 Islamic-Persian gardens: the late Timurid period

The Persians survived for more than eight centuries after the fall of the Sassanian capital, Ctesiphon, in 637, not as an independent nation but as a subject realm of the newly established Islamic empire.¹³³

The Timurids were the final great dynasty to emerge from the Central Asian plains. In 1370, their eponymous founder, Timur (Tamerlane), who belonged to a Turko-Mongol tribe that settled in Transoxiana, dominated this province and established Samarqand as his capital. Within thirty-five years, he had conquered all of Central Asia, greater Iran, and Iraq, as well as parts of southern Russia and the Indian subcontinent. To the west, Timurid forces defeated the Mamluk¹³⁴ army in Syria and that of the Ottomans at Ankara (1400–2). In 1405, while preparing to invade China, Timur died. The vast empire he carved for himself proved to be difficult to keep; his son and successor, Shāhrukh Mīrzā (1405–47), barely managed to maintain the empire's boundaries, and subsequent Timurid princes sought to establish their own kingdoms, weakening the empire with internal conflict. Eventually only Khurasan and Transoxiana remained Timurid, and during the remaining years of the dynasty, these were ruled by separate branches of the Timurid family.¹³⁵

Timur chose Samarqand, located in modern-day Uzbekistan, as his capital after he came to power in the latter part of the fourteenth century. By bringing craftsmen from different conquered lands to Samarqand, Timur initiated one of the most brilliant periods in Islamic art. Timurid art and architecture provided inspiration to artists in lands stretching from Anatolia to India.¹³⁶ Though Timur's extensive empire itself was relatively shortlived, his descendants continued to rule over Transoxiana as leading patrons of Islamic art. Through their patronage, the eastern Islamic world became a prominent cultural centre, with Herat, the new Timurid capital, its central point. Timurid rulers were sympathetic to Persian culture and attracted artists, architects, and men of

¹³³ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 61.

¹³⁴ The Mamluk Sultanate was a medieval realm spanning Egypt, the Levant, and Hejaz. It lasted from the overthrow of the Ayyubid Dynasty until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mamluk," <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Mamluk>.

¹³⁵ Suzan Yalman, *The Art of the Timurid Period (ca. 1370–1507)*. Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.

¹³⁶ Lisa Golombek and Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992.

letters who would contribute to their high court culture. Some of these rulers were also great patrons of the arts, commissioning manuscripts that were copied, compiled, and illustrated in their libraries. Due to flourishing manuscript illumination and illustration, the Herat school is often regarded as the apogee of Persian painting (Figure 1-14).¹³⁷ The Timurid period saw great achievements in other luxury arts, such as metalwork and jade carving. This cultural efflorescence found its ultimate expression at the court of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā¹³⁸ (1470–1506), the last effective Timurid ruler.¹³⁹



Figure 1-14. Timur granting an audience in Balkh. Herat school of painting, 1467–1468, Herat (Source: <http://www.turkoteck.com>)

Many Timurid princes were also prodigious builders of religious institutions and foundations such as mosques, madrasas, khānqāhs (convents), and Sufi shrines were the

¹³⁷ Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989, 290.

¹³⁸ Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā was born in Herat in 1438 CE. He was the Timurid ruler of Herat from 1469 to 1506, with a brief interruption in 1470. This Timurid ruler, regarded by contemporaries as having raised agriculture to new heights in the Herat region, took a personal interest in agriculture and gardening. See Maria E. Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*: The Evidence from a Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli, 110-128. Brill, 1997.

¹³⁹ Lentz, Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 271.

main beneficiaries of their building programs.¹⁴⁰ Trademarks of the Timurid style were monumental scale, multiple minarets, polychrome tilework and large, bulbous, double domes. The Timurid period also witnessed women as active patrons of architecture.¹⁴¹ Along with their immediate successors, the Shaybanids, Timurid cultural tradition was also partly passed on by Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires.¹⁴²

Timurid gardening and agricultural management

Garden design was also another field in which the Timurids clearly exceeded their predecessors. Our knowledge of Timurid gardens today is limited to existing textual sources, contemporary miniature paintings and incomplete archaeological remains.

Samarqand was the first capital city established by the Timurids, transformed into a spectacular major urban centre with the aid of foreign craftsmen.¹⁴³ The city was located on an extensive plain within the vicinity of vineyards and fruit orchards, surrounded by vast green meadows. In contrast to the dry arid climate of the central Iranian plateau, there were considerable water and wetlands in the region. The city of Samarqand and surrounds were irrigated by a network of streams and channels fed from the Zarafshān River to the north of the city.¹⁴⁴ Timurids created a number of gardens which formed a unique and outstanding green belt that encircled the city of Samarqand: nothing is left of them today. However, these gardens have been explored and identified through historical accounts, travel diaries, visionary sources or miniatures and archaeological investigations.¹⁴⁵ Existing textual sources, written by a number of well-known contemporary historiographers, mention up to fifteen palaces mostly located in the gardens that once existed, surrounding Samarqand.¹⁴⁶ According to contemporary accounts and descriptions of the Samarqand gardens, they featured rectangular and square geometric areas, organized in the *Chāhārbāgh* or cross axial form.¹⁴⁷ Adopting the ancient Persian

¹⁴⁰ Lentz, Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, 36-45.

¹⁴¹ Lisa Golombek, "The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives," 142-143.

¹⁴² Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*. Brill's Inner Asian Library, 2007, 94.

¹⁴³ Thomas W. Lentz, "Memory and Ideology in the Timurid Garden" in *Mughal Gardens: Sources, Places, Representations, and Prospects*, edited by James L. Wescoat and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996.

¹⁴⁴ Behbahnai, Khosravi, "Persian Garden Between permanence and Innovation," 255.

¹⁴⁵ Donald Wilber, *Persian Garden and Garden Pavilions*. Tokyo: Charles Tuttle Co, 1962, 24.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas W. Lentz, "Memory and Ideology in the Timurid Garden," 33.

¹⁴⁷ Lisa Golombek, "The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives," 137-147; Donald Wilber, *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions*, 27-29.

prototype of the nomadic Turko-Mongol culture, this particular pattern answered the new circumstances and conditions of Timurid rulers, and brought them closer to nature.¹⁴⁸

From descriptions and references found in the Timurid account of *Zafarnāma*, written by the Timurid historian, Sharaf Al-dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, the art historian, Lisa Golombek has identified about nine gardens built and used by Timur when he returned from various military campaigns, encircling Samarqand. *Bāgh-i Bihisht* (garden of paradise), *Bāgh-i Shimāl* (garden of the north), *Bāgh-i Buland* (the exalted garden), *Bāgh-i Chinār* (the plane tree garden), *Bāgh-i Naqsh-i Jahān* (the image of the world garden), *Bāgh-i Dilqushā* (garden of heart’s delight), and *Bāgh-i Naw* (the new garden) are the most famous gardens described. They depict common features such as walled enclosures, entrance gates, pools and channels, man-made hills, shady pathways, centralized multi-storey pavilions, and lavish decorations.¹⁴⁹ These gardens were designed to create archetypes of Persian gardens, including the Mongol nomadic tradition and climatic conditions of the city of Samarqand.¹⁵⁰ Using gardens as microcosms of his conquered realms, Timur named many gardens after major cities in the Muslim world that he had conquered. These included Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Sultaniyah and Shiraz, which according to the historian, Thomas W. Lentz, represented a symbolic display of war trophies.¹⁵¹ Timur’s interest in designing complex gardens with magnificent pavilion structures and a variety of plants and horticultural activities had grown during his lifetime, notwithstanding the fact that he spent most of his life on the road and in tents during military campaigns. However, what is important here is the meaning of this garden building activity. Its importance can be interpreted as a projection of emerging Timurid imperial ideology, and creating gardens appears to have been a successful display of divine power and legitimacy.

After Timur’s sudden death in 1405, garden culture and design were continued by his descendants who ruled over most of Iran and Central Asia for the remainder of the fifteenth century. A significant achievement of the Timurids in the latter years of the dynasty was the development of agriculture and agricultural science.¹⁵² This was evident in the expansion of agriculture and horticulture, especially in the Herat region, during the

¹⁴⁸ Behbahnai, Khosravi, “Persian Garden Between Permanence and Innovation,” 255.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵⁰ Behbahnai, Khosravi, “Persian Garden Between Permanence and Innovation,” 255.

¹⁵¹ Thomas W. Lentz, “Memory and Ideology in the Timurid Garden,” 33.

¹⁵² Maria E. Subtelny, “A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context: The *Irshād al-zirā‘a* in Late Timurid and Early Safavid Khorasan.” *Studia Iranica* 22/2 (1993), 110.

reign of Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā in the late Timurid era, and recorded in the agricultural manual of *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, a primary source of this study.¹⁵³

Timurid gardens had considerable influence and impact on the art of gardening. In the autumn of 1506, not long after the demise of Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā, Zahīr al-Ddīn Muhammad Babur, grandson of Timur and the young Mughal prince, who later founded the great Mughal empire in 1526, known today as the Indian subcontinent, travelled to Herat to visit his cousins, the two recently enthroned sons of Sultān Husayn. On this visit to the monumental royal gardens and their imperial residences and pavilions, twenty of which Babur saw fit to tour as important sites, he experienced the symbolic weight of more than a century of Timurid rule and culture at a time when Herat flourished.¹⁵⁴ In his memoirs of *Baburnāma* he describes some of the most famous gardens amongst other important building sites. The gardens were often laid out on relatively small or vast, enclosed, irrigated plots of land. Fruit and shade trees, and vegetable and viticultural plantations embodied in high-walled orchard gardens often featured lavishly decorated central pavilions and basins.¹⁵⁵ Taking inspiration from the Timurid *chāhārbāgh* gardens of Herat, Babur later created similar gardens in Agra and Kabul for royal residences and camps as well as the setting for major imperial events (Figure 1-15).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ It is noteworthy that this manual was written not for the Timurids, but rather for their political successors in Khorasan; the Safavids, presented within the framework of a book of advice to Shāh Ismā‘īl, urge him to follow the same model in order to safeguard the political strength and economic stability of his new state. See Maria E. Subtelny, “A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context,” 167-217.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas W. Lentz, “Memory and Ideology in the Timurid Garden,” 31.

¹⁵⁵ Zahīr al-Ddīn Muhammad Babur, *Baburnāma (Vaqāyi’)*, edited by Eiji Mano, vol. I. Syokado, Kyoto, 1995-96, 298; *The Baburnāma :Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, translated by W.M. Thackston, Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institute and Oxford University Press. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 236-237.

¹⁵⁶ Maria E. Subtelny, “The Timurid Legacy: A Reaffirmation and a Reassessment.” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale*, 3/4 (1997): 9-19.

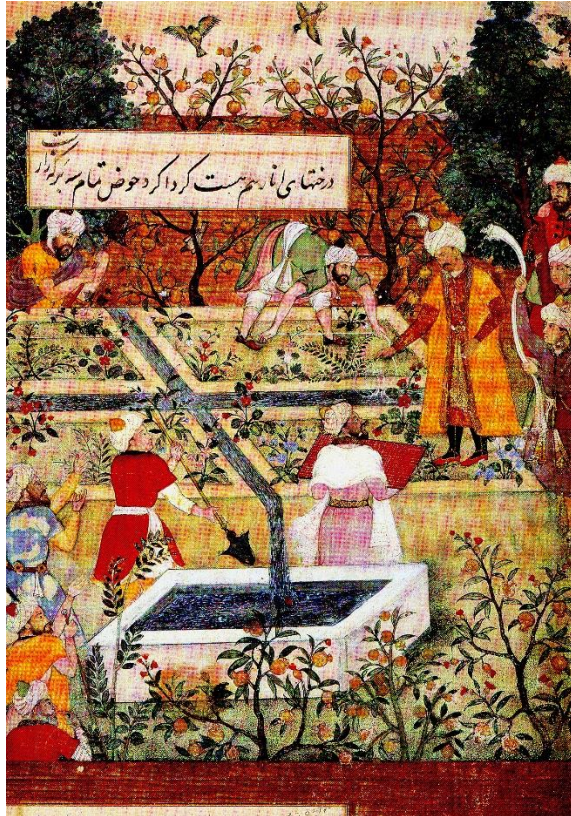


Figure 1-15. Babur’s workmen constructing a cross axial Mughal garden (a Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*)
Baburnāma, Mughal India, 1590 (Source: <https://courses.cit.cornell.edu>)

The rise of the Safavids in the sixteenth century

Many years after the Mongol invasion of Persia at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Isma‘īl, the grandchild of the great Sufi, Shaykh Safī Al-dīn Ardabīlī,¹⁵⁷ with the help of the Safavid *Qizilbāsh* army, founded and established the central government of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722) and asserted Shi’a Islam, the official religion.¹⁵⁸ Iran was

¹⁵⁷ Shaykh Safī Al-dīn Ardabīlī (of Ardabil) (1252–1334), was the Sunni Muslim eponym of the Safavid dynasty, founder of the *Safaviyya* order, and the spiritual heir and son-in-law of the great Sufi *Murshid* (Grand Master) Shaykh Zahid Gilani of Lahijan in Gilan province in northern Iran. Most of what we know about him comes from the “*Safvāt al-safā*”, a hagiography written by one of his followers. “The Oxford Dictionary of Islam,” ed. John L. Esposito. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹⁵⁸ The militant followers of the Sufi order called *Qizilbāsh* or “red headed” for the red hat (*tāj*), given to them by their preceptor, Shaykh Haydar, Isma‘īl’s father, who was a religious and spiritual mentor, a perfect guide, as well as a military overlord. Having a boundless devotion for their lord, the *Qizilbāsh* army men believed their leader’s seat as rightly passed from father to son in line with the *Shi’a* tradition. In the year 1500, Isma‘īl the thirteen-year-old son of the killed leader, Shaykh Heydar, in revenge for the death of his father, left to conquer territories in northwestern Iran. In January 1502, Isma‘īl defeated the army of Alvand Bayk of *Āq Quyunlū*, ruler of Azerbaijan, seized Tabriz and made this city his capital. The *Qizilbāsh* Safavid army continued to conquer the rest of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Khurasan; they became the strongest power in Iran, and their leader, Isma‘īl, now fifteen, was declared Shah (King) in 1502. The Safavids used the integration of Shi’ism to gain political power against the Sunni Turkomans of the western regions and later, the Tajiks and Torko-Mongols of the eastern regions. There is no wonder that once Isma‘īl conquered Tabriz, he established Twelver Shi’ism as the religion of all his subjects, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of the Tajiks professed the orthodox Sunni religion of the *Khalifas* of Baghdad, the Seljuks, and

divided between the Turcoman tribes of the *Āq Quyunlū* family in Tabriz to the west, and the direct heirs of Timur, the Jaghatay kings of Herat (shortly before the Uzbek Shaybanid conquest of Herat), before Shah Isma‘īl took control of the whole region and centralized power. Despite the long, seemingly endless conflict with the Ottomans (from the west) and the Uzbeks (from the east), and after a substantial period of turmoil in the wake of the Mongols, Safavid rulers ushered in a period of comparative peace. They were noted patrons of Persian literature, arts and customs. Safavid material culture was evident in the creation of magnificent gardens including the new urban landscapes of Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan.¹⁵⁹

Defined by Sheila Canby as the golden age,¹⁶⁰ the Safavid Empire was the second of three Islamic empires that emerged and flourished in the early period of the modern Middle East and Central Asia. Seizing almost all the territories which today comprise modern Iran and nearby areas throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the Safavid Empire was significant in defining Persian language, culture, and religious faith and identity.¹⁶¹ The best known of the Safavid kings was Shah Abbas, who ruled from 1587 to 1629. Abbas “initiated a new period in Persian architecture in which the rich, sensationally coloured and imaginative details developed by his predecessors became unified into serene and meaningful ensembles of immense scale and grandeur” (Figure 1-16).¹⁶²

the Turko-Mongols of Samarqand, Khurasan and Tabriz. See Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007, 114.

¹⁵⁹ Mahvash Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity*. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007, 113-138; Mahvash Alemi, “The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilio Petruccioli, 72-96. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997; Heidi Walcher, “Between Paradise and Political Capital: The Semiotics of Safavid Isfahan.” *Middle Eastern Natural Environments* 103 (1997): 330-348.

¹⁶⁰ Sheila R. Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501–1722*. London: British Museum Press, 2002.

¹⁶¹ Rafooneh Mokhtarshahi Sani, “A Conceptual Understanding for Teaching the History of Islamic Architecture: An Iranian (Persian) Perspective.” *ArchNet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, vol. 3, issue 1 (2009): 237.

¹⁶² Arthur Upham Pope, *Persian Architecture, The Triumph of Form and Colour*. University of Minnesota: G. Braziller, 1965, 207.



Figure 1-16. Iran and Safavid Empire territories located between two other great empires, the Ottomans and the Mughals, during the seventeenth century (Source: <http://www.iranpoliticsclub.net>)

Undoubtedly, one of the most important legacies of the Safavids is their splendid and innovative architecture, landscape design, and urbanism. Evolving in patterns, decoration and styles, traditional architecture from this period influenced architecture, garden culture, and urbanism of the following periods.¹⁶³

In the early period of the Safavid era, garden and garden making as the main elements of development in the major cities, was well discussed and considered in scientific, literary and historical works. In 1544, when Shah Tahmāsp, the second ruler of the Safavid dynasty, under attack and pressure from the neighbouring Ottoman empire, decided to move the capital of his Persian empire from the northwestern city of Tabriz to Qazvin in central Iran; he initiated what would become one of the first, greatest urban development projects in Persian history – the complete remaking of a new garden city. This innovation later paved the way for the development of the next Safavid capital of Iran, Isfahan (Figure 1-17).

¹⁶³ Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 155.

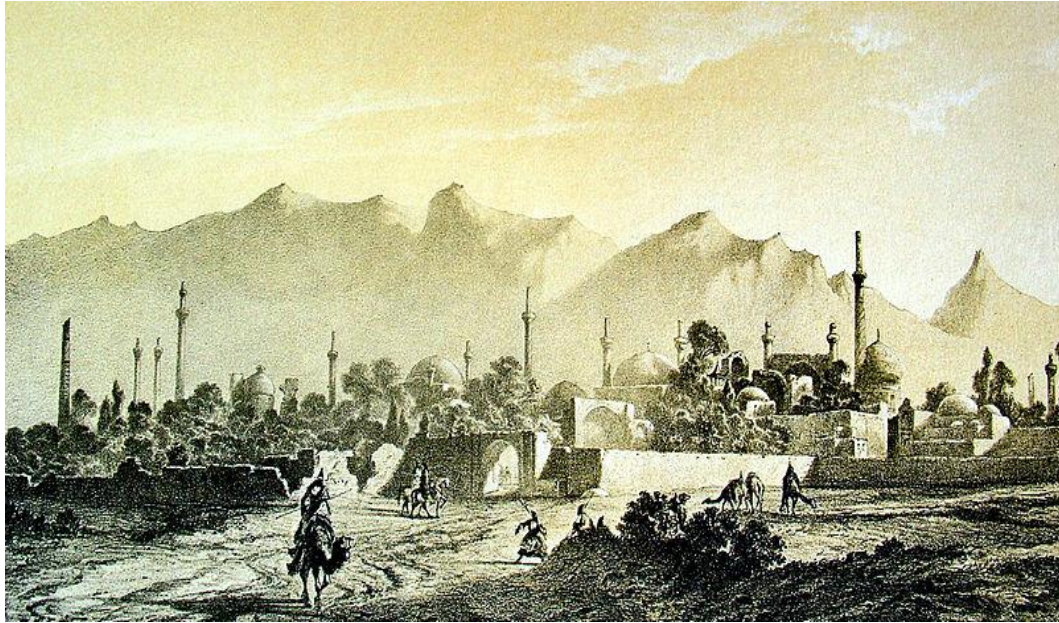


Figure 1-17. Nineteenth century drawing of Isfahan, the third Safavid capital city, by Eugène Flandin, 1840. (Source: *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851)

Persian gardens under Safavid rule

Partial evidence of the Safavid gardens and landscapes and information about their origin, settings, emergence, and evolution are available in the existing historical documents that attest to the presence of these gardens. These include reports and descriptions in local chronicles and histories of the period that mention the existence and creation of, or events that took place in, these gardens; poetic and literary sources highlight their aesthetic and ethical values; visionary sources and miniatures depict parts of the garden; drawings or descriptions by foreign travellers were occasionally illustrated with views, sketches, or plans; and traces of the gardens recently documented in archaeological investigations or old city plans.¹⁶⁴

Like the Timurids, the Safavids inherited the nomadic practices of their tribal Turkoman ancestors of moving from cool to warm places by the change of the seasons. The rhythms of pastoral nomadism dominated court life in Iran until the twentieth century. Seasonal migrations were not only a way to provide the grazing lands essential to the nomad's herds; they also served as a means to escape the extremes of heat and cold which characterize most of the Iranian plateau. However, the movements of later rulers

¹⁶⁴ Alemi, "A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran," 114.

of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were more often dictated by military operations, whether fighting external enemies or suppressing internal rebellions.¹⁶⁵

According to the architectural historian Mahvash Alemi, the tradition of hunting along established routes as well as the need to construct temporary residences in different provinces for political reasons led to the development and creation of a network of gardens and particularly along the major roads of the region.¹⁶⁶

In her analytical study of Safavid garden types and models, Alemi succinctly classified the gardens of the Safavid period into three main categories based on their shape, design, function and location.¹⁶⁷

The first type is an urban garden defined as a *dawlat khānah* or the “house of government”; which refers to grand royal complexes of courtyards and gardens, including the residence for the king and his family (the haram), or the private audiences of the king (*khalvat khānah*), as well as buildings used for official audiences (*divān khānah*), offices for administration (*daftar khānah*), and service facilities, called the *buyūtāt*. The royal facilities usually comprised baths (*hammām*), stables (*ṭavīlah*), storage areas (*sufra khānah*), kitchens (*matbakh*), workshops (*kār khānah*), and a library (*kitāb khānah*). Together, these were the basic elements of a garden-city that could vary in size depending on the importance of the urban centre in which they were constructed.

Other important public facilities such as mosques, cisterns, and bazaars were usually assembled around a vast open arena, the *Maydān*, connected and accessible to the royal complex and the court. Examples of these royal complexes are well-known in the three Safavid capitals of Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan, as well as in the smaller cities of the Safavid realm such as Khoy, Shiraz, Kashan, Mashhad, Farahābād, Ashraf, and Sari.¹⁶⁸

The second type is a more formal type of the garden: Bāgh-i Shāh (royal garden), Bāgh-i Takht (throne garden) or *Chāhārbāgh* (quadripartite garden).¹⁶⁹ These were large suburban pleasure gardens, located away from the *Maydān*, for the use of the king and the royal family. A *Khiyābān*, a straight linear promenade irrigated by a tree-lined water canal, usually connected the suburban gardens to the urban centre. The Hizār Jarīb garden

¹⁶⁵ Bernard O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design.” *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 249.

¹⁶⁶ Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” 113.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁶⁹ For more studies on this garden type see: Mahvash Alemi, “Chāhārbāgh.” In *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1 (1966), 38–45.

in Isfahan, Bāgh-i Shāh in Shiraz, and Bāgh-i Shāh at Fin in Kashan are well-known examples of this garden type.

The third garden type is the royal hunting park (*Shikārgāh*), which is a wilder type of garden created at hunting resorts; small royal palaces or pools of water were constructed in a natural landscape such as a forest or near natural waterfalls or rivers.¹⁷⁰ The best known of these hunting resorts were built by Shah Abbas I on the shores of the Caspian Sea in northern Iran.

Safavid gardening and garden making began in the first capital city of Tabriz during the rise of the first Safavid ruler Shah Isma‘īl (1501–1526). He commanded the construction of a new garden-palace in Khoy, near Tabriz, where he spent the rest of his life pursuing hunting, drinking and royal pleasures, after being defeated by the Ottomans at the devastating battle of Chaldiran in 1514. Francesco Romano, the Venetian trader who visited Persia in 1507, mentioned this royal garden-pavilion in his travel account, which Mahvash Alemi identified as the first description of this *dawlat khānah*.¹⁷¹ Romano describes it as having two lofty gates and two splendid courts that were similar to the cloisters of convents. In front of the western gate, there were three towers made of the horns of animals that the king and his men had hunted. The Persian Safavid historiographer Āstarābādī in his account *Tārīkh-i Sulṭānī*, reports that Shah Isma‘īl, in the seventh year of his reign, spent the winter in Khoy and Urumi, where he built a grand domed structure at the tomb of Imāmzāda Sahl ‘Alī, as well as a basin, *Chāhārbāgh*, and gardens at a source of water.¹⁷²

In 1524, after the death of Shah Isma‘īl, his son Shah Tahmāsp (1514–1576) succeeded his father and shifted the capital from Tabriz to Qazvin in 1544, in an effort to make the capital more secure and to avoid the attacks of the Ottoman Sultan Sulaiman.¹⁷³ With Qazvin as the new royal capital, he commenced a large urban development program, the greatest part of which concerned the gardens for his court’s residence. It developed into the famous *bāghistān*, or garden city, named Sa‘ādat ābād¹⁷⁴ which was built to the north

¹⁷⁰ Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” 113.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁷³ Suleiman I or simply Solomon as a Biblical name; (6 November 1494 – 7 September 1566), commonly known as “Suleiman the Magnificent” in the West and “*Kanuni*” (the Lawgiver) in the East, was the tenth and longest-reigning Great Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, from 1520 to his death in 1566. Under his administration, the Ottoman State ruled over 20 to 30 million people.

¹⁷⁴ Ehsan Eshraqi, “Towsif-i Dowlatkhāneh va bāgh-hāye Safavi dar Manzūmehāye Abdi Bayk Navīdī, Shā‘er-i dowrān-i Shah Tahmāsp I,” *Farhang* 68 (2008): 41-58.

of the existing city, to which it was linked through a *Khiyābān* (Ja‘far ābād) and two *Maydāns* (Maydān-i Asb And Maydān-i Sa‘ādat). These open squares were used for polo, royal receptions, and promenades by the court and the citizens alike.¹⁷⁵ Based on Alemi’s above mentioned garden typology, the garden-city of Shah Tahmāsp in the city of Qazvin can be regarded as a combination of both of the first two garden types, as the complex served as both an urban *dawlat khānah* or government house and a suburban collection of royal pleasure gardens for court residence.

After the completion of the garden city in 1557, Shah Tahmāsp moved from the old palace established by Shah Isma‘īl in Tabriz to the new palace. Celebrating this important event, the court poet and historian, ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī (1515-1580), was ordered to write an encomium of the royal garden complex in verse. He composed a poetic compendium called “Gardens of Eden” (*Jannāt-i ‘adan*) finished in 1559/60. It contained five long poems called *Khamsa*, which is a particularly interesting source for the comprehension of the aesthetic values in the Safavid period.¹⁷⁶ Describing the garden complex, a Safavid contemporary historian of Shah Abbas I (Shah Tahmāsp’s grandson), Qāzī Ahmad Qomī writes that, “the *bāgh* was square and had buildings and covered pavilions (*tālār*), porches (*iwāns*) and pools... the *bāgh* was divided geometrically.”¹⁷⁷

The Spanish ambassador and traveller to Safavid Persia, Don Garcia de Silva Figueroa, describes his audience with Shah Abbas I in the royal quarters of Qazvin on June 1618 in his memoir. The ambassador and his entourage were led through “a broad alley lined with cypress and plane trees, then in the middle and to the right they took another smaller alley heavily covered by trees and came to a very beautiful and large pool which was more than 150 yards square, in the middle of which stood a pretty pavilion open on all sides.”¹⁷⁸ Such gardens would inspire Shah Abbas’s greatest construction projects in the next capital city of Isfahan, as well as other major cities of Iran.

Gardens and their associated cultural and practical principles were a major component of the new royal city laid out by Shah Abbas I in the late sixteenth century in the suburban

¹⁷⁵ Mahvash Alemi, “The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilio Petruccioli, 72-96. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997, 73; Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 72.

¹⁷⁶ A focused detailed analysis of the Persian manual of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, describing the garden-city of Qazvin, is presented in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

¹⁷⁷ Khansari, Moghtader, Yavari, *The Persian Garden*, 72.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

fields between the old Seljuq city and the river Zayendah-rud.¹⁷⁹ Following in the steps of his father in Qazvin, Shah Abbas ordered the construction of a royal bazaar (*Qaysariyyah*) in Isfahan in 1590. According to Alemi, This new bazaar was substantial and considered to be superior to its old model in Tabriz.¹⁸⁰ At that time, the *Maydān* had a one-level arcade with shops opening directly onto it, which was later improved to a two-tiered bazaar with spacious shops and a lofty roof around the open public space of the *Maydān*. The ‘Āli Qāpū gate on the western side of the *Maydān* gave access to the pre-existing Naqsh-i Jahān square. Further urban improvements changed the feature of the *Maydān* in 1601–1602, to make it more attractive to merchants and customers. Plane trees and willows were planted, and it was surrounded by a stream that altered it into a resting place.¹⁸¹ Following these developments, the bazaar retailers had no choice but to move there from the former commercial, religious, and social heart of the city, the old *Maydān*, that was linked to the Seljuq Jāmi‘ Mosque and bazaars that had been established in the eleventh century. The new urban complex was completed by the construction of the Shaykh Lutfullāh mosque (finished in 1603) and the Shah mosque (begun in 1612), which transformed the *Maydān* into the new centre of the new capital. At the same time, these improvements of the *Maydān* brought the largest commercial and religious city activities under the gaze of Shah Abbas, prompting him to collect taxes from the newly established bazaar, and providing an audience for the ceremonial events he staged on the *Maydān* in front of the palatial gate of the new *dawlat khānah*, ‘Āli Qāpū.¹⁸²

The northern state of Mazandaran was another region which gained importance during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas, who was fond of hunting and wintering (*qishlāq*) in this prosperous region. Shah ‘Abbas created various gardens in Miyān Kalā, Astarābad, Farahābad, Ashraf, Sari, Amol, Bāghāt, and Bārforūsh.¹⁸³ These garden types varied from porticos and pavilions, located in natural sites, to garden complexes attached to existing urban centres or to new urban settlements populated by people who had been deported from Georgia.¹⁸⁴ The royal complexes were composed of a continuous network of

¹⁷⁹ Heidi Walcher, “Between Paradise and Political Capital: The Semiotics of Safavid Isfahan.” *Middle Eastern Natural Environments* 103 (1997): 330-348.

¹⁸⁰ Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” 117.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁸² Alemi, “The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models.”

¹⁸³ See: Mahvash Alemi, “Documents: The Safavid Royal Gardens in Sari.” *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre 1*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli, 98-103. Rome: Dell’oca Editore, 1996.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

gardens accessed through a *Maydān*, where certain public facilities such as cisterns, schools, mosques, and bazaars were provided. Shah Abbas considered the city of Ashraf to be his second capital, where he stayed in his royal garden complex for long periods and at times received guests and ambassadors in its gardens and pavilions.¹⁸⁵ As Alemi illustrated, these royal garden cities elucidate how the Safavid king used gardens as an urban asset to improve an existing city or construct a new one to colonize the land.¹⁸⁶

The successors of Shah Abbas, Shah Safi I (1629–1642) and Shah ‘Abbas II (1642–1666), created multiple palaces and gardens in Isfahan, attracting European merchants and adventurers to the Safavid capital, after the death of Shah ‘Abbas in 1629. The Talār-i Tavila was built by Shah Safi I in the urban precincts, where the splendid Nowruz feast of 1637 was celebrated.¹⁸⁷ He also built the Āyinah khānah palace in the suburban Sa‘ādat garden, and the New Hizār Jarīb royal garden on the southern banks of the Zayendah-rud River.¹⁸⁸

Shah ‘Abbas II was, as Alemi states, the last Safavid ruler to enrich the city with theatrical devices related to gardens.¹⁸⁹ As a part of his urban developments, a new *Khiyābān* linked the palace quarters to the royal pleasure gardens through the Hasan Bayk Bridge and to the New Hizār Jarīb garden. Although this new *Khiyābān* was wider in comparison to the one created by Shah ‘Abbas I, it lacked the substantial surrounding gardens and architectural features like the central water channel and the beautiful monumental gates of the flanking gardens.¹⁹⁰ He also added great Tālārs (a columned hall) to the ‘Āli Qāpū royal palace, the Chihil Sotoūn pavilion and the Khalvat Khānah palaces in the royal precincts.¹⁹¹

Shah Sultan Husayn (1694–1722) was the last Safavid ruler to commission a monumental suburban pleasure garden called Farahābād to the south west of the Zayendah-rud River. As Alemi states: “It was, the architectural outcome of a dynastic folding inward that started after Abbas I, undermining the base of royal power and

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 100-101.

¹⁸⁶ See: Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*, 113-137. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007.

¹⁸⁷ Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” 117.

¹⁸⁸ Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy,” 132.

¹⁸⁹ Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” 118.

¹⁹⁰ Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy,” 132.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 132.

preparing the ground for the Afghan crisis and the collapse of the Safavids. The royal garden, which under the first Safavids had been a political proclamation, found itself reduced in Farahābād to no more than the shadow theatre of a court, and its destruction meant the fall of the Safavid dynasty.”¹⁹²

1.3 Persian literature in the context of the Safavid era

Known as one of the greatest and oldest literature of mankind, Persian literature has its roots in surviving works of Middle Persian and Old Persian, the latter of which dates back as far as 522 BC (the date of the earliest surviving Achaemenid inscription, the *Behistūn* inscription). However, though much of the pre-Islamic material has been lost, the bulk of surviving Persian literature comes from the times following the Islamic conquest of Persia in 650 CE.¹⁹³

Persian literature and the school of Islamic theology

Islamic civilization encountered major questions in confrontation with other intellectual societies including Iranian, Jewish and Christian. The questions that religious intellectuals were asked were mostly revolved around the topics of monotheism (*tuwhīd*), determinism (*jabr*) and free will (*ikhṭiyār*), the probability of seeing God, and existence and principality. These important questions needed explanation, reasoning and argumentation to unite Muslims’ primary beliefs. Based on their attitude in responding to these questions, Islamic scholars were divided into two main groups. Some picked elucidation and reasoning, while others employed explanation, narration and tradition. However, these groups totalled seventy sects among them Shi‘a, Mu‘tazilah and Ash‘ariyah, the main sects in Iran. Iranian influential writers and poets, who mostly followed these three sects in their religious beliefs, naturally reflected them in their works, which generally laid the foundations for theology and ideology of Iranian literary men.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” 135.

¹⁹³ Arthur John Arberry, *The Legacy of Persia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953, 200.

¹⁹⁴ Ahmad Tamimdari, *The Book of Iran: A History of Persian Literature: Schools, Periods, Styles and Literary Genres*, translated by Ismail Salami. UK: Alhoda, 2002, 33.

Shi'ism as the state religion

Shi'ite or Shi'a communities are those who consider Imām Ali as the legitimate successor of Prophet Muhammad. Their active presence Shi'ite goes back to the formative period of Islam.¹⁹⁵

Safavids played an important role in making Shi'ite Islam the official religion in Iran, even though they were not the first rulers in Iran who practised Shi'a. There were large Shi'a communities in some cities like Qom and Sabzevar as early as the eighth century. During the tenth and eleventh centuries the *Buwayhids*, the *Zaidīyyah* branch of Shi'a, ruled in Fars, Isfahan and Baghdad. As a result of the Mongol conquest and the relative religious tolerance of the Ilkhanids, Shi'a dynasties were re-established in Iran and the most important was *Sarbidārān* in Khorasan. The Ilkhanid ruler, Oljāitū, converted to Twelver Shi'ism in the thirteenth century.¹⁹⁶

During the rule of Shah Isma'īl I, the first Safavid ruler, it was mandatory for the Sunni population to convert (Figure 1-18). The Sunni clergy (*Ulemā*) were either exiled or killed.¹⁹⁷ Isma'īl I brought in mainstream *Ithnā'ashariyyah* Shi'a religious leaders and in return for devotion, awarded them money and land.¹⁹⁸ The Shi'a *Ulemā* gained more power during the Safavid and Qajar periods, and they either became independent of, or compatible with, government.

Iran became a feudal theocracy: the Shah was held to be the divinely ordained head of state and religion. In the centuries that followed, this religious stance cemented both Iran's internal cohesion and national feelings and provoked attacks by its Sunni neighbours.¹⁹⁹

Persian literature and poetry during the Safavid period is greatly influenced by Shi'ite thought, as this period played an important role in the development of Shi'ism, and the presence of major Shi'a literary masters brought about a surge in Shi'ite theology and mysticism.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, translated by Sayyid Husayn Nasr, 24. New York: State University of New York Press, 1975.

¹⁹⁶ Nikki R. Keddie and Yann Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*. Yale University Press, 2006, 19.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13, 20.

¹⁹⁸ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, translated by Carol Volk. Harvard University Press, 1994, 170.

¹⁹⁹ Keddie and Richard, *Modern Iran*, 11.

²⁰⁰ Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009, 191.



Figure 1-18. The declaration of Shi'ism as the state religion of Iran in 1501 by Shah Isma'īl: "On Friday, the exalted king went to the congregational mosque of Tabriz and ordered its preacher, who was one of the Shi'ite dignitaries, to mount the pulpit. The king himself proceeded to the front of the pulpit, unsheathed the sword of the Lord of Time, may peace be upon him, and stood there like the shining sun." (Source: Saied Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imām*, The University of Chicago Press, 1984)

Safavids and literature of medieval Persia

Literature and poetry of the Safavid period represented the continuity of its previous schools and periods.²⁰¹ A new style was adopted by the internal atmosphere of Iran in the fourteenth century. Most vernacular governments under direct or indirect influence of Mongol rulers were disjointed and transformed into small native governments. The upheaval once again led to destitute people of tranquility and there were not many powerful patron Viziers who supported science and literature comparable to the preceding century.²⁰² Superstition prevailed over philosophical thinking, and the people surrendered their lot to destiny and found consolation in submission. Therefore, gnosis and mysticism became popular and spread across the Indian sub-continent.²⁰³ As a matter of language, Mongol terms gradually prevailed and in the absence of any kind of organizations to support poets, they mostly followed the style of the poets of the twelfth and thirteenth

²⁰¹ Ehsan Yarshater, "Persian Literature, 1500-1900 (from the Safavids to the dawn of the Constitutional Movement)." In *A History of Persian Literature*, vol.7. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, 43.

²⁰² Saied Nafisi, *Tārīkh-i nazm-o nathr dar Iran va dar zabān-i Farsi*, vol.1. Tehran, Forūghī, 1984, 182.

²⁰³ Tamimdari, *The Book of Iran*, 55.

centuries. As a result they gravitated towards ineffective literal arts and exposition such as enigma, historical materialism and riddle. The vestiges of this instability in literature resulted from Mongol subversion, only to survive in later centuries. This state of affairs originated in the early years of the Mongol invasion and continued through to the mid-fourteenth century.²⁰⁴

In the latter part of the fourteenth century during the time of Timur Bayk Gūrkhānī (known as Tamerlane) (r. 1370–1405), Iranian society was not negatively impacted, compared to the Mongol period, bearing in mind that Timur was Muslim, and he and his troops had relatively developed the city's dwellings. Timur's son, Shāhrukh, had played an important role in the transformation of Persian literature and development of Persian arts. He was one among others, who founded the school of painting and other schools of Islamic arts in Herat.²⁰⁵ The attention paid by the sons and grandsons of Timur to the Herat region resulted in the revival of the Khorasan region by virtue of its proximity to Herat.²⁰⁶

Thus, the region owed its brilliant high point to the Timurid era. The new styles adopted by Herat artists were followed during the Safavid era. In fact, the arts and sciences of Herat during the reign of Sultān Hussayn Bāyqarā became the provenance of a new objective and reflective change in Iran. The poetry of this period is simple and conversational. It was divorced from the court and permeated diverse classes in society.²⁰⁷

The poetry and literature of the fifteenth century witnessed change due to the patronage, support and encouragement of Timurid princes that bestowed their art and literature. The poetry of the first half of the fifteenth century is a prelude to the Indian style (*Sabk-i Hindī*) in Persian poetry, which was intended to dominate the literary regions in the following centuries and interpolate between the literature of the Safavid era and that of the Timurid era. Not only literature but other fine arts underwent a transformation during this era. Furthermore, throughout the following centuries under Safavid reign, religious literature, especially Shi'a literature through panegyrics and eulogies of the family of the prophet, became widespread and reached its peak. Persian authors, who tended to write scientific manuals and handbooks in Arabic prose, started to write about

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 56.

²⁰⁵ Suzan Yalman, *The Art of the Timurid Period (ca. 1370–1507)*, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000. 64.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.

²⁰⁷ Tamimdari, *The Book of Iran*, 58.

religious subjects in the fifteenth century. As a result of the Mongol tradition in Iran which flourished and continued in the Safavid era, historiography was also given considerable attention in this century.²⁰⁸

The establishment of the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century, the most prominent Persian empire after the emergence of Islam, was a noteworthy occurrence in the history of Iran. Shah Isma‘īl, the son of Sultan Haydar, whose lineage traced back to Shaykh Safi Al-dīn Ardabīlī, the popular mystic, was enthroned in 1501 in Tabriz. Conquering key areas in Iran, Shah Isma‘īl declared Shi‘ism as the official religion of the territory and did his utmost to propagate and spread Shi‘ism.

Due to political turmoil and discord among various parties including heated clashes with external enemies (e.g. the Ottomans in the west and the Uzbeks in the east), Safavid monarchs paid less attention to literary men and poets than the preceding periods, with the exception of religious literature, which they oppressed for propaganda purposes. This disfavour resulted in migration of literary men and poets to Mughal central Asia and Ottoman regions, especially India.²⁰⁹ The Ottoman Turks, contemporaries of the Safavids, were well-established and ruled in Asia Minor and to the east; in Mughal India the grandsons of Timur were on the throne. The influx of Arabic speaking scholars in Iran caused foremost religious works to be written in Arabic, while general religious guidebooks and instruction were being written in Persian.²¹⁰ Narrative literature underwent considerable change during this century. In the early sixteenth century, the main theme of narrative literature was the imitation of the great Persian poet, Nizāmī Ganjavī.²¹¹ In addition to those imitative *Maṣnavīs*,²¹² new *Maṣnavīs* were composed.²¹³

With the expansion of Safavid power, Persian literature did not undergo considerable change throughout the seventeenth century. As a result of the dominant religious Safavid government, the social and political atmosphere of the country had adopted an obsessively religious form. The main cause for migration of poets and artists to India and

²⁰⁸ Nafisi, *Tārīkh-i nazm-o nathr*, 229.

²⁰⁹ Mehdi Dashti, “Farāz va foroūd-i shi‘r-i Farsi dar asr-i Safavi.” *Zabān va adab-i Parsi* 13. Tehran, 2000, 105-106.

²¹⁰ Tamimdari, *The Book of Iran*, 60.

²¹¹ Zabihullah Safa, *Tārīkh-i adabīyāt-i Iran*, vols. 1-5 (Tehran, Quqnuq, 2006), 584.

²¹² *Masnawi* or *Mathnawī* is the name of a poem written in rhyming couplets, or more specifically, "a poem based on independent, internally rhyming lines". Most *Mathnawīs* followed a meter of eleven, or occasionally ten syllables, but had no limit in length. *Mathnawīs* have been written in Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Urdu cultures.

²¹³ *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, to be read in detail in the fifth chapter, can be considered among these new *Masnawīs* composed in the same structure as Nizami’s *Khamsa*, but different in theme and subject matter.

the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century resulted in the migration of poets and artisans in the seventeenth century. The Safavid government, with its focus on consolidating political power, paid little attention to poetry and literature, and the same attitude was adopted for poets and literary masters.²¹⁴

During the seventeenth century, Isfahan, India and Ottoman territories encouraged the practice of artists, literary and religious men, *Ulemā* and clerics, especially in the Indian sub-continent, flourished under Mughal emperors. Indian style, the best known poetic style of this period, excelled in meaning through the invention of new and complex topics, piquant imagination, and the transmission of adage and conciseness. Among popular literary genres of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the “religious epic,” which experienced a revolution in response to the religious political environment. Religious epics were generally the biographies of saints and chiefs of religion and their structure was given more status in Iran, India and Asia Minor.²¹⁵ However, during the sixteenth century the most prevalent poetry style was somewhere in the middle, between Iraqi style (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries) and Indian style (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries), known as the ‘hypotyposis’ style which dominated literary regions of Isfahan and India for a century.²¹⁶ The linguistic structure of this poetry style is created by the introduction of common everyday words and erroneous sentences. From a literary point of view, poets lean towards simplicity. They are not bound to complex literary methods, but instead use simile, metaphor and figurative expression.²¹⁷

Shahrāshūb genre or urban topographical poetry in the Safavid literature

Pre-modern Persian poetry was largely produced in an urban environment, and the poets, whether associated with a royal court or a mystical bent, had a special relationship with the city in which they practised their skill.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Dashti, “Farāz va froūd-i shi‘r-i Farsi dar ‘asr-i Safavi,” 104.

²¹⁵ Tamimdari, *The Book of Iran*, 62.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

²¹⁸ Sunil Sharma, “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 2, vol. 24. Duke University Press, 2004, 73.

