

Original Research Article

Reading the Street Landscape in the Persian Garden

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Received: 23/07/2023

Accepted: 23/08/2023

Available online: 23/09/2023

Abstract | The concept of the Persian garden is known as one of the symbols of civilization and architectural patterns of the Iranian region, from Transoxiana to Mesopotamia, due to its continuity and widespread presence in the geography of Iran. A closer examination of documents, travelogues, and the analysis of the evolution of the physical aspect of this phenomenon reveals that social, cultural, political, agricultural, and economic conditions have had a slight influence on the symbolic system of the Persian garden in each period. The first spatial Perception of the audience in the Persian garden is a combination of tall trees and the endpoint of the main axis that extends from the entrance area to the pavilion combined with the eye-catching play of water in the pools and basins and the shade of trees. This image, the most important and enduring image of the Persian garden, represents the Street of Garden and is one of the components of the Persian garden that has undergone the least changes in its shape and continuity in the historical process of the evolution of the Persian garden. The main street of the garden has a significant role in the design of Persian gardens and represents the highest manifestation of the garden's symbolic aspects. This article aims to analyze the role of the street as the most important component of the garden's landscape design through historical document analysis, and then analyze the influential criteria in the historical developments of the garden street. Throughout the history of Persian garden developments, the street has had a conceptual role in the creation of the garden and the stabilization of its constituent elements during different periods has led to the continuity of the Persian garden identity.

Keywords | *Persian garden, Street, Landscaping, Landscape component.*

Introduction | Since the main features of Persian gardens are defined around their main axis, the street of the garden¹ can be considered the main meaningful aspect in forming this archetype. Although it is possible to assign such a role to the other components of the landscaping of the garden, at the head of which is the Pavilion, the undeniable necessity is that the Pavilion and its magnificent architecture are part of the "Street of Garden² scenario"; Therefore, sometimes even the location of the pavilion changes from the geometric center of the garden and is moved to another place, but still has a strong relationship with Street of Garden. Abbasabad Behshahr Garden is one of the prominent examples where the main pavilion

of the garden has moved out of the geometric center and its architecture is not even similar to the common architecture of pavilions, but the character of the street in the garden has remained strong and, in combination with other components, has created a powerful structure for the garden.

Hypothesis

It seems that the main essence of what is known as the Persian garden and has continued to this day is the "Street of Garden" which is considered the Identifier component of the garden; in other words, the various patterns of the Persian garden have emerged from the transformations of its Street.

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Research Methodology

The present research is a study that evaluates the role of streets in Persian gardens in three stages based on historical documents and maps. The operational stages of the research are arranged based on a selection of Iranian garden examples as follows:

1. Historiography: the study of gardens in historical periods before Islam until the end of the Qajar period.
2. Analytical study: the role of streets in the emergence of Persian gardens and evaluating their position in selected examples;
3. Theoretical explanation: the concept of “street landscape” in Persian gardens.

The selection of samples for discussion has been from among the total documents and records of Persian gardens in the area of its influence from India to North Africa, with an emphasis on selecting official gardens in the geographic area of Iran during the Safavid³ period; a comprehensive study of Persian garden maps was carried out, and its summary analysis led to the selection of samples in the research, which, while being located in the mentioned area, had the highest documentary evidence according to written documents and archaeological findings (Fig. 1).

Research Background

Persian sources that have addressed the role of streets in Iranian gardens can be divided into three main groups:

The first group includes studies that have limited themselves to the formal aspects of the garden and have considered the functional role of the street in defining the concept of the garden as important (Stronach, 1991; Pope, 2008; Pirnia, 1994; Alemi, 2012). This group of studies usually considers the garden valuable due to its greenery and, as a result, introduces the street as a path for organizing between the garden beds and decorating the garden: “Two parallel streets on either side, each with trees, and separated in the middle by a pedestrian walkway or promenade” (Dehkhoda, 1994, V. 6). The second group is studies that focus on the general concept and mythical dimensions of the Persian garden and have examined the physical structure of the street and its relationship with other spaces (Daneshdoost, 1990; Beheshti, 2008; Etezadi, 2014; Shahcheraghi, 2013). This group considers the visual dimensions of the garden valuable; therefore, they interpret the street as a path to reach the pavilion: “A rectangle with two perpendicular axes that a pavilion has been built at their intersection. Usually, wherever we find such an assembly, we call it a Persian garden, and as a result, when we are present Persian garden, we understand this discipline more than anything else” (Beheshti, 2008, 7).