Shahrāshūb is a useful term, often employed in the discussion of Persian poetry about cities and landscapes, and considered more often a *Topos*²¹⁹ than a literary genre.²²⁰ This type of poem was practiced in the fifteenth century and continued to be in vogue during Safavid power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The term *Shahrāshūb* means: “city disturber” and generally describes a charming and fascinating beloved who seditiously disturbs a city. This genre has also been applied to different terms, such as: *Shahrangīz*, *Ālamāshūb*, *Dahrāshūb* and *Jahānāshūb* (the world disturber).²²¹ According to Ahmad Golchin Ma‘ani’s study on *Shahrāshūb* in Persian poetry, this genre basically consists of two types of poem: a complex set of poems composed to laud and praise or vilify and slander a city or region and its people, or poems describing common trades, crafts or craftsmen of a city and/or region.²²² The first type of Persian poetry was often composed in the *Qasida*²²³ or *Maṣnavī* genre and the second type was usually composed in the *Rubā‘ī*²²⁴ genre.²²⁵

The *Shahrāshūb* was originally an appellation for a beautiful beloved in a lyric poem, but also a short, bawdy lyric addressed to a young boy engaged in a trade or craft, who coquettishly offers his wares to the love-struck poet.²²⁶ One of the earliest and oldest instances of this kind of poetry is found in the Poetic collection (*dīvān*) of Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān,²²⁷ whose *Shahrāshūb* poems, although replete with useful information on the

²¹⁹ *Topos*, in Latin *locus* (from *locus communis*) is referred in the context of classical Greek rhetoric to a standardised method of constructing or treating an argument. The technical term *topos* is variously translated as “topic,” “line of argument” or “commonplace”. Ernst Robert Curtius expanded this concept in studying *topos* as “commonplace”: reworking of traditional material, particularly the descriptions of standardised settings, but extended to almost any literary meme. See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, translated by Willard R. Trask, 80. New York: Pantheon Books, 1953.

²²⁰ Sunil Sharma, “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape,” 73.

²²¹ Ahmad Golchin Ma‘ani, *Shahrāshūb dar Shi‘r-i Farsi* (Tehran, Amirkabir, 1967), 3.

²²² Ahmad Golchin Ma‘ani, *Shahrāshūb dar Shi‘r-i Farsi*, 2-3, 88-90.

²²³ *Qasida* is a form of Perso-Arabic lyric poetry. The classic form of *Qasida* maintains a single elaborate metre throughout the poem, and every line rhymes. It typically runs more than fifty lines, and sometimes more than a hundred. The genre originates in Arabic poetry and was adopted by Persian poets, where it developed to be sometimes longer than a hundred lines.

²²⁴ *Rubā‘ī* is a poetry style used to describe a Persian quatrain (a stanza or poem of four lines), or its derivative form in English and other languages. The plural form of the word, *Rubā‘īyat*, is used to describe a collection of such quatrains. There are a number of possible rhyme schemes to the *Rubā‘īyat* form. In Persian verse, the *Rubā‘ī* is usually written as a four-line (or two-couplet) poem, with rhymes at the middle and end of each line.

²²⁵ Ahmad Golchin Ma‘ani, *Shahrāshūb dar Shi‘r-i Farsi*, 2.

²²⁶ Sunil Sharma, “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape,” 73.

²²⁷ Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān was an eleventh century Persian poet of the Ghaznavid empire, known as the prisoner poet. He was born in 1046 in Lahore to wealthy parents from Hamadan, present-day Iran. His father, Sa‘d bin Salmān, was a great Persian ambassador who was sent to India by Ghaznavids. Mas‘ūd was born there and he was highly learned in astrology, hippology, calligraphy, literature, and Arabic and Indian languages. In 1085 he was imprisoned in the fortress of Nay, for his complicity with Sultan Ibrahim's

crafts and trades prevalent during this time, represent a metaphorical city and are not localized. Also included in his versifying of the multifarious fabric of a utopian metropolis are beloveds distinguished not only by a trade or craft, but also by their membership in a religious community (Hindu, Christian, etc.) or by a distinctive physical characteristic (curly hair, a squint, etc.).²²⁸ With the rise of major urban centres of Persianate culture from the fifteenth century onwards, this kind of poem became a unified work specifically written for a city and ruler named therein. By providing a catalogue of young boys cheerfully engaged in their sundry professions, the poet attempts to convey a sense of the dynamic and complex structure of society in which everyone, including the poet himself, has an assigned role. Relatively speaking, most scholars have emphasized the socio-historical value of the *Shahrāshūb*. Such poems provide information on a multitude of professions and crafts in various cities and in historic times, as evidenced by Mehdi Keyvani's statement, "For knowledge of the technical and social affairs of crafts and trades in the Timurid and Safavid periods, the *Shahrāshūb* literature is a valuable source because it mentions tools and technical terms used in different crafts and the traditions and characteristic customs of particular guilds."²²⁹

son, Mahmud. He was released in 1096, when he returned to Lahore and was appointed governor of Chalander. Two years later, continual political changes resulted in a prison stay of eight years, with his release in 1106. The last years of his life were spent in high favour. Most of his best poems were written in the Nay prison.

²²⁸ Sunil Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape," 73.

²²⁹ Mehdi Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1982, 197.

Part II

The Science of Gardening:

Irshād al-zirā‘a

Chapter 2
Horticulture and the Science of Gardening
in the Early Safavid Period

2 Horticulture and the Science of Gardening in the Early Safavid Period

2.1 Botanical progress and horticultural activities of the early Safavids

As one of the oldest examples of landscape design, the Persian garden, not being excluded from that inordinately emphasised ideological concept of “garden as an earthly paradise,” is often cited in the scholarly literature as an aesthetical and spiritual entity offering the immediate functions of restoration, leisure and joy.²³⁰ Nevertheless, the recent wave of contemporary historical scholarship has provided deeper insight into the reality of medieval Persian garden environments and their crucial role as the main setting for economic, cultural, social and political affairs by exploring the relevant historical accounts and chronicles, among them the primary sources in this study: *Irshād al-zirā‘a* and *Jannāt-i ‘adan*.²³¹ Gharipour, in his article on the multifunctionality of medieval Persian gardens, addressed the frequently referred to medieval or pre-modern Persian gardens in historical chronicles. He noted that the formal pleasure gardens of medieval Persia were not only conceived as dynamic spaces that accommodated diverse functions in social and political events, but inseparable, vibrant objects of the social and urban life

²³⁰ See A.U. Pope, A. Daneshvari and J. Gluck, eds. *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present: Prehistoric Times to the End of the Sassanian Empire*. Mazda Publishers, 2005; Penelope Hobhouse, Erica Hunningher and Jerry Harper, *The Gardens of Persia*. Kales Press, 2004; Elizabeth B. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden: In Persia and Mughal India*. London: Scholar Press, 1980; Mehdi Khansari, M.R. Moghtader and Minouch Yavari, *The Persian Garden: Echoes of Paradise*. Mage Publishers, 2004; Yves Porter and Arthur Thévenart, *Palaces and Gardens of Persia*. Flammarion, 2003; Sussan Babaie, “Paradise Contained: Nature and Culture in Persian Gardens.” *The Studio Potter* 25, no. 2 (1997).

²³¹ Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013; Mohammad Gharipour, “Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure; Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia.” *Journal of Garden History* 39, no.3 (2011), 249-62; Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007; Mahvash Alemi, “The Garden City of Shah Tahmāsp Reflected in Words of his Poet and Painter.” In *Interlacing Words and Things: Bridging the Nature-culture Opposition in Gardens and Landscape*, edited by Stephen Bann. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012; Maria E. Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh: The Evidence from a Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli. Brill, 1997; and not least Maria E. Subtelny, “A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context: The *Irshād al-zirā‘a* in Late Timurid and Early Safavid Khorasan.” *Studia Iranica* 22/2 (1993).

of the cities as well as economical agricultural enterprises.²³² The information and descriptions in such historic manuals reveal that even the royal Persian gardens, or those devoted to restoration or pleasure, still intended to produce agricultural crops for private or public use. Thus the restorative or rejuvenating functions of those gardens did not conflict with their economic or productive use.²³³ The agricultural prosperity of the gardens of the late Timurid period during Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā’s (1438–1506) reign is illustrated in the Timurid account of *Rawzāt al-jannāt*, as the author, Isfīzārī, addresses the abundance of fruit, such as grapes or watermelons, indicating that high yields would be sold in the town and supplied to the region.²³⁴ This productivity, being the main source of income, an important aspect of the various functions of Persian gardens is emphasised in Navīdī Shīrāzī’s *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, as the poet devoted a full volume of his compendium to describing horticultural yields and fruits of the early Safavid Sa‘ādat ābād imperial pleasure gardens.²³⁵ (Figure 2-1)

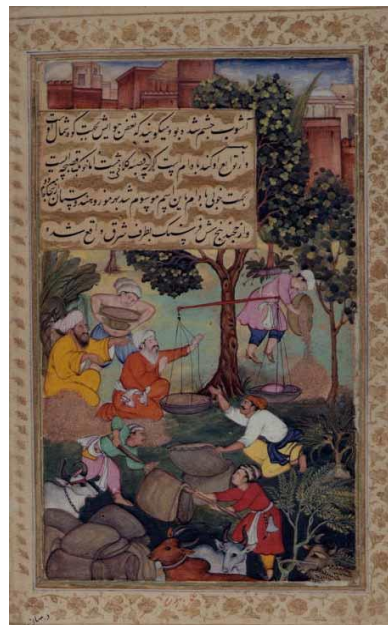


Figure 2-1. Harvesting the almond crop at Qand-i Badam. An illustration from the memoirs of Emperor Babur. Illustrator: Bhawani. India, 1590 (Source: <http://www.columbia.edu>)

²³² Gharipour, “Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure,” 252.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 252.

²³⁴ Written by the Timurid historian Isfīzārī, this account is one of the important historiographies on the Khurasan region during the reign of the prominent Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, narrating the history of Herat between the years 1321–1470. See Mo‘in al-dīn Mohammad Zamchi Isfīzārī, *Rawzāt al-jannāt fī Awsāf-i madīnat al-Herat*, vol.1, edited by Mohammad Kazem Emam, Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tehran, 1960.

²³⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlas*. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1979.

Gharipour explains that even Persian garden terminology replicates dual functionality. The Persian term *bāgh* which literally means garden, for example, refers to both pleasure gardens and agricultural fields.²³⁶ The frequent usage of this term in both *Irshād al-zirā‘a* and *Jannāt-i ‘adan* is another indication of the early modern Persian garden as an inseparable part of agricultural economy as well as the political stability of the state.

The late Timurid agronomical handbook of *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, like any other similar historic agricultural manual of the Islamic realm, offers abundant information on various types of cultivated plants and agricultural goods, such as fruit trees, flowers and ornamental plants, aromatic plants, and medicinal and kitchen herbs. Moreover, Abū Nasrī, based on his declaration in the manual’s introduction, was employed as an agricultural accountant and surveyor in one of the major endowed religious foundations, the shrine of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī at Gāzurgāh near Herat, which is revealing in relation to Timurid innovative agricultural experimentation.²³⁷ According to Subtelny’s study on Timurid agriculture, those endowed institutions were turned into huge agricultural establishments supervised by professional managers, surveyors and recorders, financial auditors and accountants.²³⁸ This was where Abū Naṣrī wrote his agricultural manual *Irshād al-zirā‘a* and probably other scholarly works including the informative treatise *Tarīq-i qismat-i āb-i qulb*, specifically written on water distribution methods and agricultural irrigation patterns in the Herat region and its nine neighbouring districts based on mathematical and geometrical sciences.²³⁹ The Timurid gardens and similar agricultural organizations of the eastern Khurasan region, owing to the arid regional climate, were generally the output of an intensive irrigation agricultural system under the supervision of the state due to the organization of its systematic irrigation network and governmental investment.²⁴⁰ According to Subtelny, the medieval gardens

²³⁶ Gharipour, “Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure,” 253.

²³⁷ Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” edited by Muhammad Mushiri. Tehran: Tehran University, 1996, 8.

²³⁸ Maria E. Subtelny, “A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context,” 189-194.

²³⁹ Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, *Risāla-i tarīq-i qismat-i āb-i qulb*, ed. Mayel Hiravī. Tehran: Bonyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1968.

²⁴⁰ See R.G. Mukminova, “The Timurid States in the Fifteenth and Seventeenth centuries.” In *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* (vol. 4, part 1), edited by M.S. Asimov and C.E. Bosworth, 356. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1992; Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*. Brill’s Inner Asian Library, 2007, 122-28.

served as botanical laboratories for vegetal observations and examination of new species.²⁴¹ (Figure 2-2)



Figure 2-2. The original systematic irrigation network in the seventeenth century Safavid Fin garden in Kashan, central Iran (Source: <http://www.gardenvisit.com>)

Taking into account the detailed, diverse agronomical data provided in Abū Naṣrī's treatises, from his practical information on the science of gardening to his examples of the agrarian patronage of prominent Timurid rulers and nobles (e.g. Shāhrukh Mīrzā and Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā) and their interest in and attitude toward agriculture and garden making,²⁴² it can safely be concluded that the early modern Persian gardens could be used in many cases for agricultural and botanical experimentations, and for examination or introduction of new types or species.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Maria E. Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*: The Evidence from a Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual." In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli. Brill, 1997, 110.

²⁴² Abū Naṣrī in his guidebook quotes from the gardeners about the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh Mīrzā's experience in pepper cultivation in his imperial garden of *Bāghcha-i Lakandī*. See Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 197. In the following part Abū Naṣrī states how the Timurid Sultan, Husayn Bāyqarā, taught the gardeners how to ward off worms from plane trees in his Jahān-ārā royal garden. Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, *Irshād al-zirā'a*, 198.

²⁴³ Maria E. Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*," 110.

These historical scholarly investigations confirm that, even in the realm of agronomy and agriculture, medieval Persian gardens could accommodate a variety of purposes such as utilitarian and economical, horticultural and floricultural, ornamental, experimental, botanical and even medicinal.²⁴⁴

2.2 The late Timurid-early Safavid period and agricultural economy

The importance of agriculture and the manuals of advice

The economy of the early Timurid period was undoubtedly affected by Timur's destructive campaigns over conquered territories. Although agricultural and agronomy details from this period are still unknown, the flourishing agricultural economy through expansion of land under cultivation over the following decades were aided in several cases by the construction and development of water canals such as the the *Jūy-i Sultāni* in the north of Herat.²⁴⁵ The Safavids were in many aspects the direct inheritors of the Timurids. Similarly, the basis for the Safavid domestic economy was both agricultural and pastoral. The agricultural economy of this era was to a large extent based on cultivation and taxation of agricultural crops and products, and not surprisingly was subject to the principal restraints of climate and water supply.²⁴⁶

On the other hand, the medieval Turk and Turko-Mongol rulers of Persia with a long held nomadic lifestyle avoided the sedentary life and agricultural practices which had been the basis of Iranian societies since ancient times.²⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly the economic and political importance of agriculture and peasantry life was not appreciated by them, as their nomadic economic mainstays were raiding and plunder.²⁴⁸ The historian, Roger Savory, attributed the nature of early Safavid society to two main races at both higher (governmental) and lower (public) levels: Turks and Tājiks (the original Iranians). At

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 110.

²⁴⁵ The construction of this water canal was, according to Wliber and Glombek, the greatest topographic invention of the Timurid period in Herat region by a vizier of Sultan Abu Sa'id Mirzā. However, it was after the death of Abu Sa'id and under the reign of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā that Herat flourished and greatly expanded with newly offered agricultural and irrigation opportunities brought about by this development. Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, vol. 1 Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, 16, 27.

²⁴⁶ Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*. Cambridge University Press, 1980, 186.

²⁴⁷ Ilya Pavlovich Petrovsky, *Kishāvarzi va monāsibāt-i arzi dar Iran ahd-i Mughal*, vol. 1, translated by Karim Keshavarz. Tehran: Nīl, 1967, 70.

²⁴⁸ Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*. Brill's Inner Asian Library, 2007, 103.

governmental and administration level there were two divisions, the *Qizilbāsh* Turks “men of the sword” and the Tājīks “men of the pen.”²⁴⁹ Likewise there was a dichotomy between the Turcoman nomadic tribes, who were cattle breeders living apart from the surrounding population on the plains and pasture lands, and the Persian Tājīk peasants who were settled farmers living in villages (Figure 2-3).²⁵⁰

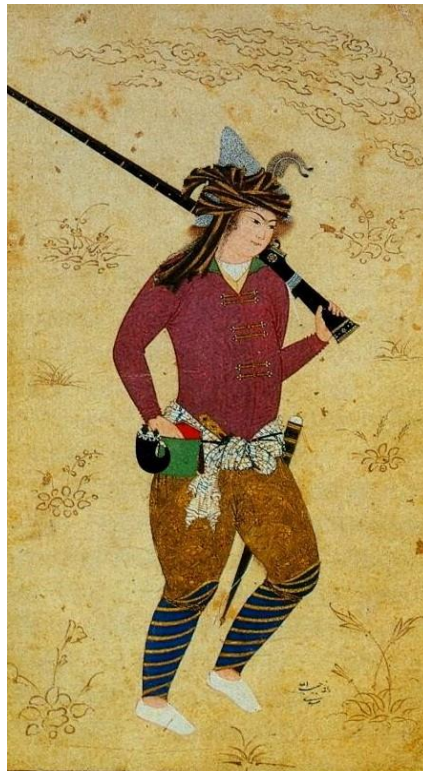


Figure 2-3. A Persian Safavid *qizilbāsh* musketeer in the seventeenth century, Berlin Museum of Islamic Art (Source: <http://greatestbattles.org/Persia/ShahAbbas>)

In this setting, while agriculture remained the base of the economy, the crucial role agriculture played in sustaining the state’s stability had to be notified to the ruler, wealthy property owners and men in power in the governmental class.²⁵¹

This approach led to the compilation of manuals of advice on the theory and practice of government, composed and written by native Iranian religious and bureaucratic intellectuals. The role of this essential instructive literature, which usually contained a wide range of agronomic and land management information, was to highlight the rulers’

²⁴⁹ Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, 186.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁵¹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 103.

or their military elite's responsibilities toward the Tājīk peasantry, who were the basic producers of the state's income and profit.²⁵²

Having a long tradition in Persian culture dating back to the Sassanian books of advice or *andarz*, this genre of literary work is often cited in the scholarly literature as "mirrors for princes."²⁵³ According to Subtelny, the main point of this genre was to state the dependency of the "political stability" upon the ruler's "practice of justice" (*'adālat*), which in ancient Persian conceptions "was understood not only as a philosophical notion or legal abstraction, but as the maintenance of equilibrium (*i 'tidāl*) in a hierarchically structured society based on four functionally distinguished classes."²⁵⁴

At the lowest level were the peasants, the principal producers of agricultural products and as a result the state's wealth and prosperity. Therefore, as the chief producers of income, the peasantry supported the military, the mainstay of political power and the instrument of the ruler's punitive capability (*siyāsat*), by which social and political order was maintained. For the peasantry to maximize its productive potential, it depended on the ruler's justice in key areas of taxation and personal security. As over-taxation often provoked the peasants to flee their lands, political unrest necessarily had a negative impact on agricultural production. Thus based on Subtelny's example, the main theme of this literary genre of "mirrors for princes" was encapsulated in the famous maxim, the circle of justice: "No kingship without the army, no army without revenues, no revenues without agricultural development, and no agricultural development without the king's justice."²⁵⁵ Those words have clearly and explicitly verbalized the fundamental role of agriculture and served to ensure the strength of medieval society by intellectual authors. Moreover, highlighting the role of religion, the authors of the manuals of advice usually referred to the spiritual benefits accrued by the ruler who promoted agriculture, citing Qur'anic verses or prophetic traditions. For example, in the late Timurid agricultural manual of Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī, the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, the author hints at the prophetic phrase: "this world is a field sown for the hereafter."²⁵⁶

Subtelny introduces several medieval examples of the genre in her study of Timurid history, such as the early eleventh century manuals of *Qābūs nāma*, *Siyāsat nāma* and

²⁵² Ibid., 104.

²⁵³ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 104.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 105.

²⁵⁵ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 104. Also see Ann K.S. Lambton, "Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship," in *Studia Islamica*, vol. 17 (1962).

²⁵⁶ Abū Nasrī Hīravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 25-26. Also see Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 105.

Nasihāt al-mulūk, and *Nasā'ih-i shāhrukī* and *akhlāq-i muhsinī*.²⁵⁷ However, one of the best examples of this literary genre is the late Timurid-early Safavid agricultural manual of *Irshād al-zirā'a*, composed in the early sixteenth century and completed in 1515 in Herat in eastern Khurasan (northwest of Afghanistan, eastern Iran and southern Turkmenistan today). Written and recorded during a time of political instability and agrarian deterioration after nomadic Uzbek invasions of the Khurasan region; Abū Nasrī Hiravī has incorporated an advanced agronomic system threatened by both leadership and climate change. Completed during the reign of the first Safavid ruler, Shah Isma'īl, and dedicated to him in the author's declaration, this record is a conservative response to economic decline and political anarchy under corrupt *qizilbāsh* commanders. *Irshād al-zirā'a*, as Abū Nasrī's last efforts and hopes to revive the state's past glory, is presented as evidence of the main accomplishments of the late Timurid period in the political economic sphere, retelling the highly developed state of agronomy and science of agriculture to the incoming Safavid men in power.²⁵⁸

The most famous Persian agricultural manuals of medieval times

An in-depth understanding of Safavid gardens and their design does not seem possible without considering the science of agronomy and gardening in medieval Persia and beyond. Fortunately, there is abundant practical horticultural, botanical and even astronomical information in some remarkable Persian agricultural manuals about different plants, trees, cereals, fruits and flowers, vegetables and herbs, which were cultivated in the region of greater Iran through the pre-Islamic period to early modern times.

The early Islamic literature on agronomy traces back to Hellenistic or Latin sources or from their already existing translations to Syrian or Pahlavi (middle Persian). While according to Jakobi most of this literature resembles earlier pan-Islamic Greek or Latin antiquity texts in both structure and presentation, the origin of the collective data on actual

²⁵⁷ Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 103-110. For more on this genre see Ann K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes," In *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government*, vol.vi. London: Variorum, 1980, 419-442; Idem, "Reflections on the Role of Agriculture in Medieval Persia." In *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, edited by A. L. Udovitch, 283-312. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1981.

²⁵⁸ Maria E. Subtelny, "The Timurid Legacy: A Reaffirmation and a Reassessment." *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 3/4 (1997): 9-19.

natural and regional practices and observations remains ambiguous.²⁵⁹ However, during the later Islamic periods this agricultural literature was exceeded by editions based on experimental firsthand studies and observations of native plants.²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, in recognizing the Persian contribution to the Islamic literature on agriculture, some of the best known agricultural literature is briefly introduced below.

The oldest known agricultural manual in Persian is *Varznāma*, which is actually a translation of the Greek *Eklogai* (or *Geoponica*) by Cassianus Bassus Scholasticus (late sixth to early seventh century)²⁶¹, translated by an unknown Persian writer.²⁶² The translation of the Greek original text to Pahlavi originates no later than the seventh century, while according to its editor, Hasan Atefi, the Persian version belongs to the Samanid era (during the tenth century) due to its authoring style.²⁶³ This old Persian manuscript consists of twelve sections and each part is divided into several sub-chapters.²⁶⁴ There are two Arabic translations of the text available, one from the original Greek text known as *Al-Filāha al-rūmīyya*, and the other from the Pahlavi version of the original *Eklogai*.²⁶⁵

The other important historic Persian manual, which can provide some valuable information to re-visualize medieval Persian agriculture and gardening for the particular region of present-day western Iran (today Iraq) is *Al-ahyā va Al-Āsār*. This unique Persian manual was written by the prominent Ilkhanid vizier and distinguished statesman, historian and physician, Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓllulāh Hamidānī, in twenty-four volumes, which contain diverse material in different fields, such as agronomy and agriculture,

²⁵⁹ Jurgen Jakobi, "Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience: The *‘Irshād al-zirā‘a*" of Qāsim B. Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī." In *Timurid Art and Culture*, edited by Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992, 202.

²⁶⁰ D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 31.

²⁶¹ Cassianus Bassus, called Scholasticus (lawyer), was a member of a group of writers on agricultural subjects at the end of the sixth, beginning of the seventh century. He compiled from earlier writers a collection of agricultural literature. Dedicated to his son Bassus, his work was entitled *Eklogai peri georgias* or "Selections on farming". The original Greek text of Cassianus Bassus has been lost, but some of the contents have survived as part of a collection entitled *Geoponica*, finished about the year 950 and dedicated to the emperor, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. See Hugh Chisholm, "Bassus, Cassianus." In *Encyclopedia Britannica* 3 (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press, 1911, 498.

²⁶² Jurgen Jakobi, "Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience," 202.

²⁶³ Iraj Afshar, "Fihristnāma-i ahamm-i mutūn-i kishāvarzi dar zabān-i Farsi," *Āyanda* 8/10 (Tehran, 1983): 686.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 686.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 687.

cultivation, farming, meteorology, apiculture, entomology, architecture and mining.²⁶⁶ Composed and completed during the reign of the Mongol ruler (*Ilkhān*), Ghāzān Khan in thirteenth-century Ilkhanid Persia; this notable source provides considerable firsthand information on the science of gardening and horticulture in pre-modern Persia, dating back to about two centuries before the rise of the Safavid dynasty.²⁶⁷

Another published Persian manual on agronomy is mainly known as “*dar ma’rīfat-i ba’zī umūr ki ahl-i filāhat rā bi kār āyad.*” It consists of twelve chapters and appendix, known as “*Davāzdah bāb dar ‘ilm-i filāhat.*”²⁶⁸ Based on Afshar’s study there is no trace of the author’s name or information on existing manuscripts of the text, except a newly discovered manuscript by Afshar in 1983, in which the name of the author is given as ‘Abd al-‘Ali Bīrjandī.²⁶⁹

However, whether this is mainly based on firsthand cultivation experiences or just a facsimile of an older prior literature, *Irshād al-zirā‘a* remains one of the best examples of agronomic literature among similar medieval Persian texts.²⁷⁰ Analysing, studying and interpreting this significant manual are the main foci of this chapter and the next. These chapters will examine the extent to which this manual can reconstruct an early Safavid garden with its dominant physical features based on agricultural prescription and suggested layout.

2.3 *Irshād al-zirā‘a* and the making of early Safavid gardens

²⁶⁶ This manual is also known as and entitled “*Al-āsār va al-akhbār*”. Its author, Rashīd al-Dīn, was later commissioned by Ghazan Khan to write the *Jamī al-Tawārikh*, now considered the most important single source for the history of the Ilkhanid period and the Mongolian Empire. He retained his position as a vizier until 1316. After being charged with poisoning the Ilkhanid king Oljeitu, he was executed in 1318.

²⁶⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn was, according to Afshar, so into cultivation and agricultural activities in addition to his several endowed foundations in Tabriz that he constructed two flourishing gardens, *Rashīdīyya* and *Nuzhat-ābād* in that city, and employed some cultivators and gardeners from Yazd to develop them. Therefore, it is reasonable to regard a considerable part of his agronomic record as actual firsthand observation. See Iraj Afshar, “Fihristnāma,” 688.

²⁶⁸ There are two different published editions of this text, the first belongs to ‘Abd al-Qaffar Najm Al-Daula around the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the second by Ahmad Reza Yavari in 1980-81. Yavari blames the writer of “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*” for copying several passages from the mentioned text of “*dar ma’rīfat-i ba’zī umūr...*”; however, Jakobi refutes this claim by giving some examples, claiming these two treatises were established independently. See Jakobi, “Agriculture between literary tradition and firsthand experience,” 205.

²⁶⁹ Iraj Afshar, “Fihristnāma,” 692.

²⁷⁰ Subtelny considers the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* as the most important medieval agronomic work after Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Al-āsār va al-akhbār*. See Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 117.

Khurasan, the Timurid capital and agricultural context

Irshād al-zirā‘a recorded the rich agricultural potential and highly advanced urban culture of the Herat region, the last capital of the Timurid empire, in the heart of the large, eastern Iranian province of Khurasan. The agriculture of the urban oases of Khurasan, and particularly that of Harir-rūd valley, had been intensive and specialized since earliest times.²⁷¹ Hamdullāh Mustaufī, the fourteenth-century historiographer and geographer, described the region as the “gem in the centre of the necklace linking Iran and Turān.”²⁷²

The city of Herat reached its greatest splendour under the Timurid monarchs, especially under Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā (1438–1506) who ruled Herat from 1469 to 1506.²⁷³

The systematic expansion of irrigation networks by constructing new water distribution canals and highly advanced hydro-agriculture management during the late Timurid period and particularly under Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā, afforded the best conditions for agricultural development, economic prosperity and population growth.²⁷⁴ According to Subtelny, by the second half of the fifteenth century, Herat was inseparably connected to its surrounding rural districts, and densely built suburbs had become an expanded and populated urban agglomeration, corresponding to the model of the rural-urban continuum of medieval Islamic city studies.²⁷⁵ This flourishing productive city, along with Khurasan’s long history of Islamic religious scholarship and cultural patronage of Persian high art and literature, made the region a popular and desirable place to live or visit for people and nobility. Babur, who established the Moghul Empire and

²⁷¹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 114.

²⁷² Hamdullāh Mustaufī Qazvīnī, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, edited by Mohammad Dabir Siyaqi. Tehran, 1958, 181-96.

²⁷³ Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā was born in Herat in 1438. He was the last prominent Timurid ruler of Herat from 1469 to 1506, with a brief interruption in 1470. In 1501 the Uzbeks, who had conquered Transoxiana for good from the Timurid Babur, under Muhammad Shaybani, could now threaten Khurasan. Suffering from the effects of advanced age, despite Babur’s persuasions to act against them, Sultan Husayn made no move. The Uzbeks began conducting raids into Khurasan. Finally, changing his mind, Sultan Husayn started marching against them, but he died in 1506 just short of beginning his advance. The inheritance of the throne was disputed between his sons, Badi‘uzzaman Mirzā and Muzaffar Husayn Mirzā. Babur, who had begun a journey in support of Husayn, noted the struggle between the two brothers that made the region impossible to defend and he retreated. The following year, in 1507, the Uzbeks under Muhammad Shaybani conquered Herat and made Husayn’s successors flee, ending Timurid rule in Khurasan. Three years later, after much fighting, the city was taken by Shah Isma‘īl, founder of the Safavid dynasty, in 1510 and the Shāmlū *qizilbāsh* assumed the governorship of the area. See *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, translated by W.M. Thackston, Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford: The Modern Library, 1996; Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 43-52.

²⁷⁴ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 114-132.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

who travelled to Khurasan shortly after Sultan Husayn’s demise in 1506, describes Herat and his eagerness to see the area in his memoirs of *Baburnāma*: “I really wanted to see Herat, which had no equal in all the world and which during Sultan Husayn Mirzā’s reign had been adorned and decorated ten, nay twenty times over.”²⁷⁶ (Figure 2-4)

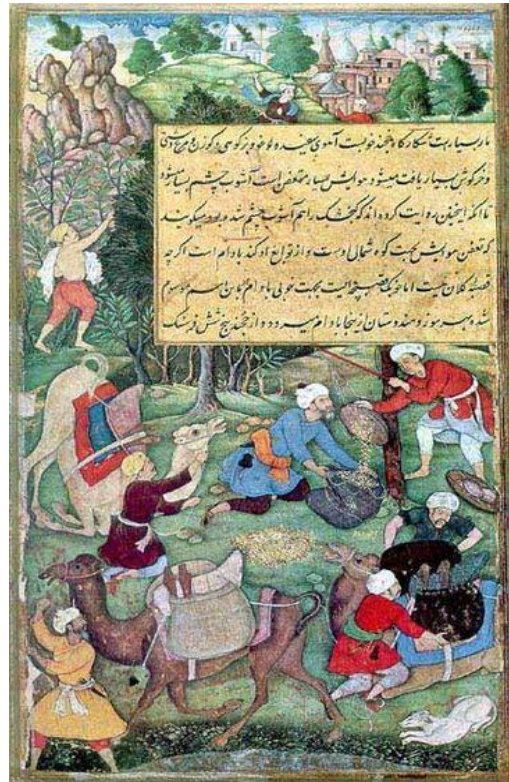


Figure 2-4. Agricultural activities depicted in the memoirs of Emperor Babur. Weighing and transport of almonds at Qand-i-Badam (literally means village of the almond, for the excellent quality of the almond crop) located more or less between Samarqand and Andizhan. Illustrator: Sur Das, India, 1598 (Source: <http://museums.artyx.ru>)

During his inspiring stay, Babur, the landscape historian, was confronted by the symbolic burden of more than a century of Timurid rule, glory and culture in Herat at a time when the city flourished.²⁷⁷ Babur reports on his sightseeing tour around Herat during his stay in the capital; he names the most famous gardens of the area amongst various important buildings and places visited. Those gardens were often laid on relatively small or vast

²⁷⁶ *The Baburnāma :Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, translated by W.M. Thackston, Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institute and Oxford University Press. New York, Oxford: The Modern Library, 1996, 225.

²⁷⁷ Thomas W. Lentz, “Memory and Ideology in the Timurid Garden.” In *Mughal Gardens: Sources, Places, Representations, and Prospects*, edited by James L. Wescoat and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, 31. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996.

enclosed irrigated plots of land, usually including fruit, vegetable and viticultural plantations embodied in walled orchard gardens with often central pools and pavilions, referred to by the term *bāgh*: Bāgh-i ‘Alī Shīr Bayk,²⁷⁸ Bāgh-i Nazargāh (spectacle garden), Bāgh-i Khiyābān (avenue garden), Bāgh-i Zāghān (raven’s garden), Bāgh-i Naw (new garden), Bāgh-i Zubayda, Bāgh-i Safīd (white garden), Bāgh-i Jahān-ārā (the world adorning garden) and Bāgh-i Shahr (town garden).²⁷⁹ (Figure 2-5)



Figure 2-5. Babur being entertained by his cousin, Badi ‘uzzamān Mirzā, the son of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, during a royal feast at Bāgh-i Jahān-ārā during Babur’s visit to Herat in the last years of Timurid reign in 1506. Illustration of *Baburnāma*, late sixteenth century, India (Source: <http://museums.artyx.ru>)

²⁷⁸ Belonging to Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Navāī, the great Timurid amir and Sultan Husayn’s intimate poet and patron of art and architecture, this garden was located west of Gāzurgāh, and was the first to be irrigated by the Jūi-i Sultanī, described as the most elaborate establishment in the area. He also erected extensive religious, charitable complexes including madrasa, khanqah, Friday masque, bath, hospital, his tomb and his quarters, which Babur names in *Baburnāma* as places he had visited in Herat. (Sadly almost all of the significant gardens and monumental buildings that the Timurids built in Herat and nearby surrounds have vanished, and in some cases a few archeological remains have survived.) See Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, 28; *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 231.

²⁷⁹ *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 229-231.

Although some plots in this garden catalogue were built during the Kart Maliks, the local government of Herat before Timur's conquest of Khurasan, and the Timurids already had a long tradition of garden making before Sultan Husayn's reign²⁸⁰ (e.g. Bāgh-i Shahr, Bāgh-i Safid and Bāgh-i Zāghān);²⁸¹ however, the construction of many major garden projects date back to Sultan Husayn's thirty-seven-year reign. After taking the throne in 1469, for example, he was involved in the construction of Bāgh-i Jahān-ārā which replaced Bāgh-i Zāghān as the new imperial residence and official royal court. It was a vast garden, approximately 275 acres (440 *jarībs*), built near the Gāzurgāh complex, northeast of the city walls.²⁸² (Figure 2-6)

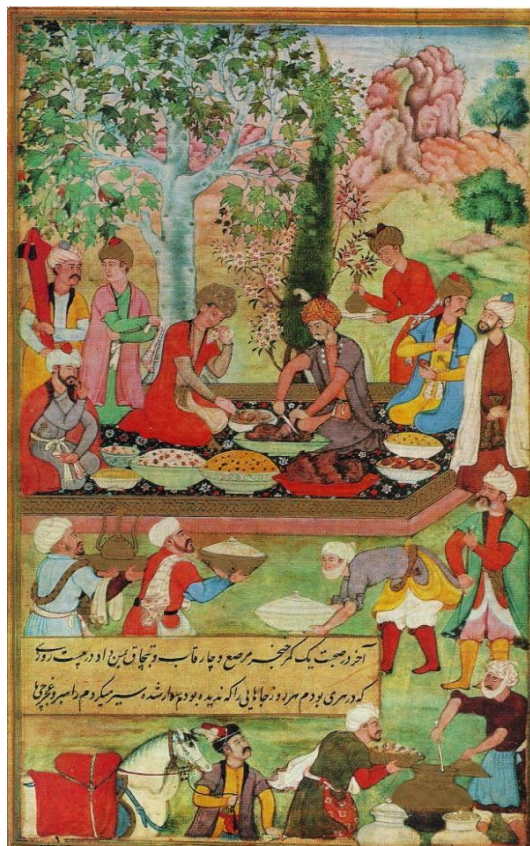


Figure 2-6. Another illustration of *Baburnāma* depicting Babur being hosted by his cousin Badi 'uzzamān Mirzā, during a royal reception in Bāgh-i Jahān-ārā. *Baburnāma*, late sixteenth century, India (Source: <http://indian-heritage-and-culture.com.au>)

²⁸⁰ Some of the listed gardens already existed in the environs of Herat by the time Sultaan Husayn came to power, such as Bāgh-i Shahr, Bāgh-i Safid and the most important of all, the Bāgh-i Zāghān, which became the royal residence, seat of government and symbol of Timurid sovereignty by Shāhrukh Mirzā after transferring the capital from Samarqand to Herat in 1411. See Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, 26-27; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 131.

²⁸¹ Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, 26.

²⁸² Khvādamīr, *Tarikh-i Habīb al-siyār*, ed. Jalaluddin Humaii, vol. 4 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Khayyam, 1954), 196.

This multiplicity of existing gardens and agricultural activities, together with Sultan Husayn's personal interest in agriculture and gardening, truly reflect the greatly advanced garden making culture as well as his horticultural and agricultural patronage and investments during the last years of Timurid rule.²⁸³ This innovative Timurid attitude towards agriculture and this high culture of gardening during the reign of the last prominent Timurid Sultan, Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, was summed up by Abū Nasrī Hiravī in his introduction to the agricultural manual *Irshād al-zirā'a* or "guidance on agriculture".

Irshād al-zirā'a, dedicated to the first Safavid ruler and conqueror of Herat, Shah Isma'īl, was compiled as the previously discussed medieval literature genre of "mirror for princes," focusing exclusively on agriculture for the establishment and empowering of an unbroken and stable political state.²⁸⁴ Compiled during barbaric invasions, power transition and economic and political turmoil that ensued from the new *qizilbāsh* emirs corruption in the Herat region in 1515, took place nine years after the demise of Sultan Husayn and the collapse of the Timurid state in Khurasan. It would appear that Abū Nasrī argued convincingly for the re-establishment of agricultural activity under the sponsorship of the new Safavid ruler, providing him at the same time with a precise record of the agricultural practices of the Herat region under Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā and his agricultural expertise (Figure 2-7).²⁸⁵

²⁸³ The Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, is regarded by contemporaries as having raised agriculture to new heights in the Herat region. According to different historical sources, he took a personal interest in agriculture, and even gardening. See Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid *chāhārbāgh*," 110.

²⁸⁴ Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 114.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.



Figure 2-7. A portrait of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, from an early illustrated manuscript, attributed to Bihzād (Source: <https://en.wikiart.org>)

Abū Nasrī Hiravī

Like many other medieval historiographers and writers, information about Abū Nasrī, author of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, is based on autobiographical notes found in his introduction to the text. Unfortunately, the literary sources of the time, for instance the *Tadhkira* literature, do not mention Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī or any of his literary works and texts.²⁸⁶ Therefore, the only data available is based on his own accounts of his life and work, directly or indirectly. The author introduces himself in the introduction or *Muqaddimah* as “Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī.” The title or *Nisba* of “Hiravī,” which

²⁸⁶ “*Tadhkirah*” is the Arabic term for “memorandum” or “admonition”. It is frequently used in Persian and Turkish literature as part of the title of literary works on the nature of authoritative collections or summaries for a collection of lives, most frequently those of poets, but also of saints, shaykhs or calligraphers. A *Tadhkirah* of poets gives a brief biography and examples of each author's work. *Tadhkirahs* are one of the most remarkable and widely expanded biographical literary works. *Tadhkirahs* as an important and inseparable part of manuscripts are of great interest and value in Persian literature, and they seem to have been the only means of preserving and disseminating poetry and works of literature over time. See Ahmad Golchin Ma'ani, *Tārīkh-i Tadhkirah-hay-i Farsi*, vol. 1. Tehran: Sanaie, 1970; Hossein Mottaghi-far, *The Traditions of Persian “Tadhkirah” Writing in the 18th & 19th Centuries and its Bibliographies*, Ph.D. Dissertation. Russia: Saint Petersburg Academy of Culture, 1997.

means “from Herat”, is mentioned in both existing editions of the text.²⁸⁷ The author adds that he is the descendant of Shaykh Abū Naṣrī Tabasī, well known as *Pīr-i Herat* (the sage of Herat).²⁸⁸ In a part which comes later, the author also mentions that his ancestor, Abū Naṣrī Tabasī, is buried in the village of Irāva in the province of Tabas-i Gilaki.²⁸⁹ He adds that his family originally came from the village of Bābk in the province of Zāva (today’s Turbat Haydariyyah, south of Nishabour in Khurasan).²⁹⁰

Pointing to his faith, Abū Naṣrī indicates that he is a Twelver Shi‘a by briefly referring to all of the twelve Shi‘a Imāms in seventeen verses of poems.²⁹¹ He mentions the first Imām of Shi‘a faith, ‘Ali ibn-i Abi Tālib, four times in the introduction, mentioning him as the “inventor” (*Mukhtari‘*) of “higher arithmetic” (*‘ilm-i Sīyāq*), who according to Jurgen Jacobi: “fits the Shi‘a’s notion of Ali as the model of an enlightened thinker rather than a cleric.”²⁹² Jacobi is suggesting that Abū Naṣrī’s frank confession of his Shi‘a faith does not appear to acknowledge the new Shi‘a masters, the Safavids.²⁹³ However, the author displays his poetic talent in about forty verses of panegyrics to the first Safavid

²⁸⁷ Based on the information provided in the Mushiri’s editor’s introduction of the text, there are two main published editions of this historic manual, both published in Tehran. The former was collected and prepared by ‘Abd al-Qaffār Najm al-Daula, the Persian scholar and historian, around the early twentieth century in 1905, and the latter by Muhammad Mushiri in 1966 to 1967. Considering the information in Mushiri’s edition, the first edited collection (Najm al-Daula’s edition) is missing the introduction of the author as well as some parts from the final chapter. Also it has summarized or omitted some of the original contents. While Najm al-Daula had no access to the introduction of the text, he names the author of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* as Fazil-i Hiravī, which means the “scholar from Herat”. However, in Moshiri’s edition the author is directly named as Qāsim Ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Naṣrī, so apparently the title of Hiravī is added later. See Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” editor’s introduction, 1; Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, *Irshād al-zirā‘a, Tasnīf-i fazil-i Hiravī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qaffār Najm al-Daula (Tehran: Majmu‘a-i ‘ilm-i irani dar zirā‘at va filāhat va bāghbāni va ghayra, 1904-1905); Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 202.

²⁸⁸ Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

²⁸⁹ Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 28.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁹¹ Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

²⁹² Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8. Also see Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 202.

²⁹³ As Jakobi addressed, indeed, the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* was completed in 1515, just nine years after the demise of the last great Timurid ruler with his capital of Herat, Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā. In 1513, at the latest two years before the completion of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, the Safavids had gained decisive influence in Herat and eastern regions; however in spite of the late date, the splendour of the Timurid era is still last on when Abū Naṣrī praises the Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā as: “the shining light at the dinner table of the Timurids, Sultan Husayn”. Abū Naṣrī even mentions the names of the great Timurid rulers, Shāhrukh Mirzā and Abū Sa‘id Mirzā, but not the Safavid Shah Isma‘il or his son Tahmāsp, who was the local governor of the Herat region in 1515, or any other representatives of Safavid or Shaybanid power. In Jakobi’s justification, the religious life under the Timurids had prominent Shi‘a features so far as the veneration of the prophet’s family (*ahl-i al-bayt*), to which the Shi‘a Imams belong was common. See Jakobi, “Agriculture between literary tradition and firsthand experience,” 203-204; Abū Naṣrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 48.

king, Shah Isma‘īl (without directly mentioning his name), who had already gained decisive power over Herat at least two years before *Irshād al-zirā‘a* was composed.²⁹⁴

In his own declaration about his occupation, Abū Nasrī indicates he was an architectural surveyor or accountant (*Sāyīq*). In his words, he had “chosen the seclusion from the disloyalty of the world and the seditious unmerciful people.”²⁹⁵ Nevertheless Abū Nasrī was employed at (or perhaps had retired to) the shrine complex of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī at Gāzurgāh, northeast of Herat.²⁹⁶ (Figure 2-8) His responsibilities as a *Sāyī* as Subtelny suggested was the financial management of the agricultural products that belonged to the endowed, cultivated lands of the shrine complex.²⁹⁷ This profession, according to Subtelny, was a popular job choice among the younger population of the Herat region, due to the expansion of agricultural activities and endowments, which required expertise and duties in a wide range of related areas. Some of Abū Nasrī’s responsibilities, as an accountant and bookkeeper, were estimating crop yields, assessing taxes, and surveying, which required practical understanding of mathematics, geometry and astronomy.²⁹⁸ This has been supported by the fact that Abū Nasrī was also the author of several other handbooks on mathematical and geometrical calculation, among them the aforementioned manual on irrigation systems of Herat and surrounding districts entitled *Risāla-i tarīq-i ghīsmat-i āb-i qulb*.²⁹⁹ The author mentions he was engaged in the science of *Sīyāq* (*‘ilm-i Sīyāq*), invented by the first Imām of Shi‘a faith, ‘Alī ibn-i Abī Tālib.³⁰⁰ Jorgen Jakobi refers to Charles Storey’s translation of *‘ilm-i Sīyāq* as “higher arithmetic.” Subtelny translated the term as “science of accountancy script.”³⁰¹ However, Iraj Afshar

²⁹⁴ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 6-7.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁶ According to Maria Subtelny, the shrine complex of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī at Gāzurgāh was one of the other similar important religious sites and major endowed foundations located at Gāzurgāh, Mazar-i Sharif, Mashhad, and other major cities, transferred into large-scale agricultural establishments, run by groups of professional managers, accountants, and financial auditors. It is no coincidence that Abū Nasrī, the author of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, wrote his agricultural work at the shrine of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī northeast of Herat, where he was employed as an agricultural accountant, crop register and surveyor. See Maria E. Subtelny, “The Timurid Legacy: A Reaffirmation and a Reassessment.” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale*, 3/4 (1997), 9-19.

²⁹⁷ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 142.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁹⁹ Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, *Risāla-i tarīq-i qīsmat-i āb-i qulb*, ed. Mayel Hiravī. Tehran: Bonyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1968.

³⁰⁰ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

³⁰¹ Jorgen Jakobi, “Agriculture between literary tradition and firsthand experience,” 207; Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 142.

points out that according to Rashīd al-Dīn Hamidānī, intimate knowledge (*rasīdagī*) of agriculture is part of *'ilm-i Sīyāq*.³⁰²



Figure 2-8. The internal courtyard of the shrine complex of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī in Gāzurgāh, north-east of Herat, today Afghanistan (Source: <https://archnet.org>, Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme)

Sīyāq is often used together with the term *Tarh*, which means layout or design, and which also refers to the actual grid plan laid out by an architect or surveyor.³⁰³ In another application of this term, Abū Nasrī has titled the chapter eight, the last chapter of the treatise on the *chāhārbāgh*, as “*bi sīyāq-i bāghbānī*”, which means: according to (or in style of) a symmetrical landscape plan.³⁰⁴ Therefore in addition to the first meaning of an occupation or “system of notation or accounting,” *Sīyāq* could also be used to mean “according to” or “style of”. However, the Mughal emperor, Babur used the term in his memoirs of *Baburnāma* “to give order to” or “to straighten up” when he refers to his act of straightening a winding watercourse in Bāgh-i Kalān in the village of Istalif: “Outside

³⁰² Iraj Afshar, “Fihristnāma,” 694.

³⁰³ According to the Dehkhoda Persian dictionary, the term *sīyāq* has some different meanings such as: to expel, to agonize, approach or method, and also accounting science (there is also another term “*khat-i sīyāq*” which refers to a specific type of characters or hand writing which accountants used to write their figures, numbers and calculations with), the latter of which is most relevant to Abū Nasrī’s intent. According to Subtelny’s study on the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, this term used by Abū Nasrī confirms he was an architectural surveyor or accountant (*Sāyīq*), as she points to the association of two terms, *sāyīq* and *tarh*, which mean layout and design. Maria Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid *chāhārbāgh*,” 111.

³⁰⁴ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

the garden are large plane trees, with pleasant, shady green spots at their bases. A one-mill stream flows constantly from the middle of the garden. On the banks of the stream are plane and other trees. The stream used to run higgledy-piggledy (*Kaj va Bī-Sīyāq*) until I ordered it to be straightened (*Bar vajh-i Sīyāq*). Now it is a beautiful place.”³⁰⁵ (Figure 2-9)

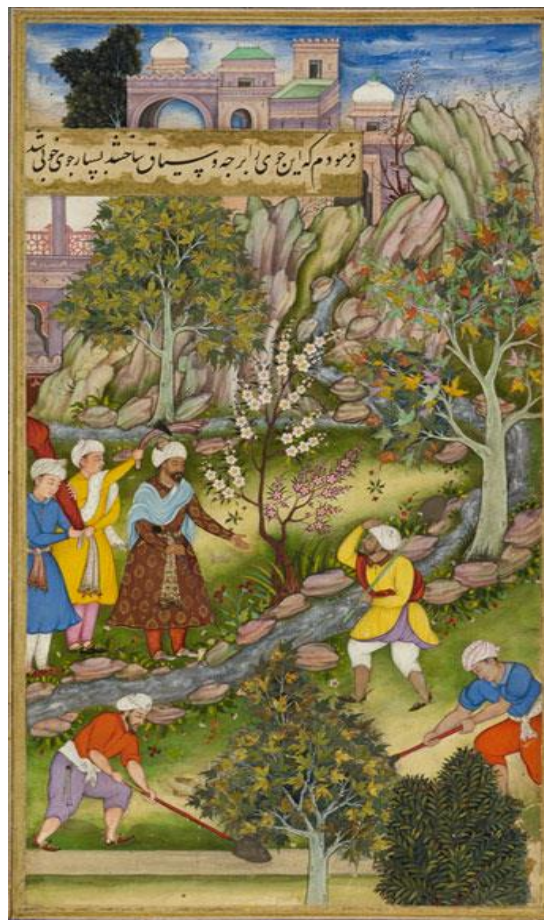


Figure 2-9. Babur watching men altering the course of the stream at Istalif so it flowed in a straight line, illustration in the memoirs of Emperor Babur. Illustrator: Mahesh, India, 1504 (Source: <http://www.columbia.edu>)

In the following section, Babur explains how he ordered a stonemade basin around a natural spring called Khāwja Si-Yārān to be built: “I had the spring surrounded with stonework plastered and mortared into a ten by ten pool, such that the four sides would form straight (*bi Sīyāq va Gūniyā-dār*), symmetrical benches overlooking the entire grove of Judas trees.”³⁰⁶ (Figure 2-10)

³⁰⁵ *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 162.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

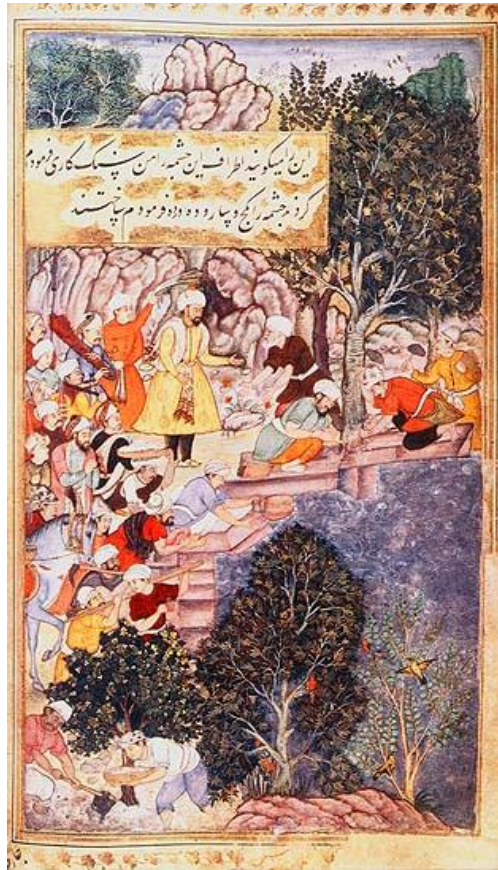


Figure 2-10. Babur watching men constructing a platform by the altered stream, illustration in the memoirs of Emperor Babur. Illustrator: Ramdas, India, 1504 (Source: <https://depts.washington.edu>)

This explanation of the term *Sīyāq* as “giving geometrical shape, harmony and order,” and its association with the term *Tarh* (design), also confirms Abū Nasrī’s position as a member of (or assistant to) a qualified team of designers and landscape architects under the supervision of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā’s chief agronomist and landscape architect, Sayyid Nizām al-Dīn Amīr Sultān Mahmūd, better known as Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās.³⁰⁷ (Figure 2-11)

The historian, Jorgen Jakobi, regards the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* as part of the Islamic literary tradition of works on agronomy based ultimately on Graeco-Roman, Syriac, or Pahlavi sources, while the author has not mentioned any earlier sources he may have based his work on.³⁰⁸ However, other historians, such as Afshar and Lambton, were of the view that Jakobi’s work was influenced by similar earlier agronomic works such as the tenth

³⁰⁷ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 45, 109.

³⁰⁸ Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 202-205.

century Arabic “*al-Filāha al-nabatīya*” by Ibn-i Wahshīya or “*dar ma’rīfat-i ba’zī umūr ki ahl-i fīlāhat rā bi kār āyad*” by an anonymous Persian writer.³⁰⁹ Although it is still arguable as to whether Abū Nasrī compiled his work based on firsthand agricultural experience and knowledge, what is confirmed is that (as mentioned in the third chapter of his manual) in assembling the work and its agricultural data, he consulted crop registers,³¹⁰ as well as people qualified in agricultural materials and science, and garden and landscape designers such as the aforementioned chief agronomist and landscape architect, Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās.³¹¹

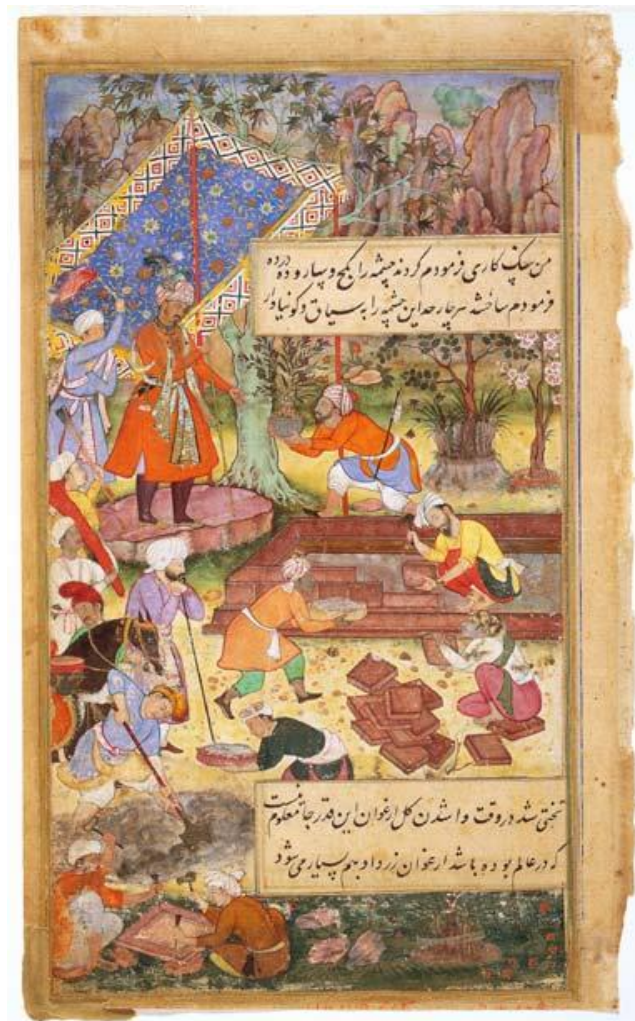


Figure 2-11. Another scene of Emperor Babur watching men constructing a stonework platform on the course of a stream at Istalif, illustration in the memoirs of Emperor Babur. Late sixteenth century, India (Source: <https://depts.washington.edu>)

³⁰⁹ Ann K. S. Lambton, “Aspects of Agricultural Organisation and Agrarian History in Persia.” HO I, 6/1 (Leiden and Cologne, 1977), 161; Iraj Afshar, “Fihristnāma,” 691-692.

³¹⁰ Abū Nasrī Hīravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 92.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45, 109.

By any means, the figure of Abū Nasrī as an important member of a large agricultural enterprise, the shrine complex of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī, the author of informative guidebooks on agriculture and irrigation management, and an assistant to his superior, Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā’s chief agronomist, hydrologist and landscape architect, Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās, can be regarded as embodying a link between the management of irrigation agriculture and record-keeping in Timurid Iran.³¹²

Structure and contents

Based on Abū Nasrī’s own statement of purpose, the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* is specifically about nine districts or *Bulukāt* of the Herat region, reflecting the agricultural practices in Khurasan during the reign of the last Timurid ruler of Herat, Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā (Figure 2-12).³¹³ Subtelny regards this manual as the most important medieval Persian agronomic work after the thirteenth century *Al-ahyā va Al-Āsār*.³¹⁴ She also credits the manual as an invaluable historical source of Timurid agriculture due to its localized nature.³¹⁵ Moreover, according to Jakobi’s study of the text, this notable manual is regarded as the “best known” and “most important medieval agronomic work in Persia so far discovered.”³¹⁶ Although the bulk of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* literature is mainly prose, some parts are presented in verse, both in the introduction and main body of the work. This combination of prose and poems was according to Ruggles not only to make the information easy for memorization for the audience for which the work was collected, but also “to enhance the scientific merit of the work through the display of literary prowess.”³¹⁷ Composed in a simple rhyming meter, which would never have impressed the well-known poets of the day, the poems were probably good enough to catch the ear of a moderately cultured landlord interested in agriculture and horticulture.³¹⁸

³¹² Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 141.

³¹³ Those nine neighbouring districts in Herat are specifically indicated and named in Abū Nasrī’s other informative manual on water distribution methods and agricultural irrigation patterns in the Herat region and surrounds. See Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, *Risāla-i tarīq-i qismat-i āb-i qulb*, edited by Mayel Hiravī. Tehran: Bonyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1968.

³¹⁴ Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 117.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

³¹⁶ Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 203.

³¹⁷ D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 35.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.



Figure 2-12. Iskandar, in the likeness of Husayn Bāyqarā, with the seven sages. An inscription in the arch of the window is dated AH 900 (1494/95) (Source: <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk>)

This study, based on Muhammad Mushiri’s edition of the original text, comprising 284 pages of agronomic information combined with Persian prose and some short verses, represents the most complete and reliable existing copy of the original manuscript.³¹⁹ This edition, which will shape this study’s analysis of the text, consists of two main parts differing in form, style and content: the introduction or *Muqaddimah* and the main body of the work consisting of eight informative chapters called *Rawdha* (literally means a small garden).³²⁰ The text begins with a fifty-two-page *Muqaddimah* or introduction, which presents a strong argument for agriculture as the emphasized basis for political stability. Written in a pretentious, official style, in Jakobi’s deduction this section of the work contains relevant information on the intellectual and literary history of the late

³¹⁹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” editor’s introduction, 1; Abū Nasrī Hiravī, *Irshād al-zirā‘a, Tasnif-i fazīl-i Hiravī*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qaffār Najm al-Daula (Tehran: Majmu‘a-i ‘ilm-i irani dar zirā‘at va filāhat va bāghbāni va ghayra, 1904-1905).

³²⁰ According to the Amīd Persian dictionary this term refers to a small garden, orchard, flower-bed (*bāghcha, Būstān*). The Arabic translation of the term “*Rawza/Rawdha*” is explained as a meadow with water and grass, without trees. Hasan Amīd, *Farhang-i Farsi Amīd* (Tehran, intisharat-i amirkabir, 1993).

Timurids.³²¹ The introduction seems to be more concerned with social philosophy than practical instruction which comes later in the following eight chapters. According to Jakobi's study, the main concern of Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf's introduction or *Muqaddimah* within this changing socio-political milieu was the "presentation of agriculture as an economically as well as socially and even transcendently important realm of the Islamic society."³²² In the author's own words: "In this world agriculture and horticulture (*zira 'at numūdan va dirakht kāshtan*) precede all other arts (*sanāy 'i*) as both bring blessings in this and the other world."³²³

A collection of eight separate chapters called "*Rawdha*" forms the main body of work as a longer, informal text recorded in a basically unadorned style, and covers a wide range of agricultural, horticultural and arboricultural information gleaned from astrological and meteorological knowledge about preparation, planting and seasonal activities to more practical instructions on when and how to cultivate, irrigate, fertilize, store and reap crops.

Abū Nasrī has organized this information according to the following range of topics: First, different types of soil and how to distinguish between suitable or unsuitable agricultural soil, entitled "On the knowledge of the land, which the great God has given each piece of land a special virtue, and to know how (each land) will grow grains, grapes and fruits (fruit bearing trees), and cognition of good, bad and appropriate for cultivation (*sālīh-i zīrā 'at*) kinds of soil."³²⁴

Second, ideal times for planting due to astrological learning and meteorological knowledge, prayers to be recited at the time of planting seeds or saplings, the best time to plant, harvest and store cereal grains, and methods for warding off insects and pests. The chapter is entitled: "On (about) selecting (the ideal) hour (for plantation), to predict the year's states based on Nowruz³²⁵ starting on each of the week days, to recite the holy prayers while sowing seeds or planting saplings, and the fresh fruit prayers, warding off the grasshopper (*malakh*) and worm (*kerm*), the (best) time to sow, the seed protection, the (ideal) time to reap, to store the grains with cluster when necessary and to keep the

³²¹ Jakobi, "Agriculture between literary tradition and firsthand experience," 201.

³²² *Ibid.*, 201.

³²³ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā 'a*," editor's introduction, 3.

³²⁴ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā 'a*," 54.

³²⁵ Nowruz, meaning "the new day", marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the year in the Persian calendar since ancient times and has been celebrated for thousands of years.

millet for years without getting spoiled, repelling ant, flea, gnat, tick, and to treat the gnat (mosquito) and the crook-tailed bite.”³²⁶

Third, entitled “On cultivation of grains,”³²⁷ covers the cultivation of different types of grains and cereals such as wheat, barley, millet and rice, and pulses like beans, lentils and chickpeas, including the most suitable types of fertilizer for each.

Fourth, entitled: “On digging the ditches and planting grapevine, proceeding and twitching off the grapes and so on,”³²⁸ covers the cultivation of grapevines and varieties of grapes and vine species.

Fifth, the planting of market vegetables, such as melons, watermelons, cucumbers, lettuce and spinach, radishes, onions and garlic, beets, eggplant, various species of herbs and aromatic plants, hemp, trefoil, and plants used for dyeing such as madder, indigo, henna, etc. The chapter is entitled: “On explanation of vegetables from melon, watermelon, cucumber, lettuce, rhubarb, garlic, onion, spinach, radish, beets, eggplant and others, also indigo, mascara, henna, colocynth, madder, trefoil and hemp, also other plants and to know their benefit and harm.”³²⁹

Sixth, methods of planting trees, flowers and aromatic plants from sowing seeds, grafting and cuttings, bulbs and saplings, the cultivation of olive oil trees and other fruit trees, such as pomegranate, quince, pear, apple, cherry, fig, mulberry, pistachio, the evergreen or ornamental trees and bushes, such as plane, poplar, jasmine, ornamental flowers such as the many varieties of roses, eglantine, violet, saffron, iris, tulip, narcissus, etc. The chapter is entitled: “On planting trees and flowers and aromatic plants and whatever is about their graft, bulb or sapling and etc, their different cultivation and protection methods.”³³⁰

Seventh, general methods of grafting of trees (both fruit bearing and non fruit bearing) and vines, different ways of fruit picking and their storage, estimating the yields of the market and summer crops, the preparation of various types of confection, jams and preserves, the methods of pickling and the making of vinegar and a range of condiments, apiculture and beekeeping, etc. This long chapter is entitled: “On grafting of the trees and grapevines, and beehive keeping, estimating the yields of some summer market products

³²⁶ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 59.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

and crops, caring for the early (*pīshras*) flowers and first citrus fruits (*bādrang-i pīshras*), preparation of rose-water and Egyptian-willow juice, the rose conserve, the pennyroyal extract (or juice) , different syrups (*shīrah*) (plums, hedysarum, sugar, etc) and grapes syrup (*dūshāb*) (*kāvushak va āftābī*), types of jam (sour grape, quince, mulberry, etc.), sweet pastes (*halvā*), pickling and producing vinegar, sour-grape jouncing, beestings and cheese making, and producing and keeping the silkworm cocoon (*filcha*).”³³¹

Eighth, layout and planting of a *chāhārbāgh*, based on a symmetrical landscape plan. The final chapter is entitled: “On the planting of saplings, flowers and aromatic plants in relation to each other in a *chāhārbāgh* according to a symmetrical landscape plan” and subtitled “layout of a *chāhārbāgh* with pavilion.”³³²

³³¹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 147, 225.

³³² *Ibid.*, 147, 280.

Chapter 3

***Irshād al-zirā'a*: A Handbook on Agriculture**

3 *Irshād al-zirā‘a*; A Handbook on Agriculture

3.1 Introduction and basis for composing the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*

Abū Nasrī begins his lengthy *muqaddimah* or introduction by this quatrain (*rubā‘ī*):³³³

*O your bounty is every cultivator’s honour,
Is nourished by you every flower and plant,
Without your favour in guidance of cultivation,
There is no gain for the pure man (or for Adam; Ādam-i safī).*³³⁴

After lauding God and enumerating his Qur’anic and descriptive attributes such as the supplier (*Razzāq*), the creator (*Sāni‘e*), the healer (*Hakīm*), the affluent (*Mūn‘am*), the gardener (*Chaman-ārā*), the architect (*Me‘mār*), the designer (*Tarāh*), the ruler (*Pādshāh*), and a long panegyric of the prophet, the Imāms of Shi‘a, and finally the king, the author introduces himself as Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf, the dust of the threshold of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī (*pir-i Ansāri*).³³⁵ He declares that he has been living a sequestered life from the unfaithfulness of disloyal people³³⁶ and during his seclusion he was engaged in “*ilm-i Sīyāq*,” which is Imām ‘Alī’s (the fourth Caliphate and the first Imām of Shi‘a) innovation. He continues that he was about to enter another important area of *sīyāq* or accounting (*umoūr-i sīyāq*) when one night he dreamt that a person told him from Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī to change his previous pen name (*takhallus*), not mentioned here, to

³³³ *Rubā‘ī* is a poetry style which is used to describe the Persian quatrain (a stanza or poem of four lines). This style is usually written as a four-line (or two-couplet) rhyming poem, with rhymes at the middle and end of each line.

³³⁴ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 1.

³³⁵ Shaikh Abū Isma‘il ‘Abdullah al-Hiravī al-Ansārī or Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī of Herat (1006–1088), also known as *Pir-i Herat* (sage of Herat), was a famous Persian Sufi who born in the Kohandezh, the old citadel of Herat (then Khorasan, today Herat province, Afghanistan). He was one of the outstanding figures in Khurasan in the eleventh century: commentator of the Qur’an, traditionist, polemicist, and spiritual master, known for his oratory and poetic talents in Arabic and Persian. After his death in 1088, his tomb (also known as Gāzurgāh located just north east of Herat) became a major Sunni pilgrimage centre. The shrine enclosing the tomb was commissioned by the Timurid ruler, Shāhrukh, Timur’s son (1405–1447).

³³⁶ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

“*qāne‘i*”³³⁷ (the contented one), and realized the great Sufi alludes to “satisfaction.” At this point the author states his approval (being commissioned by the Khāwja ‘Abdullāh) might be hereditary, as he remembers his ancestor (Shaikh Abū Nasrī Tabasī, known as *Pīr-i Hājāt*)³³⁸ had reached the same honourable rank, as he had already been incited by Khāwja ‘Abdullāh to live to please the God (Figure 3-1).

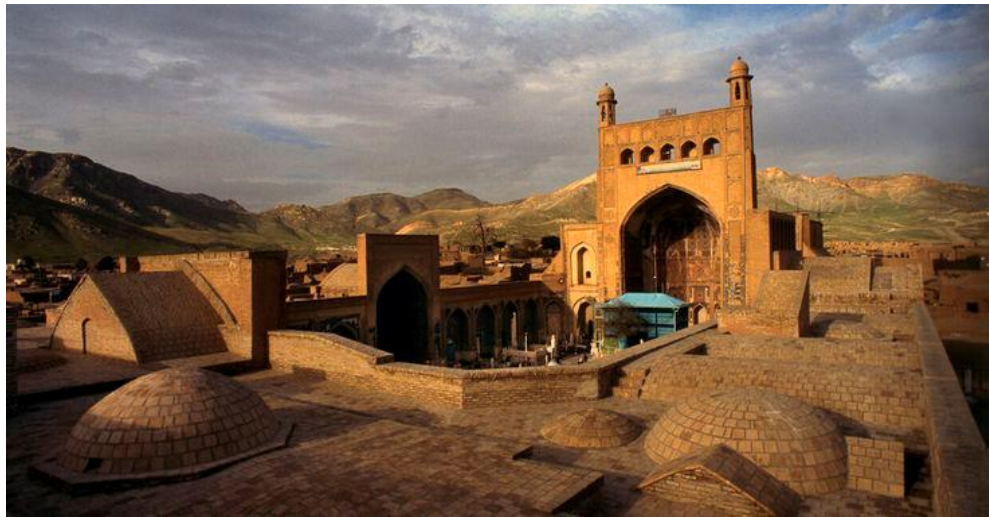


Figure 3-1. The shrine complex of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī in Gāzurgāh, Herat, today Afghanistan (Source: <http://steppemagazine.com>)

This makes Abū Nasrī think about a beneficial mission that satisfies the God and his creatures. “So should be entered an affair which may give cause to the creator and creatures to be pleased and bring the repose and relief in this and the other world.”³³⁹ He decides to have a divination with Qur’an to do whatever it shows and says (to open the Qur’an randomly as a presage). The author encounters with a famous Qur’anic verse about the story of creation of plants, fruits and vegetation.³⁴⁰ He therefore interprets this

³³⁷ According to the Dehkhoda Persian dictionary the term means: convinced, satisfied, a person who is pleased and contented with his revenue, fortune or destiny.

³³⁸ According to Abū Nasrī’s statement in another part of the muqaddimah of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, his family were originally from the village of Bābak in the province of Zāva (today’s Torbat Haidariyyah, some 100 kms south of the city of Nishabour). His grandfather, Abū Nasrī tabasī or Pīr-i Hājāt is buried in the village of Irāva in the province of Tabas-i Gilaki. Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 28.

³³⁹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 8.

³⁴⁰ *Sūrah Al-An‘am*, verse 99. Here is the English translation of the cited verse: “It is he who sends down water (rain) from the sky, and with it we bring forth vegetation of all kinds, and out of it, we bring forth green stalks, from which we bring forth thick clustered grain. And out of the date-palm and its spathe come forth clusters of dates hanging low and near, and gardens of grapes, olives and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety and taste). Look at their fruits when they begin to bear, and the ripeness thereof. Verily! In these things there are signs for people who believe.”

Qur'anic presage as a supporter of his dream of the Sufi, Khāwja 'Abdullāh Ansāri, as an urging to concern himself with the advised task. So he presumes to start and engage with agricultural matters or "*amr-i zīrā'at*."³⁴¹

The author continues, stating several contiguous recitations and narrations on pious deeds of cultivation and planting in a lengthy narrative which expands the introduction by about forty pages. Usually followed by a few verses of poems, these different short exemplums vary from the prophets, Imāms and dominant religious dignities and cited traditions to stories and tales from the great ancient Persian kings and rulers (e.g. Sassanid Anushiravan or Khosru Parviz), all praising the high status of the farmer, honouring and venerating the cultivator and his respectable vocation by the grandees and notables, the salvation and the heavenly recompense of planting, gardening and cultivation.³⁴² Considering the transformation of the socio-political milieu while recording the book, the author is concerned with emphasizing and highlighting the undeniable rule of agriculture as the most remarkable, existing way of redemption of an Islamic society. As Abū Nasrī concludes at the end of almost every narrative: "In this world, agriculture and horticulture (*zīrā'at nimūdan va dīrakht kāshtan*) should be preceded [by] all other arts (*sanāy'e*) as it brings blessings in both this and the other world."³⁴³ Abū Nasrī sums up this section after a long, famous tale of Adam and Eve, their disobedience and their first experience of farming and cultivating the earth, having been expelled from heaven, and finally to God's satisfaction for their agriculture performance.³⁴⁴

At the next stage, Abū Nasrī explains the method he applied to gather the material to compose the *Irshād al-zīrā'a*. He recounts his travels around the Herat region to survey the state of agriculture and to consult with experts among the renowned farmers and gardeners of the region.³⁴⁵ Abū Nasrī offers detailed information in the main body of the *Irshād al-zīrā'a* demonstrating his firsthand knowledge of the agricultural and horticultural conditions of the region. This claim is evident in his remarks about the locally used plants and fruits, his references to the nearby areas of Herat or the *bulūkāt-i mazkūr*, such as Nishabour and Fūshang and their cultivation routines and practices, specialist knowledge of the topography of the region as the writer of the manual of *Risāla-*

³⁴¹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zīrā'a*," 9.

³⁴² Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zīrā'a*," 9-45.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁴⁵ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zīrā'a*," 45.

i tarīq-i qismat-i āb-i qulb, and familiarity with the history of the cultivated plants of Khurasan with reference to the previous Timurid kings, such as Timur’s son, Shāhrukh Mīrzā.³⁴⁶ In the following part Abū Nasrī reflects on the ambiguities and mistakes arising from the variety of opinions and views of each individual expert recorded during his travels. To clarify these ambiguities he defers to his superior, Sayyed Nizām al-Din Amir Sultan Mahmūd, better known as Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās. Through Subtelny’s investigation and research on Mīrak evident in Timurid sources, Subtelny reconstructs his unknown family chronology, his background, rank and career to reveal that he was the most prominent Timurid landscape architect, gardener, and agronomist of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā’s reign. In fact, Mīrak was a member of a distinguished family of Timurid landscape architects and garden professionals that exerted a deep influence on garden design in the eastern Islamic world from eastern Iran to central Asia and northern India.³⁴⁷ After lauding Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās, his status and accomplishments, Abū Nasrī finishes the *muqaddimah* or introduction with a list of the manual’s contents, naming the eight following chapters or *Rawdha*. Nevertheless, throughout his entire handbook, Abū Nasrī focuses exclusively on the reign of the Timurids, concentrating on the agricultural and horticultural traditions of the region. He mentions neither the Safavids nor the Sheybanids and the instability caused by their continuous destructive wars over the Khurasan region, or the devastating famine of 1514, when according to the Safavid historiographer and the author of the *Ahsan Al-Tavārīkh*, Hasan Rūmlū, “the people ate each other up.”³⁴⁸ The shattering battle of Chaldiran is also omitted, where, in August 1514, the Ottomans inflicted a crushing defeat on the Safavids.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 145,168, 186,196, 214, 222.

³⁴⁷ Maria Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture: Further Notes to ‘A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context.’” *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995), 21; Maria Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh,” 112.

³⁴⁸ Hasan Rūmlū, *Ahsan Al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Charles Norman Seddon. Baroda, 1931, 150.

³⁴⁹ The battle of Chaldiran, took place on 23 August 1514 and ended with a decisive victory for the Ottoman Empire over the newly established Safavid Empire under Shah Isma‘īl. As a result, the Ottomans seized eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq from the Safavid territories. It marked the first Ottoman expansion into eastern Anatolia, and the halt of the Safavid expansion to the west. By the Chaldiran conflict the Ottomans also gained temporary control of north-western Iran. The battle, however, was just the beginning of a period of 41 years of destructive war, which finally ended in 1555 with the Treaty of Amasiya. See: Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 42.

3.2 Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās and the family of Timurid landscape architects

The garden in medieval Persia, far from being a superficial entity, was always an integral part of the architectural planning procedure of palaces, pavilions, mausoleums or any other structures which were situated within the surrounding landscape with elaborate irrigation systems. Together the garden and its pavilion structure formed a single architectural entity and its design and formation was shaped by a vast domain of knowledge in aesthetics, architecture, agronomy and horticulture.

There are often biographical sections in medieval historical accounts and chronicles devoted to prominent scholars, poets and literary men, artists and occasionally famous architects engaged during various periods of Timurid rule. However, little information remains about the real creators, designers and builders of the medieval Islamic gardens. An interesting exception is the evidence about the late Timurid gardener, agronomist and landscape architect who was the chief source of inspiration for Abū Nasrī, the author of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*. The identity of the abovementioned Sayyed Nizām al-Dīn Amīr Sultan Mahmūd, who was better known as Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās, has long been an enigma. Among the existing studies of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, different suggestions about this individual's actual name, rank and identity have been put forward by some scholars, though these are not supported by the information provided by Abū Nasrī in the introduction to the *Irshād al-zirā'a* or by other contemporary historical sources.³⁵⁰

As a member of a noble family of landscape architects, and a chief landscape planner, gardener, and agronomist in Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā's court, Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās was

³⁵⁰ Jurgen Jakobi in his study of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, mistakenly hypothesizes that, Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās, who he refers to as the "anonymous person", was probably Abū Nasrī's benefactor; the celebrated Timurid political figure, patron, poet and man of letters, Mīr 'Alī-Shīr Navā'i. This hypothesis comes from Abū Nasrī's description of Mīrak's garden with one hundred varieties of grapes in *Irshād al-zirā'a*; a paradise-like *Chāhārbāgh* located in Ālinjān, one of the ten districts of Herat. In Jakobi's assumption this garden was the famous "*Chāhārbāgh-i 'Alī-Shīr*", located in the same district and belonged to the Timurid emir, Mīr 'Alī-Shīr Navā'i. However it is now clear that the garden mentioned in fact belonged to Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās, who was a member of the circle of this prominent Timurid figure, Mīr 'Alī-Shīr Navā'i and his close men. Moreover, the scholar Mayil Haravi, in his edition of Abū Nasrī's other informative manual; *Risāla-i tarīq-i qismat-i āb-i qulb*, identifies this hidden character, behind Abū Nasrī's paraphrase, as either Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā or one of his sons. See Qāsim ibn-i Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī, *Risāla-i tarīq-i qismat-i āb-i qulb*, ed. Mayil Hiravī. Tehran: Bonyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 1968. 81; See, also, Jurgen Jakobi, "Agricuture between literary tradition and firsthand experience: the "*Irshād al-zirā'a*" of Qāsim B. Yūsuf Abū Nasrī Hiravī." In *Timurid art and culture*, edited by Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992, 204.

influential and honourable, and one of the closest men to the Timurid king, for whom he was, according to Abū Nasrī in the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, a wise mentor and counsellor: “The justice of the realm and the advisor of the king (*Dādras-i Kishvar va Dastoūr-i Shāh*).”³⁵¹ The recognition of the high rank and position of this great courtier is defined by Abū Nasrī’s immediate reference to him after the first mention of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā in the introduction of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*. Following a long panegyric to the Timurid ruler, Abū Nasrī states that: “The fortunate sovereign, *Khāqān-i Sāhibqirān*, (Sultan Husayn) in some way, handed over the rein (to dispose) of the main important decisions (of the state) to his (Mīrak’s) mighty hands.”³⁵² He then adds: “no one of the (king’s) sons, viziers, ministers, courtiers and noble men of the state could interfere in the crucial administrative and royal affairs which Mīrak was entrusted with.”³⁵³ This statement is followed by fourteen verses of poems describing Mīrak’s character and his pre-eminence in religious and governmental matters.³⁵⁴ The close relationship between Mīrak and Sultan Husayn is consciously described in a hemistich of the second verse: “He became the supervisor of the king and he was supervised by the king” (*Nāzir-i Shāh āmad va manzūr-i Shāh*).³⁵⁵ Abū Nasrī then mentions how Mīrak’s skills as a garden designer and agriculture specialist were highly appreciated and prized by Sultan Husayn, for whom he in a short time, executed every idea and fulfilled every desire that was “reflected in the mirror of his (Sultan Husayn’s) fertile imagination and burnished by his illuminating thoughts.”³⁵⁶ He even remarks on Sultan Husayn’s affection and fondness for Mīrak, describing how he was tenderly addressed by the king as “my son” and was bestowed the robe of honour and other royal gifts by the Timurid ruler in important court sittings.³⁵⁷ Highlighting Mīrak’s punctuality and eagerness for learning, Abū Nasrī states again “despite being extremely busy with the governmental affairs and court activities, he (Mīrak) still saves the best hours of the day for prayers and studies of religious subjects and problems.”³⁵⁸ This statement is followed by a brief reference to Mīrak’s background,

³⁵¹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 48.

³⁵² Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 48.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁵⁸ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 48; According to Subtelny, this statement can be an explanation to the unusual condition of a wealthy Sayyed family owning the landed property and being actively involved in its development and maintenance. Thus, Abū Nasrī may felt that the unusually high degree of Mīrak’s proficiency in agronomy and hydrological matters called for something of a clarification or justification in

as the author mentions that all these characteristics are hereditary and that's why he has distinguished himself as the key to solutions in every matter, as well as the most skilful architect of the finest buildings and gardens of the state.³⁵⁹

Based on a wide variety of primary Timurid sources, Maria Subtelny, has attempted to investigate the figure of Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās and to trace his family legacy, background and activity during the late Timurid and early Safavid era.³⁶⁰ Her study has been a successful reconstruction of the chronology of the life, profession and personality of this important Timurid patron, who has been identified by Subtelny as arguably the most prominent landscape architect of late Timurid Persia.³⁶¹

According to Subtelny's comprehensive investigation and based on a few references to his family history in the introduction of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, Mīrak-i Sayyed Qīyās was the son of "Sayyed Qīyās al-Dīn Muhammad Bāghbān", hence his nickname in which the Persian construct serves to designate filiation.³⁶² The father, Sayyed Qīyās al-Dīn had been a gardener and horticulturist in Sultan Husayn's service in Herat, the sobriquet, *bāghbān* (gardener, agronomist) clearly identifies his vocation. Apart from the fact that he built and endowed a notable *madrassa* complex outside the city of Herat (whose exact location is unknown), almost nothing more is known about him. This building in which Sayyed Qīyās al-Dīn's body was buried, maintained and renovated after his death by his sons; Mīrak and his elder brother Sayyed Jalāl al-Dīn Mahmūd.³⁶³

Belonging to an eminent noble (Sayyed) family as well as members of the Timurid military aristocracy, both Mīrak and his brother were in Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā's service, bearing the title of *amīr* (emir). This may explain the fact that he is usually cited in the historical sources simply as Amīr Sultan Mahmūd.³⁶⁴ According to Subtelny, the brothers

proof of his socio-religious position. For this reason, he stated that in addition to his more worldly responsibilities, Mīrak still dedicated some time for devotion and religious studies and he distinguished himself by his philanthropic activities. Maria Subtelny, "Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture: Further Notes to A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context." *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995): 25.

³⁵⁹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 50.

³⁶⁰ See: Maria Subtelny, "Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture: Further Notes to A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context." *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995): 19-60; Idem. "Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*: The Evidence from a Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual." In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilo Petruccioli, 110-128. Brill, 1997; Idem. "A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context: The *Irshād al-zirā'a* in Late Timurid and Early Safavid Khorasan." *Studia Iranica* 22/2 (1993).

³⁶¹ Subtelny, "Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture", 21.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

both belonged to the close circle of friends and followers of the famous Timurid poet, philanthropist and man of letters, Mīr ‘Alī-Shīr Navā’i, and were both listed among distinguished *amīrs* who were invited to the formal feast held by Mīr ‘Alī-Shīr on the event of his retirement to the shrine of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī at Gāzurgāh near Herat in 1499.³⁶⁵ Meanwhile in addition to his decent background and elite position, Mīrak was an occasional poet as well. According to Subtelny, biographical information about him was also incorporated into what may seem to be an unlikely historical source, a Persian anthology of poets.³⁶⁶ Yet, neither Mīrak Sayyed Qīyās nor his father or his brother are mentioned in any of the biographical sections of the Timurid historical and historic-geographical works that relate to Sultan Husayn’s court and his reign. However, they were saved from total anonymity that was typical for medieval architects, artists, craftsmen and gardeners, who were usually drawn from the lower classes of society.

Mīrak was born in Herat or its nearby districts sometime around 1476-77. As has already been mentioned, he came from a wealthy Sayyed family that owned vast properties around the Herat region and throughout Khurasan, which he had attained through inheritance.³⁶⁷

According to Abū Nasrī in the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, Mīrak was skilled and knowledgeable in the science of agronomy (*‘ulūm-i zirā‘at*), construction (*‘imārat*) and hydrology (*mīrābī*).³⁶⁸ Abū Nasrī claims Mīrak’s expertise in each of these matters had been inherited from his forefathers (*ābā’ va ajdād*) who had always been engaged with the development, cultivation and improvement of the lands and regions under the previous great rulers and attempted in order to insure the welfare and comfort of their peasantry and people.³⁶⁹ Confirming the common tradition of transmission of the professional knowledge in the family in medieval Islamic realms, this statement indicates the fact that Mīrak’s father had been engaged with the same career and practice. Specializing in the design and creation of the *Chāhārbāgh* type of garden, Mīrak’s professional duties involved overseeing the construction of gardens and garden pavilions for Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā.³⁷⁰ His knowledge and capability in diverse professional fields such as agriculture, irrigation and architectural construction is emphasized by Abū Nasrī as

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 23

³⁶⁶ Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*,” 112.

³⁶⁷ Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās,” 24.

³⁶⁸ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 46.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁷⁰ Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās,” 24.

unrivalled in those areas.³⁷¹ This is explained with reference to the *Chāhārbāgh*, the formal quadripartite garden, whose planting and layout is illustrated in the last chapter of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*. It was a multipart architectural landscape in which the three main components; plantings, irrigation system (water channels, pools, fountains, etc.) and recreational garden structures formed a single compositional whole designed according to a specific geometrical order.³⁷² Abū Nasrī’s description of the *Chāhārbāgh* garden in the last chapter of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, clarifies that the Iranian *Chāhārbāgh*, unlike its equal European gardens whose plantings were usually limited to ornamental plantings, was a combination of decorative flowers and productive fruit trees, aromatic herbs and certain types of vegetables. Abū Nasrī’s depiction of the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* as well as his presentation of Mīrak’s skills, duties and responsibilities encompassed the roles of gardener and architect (*Tarāh*), agronomist, horticulturist (*Bāghbān*), floriculturist (*Gulkār*) and even apiarist, since bees were essential to the pollination and fertilization of certain types of plant species.³⁷³ (Figure 3-2)



Figure 3-2. Probably the landscape architect (*Tarāh*) holding the grid plan (*Tarh*) and workmen measuring out the *Chāhārbāgh* garden plot. An illustration from *Baburnāma*, Mughal India, 1590 (Source: <https://www.studyblue.com>)

³⁷¹ Ibid., 46, 48.

³⁷² Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās,” 25.

³⁷³ Ibid., 25.

Although Abū Nasrī did not provide any specific names or details of gardens or structures built under Mīrak’s direction or supervision in Herat or its vicinities, he made it clear that Mīrak was actually in charge of all major architectural and garden constructions in the city. There is only one *Chāhārbāgh* which Abū Nasrī refers to twice in the fourth and sixth chapters of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*.³⁷⁴ This *Chāhārbāgh* garden which Abū Nasrī had visited personally, identifying its hundred varieties of grapes, was located in the village of Fazān in the district of Ānjān near Herat and was constructed by Mīrak’s workmen (*khuddām*; literally means servitors).³⁷⁵ Mīrak was apparently in charge of other professional activities including overseeing the development of intensive irrigated agricultural plots and gardens, land management and market gardening on the domains that founded the bulk of the religious endowments (*awqāf*) of shrine establishments.³⁷⁶ The systematic extension of irrigation networks and the application of highly advanced hydro-agriculture during the late Timurid period, mainly under Sultān Husayn Bāyqarā, prepared the best conditions for an increasing area of irrigated agricultural lands. Describing the rich agricultural context that Mīrak was active within, the Timurid social and literary historian Dawlatshāh wrote that under Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, “farming (*dīhqanat*) and agriculture (*zirā‘at*) have reached such a high level that Saturn who sits so high in the seventh sky of heaven is jealous of the peasants on the ground, and out of envy for their fields the market for Virgo’s harvest has collapsed.”³⁷⁷ However, despite such statements, Sultan Husayn’s interest in agriculture and gardening has been overshadowed in the scholarly literature by the lavish attention that has been given to his patronage of artistic and cultural activities. To address this imbalance, Subtelny states: “the contemporary authors regarded him as a ruler who had the best interests of the peasantry at heart and who raised the agricultural development of the Herat region to antecedent heights.”³⁷⁸ In this vein Abū Nasrī writes in the *Irshād al-zirā‘a*, that Sultan

³⁷⁴ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 113, 220.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

³⁷⁶ One of the most famous examples of those endowment foundations was the lands and properties which belonged to the shrine of Khāwja ‘Abdullāh Ansārī at Gāzurgāh near Herat, where Abū Nasrī was employed under the direction of his superior, Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās, who like many other members of the Timurid elite of Herat, may have made pious endowments to it.

³⁷⁷ Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, *The tadhkiratu al-shu‘arā. (Memories of the poets)*, edited by Edward G. Brown. London: Luza and Co, 1901.

³⁷⁸ Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās”. 43. However, the agricultural development of the Herat region was not the achievement of Sultan Husayn alone. As mentioned, it had been initiated by the early Timurid ruler, Shāhrukh Mīrzā at the beginning of the fifteenth century after the economic disruption that had resulted from the frequent Timurid invasions. The following Timurid rulers systematically developed the irrigation network in Khurasan region, thereby intensifying the entire area under cultivation. By the end of the

Husayn, who used to inspect the trees and plants of his royal gardens personally, taught his gardeners how to get rid of worms on the plane trees in one of his gardens, noting that this was an unusual personal characteristic of this fully acculturated Timurid ruler.³⁷⁹

Taking with him the *Chāhārbāgh* design that had become a family tradition, Mīrak emigrated from Herat to the more welcoming regions of central Asia and India, like so many other members of the former Timurid political, religious and artistic elite who came under severe ideological and financial pressure from the new Qizilbāsh emirs who had recently held power over eastern Khurasan. What is most important for this discussion is the impact that the classification of the design of the *Chāhārbāgh* had on both Central Asia and India. This can be traced directly to Sayyed Mīrak's move to India, where in 1529 he was engaged in garden construction at Agra and Dholpur for Babur, who has traditionally been credited with introducing the Timurid tradition of garden design to northern India.³⁸⁰ Sometime after 1530 he immigrated to Central Asia and constructed a magnificent garden for the Uzbek ruler, 'Obaydullāh Khān I, under his patronage in Bukhara. According to Subtelny, this garden was important enough to be mentioned along with the other architectural monuments erected during that ruler's reign.³⁸¹ Even more significant for tracing the Timurid legacy in garden design is the move made around 1559 by Sayyed Mīrak's son, Muhammad (who was known as Sayyed Muhammad-i Mīrak), from Bukhara to India, where he was engaged with the design and construction of Humayun's famous tomb in Delhi. It has generally been acknowledged among architectural historians that Humayun's mausoleum-garden is the first preserved Mughal garden constructed according to the "classical" Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* layout.³⁸²

century, according to the Timurid historian, Isfizārī, the entire swath of the Harīr-rūd valley in Khurasan had come under cultivation, forming one constant agricultural continuum. Nonetheless, it was the particular part of agriculture practiced in the Herat region that connected it most closely to gardening, which was, according to Subtelny: "a highly specialized, intensive, irrigated agriculture practiced for the most part on relatively small, often walled, plots of land in the densely populated districts surrounding the city." It was this type of intensive irrigated agriculture that Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās specialized in and which served as the main focus of Abū Nasrī's agricultural manual and represented in a purified form in the *Chāhārbāgh*. See Mo'in al-dīn Mohammad Zamchi Isfizārī, *Rawzāt al-jannāt fī Awsāf-i madīnat al-Herat*, vol.1, edited by Mohammad Kazem Emam, Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tehran, 1960, 374-75; Also: Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*", 118.