The third group of research questioned the garden as a

landscape and emphasized the semantic dimension of the street in it (Mansouri, 2005, 2016, Sheybani & Hashemi Zadegan, 2017; Barati, Barati, Alehashemi & Minatour Sajjadi, 2018; Atashinbar & Motedayen, 2019; Motedayen, 2020). This group has considered the perceptual dimensions of the street and interprets it as a landscape component in the Iranian garden: “The Persian garden is an enclosed, organized garden with an internal focal point that is meaningful along the street” (Motedayen, 2017, 34). With a different perspective on existing research, this article takes a novel position for the street of garden introduces it as the main element of the Persian garden landscape, and tries to explain the relationship of the street of garden with the formal transformations of the Persian garden with regard to the stability of the semantic pattern of the Persian garden.

Narrative: Formal Transformations of the Street of the Garden in the Persian Garden throughout History

• Before the arrival of Islam in Iran

The root of the word “khiyaban”⁴ (Khoi + apan) was linked to the element of water, and for this reason, its concept can be related to the ancient period (Atashinbar & Motedayen, 2018, 72). The main manifestation of it was the garden, which is a symbol of the history of Iranian civilization. This definition also includes the concept of goodness and sanctity (ibid.) for the street and its clear connection to “water” as a mythological element in Iranian culture and a symbol of authenticity and purity (Mansouri, 2019, 38). The most famous reasons for the formation of the Persian gardens theory are also based on this foundation: following the exploration of the Pasargad royal garden, the discovery of stone water channels among the streets of the garden became the source of the first theorization in this field, which was carried out by Astronakh (Stronach, 1991). He presented the theory of the Chaharbagh⁵ for the first time by drawing two axes perpendicular to each other in Pasargad Garden, admitting the existence of a formal garden due to the presence of a waterway in the middle of the main axis. However, the Chaharbagh theory was later criticized and emphasis was placed on the straight geometry or street: “Looking at Pasargadae and many other Iranian gardens like those remaining from the Sasanian period, we find that Chaharbagh was not the pattern of Iranian gardening, but it can be assumed as a specific pattern of Iranian gardening.” (Heydar Nattaj & Mansouri, 2009, 28).

Astronakh also refers to a garden called Khalvatgah-e Basafa or Ardeshir II Palace in the remaining works of Shush to prove the theory of the Persian garden (Jamaledin, 2015, 24). He also believes in this pattern for the Khosrow Palace, and the presence of a long waterway