³⁷⁹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 198.

³⁸⁰ Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*," 114.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 114. For more detailed information about Mīrak's son, Sayyed Muhammad-i Mīrak and his life and career, see Subtelny's study of this unknown Timurid family of landscape architects in: Subtelny, "Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghīyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture", 23-60.

3.3 The main body of the work

After a long detailed introduction, Abū Nasrī begins by organizing practical information in eight separate chapters called *Rawdha* (literally means small garden), providing the operative discourse of the science of agriculture in a markedly more plain and informal text.

The first chapter begins with the following list of contents: “On the knowledge of the land, which the great God has given each piece of land a special virtue, and to know how (each land) will grow grains, grapes and fruits (fruit bearing trees), and cognition of good, bad and appropriate for cultivation (*sālīh-i zīrā’at*) kinds of soil.”³⁸³

The author follows with a citation from Galen, “*Jālīnūs-i Hakīm*,”³⁸⁴ comparing different types of soil based on the appearance of plants grown on those lands. He continues with some practical methods to distinguish different types of soil and how to recognise suitable soil for agriculture before cultivation. He concludes with a summary of various types of ploughing (*shodiyār*).³⁸⁵

The second chapter begins with the following list of contents: “On (about) selecting (the ideal) hour (for plantation), to predict the year’s states based on Nowruz³⁸⁶ starting on each of the week days, to recite the holy prayers while sowing seeds or planting saplings, and the fresh fruit prayers, warding off the grasshopper (*malakh*) and worm (*kerm*), the (best) time to sow, the seed protection, the (ideal) time to reap, to keep and store the grains with cluster when necessary and to keep the millet for years without getting spoiled, repelling ant, flea, gnat, tick, and to treat the gnat (mosquito) and the crook-tailed (scorpion) bite.”³⁸⁷ The chapter then opens with a section on the perfect time for planting considering astrological learning, such as the natural disposition of the constellations or cultivating based on meteorological knowledge, as the author states that for many years the men of learning and sages in the realm of agriculture (*arbāb-i ma’rifat*

³⁸³ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 54.

³⁸⁴ According to Jakobi’s comparative study of the two texts “*Ma’rifat-i filāhat*” and the “*Irshād al-zirā’a*”, Abū Nasrī dedicated an almost high number of the book’s passages to quotations of the ancient authors and scientists such as Galen, Plato and Badegoras in the main body of his work while there is no similar attribution to the mentioned authors in the whole “*Ma’rifat-i filāhat*”, not even in the apparently common passages. Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 201.

³⁸⁵ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 58.

³⁸⁶ Nowruz, meaning “the new day”, marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the year in the Persian calendar since ancient times and has been celebrated for thousands of years.

³⁸⁷ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 59.

va ashāb-i dīhqanat) have confirmed that “if one plants at a good time, the product would be perfect with God’s divine inspissation and no pest will harm it.”³⁸⁸ The rest of the chapter is narrated in the same sequence mentioned in the title of listed contents with some quotations from “men of religion” and from ancient wise men such as Galen³⁸⁹ and Plato³⁹⁰, as well as one attribute to “Khāwja Abulqāsim ibn-i Alī Tarmazī” in a narration on “knowing the conditions of the year”³⁹¹ (*ahvāl-i sāl dānistan*).³⁹²

The contents of the third chapter “In cultivation of grains,”³⁹³ begins with a long passage on wheat, its various types, different methods of sowing or furrowing, and various types of bird or animal dung to be used as ‘muck’. The chapter is extended by discussing the particulars and planting techniques of other types of grain and pulses such as barley, bean, broad bean, lentil, millet, pea, rice, grass pea and their familial types and equals.

The fourth chapter begins with the following list of contents: “On digging the ditches and planting grapevines, proceeding and twitching off the grapes and so on.”³⁹⁴ After a short passage on introducing the grape and its qualities, referring to the “learned Plato” (*aflātūn-i hakīm*) on the best methods of planting vines, and the ideal time and land for cultivation, Abū Nasrī indicates that he is using the technical practice of experts and men of knowledge. In a section on grafting and planting the vine’s scion and explaining a new grafting method, the author addresses an innovative grafting practice used by Mīrak, stating that: “... This instruction is founded by the highness (*ālījāh*), protection of the lordship (*siyādat-panāh*)..., Sultan Mahmūd, renown to Mīrak Sayyed Qīyās.”³⁹⁵ (Figure 3-3)

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 60.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 62.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 63, 67.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 69.

³⁹² Apart from the citations in which Abū Nasrī mentions the name of the authors directly, Abū Nasrī makes some ambiguous referrals to unknown tellers several times, using these terms; “it is said...,” “some people say...” (*ba’azī guftiand, gūyand...*) which can be another prove to the assumption that the “*Irshād al-zirā’a*” is made up of discursive text from other similar, unclear texts with the authors own rich, firsthand local experience. Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 205.

³⁹³ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 79.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 105.

³⁹⁵ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 109.

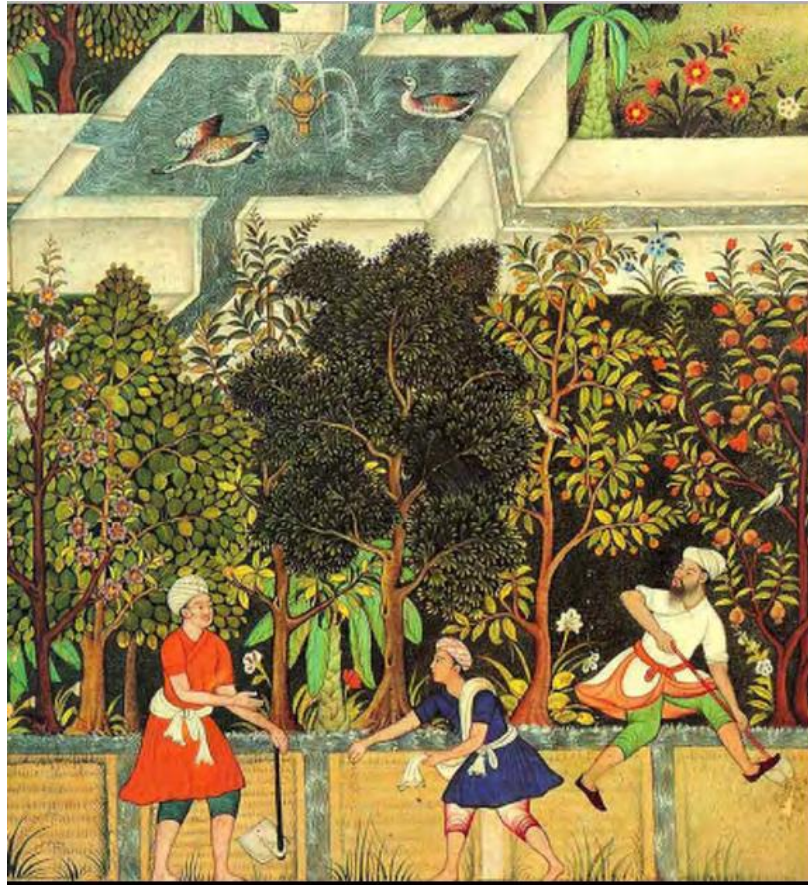


Figure 3-3. Babur’s workmen constructing a cross axial Mughal garden (a Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*). An illustration from *Baburnāma*, Mughal India, 1590 (Source: <https://www.studyblue.com>)

After explaining different methods of protection and irrigation of the saplings and vines, the chapter includes naming a heavenly *chāhārbāgh*³⁹⁶ constructed by Mīrak’s workmen which includes hundreds of varieties of grapes on every corner, as follows: “... and the names of grapes (kinds) is [sic] endless, but what is constructed in a *chāhārbāgh* at the mentioned districts (*bulūkāt-i mazkūr*) in a *chāhārbāgh* which is built by the faithful servitors (*khuddām*) of that highness (*ālījāh*), protection of the leadership (*naqābat-panāh*), the beneficent (*makhdūmī-yi vali al-nī’amī*) may his favour continue (*madda zallahū al’ālī*), at the village of Fazān in the district of Ānjān,³⁹⁷ which is a memento of

³⁹⁶ Despite the eighth chapter, which is a descriptive practical guide on the construction of *chāhārbāgh*, here is the only time Abū Nasrī mentions and describes an existing *chāhārbāgh* with some agricultural details.

³⁹⁷ According to Jakobi, although the Fazān village is not verified by the historical topography documents, the district of Ānjān can be recognized as one of the ten districts of the Timurid Herat, which is located southwest of the city and on the north side of the Harīr-rud river. Jakobi states that the described *chāhārbāgh* can be the same garden as in the list of four famous *chāhārbāgh* mentioned in an important topographical study of the Timurid Herat by Terry Allen called *Chāhārbāgh-i Alī Shīr*, which is located in the same district, Ānjān, and close to the village of Farrāshān. Jakobi assumes that the village Fazān can be a

gardens of paradise and colourful flowers (*gulhā-yi rangārang*), aromatic plants (*rayāhīn*) and fruit bearing trees (*dirakhtān-i mīvahdār*) and other trees from cypress (*sarv*), spruce fir tree (*sanoubar*), willow (*bīd*), plane tree (*chinār*) and poplar (*safīdār*) are arranged in separate terraces (*chaman*) and on each side a flat vineyard (*takhta angūr*) is ripen which is the envy of Houris of paradise visages (*rashk-i rokhsār-i hoūr*), the Wise’s wisdom and the eyes of observers is astonished by it, which includes a hundred types of grapes (*angūr*) and there is no doubt.”³⁹⁸ This chapter concludes with a full list of grape varieties (Figure 3-4).³⁹⁹



Figure 3-4. The variety of fruit trees and plantation in the layout of a quadrupartite Mughal garden (a Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*). An illustration from *Baburnāma*, Mughal India, 1590 (Source: <https://www.studyblue.com>)

Covering about 148 pages, the fifth chapter (*Rawdha*) constitutes the longest chapter in *Irshād al-zirā‘a*. The topics listed in the contents are: “On explanation of vegetables from

corrupted spelling of the mentioned Farrāshān. See Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 204.

³⁹⁸ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 113.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 113-116.

melon, watermelon, cucumber, lettuce, rhubarb, garlic, onion, spinach, radish, beets, eggplant and others, also indigo, mascara, henna, colocynth, madder, trefoil and hemp, also other plants and to know their benefit and harm.”⁴⁰⁰

Moreover, in his attributes to the ancient legendary sages, Galen and Plato, the author refers to other experts whom he appears to have consulted. These learned men in Abū Nasrī’s words are “those who [are] endowed with sophistication and masters of agriculture” (*ashāb-i khibrat va arbāb-i dihghanat*)⁴⁰¹ and their professional comments are quoted by Abū Nasrī directly, or through other expert workmen of the region. One of these professionals is *Sayyed Jalāl al-dīn niyshābūrī*,⁴⁰² whom Abū Nasrī describes as a middleman who quotes from another highness, that “guide of the truth pathway” (*rahnamay-i rah-i haqiqat*), *Sayyed Na’īm al-dīn ni’matullāh valī*,⁴⁰³ some guidance (*irshād*) about cultivation of melons.⁴⁰⁴

In another passage on varieties of melon he states that: “melons’ names are divers[e], but whatever is mentioned among the true servitors of that highness, protection of the leadership, the beneficent (*Mīrak*), is fifty kinds, as they have said.”⁴⁰⁵

All these attributions and professional quotations, as well as the author’s proved familiarity with locally used plants, their terms of application and their domestic names,⁴⁰⁶ his speciality in the history of the regional cultivation of Khurasan, and his observations and remakes of the different areas of the region (apart from the mentioned districts of Herat or *Bulūkāt-i mazkūrah*), such as Niyshabur⁴⁰⁷ and Fushanj⁴⁰⁸, can be seen as confirmation of Abū Nasrī’s proficiency and detailed knowledge of agricultural culture and practices of the Herat region and its surroundings.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁰ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 117.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁰⁴ There is also a citation of another skilled man, Kamāl al-dīn-i khājah kūhī, on how to produce an immensely fine and sweet melon. See Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 120.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁰⁶ For example, in the sixth chapter, on explaining a type of black mulberry, Abū Nasrī addresses two other local names for this fruit, as it is called in *Tāghangān* and *Herāt* (*Bulūkāt-i mazkūrah*). Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 186.

⁴⁰⁷ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 147, 165.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴⁰⁹ Jakobi, “Agriculture Between Literary Tradition and Firsthand Experience,” 204.

In commenting on past records of plant cultivation and usage around Herat and other regions⁴¹⁰ and even some references to the Timurid ruler, Shāhrukh⁴¹¹, Abū Nasrī indicates that he was not only an informed specialist in topography and the science of agronomy for this area, but he apparently was also conversant in the history of the cultivation of diverse plants of the Khurasan region.

The sixth chapter begins with a statement: “On planting trees and flowers and aromatic plants and whatever is about their graft, bulb or sapling and etc, their different cultivation and protection methods.”⁴¹²

In this chapter Abū Nasrī raises an interesting point about Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā in a passage on cultivation of the Plane tree, and methods for warding off worms over the summer season. Abū Nasrī describes a process that his: “majesty [the] king (*hazrat-i khāqān-i, Solaymān makān-i*) in Jahān-ārāy garden taught the gardeners ... this method and order is specific to that highness’s gentle nature, and it (this method) has worked for the most of the peasants who have experienced this type (of method).”⁴¹³

The Jahān-ārāy garden is also mentioned by the other late Timurid historian Khvāndamīr, in *Habīb al-sīyār*, one of the notable late Timurid-early Safavid historic accounts.⁴¹⁴ Khvāndamīr addressed a vast *chāhārbāgh*, with 440 acres (*jarīb*), constructed under the command of the Sultan by a group of scrutinizer architects (*mi’mārān-i mudaqqiq*), proficient engineers or geometricians (*muhandisān-i hāziq*), the great mason masters and strong workmen, with a lofty admirable pavilion. He states the king moved from the Zāghān garden to this garden after its completion and he had a great endeavour in the garden’s maintenance and adornment personally, as he made it like a paradise, full of flowers and ornamental plants.⁴¹⁵ There is also another passage on Sultan Husayn’s personal interest in gardening and agriculture in Khvāndamīr’s account:

⁴¹⁰ There are frequent statements about different plants cultivation recorded background or for instance comparisons between old and new methods of planting in the region of Herat and its nearby districts in the main body of the text. See Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 89, 147, 197, 214, 237.

⁴¹¹ One of these referrals is in a section about the garden Balsam, which the author indicates used to be cultivated in Herat during the reign of the blessed Shāhrukh, and has now declined; however, it is still to be found in some areas of Nishabour. Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 147. The other narrative is an observation from the peasants (*dahāqīn*) in the time of Shāhrukh of one small garden (*Lakandī* garden) of the Sultan’s gardens about the cultivation of peppercorn. Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 197.

⁴¹² Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā’a*,” 166.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 147, 198.

⁴¹⁴ Khvāndamīr was living during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā and under the patronage of his erudite vizier, Amir Ali Shīr Navāī (1439–1501). *Habīb al-sīyār* is his significant literary work, completed at 1501, at the same time as the rise of the predominant first Safavid ruler, Shah Ismail I.

⁴¹⁵ Khvāndamīr, *Tarikh-i Habīb al-sīyār*, ed. Jalaluddin Humāi, vol 4. Tehran: Intisharat-i Khayyam, 1954, 136.

“... (He) did a serious effort in renovating the delightful palaces and exhilarating mansions, in design (*tarh*) of the gardens and orchards, and inspecting the trees and plants, himself personally...”⁴¹⁶

Khvāndamīr and Abū Nasrī’s reports on Sultan Husayn’s attention to agriculture, according to Subtelny’s study, are both supporters of the fact of the important role of this “fully acculturate Turko-Mongolian ruler” in the agricultural development of the Herat region to unprecedented heights.⁴¹⁷

We return to *Mīrak* and the agricultural practices in his gardens in the districts of Herat. In introducing aromatic plants and flowers, Abū Nasrī addresses a *chāhārbāgh* that belonged to *Mīrak* for the second time, without mentioning the name or place of the garden: “... (*Bōūstān-afroūz* flower) is usually grown tall about approximately five *zar‘e*,⁴¹⁸ like which (I have) observed at the *chāhār-bāgh* of that highness (*Mīrak*) ...”⁴¹⁹ This *chāhārbāgh* may be the same garden the author described in more detail earlier in the fourth chapter.⁴²⁰

The seventh chapter begins with a long list of contents: “in grafting of the trees and grapevines, and beehive keeping, estimating the yields of some summer market products and crops, caring the early (*pīshras*) flowers and first citrus fruits (*bādrang-i pīshras*), preparation of rose-water and Egyptian-willow juice, the rose conserve, the pennyroyal extract (or juice), different syrups (*shīrah*) (plums, hedsarum, sugar, etc) and grapes syrup (*dūshāb*) (*kāvushak va āftābī*), types of jam (sour grape, quince, mulberry, etc) sweet pastes (*halvā*), pickling and producing vinegar, the sour-grape jouncing, beestings and cheese making, and producing and keeping the silkworm cocoon (*filcha*).”⁴²¹

In this lengthy chapter the author mostly demonstrates beneficial dietary and even medical aspects of agriculture by providing various recipes. Abū Nasrī again underscores the fact that he has been under the consultation and guidance of the (faithful) servitors (*khūddām*) of *Mīrak* and has recited whatever he has heard. In a passage on the two main methods of grafting (i.e. homograft and hybridization) in which he explains the latter grafting system (still known as hybridization today), he states: “the second type: which is that to transplant one tree’s leaf to [an]other genus tree, for instance, apricot’s leaf to

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 111.

⁴¹⁷ Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid *chāhārbāgh*,” 118.

⁴¹⁸ An old unit of measuring length equals to approximately 41 inches or 104 centimeters.

⁴¹⁹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 147, 220.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 147, 113.

⁴²¹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 147, 225.

almond tree, and whatever I have heard from the servants of that highness, protection of the leadership (Mīrak) and have made some of it into the scope of statement (*hayz-i taqrīr*), so that the wise and mature men can have full profit from that, and the truth would be clear for the farmers and gardeners, [so] they will make effort with high ambition in that work which is beneficial for all people, and it [the second grafting method] has ten advantages...”⁴²²

To briefly summarise the main work, it is clearly evident that Abū Nasrī has arranged his information in a proper sequence of chapters. Starting from the very first step of cultivation, choosing the best type of “place,” land and soil, as well as the ideal “time” for planting, he then demonstrates practical instructions for various types and methods of cultivation for different functions and purposes such as ornamental, commercial and even botanical aspects of agriculture, ending with a long chapter (i.e. the seventh chapter) on productivity and utilitarianism by presenting various methods of preparation of market foodstuffs, and even medicinal recipes from cultivated fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. Finally, the author applies all the suggested methods in the final chapter, as a descriptive model or prototype of an actual Timurid *chāhārbāgh*.

3.4 Chapter eight: the Timurid *chāhārbāgh* layout

The final chapter and its contents are entitled “On the planting of saplings, flowers and aromatic plants in relation to each other in a *chāhārbāgh* according to a symmetrical landscape plan” and subtitled “layout of a *chāhārbāgh* with pavilion.”⁴²³

Although chapter eight of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* is the shortest in length, and least informative in terms of agricultural subsistence, it has captured most attention and interest in contemporary scholarly landscape studies.

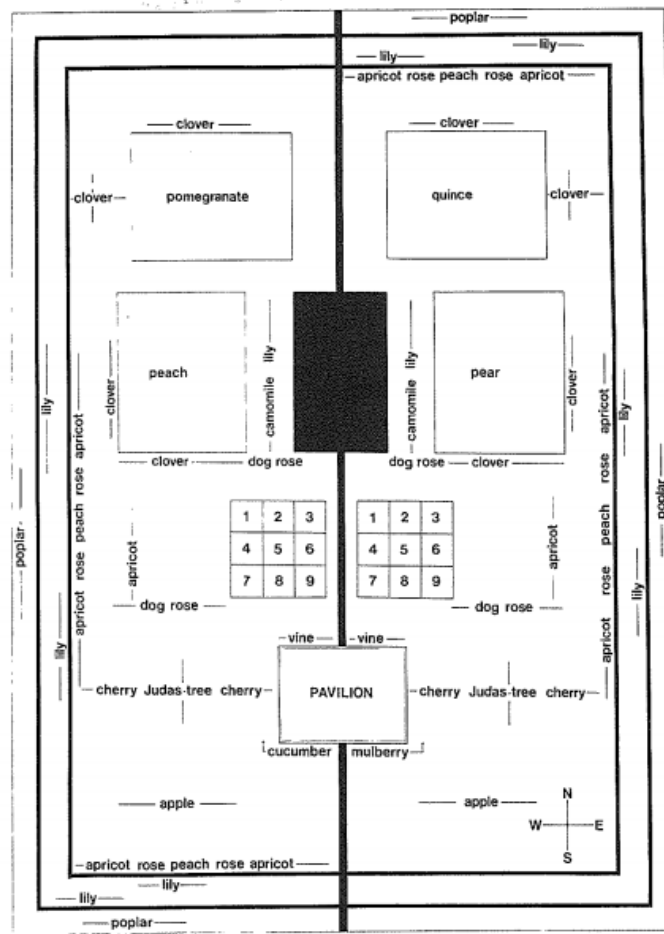
This chapter on the *chāhārbāgh* layout or quadripartite garden is remarkably important for the history of the Timurid garden design, as well as the history of medieval Persian agriculture. Subtelny noted that to date this chapter is the only detailed and documented description of an actual Persian garden, formed by the experiments and guidance of the prominent landscape architect and agronomy scientist, Mīrak and his skilful workmen, in

⁴²² Ibid., 147, 226.

⁴²³ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, “*Irshād al-zirā‘a*,” 147, 280.

addition to firsthand observations of its author, based on his own information and professional relationship with Mīrak.⁴²⁴

In the “reconstruction of the *chāhārbāgh*” based on information and descriptions in the final chapter of Abū Nasrī’s *Irshād al-zirā’a*, Subtelny refers to two studies considered to be the earliest on Persian gardens. The first was by the Russian scholar, Galina Pugachenkova in 1951,⁴²⁵ and the second study was by Ralph Pinder Wilson in 1976,⁴²⁶ published in one of the first symposiums of the Islamic garden (Figure 3-5).



8. Layout of a *chahār bāgh* based on the *Irshād az-Zirā'ah* of Qāsim ibn Yūsuf

Figure 3-5. Graphical reconstruction of *Chāhārbāgh* based on the *Irshād al-zirā'a* (Source: Ralph Pinder Wilson, “The Persian garden: Bāgh and Chāhārbāgh”)

⁴²⁴ Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh,” 116.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 116, 123.

⁴²⁶ Ralph Pinder Wilson, “The Persian Garden; Bāgh and Chāhārbāgh.” In *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976.

Other reconstructions of the *Chāhārbāgh* based on the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* are Sobti and Gharipour’s three-dimensional depiction⁴²⁷ and Mahvash Alemi’s graphical reconstruction (Figure 3-6).⁴²⁸

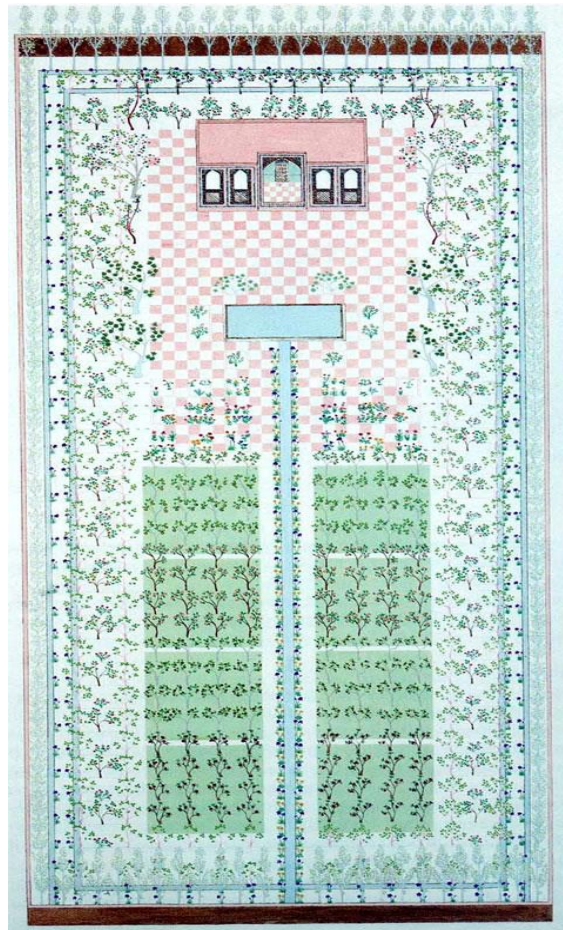


Figure 3-6. Mahvash Alemi’s reconstruction of *Chāhārbāgh* according to the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* (1966)
(Source: <http://www.oxfordartonline.com>)

While Subtelny’s graphical interpretation of the text (Figure 3-7) seems to be more complete and realistic; to my knowledge, her English translation of the last chapter of the *Irshād al-zirā‘a* is the only one available in one of the most studied sections of the text.⁴²⁹ However, I will offer another complete English translation of the final chapter, which can

⁴²⁷ Manu P. Sobti and Muhammad Gharipour, “The Hues of Paradise.” In *And diverse are their Hues: Colour in Islamic Art and Culture, The Biennial Hamad bin Khalifa Symposium*, eds. Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair. Yale University Press, bilingual edition, 2011.

⁴²⁸ Mahvash Alemi, “Chāhārbāgh.” *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* (1966), 38-45.

⁴²⁹ Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh,” 116-118.

be added to the existed one by Subtelny for comparison as the second version of the text, interpreted by a native Persian speaker translator.⁴³⁰

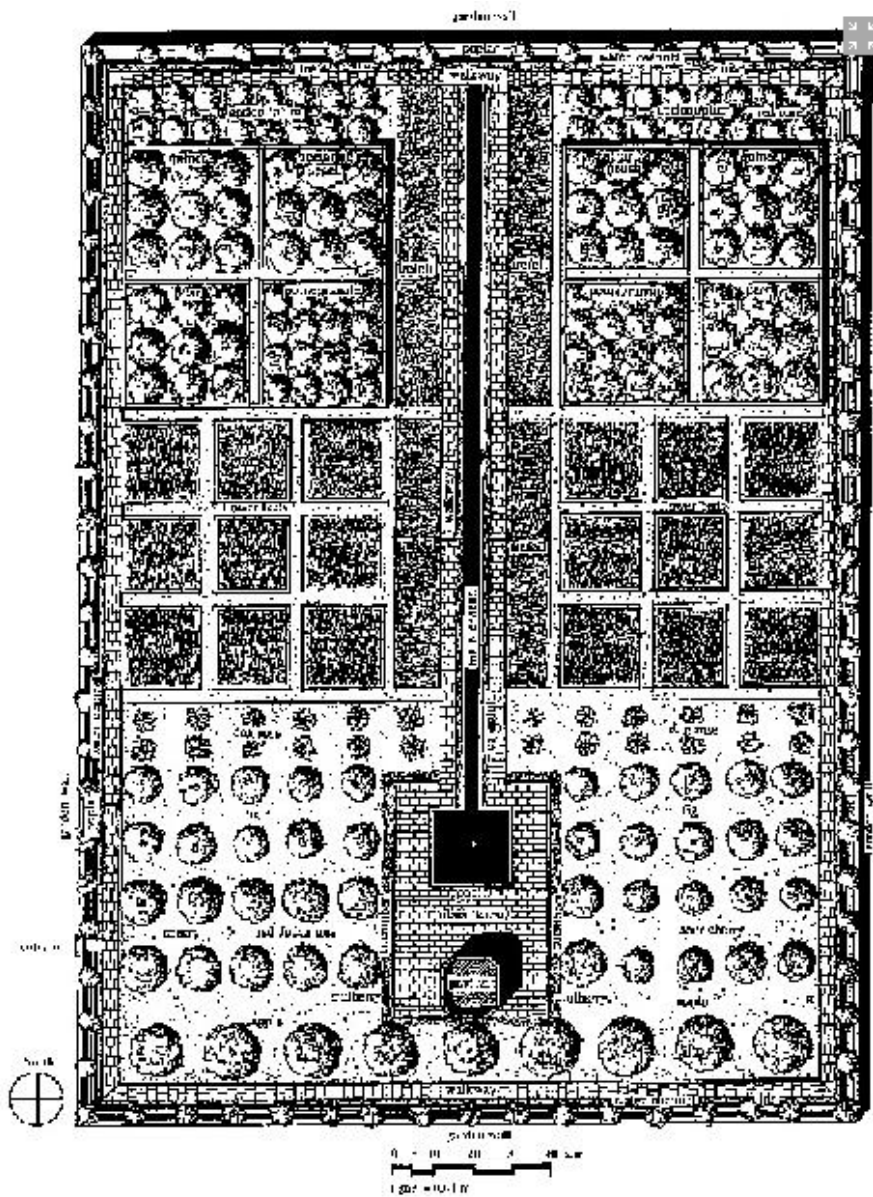


Figure 3-7. Maria Subtelny's graphical reconstruction of *Chāhārbāgh* according to the *Irshād al-zirā'a*. (1967) (Source: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/garden-ii>)

⁴³⁰ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 280-84.

3.5 Eight *Rawdha*

“On the planting of saplings, flowers and aromatic plants in relation to each other in a *Chāhārbāgh* according to a symmetrical landscape plan”

The heavenly mansion will be on the southern side toward north, and its paradisiacal orchards will be founded and created (blessed) with his majesty’s divine dispensations and boundless grace (may his gifts be exalted and his blessings become widespread), who erected the edifice of nine palaces and twelve towers of firmaments with the architectural deed of (commanding) “Be! And it is!”⁴³¹ and illuminated and adorned its loggia’s façade with the *Shamsa*,⁴³² and elevated the vaulted dome (*chāhārtāq*) of the lofty pillared portico of elements to the heavens with favour of the (his) peerless power, and variegated and embellished it with the whiteness of the dawn and redness of the crepuscule. And adorned the gardens of sacredness with tulips, gilded flowers and fruited trees with ultimate delicacy and beauty and perfect supervision and refreshment, and made the rose garden of fondness apparent with the evergreen flowers and colourful, tender, juicy fruits.

*The designer of the foundation of this ancient abbey,
The revolver of the overturned wheel of firmament,
The architect of the edifice of the ages,
The one who opens the treasury of the secret-keepers
The adorer of orchards of creation with palm trees,
The young fruits of whose production are of all variations.
The grafter of the sapling tree of mankind,
In the width way of chāhārbāgh of his existence,
From this heavenly-emanation garden-bed (Bāghche)
He continually creates new flowers.*

Layout of *Chāhārbāgh* and the pavilion

⁴³¹ The Qur’anic phrase, 16:40; 2:73; 3:59, etc.

⁴³² Brandeburg, ornamental image or fresco depicting the sun, which is usually made of metal and erected above gates or domes.

The layout is to leave three *zar'e* (about three meters)⁴³³ from the wall's footing around the *Chāhārbāgh*, then to make a one *zar'e* wide (about one meter) water canal after that and to plant poplar of *Samarqand* which is good looking, at the edge of the canal along the wall, close to each other. And (because) the pine (*najū*) has not enough fineness and auspiciousness (for) the other side of the canal which is also margin, the gladiola (*sūsan*) is suitable. And leave another three *zar'e* as *qarq*⁴³⁴ (subterranean aqueduct) which is (under the) pathway. And after that another one *zar'e* for the water canal, and to plant the gladiola on the edge of the *qarq*. Apricot tree should be planted on the mounded garden bed (*Lulah-pal*)⁴³⁵ which is five *zar'es* away from the poplar. There should be eight *zar'es* of distance between two apricots and red rose and red palm are proper to be planted in between. From the mentioned apricot, five *zar'es* should be left in between, to plant another apricot again and the palm (*alū-angūr*) to be grafted. After that in the middle, the straight main water canal (*shah-jūy*) should be placed to bring the water to the basin which is toward the mansion and on the edge of that (the *shah-jūy* or the basin?) should be (planted) the marigold, gladiola and the *khanjarī* (a kind of cactus) which are looking well. On both each side of the mentioned master water canal, walkways should be placed, and after that to prepare a place for trifoliolate (*seh-bargeh*) and on each side of trifoliolate on the upper level, four lawn patches or terraces (*chaman*) should be selected, on the first patch the pomegranate (to be planted), on the second one the quince, nectarine and peach on the third one and the pears on the fourth patch. And after (making) that (the following nine) orchards (garden beds) (*bāghchah*) are appropriate to be arranged which bloom at the same time:

The first orchard: blue violet (*banafsheh kabūd*), *īlchī* gladiolus (*īlchī sūsan*), the beautiful hundred leaved rose (*gol-i sad-barg*) and the meadow saffron (*sūranjān*).

The second orchard: saffron, narcissus (*narges*) and the beautiful six-petalled rose (*gol-i zibāy-i rasmī*).

⁴³³ *Zar'e* or cubit is a unit of measurement, which according to Subtelny was a variable module for Timurid Persia and it has been calculated in particular instances as equivalent to 60.6cm, 70cm, 73cm and 73.5cm. However according to *Mo'īn*, *Amīd* and *Dekhoda's* Persian dictionaries each *zar'e* is equal to 16 Gaz which is calculated about 104 centimetres (1/04 meters). Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh," 123.

⁴³⁴ This word is used today as drawn or sunk. According to Subtelny's study it can be translated as "filled with water" and the closest meaning can be an underground flow of water which apparently used to feed the water canals and central basin. Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh," 123.

⁴³⁵ According to *Mo'īn*, *Amīd* and *Dekhoda's* dictionaries the term *pal* is used to mean first: a mounded plot or patch which is prepared and used for agriculture or planting vegetables with raised edges, and second: a border between two pieces of orchards or patches.

The third orchard: tulip(s) (*lāleh-i bāghi*, *lāleh-i kūhī*,⁴³⁶ *dor dar gush*, *kakolī*), gladiolus (*rasmī*, *sahrāī*, *sefid*) and anemone.

The fourth orchard: blue jasmine (*yasaman kabūd*), yellow cercis (*arqavān-i zard*), yellow violet (*banafsheh zard*) and two-tiered tulip (*lāleh-i du- tabaghī*) and gillyflower (*shab- būy*).

The fifth orchard: red rose(s) (*gul malleh*, *panj-barg*, *abrash*, *sabūnī*, *ātashī*) and yellow rose(s), jouquil (*nasrīn*), *gul-i baqdādī* and *gul-i ghāzqān*.

The sixth orchard: Cathay aster (*gul-i ra'nā*) and corn-poppy (*khashkhāsh*) in the middle.

The seventh orchard: yellow jasmine (*Yasaman zard*), six-months rose (*gul-i shīsh māha*), hemerocallis (*zanbaq*), waterlily (*nīlūfar*), clove gillyflower (*gul-i qaranful*), lemon-yellow gladiolus (*sūsan limūī*) and althaea (*khatmī chīnī*).

The eighth orchard: Cathay althaea (*khatmī khatāī*), white jasmine (*yāsaman sefid*), *shab bī-dūstān* and *chaman-afrūz*.

The ninth orchard: Cathay tulip (*laleh khatāī*) and *bustan afrūz*.

At the end of the garden beds (the foot of the garden or *pāyān*) the eglantine should be planted from the eastern and western sides and two other eglantine bushes are appropriate to be planted on the north side of the basin symmetrically.

The basin should be twenty *zar'e* (about 20.80 meters) or whatever is well matched, far from the pavilion, and around the pavilion's terrace (*korsī* or platform) there will be (planted) cucumber (*khīyār*) and seedless mulberry (*tūt-i bīdānah*). And to plant where is nearby the pavilion, from the east side black cherry (*ālūbālū*), cherry (*gīlās*) on west side and red cercis (*arqavān-i sorkh*) in between and on the south side of the pavilion on the mounded row which is under the shade (*nasar*).⁴³⁷ Apple (*sīb*) should be planted which will be destroyed by worms (worm-eaten) if it is planted under the sun. Fig (*anjīr*) should be on the north side (of the pavilion) which is exposed to the sun and protected from the wind. (They) should be kept busy by protection of fruit-bearing trees and colourful gold-adorned flowers continuously to perfectly enjoy and benefit the sapling of hope and colourful flowers.

⁴³⁶ Bellflower.

⁴³⁷ According to Mo'īn, Amīd and Dehkhoda's dictionaries the term *nasar* is used for: a place which is located on southern side of the yard or garden, or a shady place which is protected from the sun.

*If you want the sapling of your wealth to be fertile,
And the tender flowers to bloom in the flower garden,
Beware that not to be disengaged for one moment,
From taking care (cultivation) of trees and flowers.⁴³⁸*

Abū Nasrī concludes his treatise by the following poems as a panegyric to the creator followed by some benediction to Mīrak as the author claims this collection (the handbook) is a confirmation of Mīrak's eminence and high ambition,⁴³⁹ finally stating the date of completion of the book.

*To give thanks to you glorious king,
The almighty wise, the unequalled unique,
My wish's palm tree which has got fertile,
By your grace O, thou leader!
(It) is grown up and thrived from the water and soil,
Its trees and vines have produced fruit,
All of its fruits are well-ripened,
The soul has got refreshed by its early fruits.
I'm hopeful that from every individuals and group,
Whosoever chose its shady passages to stay,
In each promenade and itineracy by his grandeur and grace,
To remember his poet by benediction.
Firmament is in eulogy of its layout,
Angels are praying for (its) blessing.⁴⁴⁰*

⁴³⁸ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "Irshād al-zirā'a," 282, 5sqq.

⁴³⁹ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "Irshād al-zirā'a," 282, 17sqq.

⁴⁴⁰ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "Irshād al-zirā'a," 282.

3.6 Re-defining the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*

Chāhārbāgh: symbolism and physical structure

The term *Chāhārbāgh* has been debated during recent decades of scholarship on Persian gardens. The term is the joining of the two separate words of “*Chāhār*”, which literally means four, and “*Bāgh*,” which means garden. This term is attributed to the common quaternary idea in Persian culture like other similar examples such as *Chāhār-Tāqī* or *Chāhār-Suffa* (a rectangular room with four-arched openings or vaults) and *Chāhār-Sū* (an intersection of four passages in a Bazaar).⁴⁴¹ However, in relation to garden, a common interpretation is often referred to as a “quadripartite,” or a garden quartered by the intersection of two straight water channels.⁴⁴² This layout term which has been the most common archetype of gardens in the whole Islamic world, seems to have been applied later for any garden type which had a multipart grid of intersecting water channels.⁴⁴³ According to the historian, Ralph Pinder Wilson, the term had been used in earlier accounts. Wilson traced the usage of the term and one of the earliest references to a *Chāhārbāgh* in the “history of Bukhara” written in Arabic by the early tenth century Samanid historian, Narshakī in 943-44 AD and translated to Persian in 1128-29.⁴⁴⁴ However, the term *Chāhārbāgh* seems not to have been widely used until Timurid times.⁴⁴⁵ Despite the thriving of the *Chāhārbāgh* since the early years of the Timurid era, starting with the expanded garden making project by Timur, the term was not apparent in contemporary sources till the reign of Timur’s son, Shāhrukh Mīrzā.⁴⁴⁶ According to Subtelny, the single word *Bāgh* was the only term used for referring to the monumental gardens of Timur during Shāhrukh Mīrzā’s rule.⁴⁴⁷ However, the *Chāhārbāgh* was not a Timurid invention. In fact, according to archaeological research, the concept of a walled

⁴⁴¹ Lisa Golombek, “The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives.” *Muqarnas* 12, ed. Gulru Necipoglu, 145. Brill, 1995.

⁴⁴² See the earlier discussion on Persian *Chāhārbāgh* design in chapter one of this study; the Achaemenid gardens; pages 30-37.

⁴⁴³ Golombek, “The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives,” 145.

⁴⁴⁴ Ralph Pinder Wilson, “The Persian Garden: Bāgh and Chāhārbāgh.” In *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B. Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen, 80. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976.

⁴⁴⁵ In fact the Timurids adapted and perfected the term, its function and meaning to an extraordinary level, and they deserve credit for giving such a currency to the word, which had not been widely used before the fifteenth century, to become the most known and practised tradition in garden making history of the region. See Ralph Pinder Wilson, “The Persian garden: Bāgh and Chāhārbāgh,” 80; Maria E. Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture,” 38.

⁴⁴⁶ Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh,” 116.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

quadripartite garden containing a central pavilion actually preceded Islam. It was an ancient Iranian archetype going back to Sassanian and Achaemenid times.⁴⁴⁸

The subtle association between the *Chāhārbāgh* garden and the symbolic idea of paradise is justified by the myth of the ancient Zoroastrian paradise or *Vihisht*, divided into four gradated terraces: the domain of Good Thought, Good Words, Good Deeds, and *Garotman*, the highest being that of Endless Light.⁴⁴⁹ Similarly, the four raised plots of the earthly *Chāhārbāgh*, intersected by four water canals, are assumed to be recalling this archetypal image of four terraces of the celestial paradise.⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, far more practical reasons in relation to constructing such gardens can be given rather than symbolical interpretations, as it seems likely that pragmatism played an important role, perhaps even more so than symbolism.

Although this highly structured geometrical pattern, the *Chāhārbāgh*, became the most popular metaphor for the organization and domestication of the landscape; the fourfold cross-axial plan was not the only means of organizing the garden in the Islamic realm.⁴⁵¹ In fact this layout was not the only formal garden type in many regions of the Muslim world. However, gardens in other regions of the Muslim world have a strong sense of geometrical and symmetrical order.⁴⁵² Historical research has revealed the term could refer to gardens of various size, shape, status and function. However, the *Chāhārbāgh* garden during the late Timurid reign in the fifteenth century Khurasan region, believed to

⁴⁴⁸ David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963*. Oxford University Press, 1978.

⁴⁴⁹ According to Mahvash Alemi's study of *Chāhārbāgh* meanings and examples, the myth of the garden of creation, a marvellous garden which was given to the very first human couple to live in by Ahura Mazda (the Zoroastrian god of light), existing in Iranian culture since ancient times. This garden embodied all the symbols of abundancy and beauty and all the creatures lived there in absolute peace and perfection, surrounded by four paradisiacal rivers. But one of the spirits, Ahriman, who was charged with keeping the garden light, let the torch fall and was put out of the garden of paradise, becoming the Lord of darkness. The struggle between Ahura Mazda (the Lord of light) and Ahriman has continued since then. The universe was divided in two, celestial and earthly, because of this conflict. Man was also put out of the paradise after taking part with Ahriman, but the Lord of light directed him towards redemption by showing him the art of garden creation, which is in fact re-creating the celestial heaven by making the earthly paradise. Mahvash Alemi, "Chāhārbāgh," in *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* (1966), 41.

⁴⁵⁰ Alemi, "Chāhārbāgh," 42.

⁴⁵¹ The exceptional chāhārbāgh form was like the hizar jarib garden in Safavid Isfahan, which was not based on the typical form of cross axial plan, but instead involved four parallel planted terraces located on four different levels. In this garden, the pavilion was located at one end of the garden at the highest level, working as a visual point overlooking the four parallel raised plots. See D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 39.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 49.

have been represented by a specific layout and features, is distinguished from the more generic type of garden, the *Bāgh*. This distinction is addressed by Subtelny based on three factors including plantings, vegetation and placement of the pavilion.⁴⁵³ The *Chāhārbāgh* is reasonably small in size, containing various fruit trees, flowers and herbs, with a pavilion located on the south side of the garden, while the more general garden type, the *Bāgh*, could be monumental, containing any type of greenery and plantings with or without a structure in the centre of the garden or elsewhere.⁴⁵⁴

The Timurid Chāhārbāgh in Irshād al-zirā'a

The agricultural manual, *Irshād al-zirā'a*, contains a detailed description of the layout and planting of a *Chāhārbāgh*, the Persian formal, quadripartite, architectural garden with pool and pavilion. As previously mentioned, Mīrak was a member of an important family of landscape architects and chief landscape architect, gardener, and agronomist of Sultan Husayn for whom, according to the author of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, he executed every idea “reflected in the mirror of his fertile imagination and burnished by his illuminating mind.”⁴⁵⁵

It has generally been agreed among modern scholars that in relation to the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* in Mughal India, Emperor Babur was best known for his patronage of garden making, rather than other architectural or religious monuments.⁴⁵⁶ In fact the impact that the codification of the design of the *Chāhārbāgh* had on both Central Asia and India is undeniable.⁴⁵⁷ That influence can be traced directly to Mīrak’s move first to India, where in 1529 he was involved in a construction project at Agra and Dholpur for Babur, who had traditionally been credited with introducing the Timurid garden design to northern India. As mentioned earlier, when he immigrated to Central Asia he constructed a magnificent garden for ‘Obaydullāh Khan I in Bukhara, mentioned along with the other architectural monuments erected during that ruler’s reign.⁴⁵⁸ Even more significant for tracing the Timurid legacy in the area of garden design is the move made around 1559 by Mīrak’s son, Muhammad (who was known as Sayyed Muhammad-i Mīrak) from Bukhara

⁴⁵³ Maria E. Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture: Further Notes to ‘A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context.’” *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995), 19-60.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁵⁵ Subtelny, “Agriculture and the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh*,” 119.

⁴⁵⁶ Subtelny, “Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture,” 46.

⁴⁵⁷ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 103.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

to India, where he built Homayun’s tomb in Delhi. It has generally been accepted among architectural historians that Homayun’s tomb garden is the first preserved Mughal garden built according to the “classical” Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* pattern.⁴⁵⁹

If the description in *Irshād al-zirā‘a* is assumed to be the true archetype of the *Chāhārbāgh* garden tradition during the late years of Timurid rule in Herat, it can therefore reflect the evolving nature of landscape design from Timur’s gardens in Samarqand to Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā’s gardens in Herat and surrounds. According to historian, Lisa Golombek, while many elements resemble Timur’s gardens in Samarqand, the placement of the pavilion is regarded as the single most significant difference to Abū Nasrī’s instruction. The *Irshād al-zirā‘a*’s garden pavilion was to be located at one end of a rectangular enclosure, overlooking the formal quadrilateral garden, while the gardens attributed to Timur have been indicated by a predominant centralized pavilion.⁴⁶⁰ (Figure 3-8)



Figure 3-8. A Persian depiction of Timur in his *Chāhārbāgh* garden pavilion meeting European emissaries on a dais raised above the intersection of the four paths or watercourses (Source: fotografia.islamorient.com)

⁴⁵⁹ Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 104.

⁴⁶⁰ Lisa Golombek, “The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives.” *Muqarnas* 12, edited by Gulru Necipoglu, 139. Brill, 1995.

This obvious discrepancy between the two types of *chāhārbāgh* garden based on the late Timurid *Irshād al-zirā‘a*'s descriptions and the early Timurid gardens addressed in contemporary accounts, may indicate a transformation or departure from the traditional form of *chāhārbāgh* during centuries of Timurid rule.⁴⁶¹

There are ample descriptions of the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* in contemporary narrative sources. The Mughal emperor Babur, who toured the gardens of Herat in 1506, shortly after the death of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, entertained by his two recently enthroned cousins, Sultan Husayn's sons, recorded his detailed descriptions of some of those gardens in his memoirs.⁴⁶² (Figure 3-9)

Apart from recitation of his impressions of the lavishly decorated Herat gardens and their imperial pavilions, Babur also described the mansions in Ulugh Beg's gardens in Samarqand and Darvish Mohammad Tarkhan's *Chāhārbāgh* which in his opinion was the best garden in that city during Sultan Ahmad Mirzā's reign, despite its lack of running water.⁴⁶³



Figure 3-9. Babur, the Mughal emperor, supervising his workmen altering the course of a stream in a *Chāhārbāgh*, according to symmetrical layout. An illustration from the *The Baburnāma*, the memoirs of Babur, prince and emperor (Source: <http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in>)

⁴⁶¹ Kristoffer Damgaard, “The Paradisical Garden: Tracing the Timurid Chāhārbāgh.” *DSCA Journal* 1 (Copenhagen, 2005): 29-38; D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 31.

⁴⁶² *The Baburnāma, Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, edited by Wheeler M. Thackston. New York: The Modern Library, 2002.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 60.

Babur also describes his famous *Chāhārbāgh* called *Bāgh-i Wafā* (the garden of fidelity) near Kabul: “In 914 (1508-9), I had constructed a *Chāhārbāgh* garden called *Bāgh-i Wafā*, on a rise to the south of the Adinapur fortress. It overlooked the river, which flows between the fortress and the garden. It yields many oranges, citrons and pomegranates.”⁴⁶⁴ He then describes the *Chārchaman*, (four pitches or plots) similar to Abū Nasrī’s suggestion of four raised lawn patches or terraces (*chaman*) complete with different kinds of fruit trees: “In the middle of the garden is a small hill from which a one mill stream always flows through the garden. The *Chārchaman* (four pitches) in the middle of the garden is situated atop the hill. In the southwest portion of the garden is a ten-by-ten pool surrounded by orange trees and some pomegranate trees. All around the pool is a clover meadow. The best place in the garden is there. When the oranges turn yellow it is a beautiful sight, really handsomely laid out.”⁴⁶⁵ (Figure 3-10)



Figure 3-10. The famous illustration of the Bāgh-i Wafā in Kabul. Babur is supervising his workmen during the construction of his *Chāhārbāgh* depicted here as a walled cross axial garden. The *Chārchaman* are in the middle of the garden with intersecting water canals and basin. An illustration from *Baburnāma*, the memoirs and autobiography of emperor Babur, sixteenth century, India (Source: <http://bridgingcultures.neh.gov>)

⁴⁶⁴ *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 156-157.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

In 1507 Herat was occupied by the Uzbeks but after much fighting the city was taken by Shah Isma‘īl, founder of the Safavid dynasty, in 1510 and the Shamlu *qizilbāsh* assumed governorship. Under the Safavids, Herat was again relegated to the position of a provincial capital, albeit one of importance. The Safavids used the existing Timurid *Chāhārbāghs* after their conquest of Herat from the Uzbeks, as fortified military encampments and centres for political and ceremonial events.⁴⁶⁶ Despite the fact that there was no new garden construction in the Herat region during early Safavid reign, traditional *Chāhārbāgh* design was later evident in the royal garden complex of Shah Tahmāsp in the central Iranian city of Qazvin and the imperial gardens of Shah Abbas in Isfahan during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁴⁶⁷ (Figure 3-11)

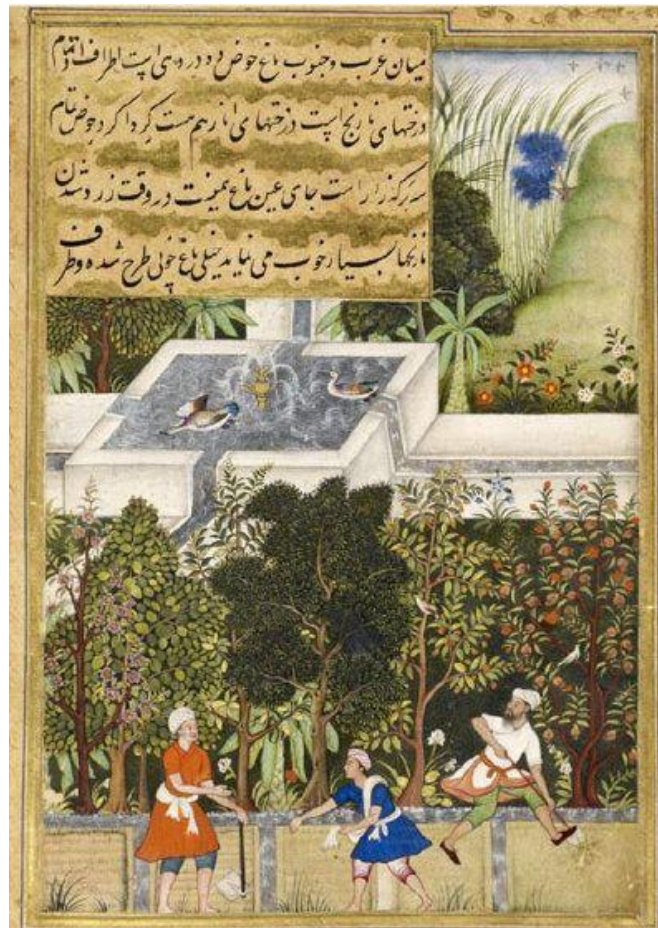


Figure 3-11. Another illustration in emperor Babur’s memoirs. Workmen constructing a cross axial garden or *Chāhārbāgh* called Bāgh-i Vafā in Kabul in 1590, India (Source: warfare.altervista.org)

⁴⁶⁶ Maria Subtelny, "Mīrak-i Sayyid Ghiyās and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture: Further Notes to ‘A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context.’" *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995), 51.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

Graphical depiction of Chāhārbāgh layout

The location of the pavilion (*imārat*) is the first thing which Abū Nasrī draws the reader's attention to, indicating it should be located on the south side of the garden, facing north. The second point is the wall which encloses the garden. A row of poplar trees (Samarqand poplars) emphasise the separation between the ideal man-made design and the surrounding environment.⁴⁶⁸ The water canal (*jūy*) is located about three *zar'es* from the walls inside the garden's perimeter. In the space between the edge of the water canal and the garden wall, the Samarqand poplars are planted closely, while along the other edge of the canal, gladiola or iris are cultivated. However, Abū Nasrī provides no further information or details that relate to the entrance(s) to the garden, which is not surprising as the treatise first and foremost focuses on agricultural details rather than architectural aspects. The walkway is located next to the iris border and covers a subterranean reservoir called *gharq* (this hidden underground water canal should have been saving the water used for feeding the central basin and also the other water canals of the garden.)⁴⁶⁹ Another minor water canal is located on the other side of the walkway (the same width) with a similar iris border.

The main waterway (*shāh-jūy*) is the other element addressed in this chapter, although its width is left unclear by the author, which should be a flow of water running down to the central basin, in front of the pavilion, twenty *zar'e* from the pavilion. (Abū Nasrī states this distance can be less or more.) This main watercourse was again bordered with gladiola, calendula and other ornamental flowers on both sides, and located between two other walkways built and paved above two *gharqs* that ran along both sides of the main watercourse. Again, the width of these walkways is ambiguous. Abū Nasrī also describes four raised terraces (*chaman*) which literally means meadow covered with lawn) planted in a symmetrical pattern of fruit trees (pomegranate, quince, peach, nectarine and pear) on both sides of the main axes of water and walkways. According to Subtelny these terraces were most likely intersected by minor watercourses, which are not mentioned by Abū Nasrī.⁴⁷⁰

The author names nine orchards (*bāghchah*) or flowerbeds with flowers and aromatic plants suitable for cultivation and blooming in sequence. In addition, from a botanical

⁴⁶⁸ Alemi, "Chāhārbāgh," 38.

⁴⁶⁹ Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh," 123.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 118, 127.

point of view, this pattern of floral design and ornamental planting offered a colourful, fragrant display.⁴⁷¹

Based on Subtelny's reconstruction, the central basin was possibly located on the same raised dais or platform (*kursī*) as the pavilion.⁴⁷²

Although Abū Nasrī did not indicate the exact size and height of this platform, Subtelny refers to contemporary late Timurid miniature paintings (e.g. *khamṣa* of Nizāmī) as the justification of her idea of the central pool set into the raised platform (Figure 3-12).

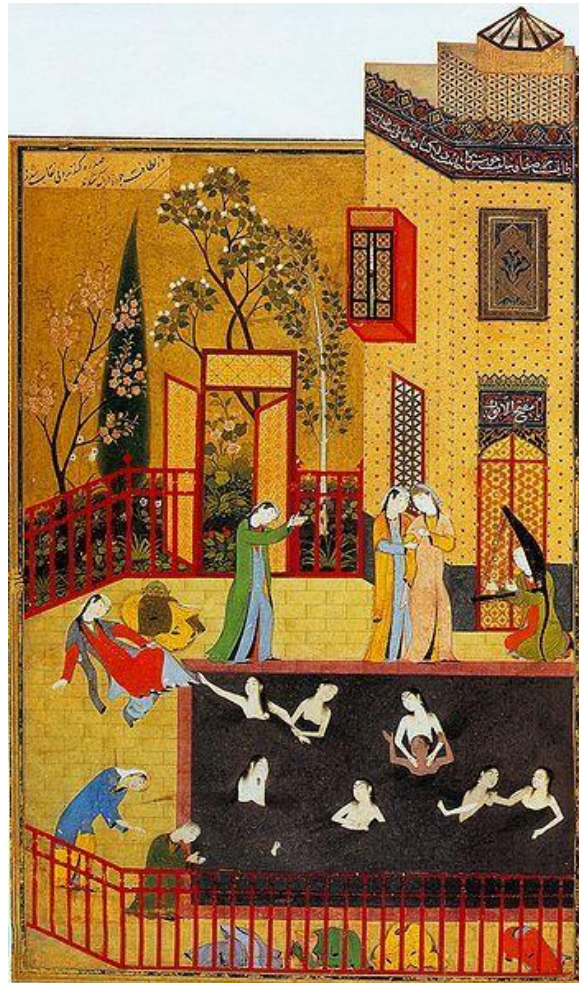


Figure 3-12. Bathing maidens observed by the eavesdropping master, from *khamṣa* of Nizāmī, Herat, 1494 (Source: Thomas W. Lentz, Glenn D. Lowry. *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989, 275.)

The area around the pavilion and its raised dais is another site for planting fruit trees which Abū Nasrī specifies as follows: cucumber and seedless mulberry around the dais or *kursī*, cherry trees, with the red cercis or Judas trees randomly planted in between, on

⁴⁷¹ Sobti, Gharipour, "The Hues of Paradise," 321-322.

⁴⁷² Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh," 118.

the west side, sour cherry on the east side, apples on the south side under the shade (perhaps the shadow of the south wall of the garden) and finally on the north side, which is suitable for fig trees.⁴⁷³

While Abū Nasrī's detailed treatise on his instructive *chāhārbāgh* is the only available textual source on designing an actual Timurid *chāhārbāgh*, according to Subtelny it seems to have been regarded by him as a suggestive model or "classical type", as he didn't provide any other form or alternative layout.⁴⁷⁴ On the other hand, in his earlier descriptions of an actual *chāhārbāgh* that belonged to Mīrak in previous chapters, those existing gardens appear to have many other plantation varieties besides those Abū Nasrī mentions in the last chapter of his handbook, such as the one hundred varieties of grapevine in Mīrak's own *chāhārbāgh*.⁴⁷⁵ Additionally, as mentioned before, there are many details and information missing in different parts of the final chapter, as Abū Nasrī's descriptions do not appear to be complete in many ways. For instance, they don't indicate the exact relationship between the mounded rows of the apricots and the terraces of fruit trees or between the terraces and flower beds. There is also no information or hints on the any minor water canal(s) crossing the main one in the middle of the garden. Therefore, this suggested layout provided by Abū Nasrī should probably be regarded not as a prescriptive model of a garden in its entirety, but as a series of modules which, according to Subtelny, could be replicated to create a garden of any desired size or pattern, but based on the fundamental quadripartite plan.⁴⁷⁶

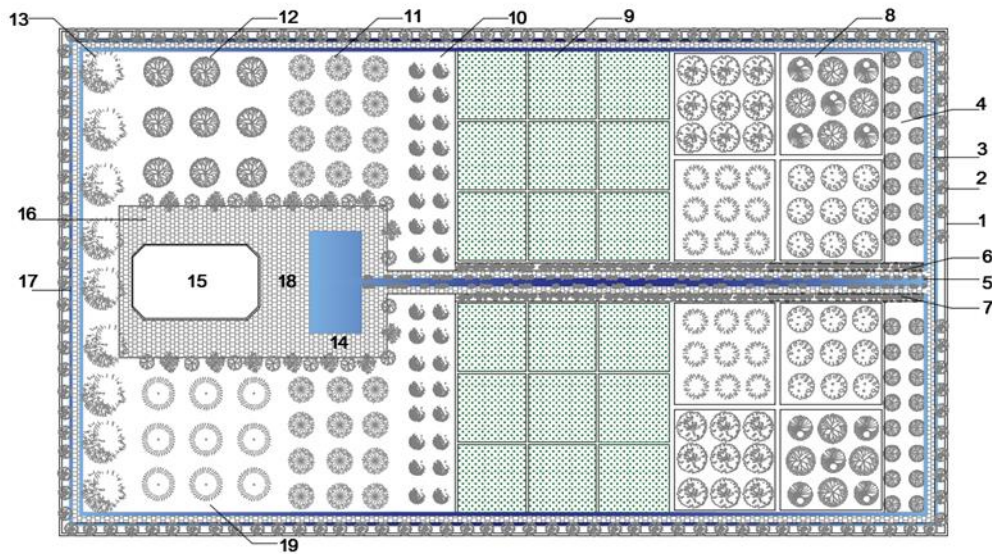
The final chapter of the *Irshād al-zirā'a*, a very important early Persian agricultural manual, strongly reflects the high point of Timurid agricultural development in the Herat region of the eastern Khurasan, which underscores the close link between agriculture and garden in medieval Iran, as a dynamic architectural, economical and beneficial entity. (Figure 3-13 to Figure 3-23 feature are some drawings reconstruct of the late Timurid-early Safavid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions.)

⁴⁷³ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 282.

⁴⁷⁴ Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh," 118.

⁴⁷⁵ Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 113.

⁴⁷⁶ Subtelny gives examples the so-called *hasht-bihisht* layout, which presents a pattern of 4x4 flowerbeds instead of 2x4, which later became a module of the Mughal garden design feature. See Subtelny, "Agriculture and the Timurid Chāhārbāgh," 118.



- 1: Garden's surrounding wall.
- 2: Poplars
- 3: Walkway border
- 4: Apricot/palm and red rose planted in between
- 5: Main water canal (*Shāh-jūy*)
- 6: Main walkways
- 7: Trifoliolate (*seh-bargeh*)
- 8: Four lawn patches (*Chaman*)
- 9: Nine flowerbeds or orchards (*Bāghcheh*)
- 10: Eglantine or dog-rose
- 11: Fig
- 12: Cherry
- 13: Apple
- 14: Central basin
- 15: Pavilion
- 16: Cucumber (*khīyār*) and seedless mulberry (*tūt-i bīdānah*)
- 17: Water canal border
- 18: The *korsī* or platform
- 19: Black cherry (or sour cherry)

Figure 3-13. Reconstructed design of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions.
(Source: Alternative 1, drawing by the thesis author)

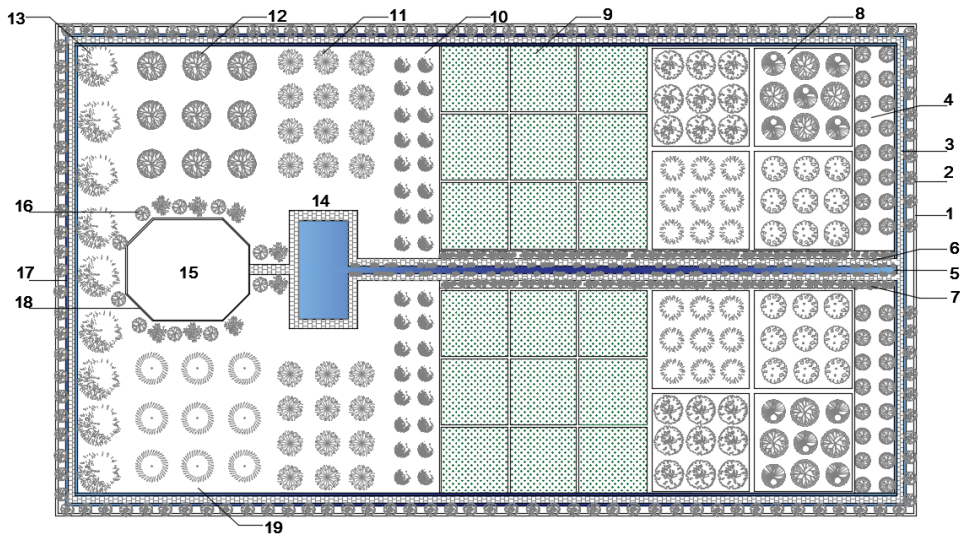


Figure 3-14. Reconstructed design of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions.
 (Source: Alternative 2, drawing by the thesis author)

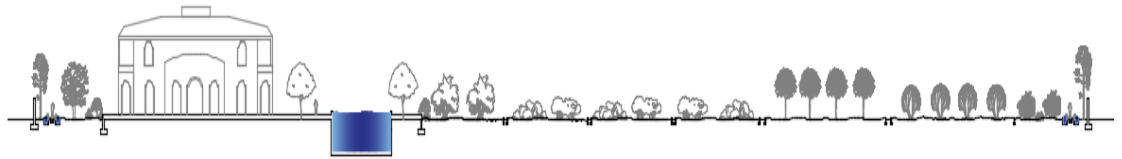


Figure 3-15. Lengthwise cross-section of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions
 (Source: drawing by the thesis author)



Figure 3-16. Width wise cross-section of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions
 (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

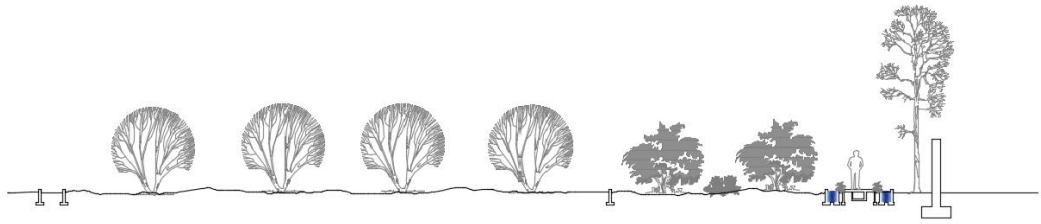


Figure 3-17. Detail of a cross-section of the border water canal, the apricot mounds, and the terraces of fruit trees in the *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

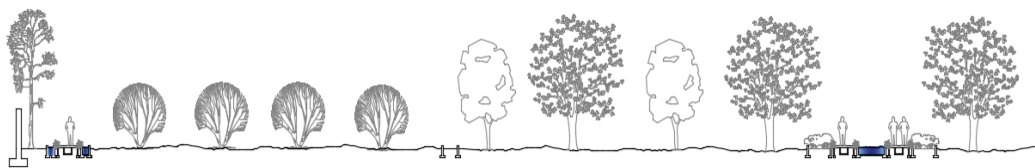


Figure 3-18. Detail of a cross-section of the border, the main water canal and terraces of fruit trees in the *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

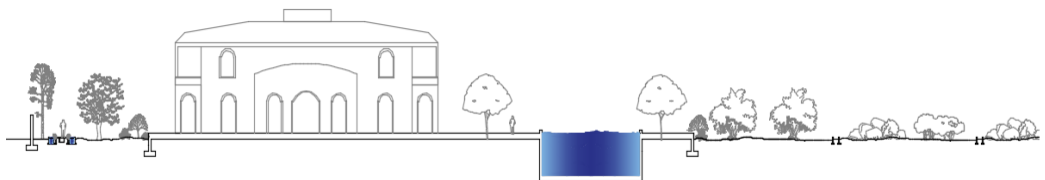


Figure 3-19. Detail of a cross-section of the border and water canal, flowerbeds, raised platform, central basin and pavilion in the *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

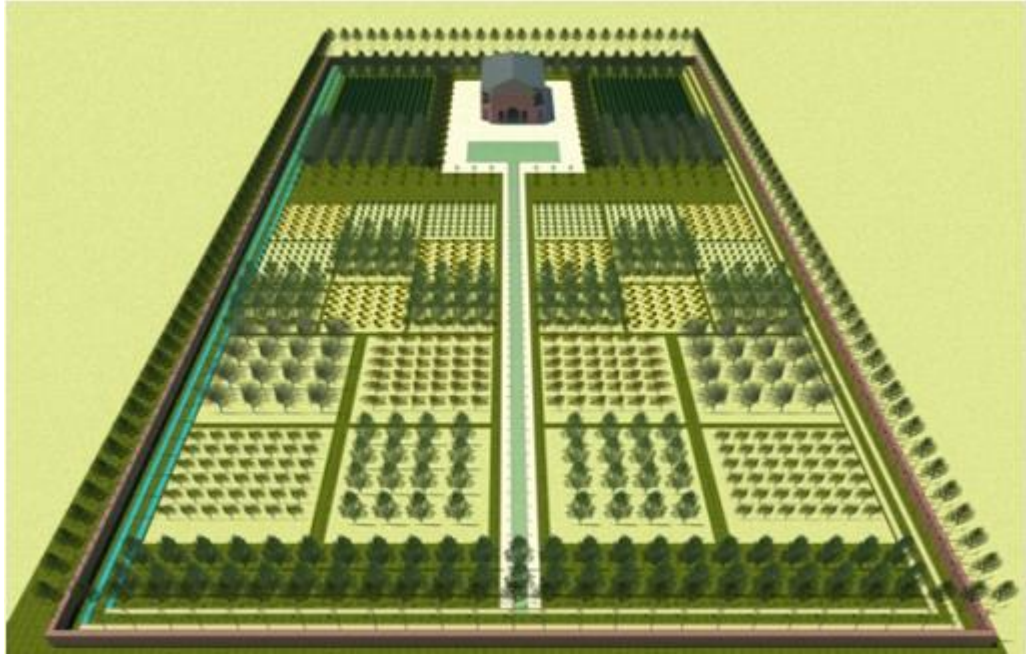


Figure 3-20. Reconstructed three-dimensional design of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions (Source: drawing by the thesis author)



Figure 3-21. Reconstructed three-dimensional design of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

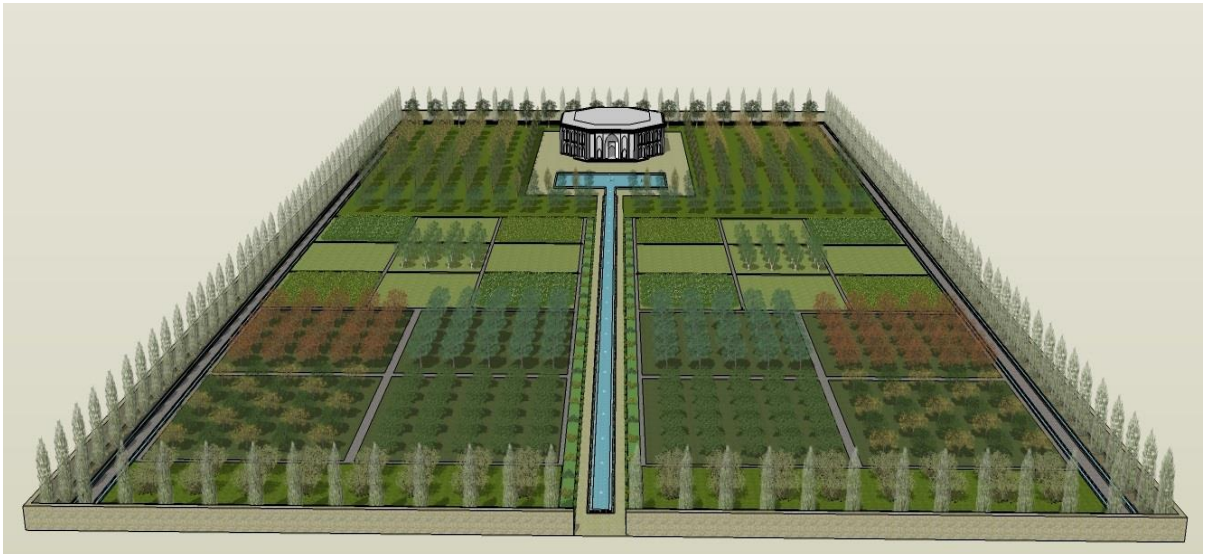


Figure 3-22. Reconstructed three-dimensional design of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

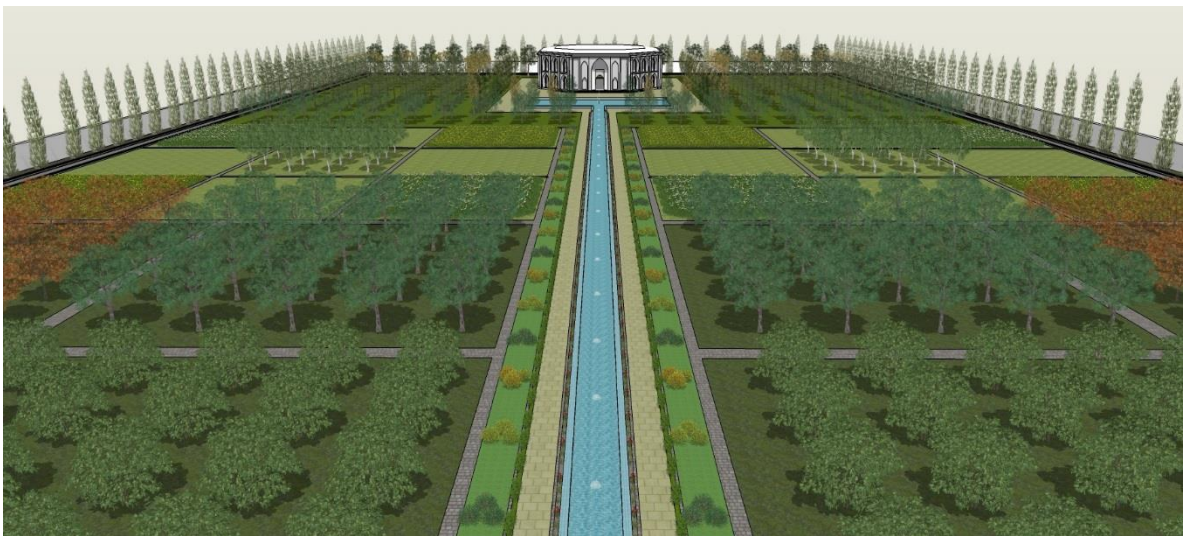


Figure 3-23. Reconstructed three-dimensional design of the late Timurid *chāhārbāgh* based on Abū Nasrī's descriptions. (Source: drawing by the thesis author)

Part III

The Poetics of Gardening:

Jannāt-i ‘adan

Chapter 4
Navīdī and the Gardens of Qazvin

4 Navīdī and the Gardens of Qazvin

4.1 Revisioning the gardens of Qazvin through *Jannāt-i ‘adan*

Jannāt-i ‘adan or the “Gardens of Eden” is considered one of the greatest examples of Persian poetry describing the gardens of Qazvin during the sixteenth century. This compilation is made up of five major poems in the style of Nizāmī’s *khamsa*, composed by the court poet and historian, ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī. These poems are arguably the most reliable evidence depicting the new garden city of Qazvin, the second Safavid capital city during the Shah Tahmāsp’s monarchy, of which almost nothing remains today. Navīdī’s poetry provides us with a detailed image of the capital city and its noble gardens and landscaping. In view of the fact that just two mansions of the glorious Sa‘ādat ābād garden city have survived time and history, revisioning the gardens of Qazvin seems achievable by applying Navīdī’s detailed descriptions.

Shah Tahmāsp and his new garden city

Shah Tahmāsp (1524–1576), the young governor of Herat, succeeded his father Isma‘īl in 1524 when he was ten years and three months old. He was the ward of the powerful *Qizilbāsh* Amir Ali Bayk Rūmlū (titled “Dīv Sultan”), who saw himself as the genuine ruler of the Khurasan state.⁴⁷⁷ The *Qizilbāsh*, who suffered in the battle of Chaldiran, was engulfed in internal rivalries for control of the empire until Shah Tahmāsp came of age and reasserted his authority.⁴⁷⁸ Tahmāsp reigned for fifty-two years, the longest reign in Safavid history (Figure 4-1).

⁴⁷⁷ Douglas E. Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2011, 146.

⁴⁷⁸ Hans R. Roemer, “The Safavid Period.” In *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, vol. 6, edited by Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, 233-34. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1968-1991.



Figure 4-1. Shah Tahmāsp I, fresco on the walls of Chihil Sotoūn palace, Isfahan, seventeenth century
(Source: Author, 2014)

The Uzbeks, during the reign of Tahmāsp, attacked the eastern provinces of the Safavid Kingdom five times and the Ottomans under Solayman I initiated four invasions of Persia. Losing territory in Iraq and the northwest, Tahmāsp realized that his capital was not secure, and he was forced to move the capital from Tabriz to Qazvin in 1544.⁴⁷⁹ Tahmāsp finally made peace with the Ottomans in 1555, ending the war during his lifetime.⁴⁸⁰

The choice of a Sunni centre also fulfilled his aim to propagate Shi'ism and repress mystic Sufi orders. He created conditions for the growth of Qazvin as his centre of power.⁴⁸¹ Tahmāsp engaged in a large urban development program by building a royal

⁴⁷⁹ Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 60-64.

⁴⁸⁰ Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires*, 50.

⁴⁸¹ Mahvash Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy." In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007, 114.

bath, cistern and bazaar (Qaysariyyah Tahmāspi) northwest of the old bazaar. In order to establish religious power, he extended the Seljuqid mosque, *masjīd-i atīq*, renovated the Shāhzādah Husayn mausoleum and restored the Panja ‘ali mosque. The presence of the Shi’ite clergy in Qazvin transformed the city into a great Shi’ite centre.⁴⁸² The greatest addition, however, concerned the gardens for the court residence. He purchased an area called Zangī ābād from Mirzā Ashraf Khan, one of the prominent figures and trustees of the city. He renamed the area Ja‘far ābād in honour of the sixth Shi‘a Imām and to highlight his fondness of Twelver Shi‘ism due to his religious policy. He developed Ja‘far into a garden city known as Sa‘ādat ābād. This garden was built to the north of the existing city to which it was linked through a public street (*Khiyābān*) and two squares or *Maydān* (*Maydān-i asb* and *Maydān-i sa‘ādat*), exhibiting the importance of garden making as a political strategy. In an enclosed garden (*Khiyābān*) is a promenade under shady trees with a water channel in the centre, and a *Maydān* is an open space where polo and archery are practised (Figure 4-2). Both garden forms were transformed into new public garden spaces in the garden city.⁴⁸³

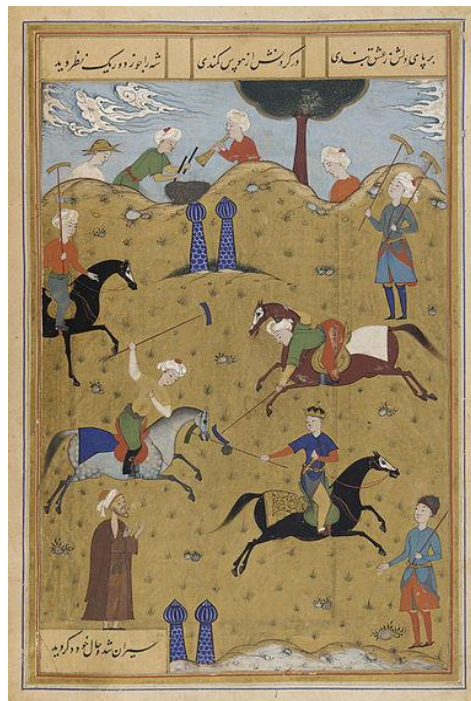


Figure 4-2. A Persian miniature from the poem *Gūy-o Chawgān* (the ball and polo mallet) which shows courtiers on horseback playing a polo match, Safavid Persia 1546 (Source: www.magnoliabox.com)

⁴⁸² Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens", 114.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 115.

If Shah Isma‘īl is recognized for his formal introduction of Twelver Shi’ism to Persia, and Shah Abbas I (Tahmāsp’s grandson and the fifth Safavid king) is credited with establishing the Safavid dynasty as one of the principal architectural patrons known to Perso-Islamic history, so Shah Tahmāsp must be acknowledged for his patronage and revival of Persian literary and cultural life.⁴⁸⁴ It is in no small part on account of Tahmāsp’s patronage of artists, miniaturists, calligraphers, historians, poets, stylists, bookbinders and other cultural artisans, primarily from Timurid Khorasan, that the Safavid dynasty emerged as an imperial entity. According to the Safavid court historiographer and accountant, Budāq Munshī Qazvinī (late fifteenth-early sixteenth century), Shah Tahmāsp in his youth “was inclined towards calligraphy and art, and brought some singular masters who were without comparison in each of their own arts to join his development program.”⁴⁸⁵

That the Shah would be committed to building a court that was intimately familiar with urban Persian culture, both literary and artistic, should be of no surprise; his own memoirs, the “*Tadhkira-i Shah Tahmāsp*”⁴⁸⁶, are littered with quotations from dominant Persian poets, Hafīz, Sa‘di and Nizāmī, as well as a number of Turkish verses. He also included a list of Qur’an verses and Hadīths supporting the holiness, eternity and predestination of the family of the Prophet (*Ahl-i bayt*).⁴⁸⁷

After completion of the garden city in 1557, Shah Tahmāsp moved from the old palace established by his father, Shah Isma‘īl, in Tabriz to the new palace in Qazvin’s vicinity. The court poet and historian, ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī (1515–1580) was ordered to write an encomium of the royal garden complex in verse. He composed a poetic compendium called “Gardens of Eden” (*Jannāt-i ‘adan*), completed in 1559/60. It contained five long poems called *khamsa*. These poems are a particularly interesting source for the comprehension of aesthetic values in the Safavid period.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁴ Colin P. Mitchell, “Tahmāsp I: Second Ruler of the Safavid Dynasty.” In *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2009.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ *Tadhkira-i Shah Tahmāsp: Sharh-i vaqāyi‘i va ahvālāt-i zindigāni-i Shah Tahmāsp-i Safavi bi qalam-i khudash* (Tehran, Kaviyani, 1920).

⁴⁸⁷ Colin P. Mitchell, “Tahmāsp I; Second ruler of the Safavid dynasty.” In *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2009.

⁴⁸⁸ Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens”, 115.

‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī and his poems

Some historians and literary scholars are well known for their records of Safavid court life, administration and bureaucracy. According to literary scholars these records do not seem to be comparable (neither in quality nor quantity) to the previous Timurid era, considered as the golden age of historiography and literature.⁴⁸⁹

‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī was one of those known historiographers from the early Safavid reign. Being from a recognized family originally from Shiraz, he was raised and lived most of his life in western Iran, Azerbaijan.

Our knowledge of ‘Abdī Bayk’s personal life is limited to scattered fragments of information collected from different reports in *Tadhkiras* (autobiographies) and also from references found in his own major works and poems, especially his “*Takmilat al-Akhhbār*”.⁴⁹⁰ He was born on 15th August 1515 in Tabriz. His father, ‘Abd Al Mu’min Ibn-i Sadr Al-dīn Muhammad was an official court man, close to the Safavid emir, Husain Khan-i Shāmlū, and to the royal family. ‘Abdī Bayk lost his father when he was too young, almost fifteen years old, as he has mentioned [his] father’s loss in his first *Maṣnavī* of *Jām-i Jamshīdī*.⁴⁹¹ The sudden death of his father forced him to quit his studies and enter the court service as a scribe and accountant, as he states in “*Takmilat al-Akhhbār*”; from that time he engaged with ‘*ilm-i Sīyāq* (the science of arithmetic) and was appointed in charge of accounting.⁴⁹² Working at the court afforded him the opportunity of travelling to a number of places, such as Georgia and Van in Turkey. He accompanied the Shah during these trips and became close to the royal family. With the shift of the Safavid capital from Tabriz to Qazvin, ‘Abdī Bayk moved with the court and spent many years there. After returning from a trip to Georgia in 1566, for some unknown reason ‘Abdī Bayk left his court job (it is not clear if he was forced to quit or he chose to resign).⁴⁹³ He travelled to Ardabil, stayed in Shaykh Safī Al-dīn Ardabīlī’s mausoleum for seven years,

⁴⁸⁹ The relatively existed social and ideological liberty as well as the Timurid rulers’ patronage and sponsorship are considered the main reasons for this thriving literature in the Timurid era. See Sayed Ali Aledavood, “Nivishta hay-i tarīkhī Abdī Bayk Shīrāzī.” In *Tahqīqāt-i Islamī*, vols. 1 and 2 (Tehran, 1995), 123.

⁴⁹⁰ Heshmat Moayyad, “Dar Madar-i Nizami I: Hasht Bihisht-Haft Akhtar.” In the Orbit of Nezami I: A Comparative analysis of Amir-Khosrow’s Hasht Behesht and Abdī Beg’s Haft Akhtar, *Iranshenasi*, vol. 2 (Tehran, 1990), 135; ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhhbār: Tārīkh-i Ṣafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosain Navaii. (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990).

⁴⁹¹ Sayed Ali Aledavood, “Nivishta hay-i tarīkhī ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī,” 123.

⁴⁹² ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhhbār: tārīkh-i Ṣafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, ed. Abdulhosain Navaii (Tehran, Nashr-i Nay, 1990), 73.

⁴⁹³ Sayed Ali Aledavood, “Nivishta hay-i tarīkhī ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī,” 124.

and returned to Qazvin where he stayed about six years before moving to Ardabil again in 1578 for the last time. He died in Ardabil aged 65 years in 1580 and was buried there.⁴⁹⁴

His work is among the richest sources that relate to the history of Qazvin and offers detailed descriptions of that city's palaces and gardens in the early Safavid years (the poems of *Jannāt-i 'adan*).⁴⁹⁵

Travel and court responsibilities did not prevent him from developing his poetic inclination and writings, for which fate endowed him with good taste and great ability. 'Abdī Bayk started composing poems early in his life. His first major *Maṣnavī* (double-rhymed verse style), the *Jām-i Jamshīdī*, was written when he was only twenty-two years old. Instead of restricting himself to panegyric and lyrical poetry and composing more volumes of *ghazals* and *qasidas*, as many poets had done before him, 'Abdī Bayk was fascinated with Nizāmī and Amir Khusrau Dihlavī's works and followed in the footsteps of these two great masters.⁴⁹⁶

Jannāt-i 'adan: form and content

Navīdī's works and poems vary in form, style, and length. He has some unique pieces in *Maṣnavī* (including three *khamasa* in the spirit of Nizāmī's *khamasa*) and some historical letters in addition to his amorous and lyrical poetry.⁴⁹⁷

Jannāt-i 'adan is Navīdī's third *khamasa* with the smallest number of verses. This precious, early Safavid compendium is addressed by the literature scholar, Paul Losensky, as "one of the longest and richest works of 'descriptive-encomiastic' poetry in the medieval Near Eastern literary tradition."⁴⁹⁸ This poetic compendium has been studied more as a historical document of the Safavid Qazvin than a unique source on garden design, culture and history. The work includes 4135 verses in total and in a pentad structure, comprising the following five major poetic volumes: *Rawdhat Al Siffāt* (Garden of Attributes), *Dawḥat Al Azhār* (Garden of Flowers), *Jannat Al Athmār* (Garden of Fruits), *Zīnat Al Awraq* (Embellishment of Leaves) and *Sahīfat Al Ikhlas* (Parchment of Faithfulness).⁴⁹⁹ (Figure 4-3)

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁹⁵ Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Moayyad, "Dar Madar-i Nizami I: Hasht Bihisht-Haft Akhtar," 135.

⁴⁹⁷ Sayed Ali Aledavood, "Nivishta hay-i tarikhī 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī," 126.

⁴⁹⁸ Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 2.

⁴⁹⁹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-'i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974; 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār*, *Zinat Al Awraq* and *Sahifat Al Ikhlas*. Moscow: Idārah-'i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1979, verses 245-422.

بسم الله و بقره محمد و نضلی علی محمد و آله هذا مرض ثانی بن ابن روه بریا بحسب که هله جنات عذیب فا جلیها
 حاله دین کنه بر درگاه اوست و سایرین این دو جمله روان بخش که جنات عدن اللی رکنه اللی السیفون سیه
 از ساعت خردوسل ششماه اوست انکه چون از دوزخ زمان این دره سرگردان با مور بهوصیف باج سعادت اوست
 و ترفیض عمارت دار السلطنه بحسب ما اذ بود بوی چنگ که وار در سگ نعلک کشید و دی چند و بی چند از عاق و در
 الفاظ دید و چون بحر و اسلوب معین شود و لاجرم در بحر خسه با سالیب قسطنطنیه منظم آورد و بیج رساله ترتیب
 داد و فهرست را با نامی علییه نهاد رساله اولی موسوم بروضة الصفا در ذکر مجلسی از احوال آن ریاض ارم
 لغزین شله فی البلاد بجز غزلان اسرار رساله دوم موسوم بدو حه الانما در در بیان احوال بهسرت
 اکتشاف معنی آن ان الله یحیی الارض بعد موتها بجز جزویشین رساله سوم معروف بحه الاما در بیان
 اوضاع صیده و اطهار بدلول کریم و فالحه کثیره لا معطو عله و لا معنوعه بجز لیلی و بجز ذاب رساله چهارم
 مشبه برینت الاوقات در بیان رنگسایزی ایام غزینه و افاشی و صدوقه صبه الله و من احسن من الله
 صبه بجز هشت پیکر رساله پنجم در معنی صبه الاطخاص در بیان کیفیت اوقات و در خردم پای از باغ کوش
 کشته در کوشه امینت از روی اخصان برینت دعای شاه دین پناه بفرموده ادخلها بسلا و امینت ارسیده اند بجز
 اسکندر نامه و مجموع این رسایل خسه موسوم جنات عدن کشته و بعد از اتمام هر یک رساله این قطعه برسم تاریخ اتمام
 بیب رخ نموده ۵۵ فی نام این نامه نامدار تا زمانه رسیده جنات عدن * چو برسد تاریخ اتمام این
 بجز رونق دیده جنات عدن کا اینک که از سعادت قبول کردم
 والسلام علی البقی و آله

بکلی این باغ سعادت طرازا
 زاینده طبع بحسن بیان
 زاب روان باغ عدن تا زکوه
 عیسی اندیش چو شمع نورس
 کشت قلم بطول الحیران
 رخ زبا زبا ملک آواز کرد
 نام خناب و مختصین نوا
 همه حده ار که جان آفرید
 باغ تک بر زنجاب بوز
 کا داران عیسی شریان ادا
 باغ تن در و صند جان کریم
 صحن این پر طرایب نوا

سین

Figure 4-3. First page of the *Maṣnavī* of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* from the original manuscript, page 501 of *Kulliyat-i Navīdī*, Tehran University, Iran (Source: *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, ‘Abdī Bayk Shīrāzī, ed. Ehsan Eshraqi, Mehrzad Parhizkari, Tehran, Sokhan, 2016)

According to the poet’s claim through his own poems about the main aim of this work: “To describe the realm of *Ja‘far ābād*,” under the command of the King, *Jannāt-i ‘adan* belongs to the category of urban-topographical poetry, a specific genre of poetry known in Persian, Arabic, Ottoman and Indo-Persian literature, dating back at least to Abbasid times. With the rise of major urban spaces of Persianate culture from the fifteenth century onwards, interest in this kind of poetry reached its peak during the Timurid period due to Timurid emphasis on cities, gardens and architecture as expressions of imperial power. The main corpus of this literature is often concerned with the descriptions of new cities, buildings or palaces, while praising the “king” for establishing the new civilization and

therefore prosperous city. The other term for this genre in Persian poetry, previously discussed in the first chapter, is “*Shahrāshūb*” or “*Shahrangīz*”.⁵⁰⁰

Through Navīdī’s poems and his other historical writings, it is clear that he started *Jannāt-i ‘adan* between 1557 and 1558. These years coincided with the completion of the Sa‘adat ābād garden city and Shah Tahmāsp’s move from the old to the new palace. The poems were completed in 1559 to 1560 and presented to the king and his court. These poems were probably sent to other court members, officials, and people in other cities and regions. It was one way of disseminating the glory of the “king of world and faith” by offering and providing a vicarious visit of his gardens and his splendid palaces as a representation of the king in the city, and accordingly promoting appreciation of the gardens through their beauty and poetic description (Figure 4-4).



Figure 4-4. Second page of the *Maṣnavī* of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* from the original manuscript, page 501 of *Kulliyat-i Navīdī*, in Tehran University, Iran (Source: *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, ‘Abdī Bayk Shīrāzī, ed. Ehsan Eshraqi, Mehrzad Parhizkari, Tehran, Sokhan, 2016)

⁵⁰⁰ Sunil Sharma, “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 2, vol. 24. Duke University Press, 2004), 73. Also see Ahmad Golchin Ma‘ani, *Shahrāshūb dar Shi‘r-i Farsi* (Tehran, Amirkabir, 1967), 3.

Although *Jannāt-i 'adan* offers an overall description of the Sa'ādat ābād garden city, each part is dedicated to a special subject. In short, Navīdī organizes his description in five volumes, independent in theme while composed as a unified whole, which is obviously an outstanding example among all *khamisa* writers works.⁵⁰¹

While the first volume (*Rawdhat Al Siffāt*) describes Sa'ādat ābād's public and private gardens, palaces and mansions, the next four volumes cover the change of seasons from spring to winter. However, each volume focuses on one aspect of the new imperial complex. The second volume (*Dawḥat Al Azhār*) mostly describes the wall paintings of royal loggias, the methods of creating these paintings, and the poem's seasonal pattern, as it is a narration of the gardens in spring. In the third volume (*Jannat Al Athmār*) the agricultural aspects of the gardens of Sa'ādat ābād, such as flowers, trees and plants, melon patches, fruits and vineyards, is a narration of the gardens in summer. The fourth volume (*Zinat Al Awrāgh*) is more about a procession through the new garden city in autumn. Almost half of this volume narrates the story of the Ottoman prince, Bāyezīd (Sultan Sulaiman's son), who took refuge to Shah Tahmāsp and lived in Qazvin for the rest of his life. The fifth and final volume (*Sahifat Al Ikhlas*) is an overview of Sa'ādat ābād' in winter. According to the author's systematic use of time in seasonal patterns along with detailed descriptions of mansions and gardens, it is Navīdī's innovation to link the spatial and visual substances to the temporal features and direct the reader to an act of discovery of the gardens through the beautiful realm of poetry. Each *Maṣnavī* begins with small passages lauding God and innocent Imāms, praying for the long reign of Tahmāsp and blessing his authority.

It is evident from earlier research on Persian poetry and literature that no similar major literary work entirely devoted to describing a city garden or royal complex exists.⁵⁰² That is why "Gardens of Eden" is a unique and valuable source that differs in content, volume, and form from other works of poetry. Today, nothing remains of the imperial Sa'ādat ābād garden, with its different palaces and unique wall paintings, except for the small mansion of Arshī khānah (Chihil Sotoūn) which has become the city's museum, and the glorious gate of 'Āli Qāpū with its famous epigraph. Although Navīdī's work is composed as a poetic oeuvre rather than architectural or structural writing, it is still possible to obtain a

⁵⁰¹ Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in 'Abdī Shīrāzī's Gardens of Eden." *Eurasian Studies* 2 (2003): 3.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

general idea of the concept, layout, and approximate dimensions of the garden city complex. The magnificent image that Navīdī conceived through the “Gardens of Eden” is the only evidence of a unique Safavid royal complex, dating back four hundred years. And even more interesting, these poems provide a testimony of Persian aesthetic appreciation of gardens in a Safavid court and its reception in sixteenth century Persian society and culture (Figure 4-5).



Figure 4-5. Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace of Sa'ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

Chapter 5

Sa‘ādat Ābād Garden through the *Jannāt-i ‘adan*

5 Sa‘ādat ābād Garden through the *Jannāt-i ‘adan*

5.1 First tome: *Rawdhat Al Siffāt* (Garden of Attributes)

*When above the flower of this cheerful garden,
The nightingale of thought started to warble,
The name of God was the first melody,
Which was heard from that sweet nightingale.
By the clear fluent poetic gift,
The pen is turned to an extolling parrot.⁵⁰³*

The first tome of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* opens with these laudative verses. *Rawdhat Al Siffāt* begins with a long panegyric of nearly 80 out of 662 verses, devoted to praising God, the prophet, the twelve Imāms of *Shi‘a* and the king.

Using two different terms for garden, *Bāgh* and *Rawdha*, the poet likens the physical human body to a garden or earthly paradise (*bāgh-i tan*), comparing the soul to a divine paradise (*Rawdha-i jān*):

*Praise to God, who created the world
Who created the garden of body and the paradise of soul,
Who refreshed the garden of body by the flowing water
And who raised the fame of the bird of language to the firmament.⁵⁰⁴*

After praising God, the Prophet and Imāms, Navīdī admires the king, his “fostering justice” and his religious policy about propagating the “religion of Ja‘far”, the sixth Imām of *Shi‘a*. It is here that Navīdī refers to Shah Tahmāsp’s talent for painting and combined form (*Sūrat*) and concept (*Ma‘nī*) using his fragrant Manichean brush (*qalam-i mānavī ‘anbarīn*).⁵⁰⁵ Navīdī states that writing poems was: “The reason for composing the book”

⁵⁰³ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-‘i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974, verses 1-3; A part of this chapter’s poetic translations are based on Paul Losensky’s translation of the *Jannāt-i ‘adan*’s poems with my own modifications, where needed, for a better reading of the poems. See Paul Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in ‘Abdī Shīrāzī’s Gardens of Eden.” *Eurasian Studies* 2 (2003): 8.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, verses 4-5.

⁵⁰⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 72-73.

(*sabab-i nazm-i kitāb*). The king’s command enabled him to express his mission to “describe the promenade (*Khiyābān*) and the garden” as it really existed. He used the art of poetry to seek the “truth” and uncover “hidden meanings.”⁵⁰⁶ (Figure 5-1)



Figure 5-1. The reconstructed three-dimensional scheme of ‘Āli Qāpū gate of the Safavid Sa’adat ābād garden and the *Khiyābān* of Qazvin, Iran (Source: Drawing by the thesis author)

The poet acknowledges that Shah Tahmāsp and the royal family’s residency in Qazvin created splendour and abundance:

*Our great faithful eminent king,
When Qazvin region got his throne
In presage of his fortunate steps,
This region got full of felicity and beatitude
Cannonade of pleasure rose from every house,
And every ruin got a mansion again
Weighty generous clouds gathered from each side,
And every single stream got overflowed by water.*⁵⁰⁷

The reader’s journey to the garden city through the poet’s words begins with a hurried gaze through the *dawlat khānah*, and describing the monumental gateway (‘Āli Qāpū). The poet likens its two lofty minarets to two raised hands praising God:

In that region just like paradise, the king

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 94-100.

⁵⁰⁷ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 102-105.

*Constructed buildings of paradise make.
 It received its majesty from heaven's loggia.
 The dust of its street is a path to heaven's heights.
 When the dome of his magnitude raised its head,
 It gazed all around to every side;
 It found nothing like itself in all the world.
 It found its loftiness to be no less than heaven's.
 So, it raised its hands to praise the lord
 With battlements scraping against the empyrean.⁵⁰⁸*

The reader's gaze falls on the dome and its ornaments to the king's portico (*aywān -i shah*), which indicates the threshold between public and imperial domains, representing the most evident landmark of the royal complex. Through personification, the reader participates in the act of building religious devotion. The portico, its decorations and murals, come to represent Shah Tahmāsp as "the king of dominion and faith", as the poet verbalizes the semiotic code of architecture.⁵⁰⁹ Navīdī bypasses the inner entrance gate and proceeds along a walled, tree-lined avenue which leads to other formal gardens that belong to noble families and courtiers. Navīdī describes the external *Khiyābān*, located outside of the royal gardens complex, behind the 'Āli Qāpū gate and along the main internal walkway. The poet emphasises that promenading makes people happy, by exalting the pleasant garden features, landscape scenes, fresh air and cool breeze, water and plants along the *Khiyābān*: (Figure 5-2)

*Promenading on that alley,
 Is wiping away all the universe sadness from the heart...
 The pleasure of its breeze from the north
 Is fading out all the dust of grief from the heart and mind...
 Its freshness can make a dead alive again
 And it can renew a dispirited mind again.⁵¹⁰*

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., verses 112-116.

⁵⁰⁹ Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in 'Abdī Shīrāzī's Gardens of Eden." *Eurasian Studies* 2 (2003): 8.

⁵¹⁰ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 166-171.



Figure 5-2. The reconstructed three-dimensional scheme of ‘Āli Qāpū gate of the Safavid Sa‘adat ābād garden and the *Khiyābān* of Qazvin, Iran (Source: Drawing by the thesis author)

On the other hand, explicating the passage’s ideological concept, Navīdī draws a parallel between the king’s urban development construction and his religious policy and beliefs by mentioning the double sense of the word “*Rāst*” in Persian, meaning both straight and right, implying that the straight design of the *Khiyābān*, is leading people to the right path:⁵¹¹ (Figure 5-3)

*The king through that alley which is like the Milky Way,
Is conducting people to the right way
When reaching to such a straight path,
Everybody in it walk to the probity.⁵¹²*

⁵¹¹ Mahvash Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy." In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007, 116; ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 182-183.

⁵¹² Notwithstanding the fact that these poems can confirm this passage or *Khiyābān* in the new garden city was not a pathway for ordinary traffic, and although the poet uses the Persian word *Mardum* (people) directly here, and despite the similarities between this passage and the *Chāhārbāgh* avenue in Safavid Isfahan, which is confirmed to have been a dynamic urban space open to the public, we still can not be sure if the *Khiyābān* of Qazvin had exactly the same role as a royal garden space open to the public with interacting, entertaining and refreshing functions, or whether it was just serving the nobility and courtiers close to the royal family. See ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 182-183.



Figure 5-3. The reconstructed three-dimensional scheme of ‘Āli Qāpū gate and the Chihil Sotoūn mansion of the Safavid Sa‘ādat ābād garden and the *Khiyābān* of Qazvin, Iran (Drawing by the thesis author)

The reader again enters the Sa‘ādat ābād garden from the northern side of *Khiyābān*; two thirds of this volume is dedicated to its description. Here the poet notes that the basic plan of the garden is the same as the typical quadripartite Islamic garden or *Chāhārbāgh*, with a north-south boulevard and junction at the main section of the garden created by two cross axial paths (*Khiyābān*). One of these passages was aligned with the outside promenade, the external *Khiyābān* from south to north, leading from the main entrance gate of the garden complex, ‘Āli Qāpū (Figure 5-4), to the central square created by the intersection of the other main passage or *Khiyābān*, running east to west. Another *Khiyābān* formed a border along the garden walls, like the fringe of a carpet.⁵¹³ Although the poet describes the gardens and their physical elements in a tangible, detailed way, he also engages with the garden’s layout from a metaphorical point of view. For example, he likens the royal garden to an “ornamented backgammon board”, describing two planes crossing each other, revealing four promenades (*Khiyābān*). Then, using and playing with the word “*safha*” (which means both “plane” and “page”) Navīdī likens the garden to a “desirable page of a poetry book, in which rhyme is composed by the King’s whim”. He

⁵¹³ Mahvash Alemi, “The Garden City of Shah Tahmāsp Reflected in Words of his Poet and Painter.” In *Interlacing Words and Thing: Bridging the Nature-culture Opposition in Gardens and Landscapes*, edited by Stephen Bann, 97. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012.

again uses the verbal and visual pun on the word “*jadval*” as a grid of water canals in the garden likened to the decorative grids of books. He also likens the sideway surrounding promenade of the garden to a painted, decorative fringe of a poetry book, and the grass and plants of the garden to writing on the poetry page.⁵¹⁴



Figure 5-4. ‘Āli Qāpū gate of the Safavid Sa‘adat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran
(Source: Author, 2014)

Navīdī goes on to describe the main pavilion or central palace called Arshī khānah (Figure 5-5), located at the intersection of two main paths on a central, rectangular space or square.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy,” 117. Also see ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 33-36.

⁵¹⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 219-259.

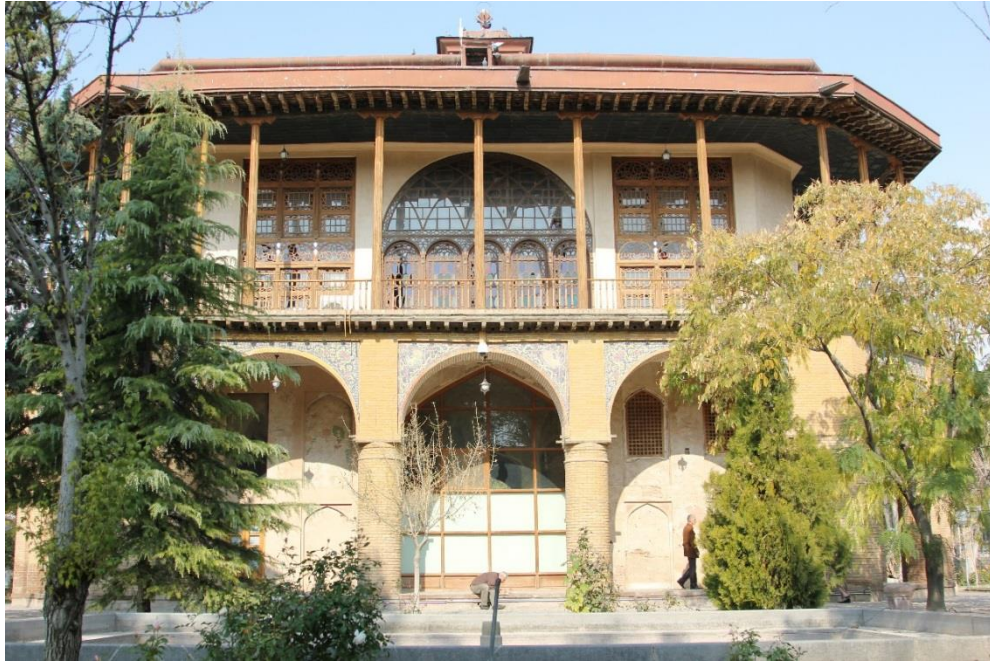


Figure 5-5. Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace of Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

This building is known as Chihil Sotoūn mansion and today exists as the city’s calligraphy museum (Figure 5-6). It was the former palace of the king’s residence and his main court. The poet also mentions a great pool or basin at the centre of the square and in front of the northern loggia with an elaborate waterfall. Navīdī compares the garden and its basin to paradise and its holy basin “*Hawz-i Kawsar.*” According to Navīdī the basin was covered by a shelter with four support columns:

*Arshī khānah is sitting among the Garden,
 The appropriate imperial house,
 At the top of a pleasant platform,
 Like a king above his throne
 The square basin is at the centre of this glorious house,
 This house is an auspicious heaven
 And the basin is a Kawsar among this heaven
 Four columns are surrounded the basin
 Their pictures are clear on the crystalline water of the basin.⁵¹⁶*

⁵¹⁶ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 219-224.



Figure 5-6. Inside the Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace of Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran
(Source: Author, 2014)

The garden was also divided by several brooks that ran alongside the passages which flowed to the central basin.⁵¹⁷ (Figure 5-7)



Figure 5-7. One of the only surviving mansions of Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, the Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace and the central basin of the historic Safavid garden, Iran
(<http://www.festivalofarts.com>)

⁵¹⁷ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 38-39.

On a designed ambulatory pattern of describing the garden complex, based on a visual simultaneity suggested by a ground plan, at this point Navīdī turns right to the east and then west of the royal mansion and describes twenty-three plots of land, subsidiary gardens and their associated structures, basins, gazebos and pergolas. He names fourteen plots to the east and nine to the west of the royal palace of Arshī khānah, including private gardens, flower or fruit gardens, vineyards and orchards. These gardens mostly belonged to the king's family, relatives, high court members, and grantees with some luxurious residential mansions among them. Each plot was named after its owner and this suggests the level of intimacy with the king.⁵¹⁸ Among those subsidiary gardens are the plot given to Tahmāsp's sister, Shahzāda Mahīn Bānū by the king as a gift, the garden belonging to Tahmāsp's favorite brother, Bahrām Mirzā, and a garden mentioned as an endowment for the eighth Imām of *Shi'a* called Bāgh-i Imām.⁵¹⁹ The poet then describes one of the most elaborate structures of the garden complex that belonged to the king's most loyal and beloved brother, Bahrām Mirzā, who died in 1548. Bahrām Mirzā's garden was surrounded by lawns and flowers with a beautiful palace at the centre named House of *Shīrvānī* or *Shīrvānī Sarāy*.⁵²⁰ This mansion featured decorative tile work, delicate wall paintings and epigraphs. A bridge conducted visitors to the central hall. The poet describes a spectacular waterfront among the vast hall with several fountains which were making a dome shape by squirting the water. Navīdī with a fine eye for both general structure and detail, describes the garden elements, shape, form and ornaments using simile, metaphor, personification and other poetical language.⁵²¹

Navīdī describes Bahrām's garden, expressing sympathy. It is obvious that Bahrām Mirzā was not alive when *Jannāt-i 'adan* was written.⁵²² The king's eyes were filled with tears looking at the *Shīrvānī-Sarāy*'s loggia, built by Bahrām Mirzā:

When the king of religion and justice

Looks to his garden,

Remembers him in his heart:

Prince Bahrām, whose place is heaven,

⁵¹⁸ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 40-49.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 43, 50, 57.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵²¹ Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 7.

⁵²² Ehsan Eshraqi, "Towsif-i Dowlatkhāneh va bāgh-hāye Safavi," 45.

*His eyes is [sic] filling by tears remembering him
He opens his eyes to his children,
Though that flower is gone now,
Wish a lasting reign for the great king.⁵²³*

Here Navīdī pauses when he describes the western *aywān* or loggia of the *Shirvāni-Sarāy* in detail:⁵²⁴

*Next to this garden of heavenly make,
Which comes like paradise, from divine effulgence,
The sky-high aywān rises up,
Joined by the sun and moon in its orbit.
Two loggias placed one atop the other
Give people the sign of the two worlds.
With the tilework on the facade, the colonnade,
Has become the envy of the blue vault of heaven.
...
On one, design originating in Cathay;
On the other, the shapes of the birds and beasts.
With the roses and morning-glories on this joyous nature,
Gives systematic lessons in gilded illumination,
And that other is an enchanting hunting ground,
Ornamented with wondrous horsemen on every side:
A brave rider rushes toward a lion,
Pillaging life from the lion with his spear.
Another, an archer in the hunt, has become
A hunter of lovers like eyebrow and lashes.
Another in a tussle with a leopard is
Like poor me and two-faced heaven.
Another has brought a gazelle to bay
A lover intoxicated by his idol's eye.*

⁵²³ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 441-444.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-53.

Another charging toward a mountain goat
The sun has drawn his sword against Capricorn.
A greyhound rushing toward several deer
Like the impassioned heart toward the beloved eyes.
The arch rears its head over the terrace
The form of a cradle- a Mahd- comes into view.
Viceroy of the Mahdi,⁵²⁵ the world-encompassing king,
Has constructed a cradle of safety against time.
Effulgence falls over the lofty terrace,
Like a revelation that illuminates the heavens.
The terrace, and upon it a pool full of limpid water
A bounteous breast and the heart of an ecstatic.
A gazebo rises up in the middle of the pool,
Stealing patience from the heart, calm from the mind.
Idols of Tarāz⁵²⁶ are going toward the gazebo
Candles flaring up within a lantern.
Geese, ducks and swans gathered around the gazebo
Are all like moths surrounding a candle.
The air diffuses light through the heart of [the] gazebo
From which the shape of an hourglass emerges.
On the bank of this pool, toward the north,
A peerless bench has been constructed.
A bridge is set up with full adornment,
So one can walk to the gazebo.⁵²⁷

Another interesting aspect is the creativity in garden design, as the poet describes a variety of shapes in the pattern of *Chamans* or lawn for each garden. Each orchard had central or marginal lawns including round, square, octagonal or hexagonal shapes as well as elaborate polygonal basins in the middle of the gardens.⁵²⁸ According to Alemi and based

⁵²⁵ In Islamic eschatology, the Mahdī, the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will rule for seven, nine or nineteen years (according to differing interpretations) before the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-qiyyamah*, literally the Day of Resurrection) will rid the world of evil.

⁵²⁶ *Tarāz* is the name of a city in eastern Turkistan, renowned for the beauty of its inhabitants.

⁵²⁷ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 465-487.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, verses 287-607.

on European traveller's drawings and sketches of Safavid gardens of the region in later years, those geometrical shapes were not Navīdī's poetical fantasies or imagination: in fact, similar patterns existed in other examples of Safavid garden.⁵²⁹ However, Navīdī's descriptions reflect a new concept in Safavid garden design, aesthetic and reception.

Not surprisingly "*Rawdhat Al Siffāt*" ends with a final eulogy for the king, as his command lightened the poet's "garden of heart" so that he could express his inner secrets and ideas.⁵³⁰ The poet prays for the survival of the great king whose power brought peace to the country, and does the same in the other four volumes of poetry (Figure 5-8). However, why does the poet begin this *khamisa* with a general picture of the Sa'ādat ābād garden and out of the large-scale time-space structural frame of *Jannāt-i 'adan*? The answer may lie in the poems of the first tome, when Navīdī describes every element and plantation of the garden behind the entrance gate of 'Āli Qāpū, protected from the natural flow of time.⁵³¹ In other words, *Jannāt-i 'adan* begins out of the natural time setting, in the eternal garden, the ideal and timeless realm of the earthly paradise of Sa'ādat ābād garden. The garden, the least permanent of architectural forms, becomes a sacred symbol of the mystical permanence of the king's rule, an atemporal realm of Shah Tahmāsp's sublunary divinity. This sacral garden uniting "power and faith" (*Dawlat va Dīn*) takes the place of the mosque, the preeminent holy and religious space in Islam, which is obviously absent from both Shah Tahmāsp's construction project of Qazvin and from his poet's descriptive compendium of *Jannāt-i 'adan*.⁵³²

⁵²⁹ Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy," 118.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵³¹ Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 12.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 12.



Figure 5-8. The miniature (painted 1539–1543) attributed to the painter Aqā Mīrak, one of the leading artists of the court of Tahmāsp, depicts the duel between two physicians in a scene that represents the *Sa‘ādat ābād* garden in Qazvin (Source: <http://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions>)

5.2 Second tome: *Dawḥat Al Azhār* (Garden of Flowers)

Dawḥat Al Azhār is the longest poem in *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, composed in 1170 verses. Following the opening laudation to God and encomium to king, Navīdī restates the main scheme of the first volume. The second volume also begins with a brief narration of Sa‘ādat ābād garden city and its *Khiyābān*, structurally linking the five tomes.⁵³³ (Figure 5-9)

⁵³³ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974, 26-30.

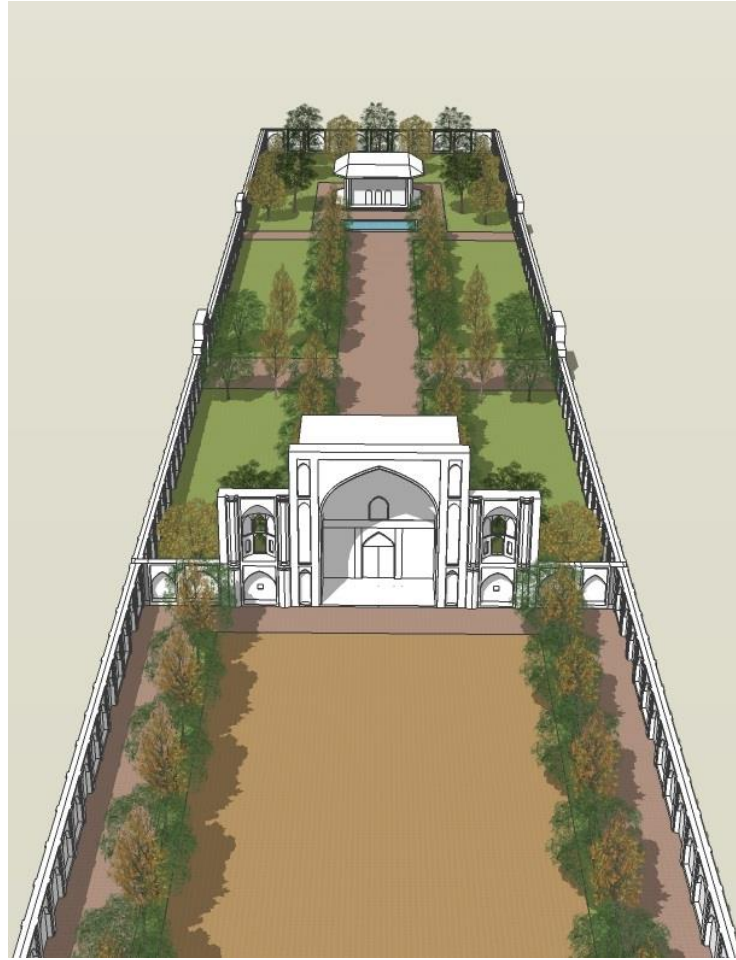


Figure 5-9. The reconstructed three-dimensional scheme of ‘Āli Qāpū gate and the Chihil Sotoūn mansion of the Safavid Sa‘ādat ābād garden and the *Khiyābān* of Qazvin, Iran (Drawing by the thesis author)

Navīdī admires the promenade for being wide, even and straight; flanked by high walls, brooks are fed by the “*Ighbāl* stream” (prosperity stream) and either side features plane, elm and other trees planted precisely the same distance, casting shadows on its verdant and emerald surface.⁵³⁴ He compares the Sa‘ādat ābād garden to its other equals and adds nobody can find such a refreshing garden either in Damascus and China, or in Shiraz and Khorasan.⁵³⁵

From the beginning readers find themselves back in the Sa‘ādat ābād garden. Navīdī clearly indicates the season as spring and he takes this approach in the three remaining volumes. He pictures the trees blooming with palm, apple and cherry blossoms beside grasses covered in flowers. The poet considers the principal theme of this volume, the flow of time, and applies this theme to every aspect of the garden; architectural elements,

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, verses 109-129.

⁵³⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, 29.

paintings and decorative objects, and even the royal eulogy all represent vernal, colourful and floral landscape.⁵³⁶

As the reader revisits the gardens and mansions, observed earlier in the first volume through Navīdī's poems, more details are observed and emphasised by the poet in "*Dawḥat Al Azhār*." This trend continues until the reader moves into the main body of the second volume with descriptions of "*majlis*," paintings that adorn the palace walls and loggias. Before describing "*majlis*," Navīdī recalls a pleasant memory of a delightful spring night when he was honoured and received by the king in the loggia of the palace.⁵³⁷ His description begins with this spring night and its fresh breeze. Then the scene pictures the king enthroned in the "*aywān*" or loggia of the palace:

*The head of the commanders of seven climes,
Whose stirrups are kings' collars of submission,
Is seated in affluence upon the throne,
A bouquet formed of the flowers of happiness,
Located in the royal loggia
Upon which the eyes of fortune and prosperity shine.*⁵³⁸

He then describes the lofty ceiling of the palace overlaid in gold, its high columns and heavenly painted doors before moving to the main "*majlis*" descriptions (Figure 5-10).⁵³⁹

⁵³⁶ Paul Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 13.

⁵³⁷ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, 14.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, verses 414-416.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, verses 66-68.



Figure 5-10. Inside the only surviving mansion of Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, the Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace and its wall paintings remained from the early Safavid era, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

Navīdī illustrates more than ten different wall paintings or “*majlis*” in the main body of “*Dawḥat Al Azhār*.” This section begins with two scenes from the story of “Khusrow and Shirin”, the second volume of Nizāmī’s *khamasa* (*Panj Ganj* or The Five Jewels).⁵⁴⁰ The reader can observe Nizāmī, the greatest romantic epic poet in Persian literature, whom Navīdī is greatly fascinated by.⁵⁴¹ The poet delicately represents other inseparable aspects

⁵⁴⁰ A story of pre-Islamic Persian origin, which is found in the great epico-historical poems of Shahnamah, based on a true story further romanticized by Persian poets. The story, chosen by Nizami, was commissioned and dedicated to the Seljuk Sultan Toghril II, the Atabek Muhammad ibn Eldiguz Jahan Pahlavan and his brother, Qizil Arsalan. It contains about 6,500 distiches in length; the story depicts the love of Sassanian Khosrow II Parviz towards his Armenian princess Shirin. "Khusrow and Shirin" recount the story of King Khosrow's courtship of Princess Shirin, and the vanquishing of his love-rival, Farhad. The story has a complex structure with several genres exploited simultaneously, and contains many verbal exchanges and letters, all imbued with lyrical intensity. Khosrow endures long journeys, physical and spiritual, before returning to Shirin, his true love. They are eventually married, but eventually Khosrow is killed by his son and Shirin commits suicide over the body of her murdered husband.[10] Pure and selfless love is represented here, embodied in the figure of Farhad, secretly in love with Shirin, who finally falls victim to the king's ire and jealousy. See Charles A. Storey, François de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Biobibliographical Survey, Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period*, vol. V. RoutledgeCurzon, 2nd revised edition, 2004), 363.

⁵⁴¹ The stories in Nizami’s poems alongside those of Ferdowsi’s Shahnama have been the most frequently illustrated Persian literary works.

of gardens and pavilions here: pure love, romance and humanity. On the other hand, Navīdī’s “*Dawḥat Al Azhār*” is written in the style of Nizāmī’s “*Khusrow va Shirin*,” now the murals and poems that describe them are linked by form, style and theme to the original archetype. The garden and palaces of Shah Tahmāsp are drawn to the literary tradition of romantic epic poetry as they are re-imagined and re-invented by the finest masterpieces of Nizāmī’s romance. The first and second scenes depict “Shirin and Farhad at Behistun Mountain” and “Khusrow watching Shirin bathing in a pool” (Figure 5-11).⁵⁴²



Figure 5-11. Mid sixteenth century Safavid miniature of Khusrow Parviz’s first sighting of Shirin, bathing in a pool, in a manuscript of Nizāmī’s poems (Source: <http://www1.seattleartmuseum.org>)

More scenes are illustrated as the reader visualises and moves to other rooms in the palace, which include “Yūsuf and Zulaykhā and Egyptian women” and historical and hedonistic events like “the banquet,” “the hunting ground,” “the polo game,” “the battle” and “the young men promenading in the garden” (Figure 5-12).⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, verses 69-71.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73-84.



Figure 5-12. One of the wall paintings in the mansion of Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn in Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran. The current painting belongs to the later Qajar era during the eighteenth century, as the earlier Safavid paintings were covered over by a new layer and painted in a new style (Source: Author, 2014)

Navīdī introduces other mansions of the royal complex here along with their loggias, basins and fountains, such as “*Divān khāna*,” “*Gunbad-i munabbat-kāri*,” “*Harem*,” garden and its mansions (women quarters) and “*Jahān namā*” palace.⁵⁴⁴ As usual, he starts with the exterior facade before moving inside the palace to the wall paintings. In addition to his praising of the artists’ skills and talents, the poet does not name the artists who painted the palace murals. However, Navīdī clearly names Shah Tahmāsp as the great patron who has gathered all the artists around him. They are considered apprentices to Tahmāsp’s, as Tahmāsp is unequalled in the art and skill of painting. Here the gardens and their pavilions are celebrated, not only as symbols of the king’s unrivalled power, but elements of dissemination, creation and aesthetic display of art, tradition and culture.

Navīdī narrates a memorable day in the king’s presence. He toured the gardens of Sa‘ādat ābād guided by the king. As he follows the king, he remembers his dream in which he was following the shining sun like a moon. Finally, the king invites him to join him on the lofty roof of the *Jahān-namā* palace which overlooks the Maydān-i asb (horse square) with a panoramic view from east to west.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 101-109.

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, verses 807-837.

In closing this second volume, Navīdī again celebrates his fortune in being honoured to compose these poems under the command of the king, the shadow of God on the earth. He mentions Nizāmi’s masterpiece of *khamsa* and compares and records his creative progress while composing his work for *Jannāt-i ‘adan*.⁵⁴⁶

5.3 Third tome: *Jannat Al Athmār* (Garden of Fruits)

In *Jannāt-i ‘adan* the third volume is devoted to describing the garden in summer in 640 verses. This volume celebrates the presence of nature and agriculture in the royal gardens, and the variation and abundance of agricultural products and fruits in summer, the most productive and fertile season.

Navīdī again reviews and pictures the general image of the gardens. After the opening panegyric, he begins by describing the *Khiyābān* and *Dawlat khāna* or the court residence and its mansions.⁵⁴⁷ He then refers to more murals, the first picturing beautiful handsome beloveds riding horses and playing polo.⁵⁴⁸ The second mural depicts a scene from the famous story of Laylā and Majnūn from Nizāmi’s *khamsa*.⁵⁴⁹ This is a reminder that the third volume of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, *Jannat Al Athmār*, is composed in the style of the third volume of Nizāmi’s famous *khamsa*, “*Laylā va Majnūn*.”

Navīdī then shifts to the main part of the third tome with a long elucidation about the coming of the Qazvin summer, “when the hard heart of the heavenly sky grows soft”,⁵⁵⁰ the snow melts, the trees are laden with fruit, and the people are restored and relax under shade trees.

*When heaven’s torch casts its rays,
From Cancer on the field of earth,
The hard hearth of heaven grows soft, its sun,
Its love grows warm for the creatures of the earth.
The snow heads down from the mountain peak.*

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 123-151.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlas*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaī, 8-11. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1979.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 13-15.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., verse 321.

Plants fill their bellies with water...
In this summery desire of the stream,
Water turns to fire, and fish into firewood.
Every spring is like a fiery heart,
Its water becomes flame, its sand, sparks.
Flowers melt in the scorching heat,
And make way for something like a genie in a bottle.
Flowery adornments wilt away,
The meadows are embroidered with fruit.
Petals pour down, and fruits appear.
Time brings the pearl from the shell.
Feverish with the hot weather, beautiful people,
Put their feet in water like cypress trees.
 ...
The fortunate spread their picnic blankets
Like plots of grass in the shade of trees.
With good hopes, companions yearn
For stream banks and the willow's shade.⁵⁵¹

Navīdī lists the names of eight patches and melon beds or *Pāliz*, some of them named after their owners, in the royal garden complex or around it, in the rich suburb of Ja'far ābād. He picks melons, as the most pleasing among summer fruits, mentions and describes over eighteen varieties of heavenly melons and lauds their sweetness and pleasing taste. Navīdī uses similes to describe the melon's shape and the lines and patterns on the rind. The round shaped melon is likened to a polo ball. And the lines and patterns are compared to and evoke a lover's pleasant smile, the halos around the moon, a rainbow, the water of life, the soft heart of a lover re-joining the beloved, the stars and atmosphere, calligraphy and finally, arabesque.⁵⁵²

The poet names a long list of Persian cities and compares Qazvin melons to other famous melon growing regions, and other agricultural sites and areas around Qazvin.

⁵⁵¹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verses 320-34.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 25-27.

Following 120 verses of description of melons,⁵⁵³ Navīdī ends this volume with a short panegyric of Shah Tahmāsp, hoping these auspicious poems will be to the king's taste and desire.⁵⁵⁴ As its content is obvious from the title which means garden of fruits, the middle part of *Jannāt-i 'adan* is dedicated to the celebration of nature by adoring the creative and beneficial industry of gardening, and moreover to admire the great king and his gardens.

5.4 Fourth tome: *Zinat Al Awrāq* (Embellishment of Leaves)

As the second longest volume of the collection of *Jannāt-i 'adan* with 1089 verses in total; the fourth volume in the seasonal progression describes the gardens in autumn. After the usual eulogy, the poet compares Qazvin to famous cities. For example, he compares Qazvin to Egypt, Syria and Isfahan in terms of climate, agriculture and fertility, to Qum, Yazd and Kashan in terms of flourishing architecture, and to Tabriz and Shiraz in terms of erudite inhabitants and charming beloveds. Not surprisingly the city of Qazvin, surrounded by ramparts which constitute green gardens instead of walls, is the best example.⁵⁵⁵

As the poet reviews the previous three volumes and mentions the seasonal patterns at work, he indicates he will describe Sa'ādat ābād garden in autumn in the fourth volume.⁵⁵⁶ Navīdī describes colourful trees overtaken by autumn and lawns covered by luminous, fallen leaves resembling a rug woven with gold.

*Early in the morning, when the sun is scattering gold on lawns,
The shining sun rays make every leaf a luminous crystal.
The leaves of the garden turn colourful,
Like the glittering stained glass of the loggia.
Saunter dawn delightfully in flirtatious companionship,
To that envy of highest paradise,
To see what the God creativity has done,
In that garden which adorns the world.*

⁵⁵³ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlas*, 27-32.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-50.

*Raining down of that many leaves like lanterns,
 Carpeted the garden's floor in golden cloth.
 Every leaf dropped from the trees,
 Has become a golden button on the collar of the canal.
 The lawn is embossed with golden leaves,
 Like the golden royal seal on silk.⁵⁵⁷*

Here Navīdī uses natural features to explain the high culture of the royal court by applying a series of similes likening the garden and fallen leaves to architectural elements, splendid decorative crafts and trades or the royal insignia or seal.⁵⁵⁸ As the poet passes through the *Khiyābān* and its surrounding mansions and gardens, he pauses on new aspects of the gardens and their public areas. He mentions several resting places, described as large, pleasing public platforms with carved stones all around and a central basin with a fountain in the middle.⁵⁵⁹ He mentions three tall plane trees in the middle of the terrace where people can rest in their pleasant shade. Navīdī likens this platform to candlesticks holding three plane trees with green lighted candles in spring and summer, and to an elegant brazier in autumn and winter with coloured plane tree leaves under the sun as its flaming fire.⁵⁶⁰

Navīdī then describes a platform which appears to be a dynamic business market bustling with cheerful customers and produce sellers. He names and describes several trades in general and in more detail, such as the tailor, jeweller, cloth merchant, and fruit sellers with various kinds of grapes, late melons, pomegranates, apples and pistachios.⁵⁶¹ This is closest to the main theme of the *Shahrāshūb* genre of Persian poetry, as the poet attempts to convey a sense of a vivacious and dynamic society in which everyone is engaged in their profession and craft, not forgetting the fact that the city owes its vitality to the great king and his power.

The poet then moves to a public bath nearby, named after one of Shah Tahmāsp's wives "Bāji Khātūn". Navīdī elaborates a place full of amorous young beauties bathing in luxurious marble basins, in keeping with the main seasonal pattern and bringing autumn

⁵⁵⁷ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlas*, verses 171-175, 184-186.

⁵⁵⁸ Losensky, "The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time," 22.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlas*, 50-53.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 53-58.

indoors by describing the golden tiles and stones that cover the interior surfaces and floors of the bath building.⁵⁶²

Navīdī attempts to situate the royal gardens in an urban and public environment before offering an historical account of the Ottoman’s rebellious prince Bayezid, son of Sultan Sulaiman I, who rose up against his father and brother, crown prince Selim. Bayezid took refuge with Shah Tahmāsp after being defeated in battle against Selim and arrived in Qazvin in October 1559.⁵⁶³ Navīdī indicates that all these events took place in autumn, so he mentions them in this volume. As an introduction to the narrative about the escapee prince, Navīdī compares Bayezid and his warm reception by the king to Tahmāsp’s younger brother, Alqās Mirzā, who had escaped to the Ottomans to plan an attack on Persia with Sultan Sulaiman a decade earlier.⁵⁶⁴ Navīdī concludes that Bayezid’s arrival is recompense for the “spinning firmament” and evidently proves the celestial protection of the king and his territory (Figure 5-13).⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, 58-61.

⁵⁶³ Sultān Sulaiman I (1553–1561) had five sons. His second son, Mehmed, had died a decade earlier. After the execution of Mustafa (heir apparent to the throne) and Cihangir's death (the youngest brother who suffered from poor health), only two princes were left to be the potential claimant to the throne: Selim (the future Selim II) and Bayezid. Selim was the governor of Manisa and Bayezid was the governor of Kütahya, two cities at almost equal distance from Istanbul, the capital. Sulaiman was in his sixties and the competition between the two brothers over the throne was evident. Sulaiman scolded his sons and decided to change their places of duty. Selim was assigned to rule in Konya and Bayezid in Amasya, both provinces being this time further from the Istanbul, but still equidistant. Selim was quick to obey and promptly moved to Konya. But to the dismay of his father, Bayezid obeyed only after much hesitaiton. Angered, Sulaiman accused Bayezid of being a rebel and supported his elder son Selim against the disobedient Bayezid. Selim, in collaboration with Sokollu Mehmet Pasha (the future grand vizier), defeated his brother in battle near Konya on May 31, 1559. Bayezid returned to Amasya and escaped to Safavid Persia with his sons and a small army. Although Shah Tahmāsp I initially welcomed Bayezid, he later jailed him on the request of Sulaiman. Both Sulaiman and Selim sent envoys to Persia to persuade the Shah to execute Bayezid. Finally, on September 25, 1561, Bayezid and his four sons were executed in Persia by an Ottoman executioner.

⁵⁶⁴ Sulaiman tried to exploit the disloyalty of Tahmasb's brother Alqās Mirzā (1516–1550), governor of the frontier province of Shirvan. Alqas had rebelled and, fearing his brother's wrath, he had fled to the Ottoman court. He persuaded Sulaiman that if he invaded, the Iranians would rise up and overthrow Tahmāsp. In 1548, Sulaiman and Alqas entered Iran with a huge army but Tahmāsp had already "scorched the earth" around Tabriz and the Ottomans could find few supplies to sustain them. Alqas penetrated further into Iran but the citizens of Isfahan and Shiraz refused to open their gates to him. He was forced to retreat to Baghdad where the Ottomans abandoned him, as an embarrassment. Captured by the Iranians, his life was spared but he was condemned to spend the rest of his life in prison in the fortress of Qahqaha.

⁵⁶⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verse 452.



Figure 5-13. An Ottoman miniature showing Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent and his son, Bayezid
(Source: <http://www.nkfu.com/sehzade-bayezid>)

Returning to the main narrative, Navīdī indicates the date of the imperial reception for historical records, situating the royal gardens in a new and different frame of public, social and cultural ritual. The poet describes the royal reception with detailed illustrations at every stage, commencing with the arrival of prince Bayezid and his army to the plaza, and welcoming ministers, emirs and court members who wear colourful, jewelled costumes.⁵⁶⁶ He adores their appearance, describing the texture of delicate fabrics and variety of turbans and garments that fill the arena with spring and autumn colours.⁵⁶⁷ Navīdī then narrates the meeting of prince Bayezid and his sons with Shah Tahmāsp, the prince being honoured by the king, with gifts exchanged. In the evening the Ottoman prince is sent by the king to his quarters through the main bazaar while his route has been decorated lavishly in celebration of his arrival. In keeping with the main theme of *Shahrāshūb*, Navīdī writes nearly 100 verses describing and admiring the thriving city embellished with candles, torches and lanterns, gold and jewels, battle equipment, and finally the flourishing market with its charming beloved craftsmen engaged in their different metiers.⁵⁶⁸

Caesar mounted at the command of the king,

⁵⁶⁶ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, 65-71.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, verse 511.

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, 71-76.

He rode to his palace through the bazaar.
The city was adorned by lights,
And made the envy of a Chinese painting gallery.
With the goods from Iraq, Turkey and Europe,
With Māni and Arzhang's paintings,
With bows and belts, swords and shields,
With gold and ornaments, pearls and jewels,
It was prepared as it must be,
The way that it befits a king.
With so many candles, torches and lanterns,
The night stole repute and splendour from the day.
Trade by trade, the heart-ravishing beauties make merry,
Business is hot in the shop of longing and teasing.⁵⁶⁹

As the prince passes the bazaar, the poems take the reader on a journey around the market of the mercantile capital, Qazvin, overflowing with luxury, wealth and glory. Linen drapers, goldsmiths, silk merchants, swordsmiths, butchers, fruiterers, confectioners, bookbinders, needle makers, retailers, grocers and musicians are some of the shops and trades the poet illustrates. The prince admires the handsome tradesmen as he passes by on his way home. The next day begins with the king's arrival at the prince's mansion to welcome him.⁵⁷⁰ Navīdī names a list of costly and magnificent gifts given to the king by the prince's retinue including fast and strong horses, healthy camels, a precious Egyptian sword adorned with jewels, six golden stirrups, two sand clocks and different, high quality textiles. The poet allocates over 250 verses to a sumptuous royal banquet held in the plaza in autumn and in celebration of Bayezid's arrival. Navīdī describes the arabesque depicted in gold embroidered tents and parasols standing side by side from east to west, with exquisite rugs, each of them like a florid piece of heaven, the grandees and chamberlains dressed formally for the occasion, and finally the sound of music and timbals announcing the beginning of the great feast.⁵⁷¹ The list of royal gifts begins with a delicate, illuminated Qur'an with an attached album of painting and calligraphy (*Muraqqa'*). In relation to the

⁵⁶⁹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verses 613-619.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid. 76.

⁵⁷¹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, 77-89.

title of this volume, Navīdī applies a double meaning to the word “*Awrāq*” which means both “leaves” and “pages”, merging the beauty of nature with the art of bookbinding. *Zīnat Al Awrāq* (Embellishment of leaves) is not only devoted to admiring leaves in nature, but praising the jewel encrusted pages or binding, and the quality of the paintings and calligraphy.⁵⁷²

*First the auspicious fortunate Qur'an,
Its cover from the both sides proving the richness,
Painted with gold and written by garnet,
Wonder of the earth to firmament,
Word by word like the world-illuminating candle,
Its vowels surrounding the letters like butterflies.
The pages from two sides to the eye,
Are remembering Gabriel's wings.
Its “'Ashr” and “Zarb” are the sign of hope,
Part by part the promise of blessing.
After the Qur'an a desirable Muraqqa',
The sparkle of its jewelled binding reaches to the moon,
A thousand tumans spent on every page,
The taxes of “Khotan” spent on its each piece of calligraphy,
Its nice script is like the eternal effulgence.
Its visible and hidden depths fulfil wisdom's desire.
Its pages, with the calligraphy of masters,
Is a realm full of cultivated gardens.
Each of its pages is another paradise,
Better than a hundred garden plots to the eye,
One glance at that Lord's heaven,
Is nicer than majestic China and Cathay.
Each of its pages is the eye's nourishment,
Better than a piece of ruby, to the eye.
Every beauty of its script is like the curls of a beauty,*

⁵⁷² ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, 39-95.

*Taking grief from the heart and dust from the eye.
 Its "Sulus" and "Naskh" are all adorable,
 Transformed to collyrium for the jewels of the eye.
 In the purity of its "Muhaqqaq" and "Rayhān,"
 The eyes of discriminating critics are dazed.
 The "Tawqi" script is akin to "Riq'a,"
 The eye of the lofty sun is stunned by it.
 The playfulness of pieces of "Nasta'liq,"
 Increase the vision of discrimination's eye.
 From the beauty of its appearance and its nice script,
 It is refreshing like the face of the beloved.
 Each one of its pieces of paintings is certainly,
 Nicer than a hundred Chinese galleries.
 The magic-measuring pen of each master,
 Has painted another picture as it desired.
 The picture which is the envy of China and Europe,
 And the wonder of "Māni" and "Arzhang."
 All the kings desire this album,
 Yearning for one look at it.
 The finest rarity which gives life,
 Seeing it gives soul to the spirit.
 Besides the king, who knows what its value is?
 Only the expert recognizes what the work is.
 A memorial of all the artists,
 However I describe it, it's two hundred times more.⁵⁷³*

After this indulgent praising of *Muraqqa'*, Navīdī lists another exhaustive list of gifts presented to the prince's family such as hunting birds, livestock, armaments, cash, clothing and textiles, followed by gifts from the king's wives and sons to the Ottoman prince's family. This section ends with a brief description of the feast and variety of foods, drink and affluence.⁵⁷⁴ The autumn trace is still visible on the cloths spread on the floor,

⁵⁷³ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verses 855-880.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 85-90.

overflowing with food, sweets and drinks, as the poet likens this spread to the leaves that cover the plaza's arena in autumn.

This historical event does not have a happy ending. Navīdī closes this volume by narrating a short account of the finale to the reception.⁵⁷⁵ After all the king's tenderness and support, bestowing him and his people wealth and assets, equipping him with an army to take back the throne, the vain prince Bayezid didn't appreciate this fortune, became arrogant and disobedient and "did what Satan had not done."⁵⁷⁶ Shah Tahmāsp had him arrested after his disloyalty was proven and "killed those who were to be killed and hung those who were to be hung."⁵⁷⁷

5.5 Fifth tome: *Sahīfat Al Ikhhlās* (Parchment of Faithfulness)

The final volume of *Jannāt-i 'adan*, *Sahīfat Al Ikhhlās* or parchment of faithfulness, is devoted to summarizing, reviewing and celebrating Shah Tahmāsp's capital city in Navīdī's *khamasa*. With 574 verses in total, the first half of this volume is dedicated to a long panegyric to Shah Tahmāsp, creator of the gardens, founder of the city and inspiration for the poems. The second half is creatively dedicated to an epitome of the whole work of *Jannāt-i 'adan*, reciting the general setting and theme of each tome in a continuum of descriptions.

Here the reader revisits Sa'ādat ābād and its central palace or *Dawlat khāna* briefly, recalling the first volume's theme. The poet compares and likens the gardens to both the eternal garden of "Iram" and temporary gardens of Shiraz, Tabriz and Isfahan and goes on to boast that Qazvin gardens are the finest without peer.⁵⁷⁸ Navīdī returns to *Dawlat khāna*, reviewing some architectural elements. Recalling "*Dawḥat Al Azhār*" in the second volume, he begins to describe palace murals, some of which are mentioned in the earlier volume, for example, the *majlis* of the battle, the hunting grounds and conquest of Georgia

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., verse 1054.

⁵⁷⁷ Despite Navīdī's claim about Bayezid's betrayal, there is another side to this story, which says Sulaiman was eager to negotiate his son's return from the beginning, but Tahmāsp rejected his promises and threats until, in 1561, Sulaiman offered him land and 400,000 gold pieces. In September of that year, Tahmāsp and Bayezid were enjoying a banquet at Tabriz when Tahmāsp suddenly pretended he had received news that the Ottoman prince was engaged in a plot against his life. An angry mob gathered and Tahmāsp had Bayezid put into custody, alleging it was for his own safety. Tahmāsp then handed the prince over to the Ottoman ambassador. Shortly afterwards, Bayezid and his sons were killed by agents sent by his own father.

⁵⁷⁸ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifāt Al Ikhhlās*, 113.

and new murals including fishermen and the painted door of the loggia depicting outdoor scenery and activities such as hunting and banquets.⁵⁷⁹

To complete the seasonal pattern in the work, Navīdī leaves the palace and enters the natural world to describe Ja‘far ābād’s winter, recalling the main theme of the third volume, *Jannat Al Athmār*. The poet uses metaphor and similes to again show the economic power and richness of court culture by likening the snow to commercial and luxury goods such as jewels, camphor and cargo from Indian harbours.⁵⁸⁰ The king is admired for being the refuge of religion and carrier of peace and security, as the people take shelter indoors from the winter chill.⁵⁸¹

*When December is about to chill,
Time demands to take a rest,
The clouds rain down scattering jewels,
And lay the leaves of the year on the hills,
All compassion comes down from above,
The hopes of the canals and rivers grew strong,
The dark night-colour cloud rains camphor,
It saves a resource for the spring.
Snow gives the good tiding from the dark cloud,
Like a white cargo from the Indian port.
The tree is more kingly wearing ermine,
It becomes like a parasol over a crystal throne.
Friends take refuge from the garden,
Together seeking heaters and furnaces.
They put out their hands over the brazier,
Hundreds of cracks in them, like ice over the basin.
The grandees have retired from the loggia,
And placed the throne beside the heater.
Taking shelter above the heater,
They have made a prayer adytum of that vestibule,*

⁵⁷⁹ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, 115-118.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, verses 401-406.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

*Windows are closed to the meadow and garden,
 And lights are lit from the heater.
 The world is secure from the happenings of time.
 The king of kings has spread out a cradle of security.
 All the people in the cradle of safety and security,
 All eyes fixed on the path of the “Master of Time.”
 All praying for the king of kings, the supporter of faith,
 As lofty as heaven with troops as numerous as stars.⁵⁸²*

Navīdī narrates another story of historical affairs that took place in the Sa‘ādat ābād gardens, recalling the main topic and historical content of the fourth volume, *Zinat Al Awrāq*. The rest of the fifth tome is dedicated to a description of another royal feast held in Qazvin gardens in celebration of the Georgian prince, ‘Isā ibn Lavand’s public conversion to Islam.⁵⁸³ He was the son of one of the last Georgian commanders, Lavand khān-i Gurji, to surrender to Tahmāsp. In February 1561, ‘Isā arrived to Qazvin to pay fealty to the king, received a warm welcome from Tahmāsp, and manifested his conversion to Islam in the company of about two hundred of his followers.⁵⁸⁴ Navīdī points out how the king honoured ‘Isā, treated him like his own son and gave him the title of “*Khān*.”⁵⁸⁵ The king is praised again as protector and propagator of the faith, one Islam that has been strengthened by his good fortune, and renewal of the religion of Muhammad.⁵⁸⁶

Although the story of the Ottoman prince, Bayezid, ended sadly with his betrayal and death, this time the conversion of ‘Isā ibn Lavand not only relocates the capital city and its noble gardens at the heart of historical occasion, but also provides another victory for the king as well as a happy ending to the entire work.⁵⁸⁷

The Gardens of Eden or *Jannāt-i ‘adan* is a collection of poems structured as a pentad, composed by ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, attempting to replicate and provide a sense of appreciation and understanding of early Safavid gardens and landscapes, reflected by the poet’s creativity in the visionary realm of poetry. *Jannāt-i ‘adan* is a unique, rare and

⁵⁸² ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verses 415-425.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 122-127.

⁵⁸⁴ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, 120.

⁵⁸⁵ Obsolescent title of the nobility or tribal chiefs given to the grandees and dominants.

⁵⁸⁶ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verse 536.

⁵⁸⁷ Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time,” 29.

valuable source on the aesthetic reception of architecture, garden design and urbanism, dating back more than four hundred years ago, which not only provides us with valuable information and detailed images of the vanished princely gardens of Safavid Qazvin, their glorious mansions and their architectural design, but also mirrors the thoughts of the poet, who represents the middle class in society. The poems lead us to comprehend how the gardens were seen, acknowledged and appreciated in the eyes of the recipients.

In the innovative structure of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, Navīdī draws a “general to detailed” pattern in the narrative language of the entire work. The first volume sets the gardens and their pavilions in an eternal time-free context, providing general descriptions of the gardens, mansions and their architectural and ornamental orders. This general information is repeated and reviewed in the next four volumes, with more detail from different perspectives including the flow of time and the four seasons. As time passes with the seasons, the gardens in each volume represent different stages for artistic and cultural activities and agricultural and natural life, displaying royal court rituals and political and historical public affairs. The shadow of the great king (Shah Tahmāsp) does not disappear in any part of the work and Apart from the poet’s long panegyrics and exaggeration, an indispensable part of this poetry tradition, Navīdī successfully presents the king as the builder of a thriving city, who establishes prosperity, wealth and civilization, and the protector and supporter of faith and honesty.

Part IV

Rethinking Persian Gardens

Chapter 6
Rethinking the Meaning and Functions of Safavid
Urban Landscapes

6 Rethinking the Meaning and Functions of Safavid Urban Landscapes

Not only Safavid gardens, but in a broader category, Persian gardens are mostly cited in recent contemporary studies as places for joy, pleasure and restoration. An in-depth study of many chronicles and historic accounts suggest that despite their hedonistic function, Persian gardens have played a crucial role throughout Iran's history as the main arena for social and political affairs and events.⁵⁸⁸ The multiple practical functions of these gardens are often overlooked by spatial and ideological explanations. A lack of clear definition of the real features of these gardens is apparent, especially from the perspective of Safavid culture and tradition. The Safavid dynasty, beginning with the reign of Shah Isma'īl I, is defined by Sheila Canby as the golden age of Persian art (1501–1722).⁵⁸⁹ After a substantial period of turmoil in the wake of the warring Mongols, Safavid rulers ushered in a period of comparative peace and they were notable patrons of Persian literature, arts and customs. Safavid material culture is distinguished, in particular, by the creation of magnificent gardens including the new urban landscapes of Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan.⁵⁹⁰ The great Safavid kings are acknowledged for bringing remarkable change to their gardens and cities, and for their innovative connection to, and relationship with, their princely gardens and specific public urban spaces.

Studying and analyzing Navīdī's poems in *Jannāt-i 'adan* confirms that early Safavid gardens, like many other equivalent medieval gardens, were also considered as flexible landscapes that could host various functions, or even adapt over time. These poems are complemented by a second text by Navīdī, "*Takmilat al-Akhhbār*" (1570),⁵⁹¹ written in prose, which recounts the general history of the Safavid kings and culminates in a

⁵⁸⁸ Mohammed Gharipour, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia." *Garden History* 39, 2 (2011): 249.

⁵⁸⁹ Sheila R. Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501–1722*. London: British Museum Press, 2002.

⁵⁹⁰ Mahvash Alemi, "A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran." In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity*. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007, 113-138; Mahvash Alemi, "The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models." In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilio Petruccioli, 72-96. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997; Heidi Walcher, "Between Paradise and Political Capital: The Semiotics of Safavid Isfahan." *Middle Eastern Natural Environments* 103 (1997): 330-348.

⁵⁹¹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhhbār: Tārīkh-i Şafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosain Navaii. (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990).

firsthand account of contemporary court life.⁵⁹² While many scholars have focused on the definition of Persian gardens and their composition and function; there is still much to be learnt about Safavid gardens from Persian literature and poetry. In Navīdī's words, there was much more to these gardens than a geometric plan divided by water canals, containing a central basin and pavilion, and enclosed by surrounding high walls, as is often imagined and implied.

This chapter examines poetry and literature as a unique lens from which to interpret gardens as an arena for diverse social and political affairs and private events in the early Safavid period. It aims to build on rigorous scholarship, and draw attention to Navīdī's representation of the functional variety of Shah Tahmāsp's garden city, and various functions based on the information elicited from Navīdī's poems and historical manual.

⁵⁹² It seems fair to say that we can't find the same quantity of historical accounts and chronicles written about the Safavids and their history, compared to any other dynasty in Iran's political history. In the early ages of the Safavids, from the mid to late sixteenth century, which coincided with the reign of Shah Ismail and his son, Shah Tahmāsp; the number of accounts written in Persian by the local chroniclers was remarkably more than those written by European travellers, merchants or historians who visited Iran during that period with different political, commercial, evangelist or exploration purposes. This could be because after Shah Abbas I's coronation, in the seventeenth century when the Safavid Qizilbāshs ("red headed" army) showed themselves as inexpugnable forces against the Ottoman's frequent invasions, and the West noticed that a new central power was growing in the Ottoman neighbourhood, and so numerous visitors from Catholic and Protestant countries of Europe were dispatched to the Safavid Iran to discover more about this mysterious land and culture. The popularity of the new Safavid kings and the great Sufi descendents, Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmāsp, because of their religious policy as the main establishers and promoters of the Shi'ism in their territory in the early years of the Safavid empire and their relation to the prophet family and their Sufi predecessors, was one of the other reasons that the Iranian accountants showed interest in writing and recording events and happenings in society and court life to admire and acclaim these acknowledged kings. "*Takmilat Al-akhbār*," or "supplemental news," written by Abdi Bayk Navīdī, is one of several important and valuable accounts written by the pre-modern Iranian historians during the first eight decades of the Safavid era. The book is written in one preface and four chapters, recounting the history from the fall of Adam to the prophecy of Mohammad, and finally to the contemporary Safavid kings, Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmāsp, completed and finished in 1570 and presented to Shah Tahmāsp's daughter, princess Parikhān. Although *Takmilat Al-akhbār* is narrating the general history of court life and events, rulers, grandees and attendants, their relation to each other and to the king himself, and not like the author's other work, *Jannāt-i 'adan*, specifically talking about the places and stages of these incidents and relations; Navīdī has alluded to some information about the royal gardens and their pavilions or their historic positions in the surrounding social and cultural life. In other words, in a more minute study, and as a present individual who observed, witnessed and experienced many of these events and incidents himself, uncovering many details about his surrounding current life, Navīdī can drive the reader and interlocutor to achieve a better understanding of the early Safavid gardens and their crucial role in the medieval Persian lifestyle. 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār: Tārīkh-i Şafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosain Navaii. (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990). 8-10.

6.1 Urbanization and social gardening of the Safavid period

The urban institutions and public spaces in pre-modern Persian cities, went through fundamental alterations specifically between the early sixteenth and early seventeenth century. For Persia, this was not only a period of radical, internal socio-political transformations, it was also an era of growing interaction with its neighbouring empires while positioned within the network of global exchange. The background of the Turko-Mongol bipartite urban system is an important consideration in the analysis of the evolving features of Safavid urbanity, particularly its manifestation in the Timurid cities of Khurasan and Central Asia. Given its roots in the mobility and nomadic practices of the medieval Turkmen and Mongol sovereigns, in this urban tradition, the ruler's palace was located outside the city walls and within a suburban landscape.

This suburban landscape, beyond its characteristics of vicinity, was formed with a network of splendid gardens. The royal palaces were located within these enclosed gardens, including garden structures such as pavilions and tents. In effect, there existed a clear 'horizontal distance' between the city and its governmental centre.⁵⁹³ In comparison with the former Timurid model, early-modern Persianate dynasties such as the Mughals and the Safavids reconsidered their spatial relationship with the city. In fact, while the layouts of early Safavid cities emulated Timurid models in Khurasan and Central Asia, the later more established and dominant Safavid state also developed its own variations of the Turko-Mongol urban pattern. In this layout, the royal complex was connected to the city through the intermediary space of the *Maydān*; which endured as a standard for Iranian cities over the next three centuries.⁵⁹⁴ In contrast to previous dynasties, the Safavid period exemplifies a diminishing gap between the city and its suburban royal territories; as well as a parallel growing interest in the construction of public spaces. A series of interconnected urban spaces created a transparent, fluid and vibrant experience that exceeded the stationary qualities of urban monumental buildings located within the dense fabric of

⁵⁹³ Mahvash Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy." In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources from a Multicultural Perspective*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University Press, 2007, 114.

⁵⁹⁴ Manu Sobti, Sahar Hosseini, "Persian civitas: revised readings on networked urbanities and suburban hinterlands in Erich Schmidt's flights over ancient cities of Iran". In *The Historiography of Persian Architecture*, edited by Mohammad Gharipour. New York, United States: Routledge, 2016, 26-27.

these cities. Gardens, streets, bridges, and coffeehouses emerged as sites of collective action, social exchange, and sensory experiences.⁵⁹⁵

All newly established Safavid capitals including Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan adjoined existing cities. Alemi succinctly describes the form of such garden cities, “organized around specific public garden spaces, *Maydān* and *Khiyābān*” that were the public face of their royal residence with its enclosed gardens. These public gardens provided the main stage for rituals meant to establish their legitimacy and control over the local population and impress foreign dignitaries.”⁵⁹⁶ The *Khiyābān* was a linear promenade arranged around an axial, tree-lined water canal while the more widely known *Maydān* was a large and usually rectangular open space. In addition to these garden types, Alemi underscores the diversity of Safavid gardens (and not limited to the well-known *Chāhār Bāgh*). She also traces a shift from the role of the garden as an instrument of urban politics, during the reign of Shah Tahmāsp, to an urban setting for increasingly lavish receptions, civil and religious rituals and the pleasures of royal life (Figure 6-1).⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ Mahvash Alemi, “Safavid Royal Gardens and Their Urban Relationships.” In *A Survey of Persian Art, from Prehistoric Times to the Present, Islamic Period: From the End of the Sasanian Empire to the Present* Vol. 18, (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2005), 1-24; Manu Sobti, Sahar Hosseini, “Persian civitas: revised readings on networked urbanities and suburban hinterlands in Erich Schmidt’s flights over ancient cities of Iran”, 26-27.

⁵⁹⁶ Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy.” 114.

⁵⁹⁷ Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens,” 113-133, and Mahvash Alemi, “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*, edited by Stephen Bann, 95-114. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2009.

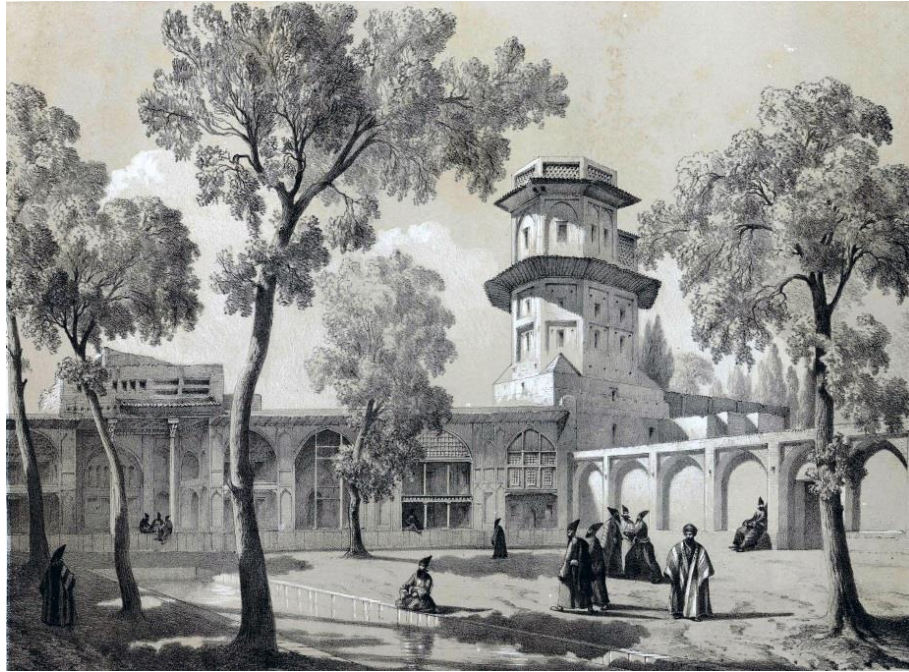


Figure 6-1. Courtyard of the seraglio as a public space, Qazvin, during the nineteenth century (1840) by Eugène Flandin (Source: *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851)

Alemi's careful analysis of extant drawings prepared by Engelbert Kaempfer in 1684 locates Qazvin's royal complex (Sa'adat ābād) north of the existing city.⁵⁹⁸ This complex was linked to the city via the extant 'Āli Qāpū gate (also known as Ja'far ābād) and a series of public gardens including a primary *Khiyābān* (today, Sepah Boulevard) which led to two *Maydān* spaces. A new bazaar was built to the northwest of the old bazaar together with a royal bath and houses of courtiers were located in the vicinity. In addition, a number of religious structures were financed in various parts of the city. While Qazvin was a former Sunni centre, the construction, expansion or renovation of religious structures served to propagate Shi'ism. Accordingly, Alemi argues that these projects served to increase the presence of the Shi'ite clergy in Qazvin and subsequently transformed the city into a great Shi'ite centre (Figure 6-2).⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Alemi, "Princely Safavid Gardens," 114.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.



Figure 6-2. Bazaar and mosque entrance, Qazvin, during the nineteenth century (1840) by Eugène Flandin (Source: *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851)

One of the most emphasized parts of Navīdī’s poems of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* is the information about innovative urban elements associated with the new urban development program of Shah Tahmāsp in the new capital, Qazvin, which is called “*Khiyābān-i Qazvin*”.⁶⁰⁰ This new urban formation regarded as the first of its kind in the history of urban spaces in Iran continued to be imitated in urban and social design (Figure 6-3).⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰⁰ Shah Tahmāsp’s new urban development project was an introduction to expanding the old city to the north and start just before the construction of the new royal garden complex, by building a royal bath, cistern and bazaar (Qaysariyyah Tahmāspi), northwest of the old bazaar. In order to establish the religious power of the groups supporting his religious policy, he expanded the Seljuqid mosque, *masjīd-i alīq*, renovated the Shāh-zādah Husayn mausoleum and restored the *Panja ‘ali* mosque, which still survive.

⁶⁰¹ Ayda Alehashemi, “Qazvin Boulevard: A Garden Inside the City, Redefining the Qazvin Boulevard Based on the Historic Texts.” *Scientific Journal of Nazar Research Centre (NRC)*, no. 22, vol. 9. Tehran, 2012, 65.

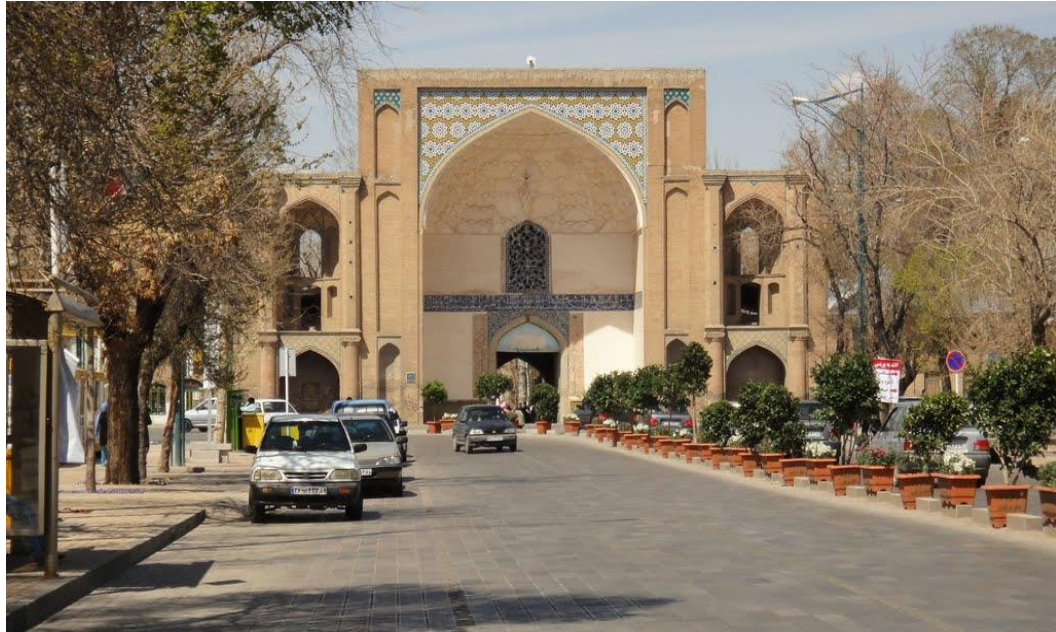


Figure 6-3. The gate of ‘Āli Qāpū and *Khiyābān* of Qazvin known as *Sipah* Boulevard today (Source: <http://www.festivalofarts.com>)

Khiyābān: The public recreational landscape

Qazvin’s Ja‘far ābād boulevard or *Khiyābān*, known as *Sipah* Boulevard today, is one of the most important additions to Shah Tahmāsp’s construction program after moving the capital from Tabriz to Qazvin in 1557. Many scholars consider this passage as the ancestor of the famous *Chāhārbāgh* Boulevard,⁶⁰² constructed during the reign of Shah Abbas (Tahmāsp’s grandson) in Isfahan, while others regard it as the first public promenade in the history of Iran’s urban spaces. This paved the way for the construction of other urban public promenades in other big cities in Iran, specifically during the reign of the Safavid king, Shah Abbas, and later known as *Khiyābān*. The significant features of this boulevard are its physical and conceptual pattern as well as spatial structure and function.⁶⁰³ Through In *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, Navīdī described this boulevard as an urban and civic space designed according to the passages in common Persian gardens, open to the public for leisure and interacting activities (Figure 6-4).

⁶⁰² *Chāhārbāgh* Boulevard is a historical avenue in Isfahan, constructed in the Safavid era in the reign of Shah Abbas I. This avenue is the most historically famous in all of Persia. It connects the north to the south and is about six kilometers. On the west side the Gardens of the Viziers are situated, and on the east side the Hasht Bihisht and Chihil Sotoūn gardens.

⁶⁰³ Alehashemi, “Qazvin Boulevard, a garden inside the city,” 65.

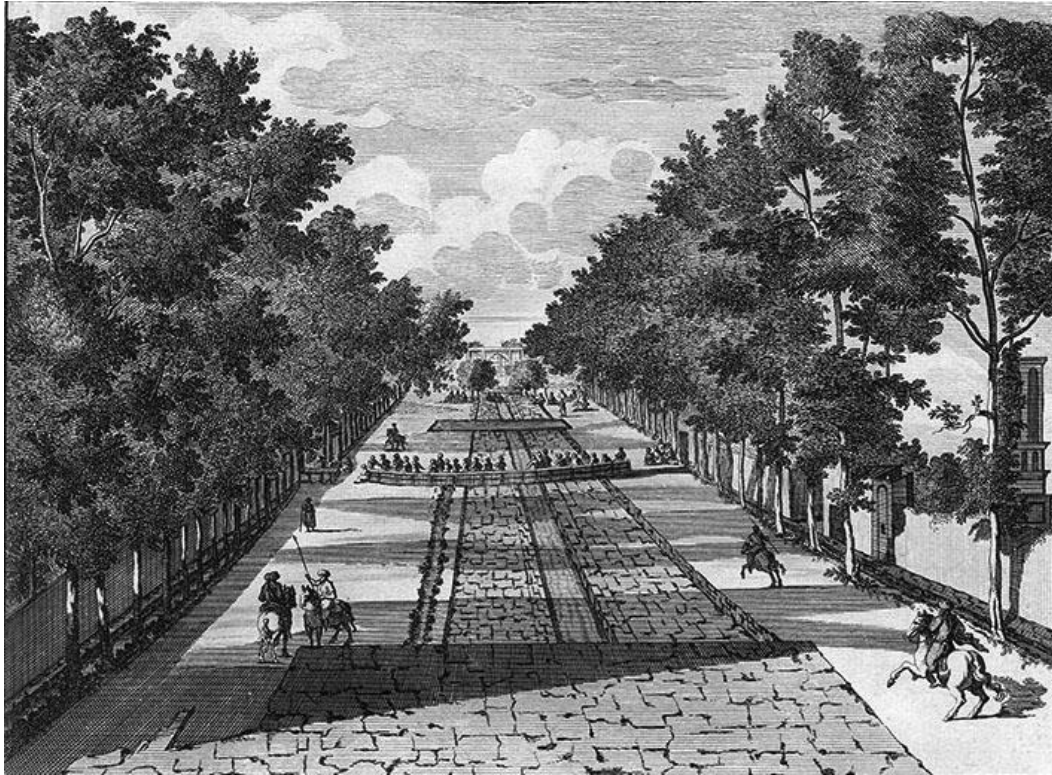


Figure 6-4. The famous *Chāhār Bāgh* Boulevard, constructed during the reign of Shah Abbas I, Shah Tahmāsp’s grandson in Isfahan during the eighteenth century (1705) by Cornelis de Bruyn (Source: *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851)

Navīdī in fact describes the Ja‘far ābād boulevard in at least four volumes of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*. In the first volume the poet states his aim of writing the poems and refers to a distinct subtitle as: “*Sabab-i nazm-i kitāb*” which means: “The reason for composing the book.”⁶⁰⁴ He clearly illustrates that the command of the king was to “describe the promenade (*Khiyābān*) and the garden” as it really existed.⁶⁰⁵ He adds that he uses the art of poetry to seek the “truth” and to find and uncover the un-manifested truth and “hidden meanings” which remain concealed.⁶⁰⁶ Discriminating between the “garden” and “*Khiyābān*”, he explains that these two different spaces however carry equal value. Later, while describing the general view of the garden city, he again distinguishes this external promenade from other inner passages belonging to the royal garden of Sa‘ādat ābād:

⁶⁰⁴ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii, 29. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974. 29.

⁶⁰⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 94-95.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, verses 96-97.

*Outside of this heavenly house,
Wishing its fortune never see bad in universe,
Is made the exhilarating Khiyābān,
Which wiped away the gloom from people's hearts...⁶⁰⁷*

The poet emphasizes that promenading along these passages gives pleasure to those people who admire pleasant garden features, landscapes, fresh air and cool breeze, and water and plants along the *Khiyābān*.⁶⁰⁸ On the other hand, he draws a parallel between the king's urban development construction and his religious policy and beliefs by mentioning the double meaning of the word "*Rāst*" in Persian, both straight and right, implying that the straight design of the *Khiyābān* leads people to the right path:

*The king through that allay which is like a galaxy,
Is conducting people to the right way
In such a straight path,
Everybody is led to the probity (Figure 6-5).⁶⁰⁹*



Figure 6-5. *Khiyābān* in Qazvin and the gate of 'Āli Qāpū at the end of the nineteenth century (Source: <http://www.kojaro.com/>)

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., verses:162-163.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., verses:166-171.

⁶⁰⁹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses: 182-183.

The poet points out that *Khiyābān* is flanked between high walls on either side (he later indicates that those walls belonged to court members and grandees' private gardens and plots), located between the “*dawlat khānah*” mansion (government house) and the main entrance gate of Sa‘ādat ābād royal complex, ‘Āli Qāpū gate, along with the main internal promenade of the imperial garden of Sa‘ādat ābād:

*From one side, dawlat sarāy doorway,
From the other side the garden of joy,
Two gates from each side standing face to face,
Have raised a tumult into the quadripartite.*⁶¹⁰

These poems confirm that this passage or *Khiyābān* in the new garden city was not a pathway for ordinary traffic, but a royal garden space open to the public (Figure 6-6).



Figure 6-6. Reconstruction of the landscape of *Kheyaban*, based on Abdi Bayk Navīdī’s poems (Source: Ayda Alehashemi, “Qazvin Boulevard, a garden inside the city, redefining the Qazvin Boulevard based on the historic texts”, in *Scientific Journal of Nazar Research Centre (NRC)*, No. 22, Vol. 9 (Tehran, 2012), 67).

⁶¹⁰ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses: 189-190.

In the second volume, Navīdī dedicates a whole section, including about twenty verses, to depict the *Khiyābān* under the title: “*Sifat-i Khiyābān*” or “describing the *Khiyābān*.”⁶¹¹

The poet lauds the straight, even, flat base of the *Khiyābān*, flanked by two regular rows of dense shady trees such as plane, elm, cypress, willow and varnish trees, casting shadows on the emerald coloured lawn. He mentions two direct, long water canals under the trees, making the whole place full of peace and serenity.⁶¹²

Navīdī uses another title for describing the internal passages belonging to the royal garden as “*Sifat-i hāshīyah va Khiyābān-hay-i bāgh*” which means: “describing the siding and main garden’s *Khiyābāns*”, emphasizing two parts of the complex, similar in shape and design, but with different functions (internal and external passages).⁶¹³

The most important role and function of this public promenade is explained in the fourth volume of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*.⁶¹⁴ Navīdī invites people to come from the city to visit this colourful paradise *Khiyābān*, if they want to profit from and enjoy their life.⁶¹⁵ As the poet passes through the *Khiyābān* and its surrounding gardens and mansions, explained as rulers and grandees’ gardens, Navīdī pauses to consider new aspects of the *Khiyābān* and public areas.⁶¹⁶ He mentions several refreshing and resting places for people who are promenading there.⁶¹⁷ He describes one of these places as a large, pleasing public platform with grated carved stones all around and a central basin with a fountain in the middle. He addresses three tall shadow casting plane trees which rose in the middle of the terrace and under the pleasant shadows of which, people rested. Navīdī likens this platform to a candlestick holding the three plane trees as its green lighted candles in spring and summer and to an elegant brazier in autumn and winter with coloured plane leaves under the sun as its flaming fire. The poet refers to this royal place as “*Soffa-yi sar-i chinār*” named after the plane trees that stand there as “candles with flame” around the basin full of light and surrounded by the stone lattice work.⁶¹⁸ He then highlights the

⁶¹¹ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974. 28.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, verses 110-129.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶¹⁴ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlās*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii, 8-11. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1979.

⁶¹⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlās*, 50.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.* verses 49-50.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.* verses 219-220.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.* verses 221-273.

presence of different shops and a bath, two other elements of a live and dynamic public urban space (Figure 6-7).⁶¹⁹



Figure 6-7. *Khayābān* in Qazvin and the ‘Āli Qāpū gate, 1921 (Source: <http://traffic.qazvin.ir>)

An interpretation of Navīdī’s poems helps to redefine the *Khayābān* as being based on four physical elements which shape its design and appearance, the concept behind its design and finally its function. According to the poet’s descriptions, Navīdī refers to the effective geometric design of being flat, straight and without any curves. The second essential element is the presence of flowing water in two canals with paved bedding, located under rows of trees, purifying the whole space. The poet then refers to the vegetation and planting as the third element of the *Khayābān*. He emphasizes the existence of two carefully arranged rows with about six different types of tall shady trees, adjacent to and casting shadow on the fresh green lawns and flowers that grow beside the runnels. Finally, the side walls constructed on each side of the promenade belonged to neighboring gardens and plots, according to the poet, and they are the last physical design factor of the *Khayābān*.

Ja‘far ābād *Khayābān* was considered as a complete garden that evolved into a public urban space. It was built outside of the royal complex and led to the entrance gate to the

⁶¹⁹ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahifat Al Ikhlās*, verses: 245-422.

king's garden. Thus Qazvin's *Khiyābān* is one of the first prototypes of a Persian gardens promenade with urban design, adapting to the city and its urban needs over time.

Qazvin's Maydāns: stages for displaying political events as well as civic activities

The *Maydān* was the central part of the urban layout of the Safavid Capital, which provided a transition between the royal palace garden and the city. Following the consolidation of the Safavid Empire, the *Maydān* evolved in a gradual transformation from being an extra-mural military and recreational institution in the Timurid period, to become a multi-functional royal, religious and commercial urban establishment. However, the transfiguration of the *Maydān* was not just a functional change, neither was it a sudden shift. The functional change was an outcome of the location of the *Maydān* and its spatial relationship with the royal complex and urban fabric, as well as the state's economic and cultural policies that were steadily implemented especially during the later ages of the Safavid rule. In the case of the Isfahan, the third Safavid capital after the city of Qazvin and planned and built under Shah Abbas I, Following the Safavid ruler's plan to shift the religious and economic centre of the city to a new location, the large open field that had traditionally housed polo and archery events, emerged as the principal point of the new capital. Towards its formal recognition, the major physical shift was the addition of double storey shops surrounding the *Maydān*. This urbanistic architecture would clearly define the borders of the *Maydān*, marking the turning point in the history of *Maydān* in the Persian city. However, beyond its morphological character, we also rely on the performance and social practices, which the *Maydān* accommodated, as embodiments of urban socio-political relationships. The spatial, cultural and symbolic role and place in the urban culture underwent change as the social practices that the *Maydān* space effectively embraced transformed. By the seventeenth century, the *Maydān* and its attached institutions were not only the ceremonial sites of kingly display, but also the integrated sites of trade and civic, religious and, political interaction.⁶²⁰

Through Navīdī's poems in the second volume of *Jannāt-i 'adan*, "Maydān-i Asb," sometimes called "Maydān-i Shah," was located at the south end of the Sa'ādat ābād

⁶²⁰ Sobti, Hosseini, "Persian civitas: revised readings on networked urbanities and suburban hinterlands in Erich Schmidt's flights over ancient cities of Iran," 25-27.

garden, flanked by the “Jahān namā” pavilion in the “*Harem*” garden.⁶²¹ Navīdī narrates the memorable day he was called to the king’s presence. He accompanies the king in a tour around the gardens of Sa‘ādat ābād guiding by the king himself. Then the king asks him to follow him onto the lofty roof of the *Jahān namā* palace which is overlooked to the “Maydān-i asb” (horse square) and had a pleasant panoramic view from east to west.⁶²²

Navīdī also mentions another new public square in the new city, situated to the west of Ali Qāpu gate, which gave access to the newly built bazaar and princely gardens. In the fourth volume, Navīdī refers to important historical events that took place in this hippodrome. Navīdī describes a detailed splendid reception ceremony of welcoming the Ottoman prince Bayezid and his army, the prince being honoured by Tahmāsp, exchanging the gifts between two royal attendants and the following lavish royal feast held at the Maydān-i Sa‘ādat in October 1559.⁶²³

In original historical accounts, entries in European travellers’ diaries and drawings (Figure 6-8),⁶²⁴ hippodromes facilitated a variety of activities such as military practice, archery, horse riding and polo. They were also a means of access to other essential urban features such as economic and commercial elements (bazaars), religious features (mosques), cultural and educational elements (the *madrasa*) and governmental elements (the royal gardens and the court). The hippodrome or *Maydān* as well as the promenade or *Khiyābān*, are the two main Safavid urban factors, which can be seen as a whole garden open to the public for pleasure and entertainment, while also acting as a stage for royal court rituals, political events or administrative affairs. These two dynamic and lively urban spaces successfully present the king as the builder of a thriving city, who establishes prosperity, wealth and civilization in the eyes of interlocutors.

⁶²¹ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, 113.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, verses 807-837.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶²⁴ For an analysis of some of those drawings see Mahvash Alemi, “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran.” In *The Middle East Garden Traditions, Unity, and Diversity*. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2007, 113-138; Mahvash Alemi, “The Royal Gardens of the Safavid Period, Types and Models.” In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires: Theory and Design*, edited by Attilio Petruccioli, 72-96. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997; Mahvash Alemi, “Princely Safavid Gardens, Stage for Rituals of Imperial Display and Political Legitimacy,” 113-133; Mahvash Alemi, “The Garden City of Shah Tahmasb Reflected in the Words of His Poet and Painter,” 95-114.

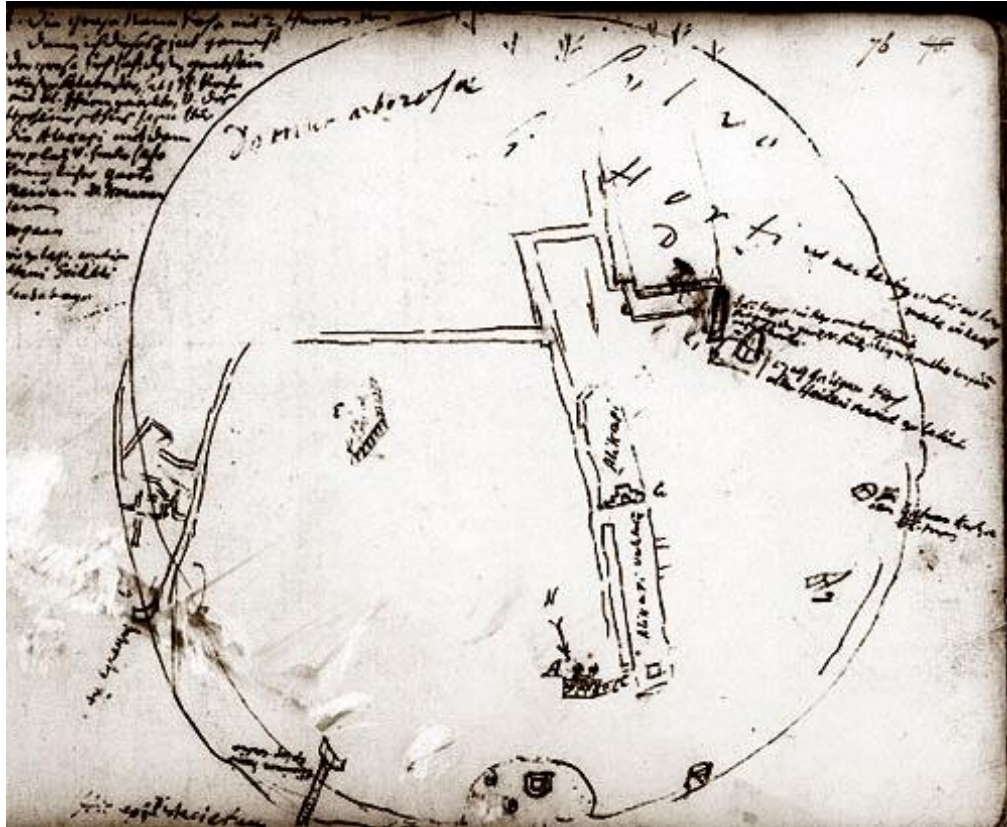


Figure 6-8. The plan of early Safavid Qazvin, drawn by Engelbert Kaempfer, showing the city's *Khiyabān* and its two *Maydāns* (Source: <http://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions>)

6.2 Political gardening: gardens as stages for political events or administrative affairs

In his historical account, “*Takmilat al-Akhhbār*,” Navīdī provides detailed insight into the political events that took place in the king’s gardens: administrative meetings, the execution of prisoners, and, not least, preparations for war. The gardens also served as a place of refuge and diplomatic exchange (of words and gifts). The poet frequently refers to different contemporary winter and summer quarters for court settlement, which obviously originated from the nomadic lifestyle of Safavid rulers (and other medieval rulers of that area), who rarely settled in one region.⁶²⁵ Navīdī details different tasks that occurred during the residence of the king in their resorts or gardens, among them his

⁶²⁵ Mohammed Gharipour, “Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure”, 249; ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhhbār: Tārīkh-i Šafavīyah az āghāz tā 978 Hijrī-i Qamarī*, edited by Abdulhosain Navāii. (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1990).

historic narrations and descriptive poems, such as administrative affairs or receptions, meeting with the grandees, governors, emissaries and envoys, law enforcement such as sentencing and execution of anathematized prisoners, encampment, military laagering and war preparations, and finally receptions, funerals, wedding ceremonies and royal feasts.⁶²⁶

Navīdī narrates how Shah Tahmāsp met and accepted to protect the Mughal prince Humayun⁶²⁷, Sultan Babur’s son, who took refuge with the Safavids after defeat in the war against his rebellions brothers, in the gardens of Tabriz (the former capital). Navīdī describes the royal reception meeting and counts the royal gifts exchanged between two kings such as a precious piece of diamond Humayun brought from India to bestow to the great king, and Tahmāsp’s gifts such as kingly tents, luxury vessels and fabrics, gold, silver and jewels and finally equeries of camels, mules and royal horses. He then narrates how the king equipped the Mughal prince’s army, dispatched some of his bravest and heroic commanders to accompany Humayun’s forces in the war against his brother, until he finally conquered Kabul and Qandahar and defeated his rebellions brothers (Figure 6-9).⁶²⁸



Figure 6-9. Shah Tahmāsp’s palace mural of Humayun’s reception, in Chihil Sotoūn palace, Isfahan, seventeenth century (Source: Author, 2014)

⁶²⁶ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, 93-94, 115-117, 109, 214.

⁶²⁷ Nasir al-din Muhammad Humayun (7 March 1508 AD – OS 17 January 1556 AD) was the second Mughal Emperor who ruled a large territory consisting of what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of northern India from 1530–1540 and again from 1555–1556. Like his father, Babur, he lost his kingdom early, but with Persian Shah Tahmāsp’s aid, he eventually regained an even larger one.

⁶²⁸ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, 93-94.

Moreover, the lavish reception of the rebellious Ottoman prince Bayezid, the son of Suleiman I (1553-1561), in Qazvin in October 1559 is recorded in both the *Jannāt-i ‘adan*⁶²⁹ and *Takmilat al-akhbār*.⁶³⁰ However, the luxury and splendour of these occasions is presented in stark contrast to the grisly end of Bayezid and his sons, after their doubly nefarious intentions to betray Shah Tahmasp are uncovered; the poet recites how in the middle of a feast in Sa‘ādat ābād garden, some grandees disclosed the secrets of Bayezid’s betrayal plan against shah Tahmāsp, informed the king that he is gathering an army against the Persian king. Bayezid and his four sons were arrested the other day and sent to be held under the custody in the same palace of their residence. Navīdī ends this narrative by revealing the arriving of some ottoman dignitaries protected by about two hundreds of army men to Sa‘ādat ābād garden, receiving the gifts from ottoman Sultān Sulaiman and delivering and surrender of Bayezid and his sons to them under the command of Shah Tahmāsp, the execution of princes in the garden of Sa‘ādat ābād by the ottoman executioner and finally moving their bodies to Istanbul.⁶³¹

Additionally, Navīdī reports some religious-political affairs and meeting happened in Qazvin’s royal gardens in both Texts, such as the Georgian prince, ‘Isā ibn Lavand’s public conversion to Islam.⁶³² ‘Isā arrived to Qazvin to pay fealty to the king, received a warm welcome from Tahmāsp in Sa‘ādat ābād garden and he manifested his conversion to Islam in company of about two hundreds of his followers.⁶³³ In the fifth volume of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* Navīdī points out how the king honoured ‘Isā, treated him like his own son and gave him title as “*Khān*.”⁶³⁴ The author again reveals a very similar story about another Georgian prince, Dāvoud Bayk who was admitted to the court and converted to Islam in the company of his valiant attendants. The king gave him the “*Khān*” title in a ceremony and granted him the Tbilisi’s rulership.⁶³⁵ The events recounted by Navīdī are supported by contemporary and historical documents and point to the accuracy of his texts. The garden hosted an enormous variety of political events, too numerous to mention here, which exemplify the complex diplomatic relations entertained by the Safavids, the

⁶²⁹ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlas*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii, 8-11. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1979. 61.

⁶³⁰ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, 115-117.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

⁶³² ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlas*, 122.

⁶³³ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, 117.

⁶³⁴ Khān was an obsolescent title of the nobility or tribal chiefs to honor the grandees and dominants during the Safavid period.

⁶³⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhbār*, 120.

grandeur and diversity of affairs of the court, and the pomp with which these affairs were conducted.

6.3 Cultural gardening: gardens as art galleries

According to Navīdī's narrations, the royal gardens or nomadic quarters of the Safavid Shah Tahmāsp were not only used as an imperial residence, but for pleasure and refreshments, royal administrative affairs and gatherings or political meetings, but also as flexible arenas for displaying the riches and wealth of the court (Figure 6-10).



Figure 6-10. The wall painting displayed on the mansion of Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn in Sa'ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran. The current painting belongs to the later Qajar era during the eighteenth century, as earlier Safavid paintings were covered over by a new layer and painted in a new school of art (Source: Author, 2014)

In *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, the second tome of *Jannāt-i 'adan*, Navīdī explains how gardens and pavilions can be transformed into art galleries by illustrating over twelve “*Majlis*” or murals on the walls of palaces in Sa'ādat ābād garden.⁶³⁶ As the murals mostly depict the

⁶³⁶ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, 67-80.

idealistic scenes of Nizāmi’s romantic poetic stories, Navīdī delicately represents another inseparable aspect of gardens and pavilions: pure love, romance and humanity. While the poet describes each “*Majlis*” in detail, the garden and palaces of Shah Tahmāsp are drawn from the literary and poetry tradition of romantic epic poetry, as they are re-imagined and re-invented by Nizāmi’s finest masterpieces. While he is praising the artists’ skills, taste and talents, Navīdī clearly names Shah Tahmāsp and lauds him as the great patron of this art who has gathered all the artists around himself and each of them are considered as Tahmāsp’s apprentice as he himself is unequalled in the art and the skill of painting. Here the gardens and their pavilions are celebrated and as not only the symbols of the king’s unrivalled power, but also are appreciated as the elements of dissemination, creation and aesthetical display of a great legacy of Persianate art, poetry and literature that were embraced by the Safavid kings. (Figure 6-11).⁶³⁷

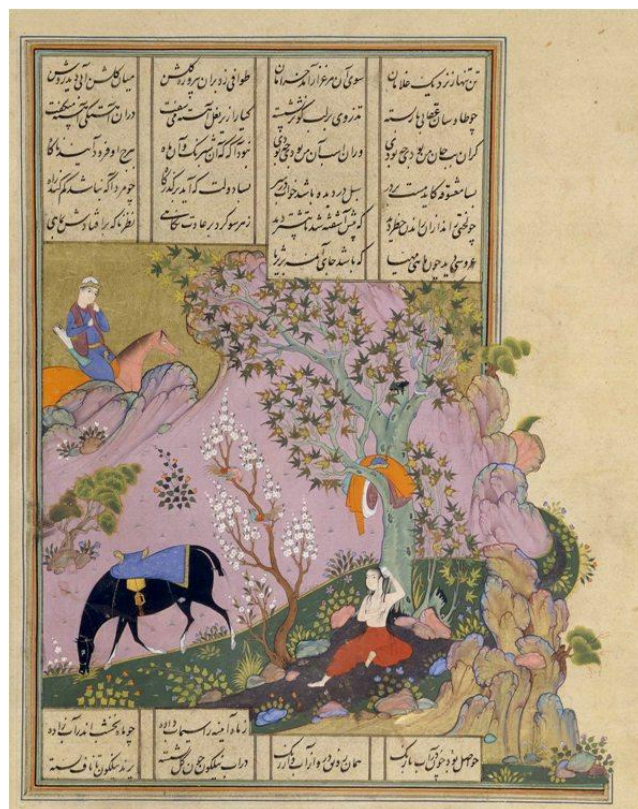


Figure 6-11. Khosrow watching Shirin bathing in a pool from Nizāmi’s *khamasa*, Safavid miniature, seventeenth century (1622) (Source: <http://www.aloreedespeutetre.fr>)

⁶³⁷ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, 69-112.

6.4 The garden as ceremonial landscape

In Navīdī's *Jannāt-i 'adan*, the gardens of Shah Tahmāsp, as previously discussed, are the main context for every major royal ceremony or social event. It is difficult to separate the political functions from the ceremonial events held in the gardens. The gardens provided the stage for a colourful pageant of ministers, emirs and court members in luxurious, bejewelled garb before the commencement of sumptuous royal and public banquets in celebration of the arrival of foreign guests. Such receptions were further enhanced by the formalities associated with the exchange of royal gifts, ceremonies dedicated to hunting, or musical events, among other entertainments. In this light, the gardens functioned as flexible arenas to display the rich and luxurious culture of the court. He points to the imperial wedding ceremony of the crown prince, Isma'īl Mirzā, in the royal gardens of Tabriz, describing three days of glorious feasting held in two separate gardens, the "North" garden for the men's gathering and *Ishrat ābād* garden for the women's. The king commanded the city and bazaar to be adorned and decorated and "a table was laid on the floor which nobody in the universe had observed any similar thing with their eyes or heard with their ears from anybody at any time."⁶³⁸

Moreover, in some parts of "*Takmilat al-Akhhbār*" the author mentions the deaths of various members of the royal family and the funerals held in the gardens, such as the death of Shah Tahmāsp's sister, princess "*Shahzada Sultanem*" who died in Qazvin Sa'ādat ābād. Her body was buried in a mausoleum in Qom after the majestic funeral ceremony in the royal residence (Figure 6-12).⁶³⁹

⁶³⁸ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Takmilat al-akhhbār*, 109, 214.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.



Figure 6-12. The Mughal prince Humayun’s meeting with Shah Tahmāsp, sixteenth century India
 (Source: <https://alifatelier.wordpress.com>)

However, the royal gardens as a place for different cultural, religious or political feasts, receptions or ceremonies was not limited to the Safavids. Babur in his memoirs of *Baburnāma*, for example, describes a royal feast to celebrate his newly born son’s birth, Prince Humayun, in a *Chāhārbāgh* in Kabul in 1508: “Five or six days after his birth, I went out to the *Chāhārbāgh* and gave a feast in celebration. All the Bayks (nobles) great and small, brought offerings. More silver coins were piled up than had ever been seen before in one place. It was an excellent feast.”⁶⁴⁰ (Figure 6-13)

⁶⁴⁰ *The Baburnāma, Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, edited by Wheeler M. Thackston. New York: The Modern Library, 2002, 260.

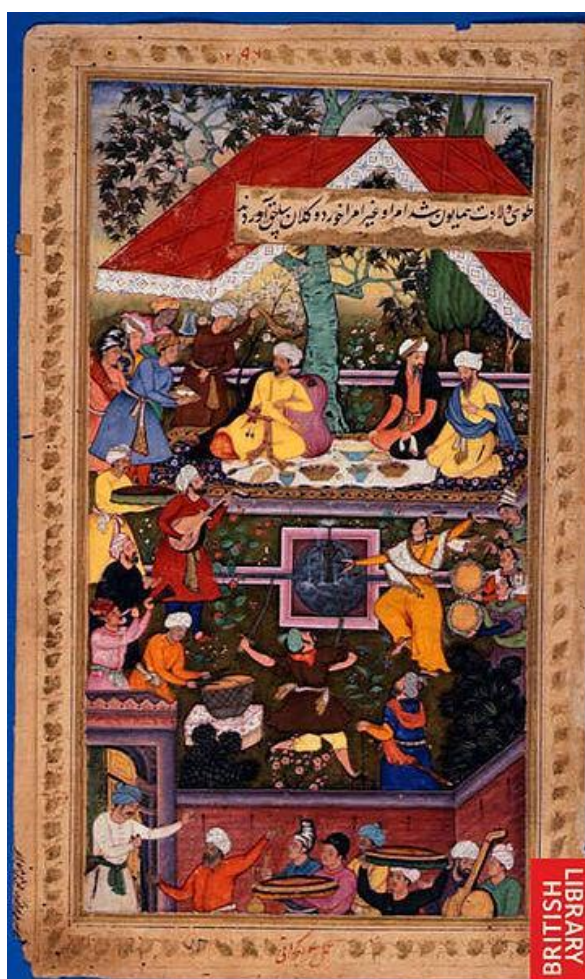


Figure 6-13. Babur celebrates the birth of Humayun in a *Chāhārbāgh* in Kabul (Source: <https://en.qantara.de>)

6.5 Gardens as botanical horticultural laboratories

The *Irshād al-zirā‘a* is evidence of an abundance of agricultural crops during the early Safavid Herat. According to Golombek and Wilber’s study on Timurid Herat, some villages and gardens around Herat in some more distant but in highly productive cultivated suburbs, were granted as royal rewards to the courtiers in favour of their loyal service to the court.⁶⁴¹

While Navidi praises the glorious royal gardens for their splendour, he also appreciates their productivity. This function of the garden as a source of income and agricultural

⁶⁴¹ Lisa Golombek and Donald Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, vol. 1 Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, 28.

produce can, again, be traced to the various functions of Persian gardens that are regularly mentioned in historical accounts and studies of the agronomy of medieval Persia. Such historic manuals reveal that even the royal Persian gardens, still produced agricultural crops for private and/or public use. The goals of physical well-being and refreshment were entirely compatible with this pragmatic function and these dual functions were even reflected in the terminology.⁶⁴² The Persian term “*bāgh*” refers to both gardens and agricultural plots.⁶⁴³ Therefore, it is reasonable to consider the medieval Persian garden as an inseparable part of the agricultural economy as well as a material expression of power and a place of refreshment.

In the first volume of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, Navidi names and describes twenty-three different plots and properties in the vicinity of the royal palace. Most of these properties, often punctuated by luxurious residential mansions, belonged to the king’s family, relatives or courtiers. Each plot was labelled according to the owner and this provides insight into the level of intimacy of each owner with the king. Throughout the compilation he uses a variety of terms for gardens including vineyards (*Angouristān*), orchards (*Boustān*), rose gardens (*Golzār* or *Golistān*), and plots or melon beds (*Pāliz*). Throughout the text, Navidi describes various types of fruits, flowers and vegetables, confirming their agricultural function;

*From each side plum, cherry and apple,
Beautiful heads raised skyward, praying.
The ripened fruit red-hot under the sun,
The promise of mouth-watering delight.*⁶⁴⁴

This fecundity comes to the fore in the third volume, titled the Garden of Fruits, which is dedicated to summer. In this volume the melon is singled out as the most pleasing of the summer fruits and Navidi praises over 18 varieties of melons for their matchless sweetness. These are then compared to those found in a long list of Persian cities together with well-known agricultural areas around Qazvin. Accordingly, the gardens of Qazvin were valued for their productivity and Navidi provides further keen insight into the

⁶⁴² Mohammed Gharipour, “Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure: Multifunctionality of Gardens in Medieval Persia,” *Garden History* 39, 2 (2011), 249.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁶⁴⁴ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses, 297, 301.

important value of individual properties, which belonged to the king's close relatives and courtiers, on account of the income they generated. (Figure 6-14).⁶⁴⁵



Figure 6-14. Persian miniature depicting Qazvin Sa‘ādāt ābād garden attributed to Ali Mīrak, Shah Tahmasp’s member of the royal painting library (Source: <http://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions>)

Navīdī names of eight patches and melon beds or “*Pāliz*” some of them named after their owners, in the royal garden complex or around it, in the rich suburb of Ja‘far ābād.⁶⁴⁶ The poet picks the melon as the most pleasing among summer fruits, mentions and describes over eighteen varieties of heavenly melons and lauds their matchless sweetness and pleasing taste.⁶⁴⁷ In the following part the poet provides a long list of Persian cities and compares Qazvin melons and water melons to other famous melon growing regions and other agricultural sites and areas around Qazvin.⁶⁴⁸ According to Navīdī’s poems, it is

⁶⁴⁵ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlās*, 23-32.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23-32.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, verses 480-589.

⁶⁴⁸ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlās*, verses 590-620.

clear that royal gardens were still intended to provide and produce agricultural goods and products and the restorative or refreshing functions of these princely gardens did not conflict with economic or productive use of them.⁶⁴⁹ Moreover according to Navīdī's information about different private gardens in Sa'ādat ābād garden complex, due to their financial value, gardens were considered as important property and sources of income, as the poet indicates that the most closer plots to the main central palace and more productively rich gardens were belonged to closer relatives and court members (Figure 6-15).⁶⁵⁰



Figure 6-15. Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace of Sa'ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran (Source: <http://taghribnews.com>)

6.6 Gardens and Pavilions

Safavid garden pavilions: typology and design parameters

Since early times in pre-Islamic Persia, the garden has been intimately related to the building of palaces or pavilions, and it is this close relationship which outlines the function of the garden.⁶⁵¹ Unfortunately, not many Timurid and Safavid palaces and

⁶⁴⁹ Mohammad Gharipour, "Transferring and Transforming the Boundaries of Pleasure", 249.

⁶⁵⁰ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Jannat Al Athmār; Zinat Al Awrāgh; Sahīfat Al Ikhlas*, 23-32.

⁶⁵¹ Ralph Pinder Wilson, "The Persian Garden: Bāgh and Chāhārbāgh." In *The Islamic Garden*, edited by Elisabeth B.Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1976, 71.

pavilions survive today, due to constant military invasions and conquests, being neglected or left to decay, or due to structural changes or alterations over the flow of time. However, thanks to some contemporary historical accounts and their descriptions and several visual documents such as sixteenth century Persian miniatures or sketches and drawings by European travellers to Persia in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we at least have an impression of the general appearance or function of pre-modern and early modern garden pavilions of Islamic Persia. The consistent presence of pavilions in Persian historiography, miniature art and literature, reveals its cultural significance as the main location in the heart of the garden for daily life, social activities, administrative matters and bureaucracy. The pavilion of a Persianate garden can be used for any structure inside the garden enclosure, designed for the primary purpose of restoration, regardless of existing form and function. The landscape architecture historian, Mohammad Gharipour, uses “garden pavilion” as an umbrella term for more than fifteen existing words in Persian historical accounts and literature, referring to any type of garden structure such as kiosks, palaces, residences and any place for leisure and restoration in a natural environment. The diversity of pavilion form, function and cultural significance in the Persianate world is manifested in complex usage of vocabulary and terminology.⁶⁵² A Persian garden pavilion’s structural form and function depended on the relationship between the built and natural environment, so that any adjustment to the layout of the garden could affect the design, function and position of the pavilion. For example, different existing *Chāhārbāgh* garden layouts, that is, the typical cross axial quadripartite plan or single main axis, or the exceptional *Chāhārbāgh* garden layout with four parallel raised terraces built on different levels, could influence placement and function.⁶⁵³

The garden pavilion not only occupies a special place in the history of garden design, but also reflects its contemporary architectural styles and traditions in different historical periods (Figure 6-16).

⁶⁵² Mohammad Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013, 2.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

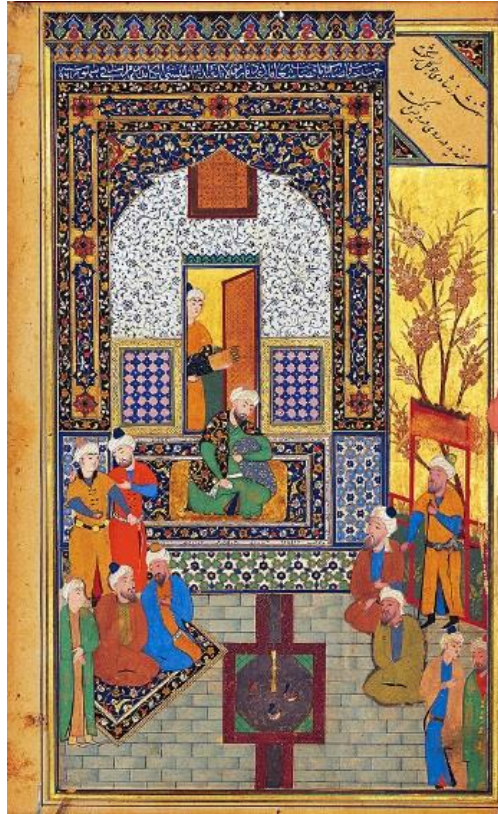


Figure 6-16. An elaborate early Safavid garden pavilion with its detailed decorations, the conversation between the king and the dervish, an illustration from *Būstān-i Sa‘dī*, 1553, from Golestan Palace Library, Tehran, Iran (Source: Masterpieces of Persian Paintings, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts, 2009)

Pavilions in Irshād al-zirā‘a

Unfortunately, Abū Nasrī in his agricultural treatise of *Irshād al-zirā‘a* did not provide much detail about the *Chāhārbāgh*’s pavilion as a structural element of the garden, but instead made botanical points about plantation for an idealized *Chāhārbāgh*. Yet, the title of the eighth chapter itself; “The layout of *Chāhārbāgh* and the pavilion”, as well as Abū Nasrī’s only statement about the pavilion and its location in the beginning of the chapter, is enough to confirm the dominance of the pavilion structure in the Timurid *Chāhārbāgh* in early sixteenth century Herat. However, the importance of the pavilion in other historical sources from the early stages of the Timurid realm to the time of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā, can confirm the essentiality of this architectural element within the garden composition. Today, only two Timurid garden pavilions have survived, at Afūshta and Gāzurgāh in Khurasan region. The example at Afūshta being less well known, has been recognized as a monastery (*Khānaqāh*). However, the architectural historian Bernard O’Kane identified this building as a garden pavilion structure. He concludes its

small size, its exquisite decoration, and its design, identical on two stories, of a square room leading to axial porticos or *aywāns*, with octagonal rooms in the corners, is much more consonant with a garden pavilion than a *Khānaqāh*.⁶⁵⁴

The fifteenth century Namakdān pavilion at Gāzurgāh near Herat, is unlikely to be typical in its twelve-sided plan, although its general layout corresponds closely to the description of an octagonal pavilion in Bāgh-i Safīd, called Tarabkhāna (the joy house), in Herat by Babur.⁶⁵⁵ This pavilion has a large domed central space, with *aywāns* on the main four axes in two stories. Smaller *aywāns* or vaulted balconies or *Shāhniṣhīns* as Babur calls them, are set on the diagonal axes.⁶⁵⁶ The early Timurid historian, ‘Abd Al-Razzāq-i Samarqandī (1413-1482), describes one of the pavilions of Bāgh-i Safīd in Herat, when he gives an account of the construction of this garden in 1410: “each of its four stalactite-decorated (*Muqarnas*) *aywāns* reached to the arch of Saturn. The crenulations (*kungira*) of its lofty castle (*qasr*) reached the arc of Jupiter. The dadoes were of jasper ornamented with figurative decoration. Skilful painters carried out a programme in every room and niche in the manner of a Chinese picture gallery.”⁶⁵⁷ (Figure 6-17)

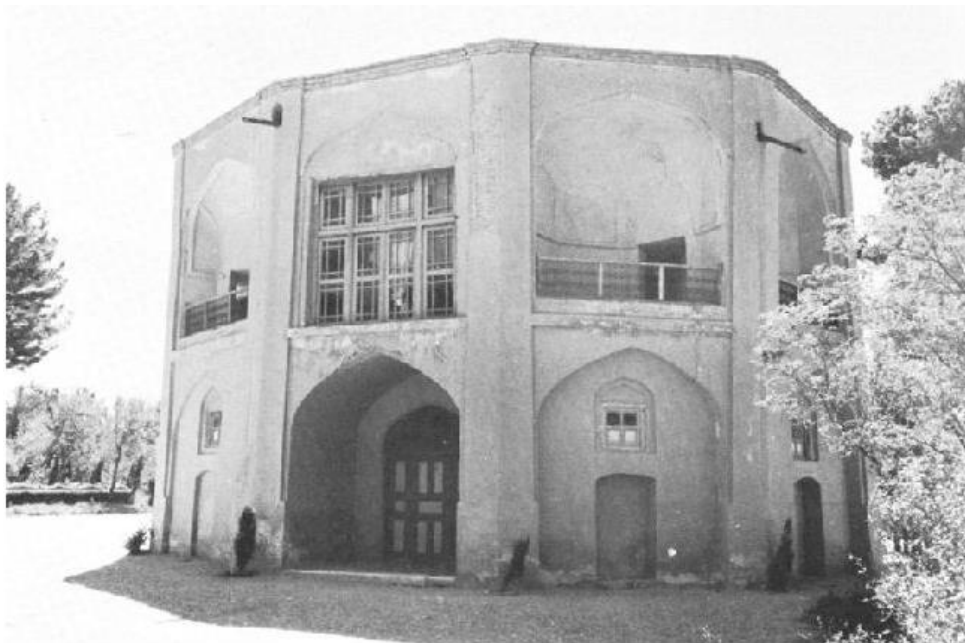


Figure 6-17. The only Timurid pavilion that has survived in Herat, “Namakdān,” a decagonal pavilion in Gāzurgāh, north-east Herat, late Timurid-early Safavid period. Photograph by Liza Golombek, 1966 (Source: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/garden-ii>)

⁶⁵⁴ O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design.” 252.

⁶⁵⁵ *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 226.

⁶⁵⁶ O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design.” 252.

⁶⁵⁷ Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq-i Samarqandī, *Matla’ al-sa’dāyn va Majma’ al-bahrayn*, edited by Muhammad Shafe’i. Lahore, 1941-49, 111.

The Mughal prince Babur visited Bāgh-i Safīd later in 1506, and he described its other mansion called Tarabkhāna, where he was invited for a royal drinking party: “The Tarabkhāna was situated in the middle of a small garden. It was a modest building of two stories and rather pleasant. The upper level had been elaborately constructed. Each of the four corners had an alcove, but otherwise the space in the middle and between the alcoves was like one room. Between the alcoves were things like *Shāh-nishāns*. Every side of the room was painted; the work had been commissioned by Sultan Abu Sa‘īd Mīrzā to depict his battles and encounters.”⁶⁵⁸

The Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mīrzā, was crowned in the Bāgh-i Zāghān (raven’s garden) in Herat in 1468.⁶⁵⁹ Sultan Husayn was a celebrated patron of architects, artists and artisans. It was under his patronage that the great Persian artist, Kamāl al-Dīn Bihzād rose to eminence. It is on record that scribes and artists worked in mansions and pavilions of Bāgh-i Safīd (white garden) in Herat and the background of some of Bihzād’s paintings was probably inspired by the gardens of that city.⁶⁶⁰ (Figure 6-18)

⁶⁵⁸ *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 226.

⁶⁵⁹ This garden was in fact Shāhrukh Mīrzā’s main seat of royal residence, however there are ample references to its temporary structures Erected for wedding and circumcision celebrations (frequently described as *Chāhār-Tāqs*) and not many information on the kinds of the permanent mansions it contained. See: Bernard O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design.” *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 249-269; Terry Allen, *A Catalogue of the Toponyms and Monuments of Timurid Herat*. Cambridge, Mass, 1981, 192-224.

⁶⁶⁰ Norah M. Titley, *Plants and Gardens in Persian, Mughal and Turkish Art*. London: The British Library Board, 1979, 23.



Figure 6-18. Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā Mirzā on the promenade, late fifteenth century illustration from Muraqqa' Gulshan, attributed to Kamāl al-ddīn Bihzād (Source: <http://www.howtotalkaboutarthistory.com>)

Sultan Husayn ordered the construction of a *Chāhārbāgh* which eventually covered more than two hundred acres of open country outside the city of Herat, near the Gāzurgāh shrine complex.⁶⁶¹ This *Chāhārbāgh* garden (known as Jahān-ārā garden which replaced the smaller Bāgh-i Zāghān as the new royal residence and the main throne setting) is also mentioned by Abū Nasrī in his agricultural manual of *Irshād al-zirā'a*, where the author refers to Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā's interest in agricultural and horticultural activities.⁶⁶² This garden which was the largest imperial garden setting attributed to Sultan Husayn, as Khvāndamīr states, had several palaces (*qusūr*), arcades (*tāq-hā*), houses (*khāna-hā*) and porticos (*aywāns*).⁶⁶³ According to the Timurid historian, Isfizārī and the Mughal ruler, Babur, this garden had some outstanding pavilions and mansions called Qasr-i Dilgushāy (palace of the heart's delight), Muqawwākhāna and Chāhār Kūshk, a central pool,

⁶⁶¹ Khvāndamīr, *Tarikh-i Habīb al-sīyār*, ed. Jalaluddin Humaii, vol. 4 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Khayyam, 1954), 136.

⁶⁶² Abū Nasrī Hiravī, "*Irshād al-zirā'a*," 113, 198.

⁶⁶³ Khvāndamīr, *Tarikh-i Habīb al-sīyār*, 136.

elevated traces and varieties of vegetation and plantings including ornamental and fruit trees and even artificial decorations.⁶⁶⁴ Babur in another part of his visit to the city of Herat and its surroundings, describes the ornamental decoration in a garden during a royal reception held by his cousins, Sultan Husayn's sons, in Bāgh-i Jahān-ārā in Muqawwākhāna mansion: "They brought in willows. Among the branches- whether they were real or artificial I don't know- were hung strips of gilded leather cut very thin the length of the branches. They looked fantastic."⁶⁶⁵

Sultan Husayn was also responsible for other smaller plots and gardens, which the Mughal emperor Babur visited in Herat later, and named them in his memoirs with some detailed descriptions of their pavilions.⁶⁶⁶ (Figure 6-19)

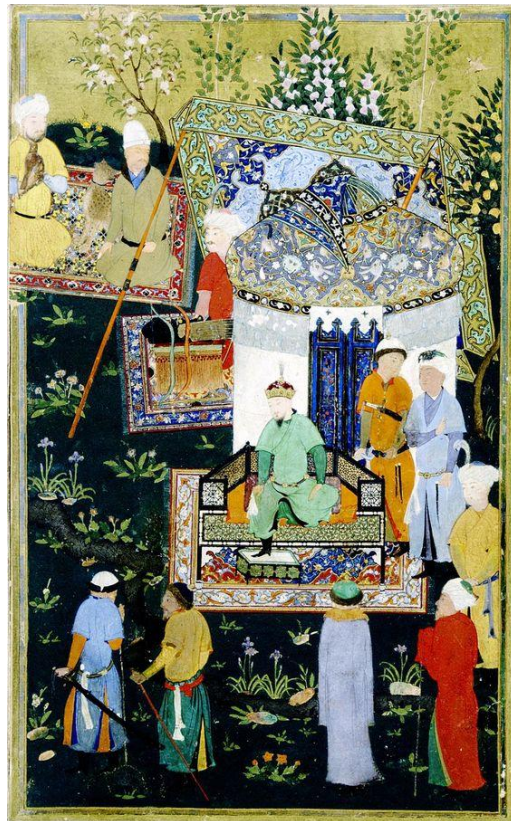


Figure 6-19. A Timurid kiosk depicted in a fifteenth century miniature shows Timur greeting an audience on the occasion of his accession in a garden, illustration from Zafarnāma, or Book of Victory (Source: ca. 1467 from The John Work Garrett Library of Johns Hopkins University)

⁶⁶⁴ Mo'in al-dīn Mohammad Zamchi Isfizārī, *Rawzāt al-jannāt fī Awsāf-i madīnat al-Herat*, vol.1, edited by Mohammad Kazem Emam, Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tehran, 1960, 317-319; *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 229; Khvāndamīr, *Tarikh-i Habīb al-siyār*, 196; Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 132.

⁶⁶⁵ *The Baburnāma: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, 229.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 226-231.

Pavilions in Jannāt-i ‘adan

Navīdī’s compendium of *Jannāt-i ‘adan* is the only Persian poetic work which is dedicated to the description of an existing garden. Focusing on the architectural elements of the garden, Navīdī who proved to have a fine eye for both detail and structure, specifically talks about the presence of several magnificent buildings within the newly established royal court of Qazvin. He precisely describes at least three separate exquisite garden pavilions and palace structures in the Sa‘ādat ābād Garden complex belong to the Safavid court, including the new government house or Arshī khānah (known today as Chihil Sotoūn), the richly ornamented mansion of Shīrvānī Sarāy belonging to Shah Tahmāsp’s loyal brother Bahrām Mīrzā, and finally the descriptions of the Jahān- namā pavilion, which was built in the vicinity of the Maydān-i Asb (horse square). However, Navīdī describes some other structures located in the subsidiary gardens and plots belonging to grander families and other court members, such as Shah Tahmāsp’s sister’s garden with its elaborate mansion and other gardens pavilions, their porticos, halls and loggias. Among all building descriptions, Arshī khānah is the most widely portrayed structure of the Sa‘ādat ābād complex. As mentioned earlier, Arshī khānah is one of the only two remaining structures of the bygone early Safavid royal gardens of Sa‘ādat ābād in Qazvin.⁶⁶⁷ Standing amid the central *Maydān* of the old city, the old mansion which is also called Chihil Sotoūn (forty columns) houses the city’s calligraphy museum today.

The building of Arshī khānah consists of two stories. On the ground floor a quadrangular central area communicates with the surrounding gardens through four surrounding *aywāns* (porticos), one on each side. Each *aywāns* is originally connected to the central room by three short passages. The four corners between the *aywāns* contain four rooms, each on a different plan. On the exterior instead of corners there are oblique walls, so that the plan is that of an unequal octagon.⁶⁶⁸ Around the exterior of the structure eight massive columns and eight corner piers with engaged pillars support a gallery inclosing the upper level, which is reached via a bent staircase leading from the south eastern corner area. Thirty-two lean wooden supports carry the roof of the upper gallery. The main space of the upper story contains a large cruciform hall, with four corner zones,

⁶⁶⁷ The only other surviving part of the old garden city is the free-standing portal structure, the ‘Āli Qāpū (the lofty gate), which was the entrance gateway of the imperial garden compound.

⁶⁶⁸ Ehsan Eshraqi, “Shahr-i Qazvin”, In *Mutālla ‘a-i Kullī dar bāra-i Shahrnīshīnī va Shahr-sāzī dar Iran*, edited by M.Y. Kiani, Tehran, 1986,152.

each with a small adjacent chamber. Whereas the rooms on the ground level and the *aywāns* are vaulted, all the rooms on the upper floor have flat wooden ceilings.⁶⁶⁹(Figure 6-20)



Figure 6-20. Interior of one of the only surviving mansions of Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, the Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

The descriptions of Arshī khānah are repeated in all five volumes of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*. Navīdī calls this heavenly mansion a palace to receive God’s mercy and kindness, where the wealth and prosperity are its permanent dwellers.⁶⁷⁰ The poet first mentions the location of the garden pavilion; the building is placed in the middle of the garden of cypress trees elevated on a pleasing platform:

*Arshī khānah is sitting among the Garden,
The appropriate imperial house,
At the top of a pleasant platform,*

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁷⁰ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, edited by Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-’i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974, verse 118.

*Like a king above his throne.*⁶⁷¹

Emphasizing the importance of water in Persian garden culture, Navīdī identifies a central quadrangular basin in the middle of the palace, from which a water channel led toward the garden outside.⁶⁷² The poet then talks about four pillars located on each corner of the basin with their pictures beautifully reflected in the crystal heart of the basin.⁶⁷³ The other significant point addressed by Navīdī, is the transparent ceiling carried on tall columns which admits natural light into the interior space.⁶⁷⁴ The poet specifically names the opening of the ceiling using the Persian term *guljām*, which was used for the domed shape glass roof openings applied for the light direction and natural ventilation. He beautifully describes the light falling from the domed opening when the sun is up in the middle of the day, and its dazzling reflection on the surface of the central basin's water.⁶⁷⁵ Navīdī adds that this vaulted opening had twelve (*dah va du*) smaller windows which evoke the twelve towers of the firmament.⁶⁷⁶ The lofty ceiling carried colourful decorative patterns. The paintings on the interior walls and on ceiling are also reflected in the basin, making it into a “deceiving painting by the hand of Mānī,” the ancient Zoroastrian prophet and painter.⁶⁷⁷ The water of the basin pours down the platform like a small waterfall⁶⁷⁸, coming out of the mansion. Navīdī states the water runs in the middle of the garden toward the exterior *Khiyābān*, after passing among four tall stout plane trees; “*chār chinār-i qavī*.”⁶⁷⁹ This reference to the four plane trees, most likely located at the intersection of the two main garden axes, is one of the few referring to the quadripartite layout of the royal garden. There are also a few verses hinting at the presence of two external basins (in octagonal and square shapes) located in front of the mansion, whose bed is covered by gravel visible under the clear water of the basin.⁶⁸⁰ (Figure 6-21)

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., verse 220.

⁶⁷² Ibid., verse 222.

⁶⁷³ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verse 224.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., verses 225-226.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., verses 226-227.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., verse 229.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., verse 231.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., verse 257.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., verse 258.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., verse 280.



Figure 6-21. The exterior facade of the Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace, its northern *Aywān* and the central basin of the Safavid Sa‘ādat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

In the first volume of *Jannāt-i ‘adan*, the poet pictures the house of *Shīrvānī* or *Shīrvānī Sarāy*. This beautiful mansion which no longer exists today, was one of the most elaborate structures of the garden complex belonging to Shah Tahmāsp’s most loyal and beloved brother, Bahrām Mirzā.⁶⁸¹ According to Navīdī, Bahrām Mirzā’s garden was surrounded by lawns and flowers and fruit trees, with two main cheerful pathways or *Khiyābān*, intersecting in the middle of the garden.⁶⁸² This mansion featured decorative tile work, in gold and sky-blue, delicate wall paintings and epigraphs.⁶⁸³ A bridge conducted visitors to the bright central hall with elegant windows.⁶⁸⁴ The poet describes a spectacular

⁶⁸¹ ‘Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, 49-50.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, verse 461.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, verses 450-465.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, verses 485-487.

waterfront among the vast hall with several fountains which were formed a dome shape fountain by the jets of water.⁶⁸⁵

The poet continues imaging the Arshī khānah pavilion as the king's sitting or government house (*dawlat khānah*) in the other four volumes of the work. Navīdī lavishly depicted some of the loggias or *aywāns* with their various elaborate vaults and arches covered with frescos and wall paintings in *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, the second volume of his poetic work.⁶⁸⁶ The vast *aywān* on the front face of the mansion is also mentioned with a door decorated with many patterns in gold and blue.⁶⁸⁷ In the other part, Navīdī identifies the shadow in some verses, which confirms the importance of the shaded areas in the Persian garden. The poet talks about the unity of inside (*bātin*) and outside (*zāhir*), a reference to Sufi religious ideas and values. Although he does not explicitly relate this concept to the design of the pavilion, he indirectly discusses the existing connection between inside and outside by talking about the transparency of the Arshī khānah garden pavilion.⁶⁸⁸ (Figure 6-22)



Figure 6-22. The exterior portico or *aywān* of the Arshī khānah or Chihil Sotoūn Palace of the Safavid Sa'adat ābād garden in Qazvin, Iran (Source: Author, 2014)

⁶⁸⁵ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Rawdhat Al Siffāt*, verses 488-495.

⁶⁸⁶ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, eds. Abulfazl Rahimov and Ali Minaii. Moscow: Idārah-'i Intishārāt-i Dānish, 1974, 51-62.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁸⁸ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, verses 807-837; Gharipour, *Persian Gardens and Pavilions: Reflections in History, Poetry and the Arts*, 128.

The poet devoted another part of the second volume to the description of the women's quarter or the Harem garden; *sefat-i Bāgh-i Haram*. Navīdī briefly points out its outstanding lofty pavilions and loggias, however, he just provides subsidiary information on the garden's several multi-shaped basins, its plantation and various fruit trees and the murals adorning the walls of its numerous *aywāns*.⁶⁸⁹

The selective descriptions of buildings in the new royal complex of Sa'ādat ābād by 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī, clearly highlights the typological diversity of Persian pavilions in a single garden compound. Navīdī explicitly indicates some of the most important characteristics of a Persian garden scheme in association with its pavilion structure as the main architectural entity, while describing each of the buildings of Sa'ādat ābād: The location of the pavilion within the garden, the basin (inside or outside the building) and the running water in channels branching off the central basin, the architectural elements: the platform (*suffa*), the loggia or portico (*aywāns*) and vaults and porches (*tāq*), the idea of natural light and the transparency, the surrounding plantation and shaded areas in between inner and outer spaces and finally the vast green view of the surrounding garden from the inside of the building.

Through Navīdī's poems and narrations, the gardens of Shah Tahmāsp, as an initial and desirable example of early Safavid gardens in medieval Persia, are a complex multiplicity of structures and functions. The poet highlights how some people turned to a public garden in which to repose, refresh and to enjoy their time, for others the garden represented a source of income and financial benefits, for the grandees, court members and dignitaries who built their private gardens and properties alongside it, the garden constituted a source of pride. The gardens offered opportunities to enjoy dance, music and carousal or it could transfer to a setting for the display and exhibition of art, literary or cultural activities, or spiritual activities. In one scene, the gardens are luxury settings for a splendid wedding, feasting and reception, in another, a diplomatic meeting takes place, they stage the preparations for war or the dreadful stages of a trial, punishment or execution. These various functions, despite their diversity, show that the royal Safavid gardens were not regarded as frozen and fixed areas or inflexible territories, they were dynamic organisms that could adapt and develop in order to hold and fulfil the needs of their interlocutors, users, inhabitants and the surrounding society.

⁶⁸⁹ 'Abdī Bayk Navīdī Shīrāzī, *Dawḥat Al Azhār*, 101-109.

Conclusion

The study of gardens and landscapes in any historical period requires a profound understanding of their origin, setting, emergence and evolution. Extant historic documents and literature provide essential insights that enable a better understanding of the form, function and meaning of gardens and their evolution over the course of time in a specific geographic zone. Various references to gardens in historical records, be they literal or metaphorical, scientific or poetic, help us understand their design concepts, forms and features and clarify their nature and patterns of occupation and use. This is what the two historical texts discussed in the preceding pages have shown.

The deep mystical value of the garden's natural components and their relation to the story of creation is common in both pre-Islamic and Islamic Persian literature. Religious sources provides ample imagery describing the heavenly Gardens of Eden as an eternally peaceful and beautiful place created to reward the righteous and the faithful. The development of the Persian garden, as a reflection of the celestial paradise can be traced in Persian poetry and literature, especially after the emergence of Islam. The vast and complex interpretation of heavenly gardens highlights the undeniable religious implications and significance of gardens in the Persian world, and the widespread influence of this concept in the culture, philosophy and tradition of the region. However, the great emphasis placed in modern scholarship on the garden's cosmological dimensions has contributed to the oversimplification of the garden's true nature, purpose and significance. The dominant paradise symbolism, either pre-Islamic or Islamic, has reduced Persian gardens to one dimensional salubrious oases intended purely for repose and delight.

In offering a different perspective that revealed Persian gardens as dynamic places with eventful venues serving multiple and complex purposes, this study has thrown new light on the history and theory of Persian gardens and landscapes in the early modern period. Through a fresh reading of two early sixteenth century texts, the study has offered a historically-grounded viewpoint on both botanical functions and poetical meanings of Persian gardens and landscapes. On the one hand, the botanical manual of *Irshād al-zirā'a* offered extensive material on the science of agronomy and gardening as well as rare agricultural instructions for the laying out and planting of formal gardens, taking into

account both garden aesthetics and the science of horticulture. On the other hand, the text of *Jannāt-i 'adan*, by contrast, revealed the poetic dimension of Safavid gardens, revealing the aesthetic reception of architecture, garden design, and urban culture.

Discussing the political, economic and geographical contexts in which *Irshād al-zirā'a* was conceived and written, have revealed new dimensions of the text. The manual was written and completed during a period of intense political and socio-economic transformation that occurred in Khurasan following the overthrow of the Timurid dynasty in 1507. Abū Nasrī's manual remains an important record of endangered Timurid agricultural accomplishments during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā, and a valuable handbook of advice for the Safavids, the political successors in Khurasan. The study showed how Abū Nasrī applied his garden perceptions to assist in the continuity of garden design tradition and consequently the political stability of the newly established state under the Safavids. In other words, Abū Nasrī's ideal garden was presented to the Safavid newcomers to Khurasan as an accurate record of the agricultural development of the former Timurid era. This showed how the act of gardening and agriculture served as an ideological instrument in the hands of a qualified supervisory class, who wanted to see the advanced agriculture and botanical science of the Herat region re-established by the patronage of the head of the new Safavid state.

Apart from valuable agricultural and horticultural informative data on cultivated crops, common botanical methods and practices in Khurasan through the golden ages of Herat region during the reign of Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā, the study of *Irshād al-zirā'a* showed the economic benefits of Persian gardens, which are usually neglected in favour of formal readings and emblematic meanings. The new reading of the text has revealed how the production of garden and the practices of gardening helped preserve prosperity and productivity and generate opulence, fortune, political power and territorial stability.

The study text of *Jannāt-i 'adan*, by contrast, focused on the poetic dimension of Safavid gardens. It showed the aesthetic reception of architecture, garden design, and urban culture, thereby providing a detailed image of the vanished princely gardens of Safavid Qazvin. The glorious mansions and their architectural design, of which almost nothing remains, were mirrored in the words of the forty years old court poet, who represented the intellectual elite of the Persian society. The poems provided an authentic record of garden city, revealing a sense of appreciation and understanding of the landscaped environment and showing how the gardens were seen, acknowledged and cherished during the Safavid period.

Analysing Navīdī's poetry showed how the reflections on gardens in Persian poetry were concerned with wealth and power just as they were with spirituality and symbolism. The shadow of the king is not disappearing in any part of the work and apart from the poet's long panegyrics and exaggerations, Navīdī succeeds in presenting the king as the builder of the thriving city, the establisher of prosperity, wealth and civilization and the protector and supporter of faith and morality. While the texts of *Jannāt-i 'adan* offers an ideal image of an early Safavid garden complex, Navīdī's poetic and detailed descriptions revealed how the garden could carry on simultaneously the multiplicity of purposes.

In Navīdī's eyes the garden is presented as the context for every major event, a lively arena for diverse cultural, social and political affairs or public and private procedures. The gardens could serve as a symbol of power, legitimacy and alliance, a place of refreshment and contemplation, food production, religious rites, cultural ceremonies and affairs of state. The gardens as properties are expressions of wealth, ethnicity, status and class. For the courtiers who chose to build their private gardens in the vicinity of the *Khiyābān*, the proximity served as a source of hierarchy, status and pride. The gardens also functioned as spaces for dance, music or carousal, the display of art, or as places for relaxation. The gardens can also be used for military preparations or for trial, punishment and, in some cases, execution. Navīdī's detailed, yet poetic, descriptions, imbued with realism, reveal how early Safavid gardens were constructed as dynamic landscapes that could be adapted to fulfil the needs of their patron and his courtiers, harem members, visitors, and even the citizens of the city.

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