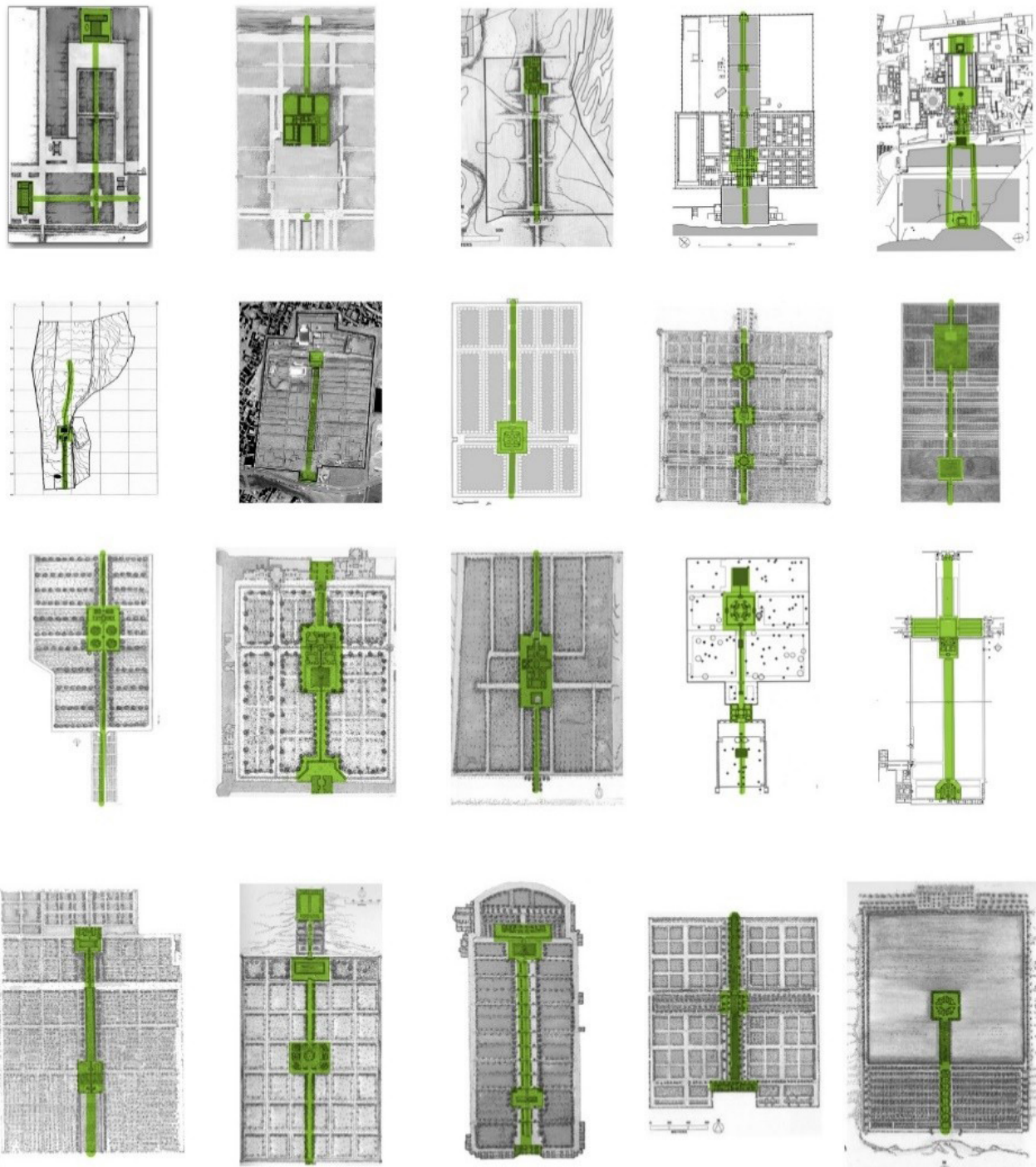


Fig. 1. The names of the gardens, in order from left: 1- Royal Garden of Pasargad (Achaemenid), 2- Garden and Complex of Taq kasra, Tisophon (Sasanian) 3- Khosrow's Mansion, Shirin Palace (Sasanian) 4- Balkuwara Palace, Samarra (Abbasid) 5- Palace Josaq Al Khaqani, Tigris Bank (Abbasi) 6- Fathabad Garden, Tabriz (Ilkhani) 7- Babar Garden, Kabul (Gurkani) 8- Bolbol Garden, Isfahan (Safavi) 9- Hezarjarib Garden, Isfahan (Safavid) 10- Farah Abad Garden, Isfahan (Safavid) 11- Bagh Ashraf, Behshahr (Safavid) 12- Bagh-e Fin; Kashan (Al Boyeh-Safaid) 13- Delgosha garden, Shiraz (Safavid) 14- Ghadamgah garden, Neishabur, (Safavid) 15- Dowlatabad garden, Yazd (Afshari) 16- Eram garden, Shiraz (Seljuq-Qajar) 17- Qasr Qajar garden , Tehran (Qajar) 18- Bagh Shahzad , Mahan (Qajar) 19- Golshan garden, Tabas (Qajar) 20- El-Goli garden, Tabriz (Aq Qoyunlu-Qajar). Source: authors.

and opposite pavilions is an argument for the presence of main and perpendicular axes and a formal garden (Fig. 2): “Khosrow Palace is one of the Sassanian palaces located next to the communication route between the Iranian

plateau and Mesopotamia. According to Arab historians’ written documents, this palace was built on a 7.5-meter-high platform surrounded by a 300-hectare which included a garden, a pond, and water paths, which were

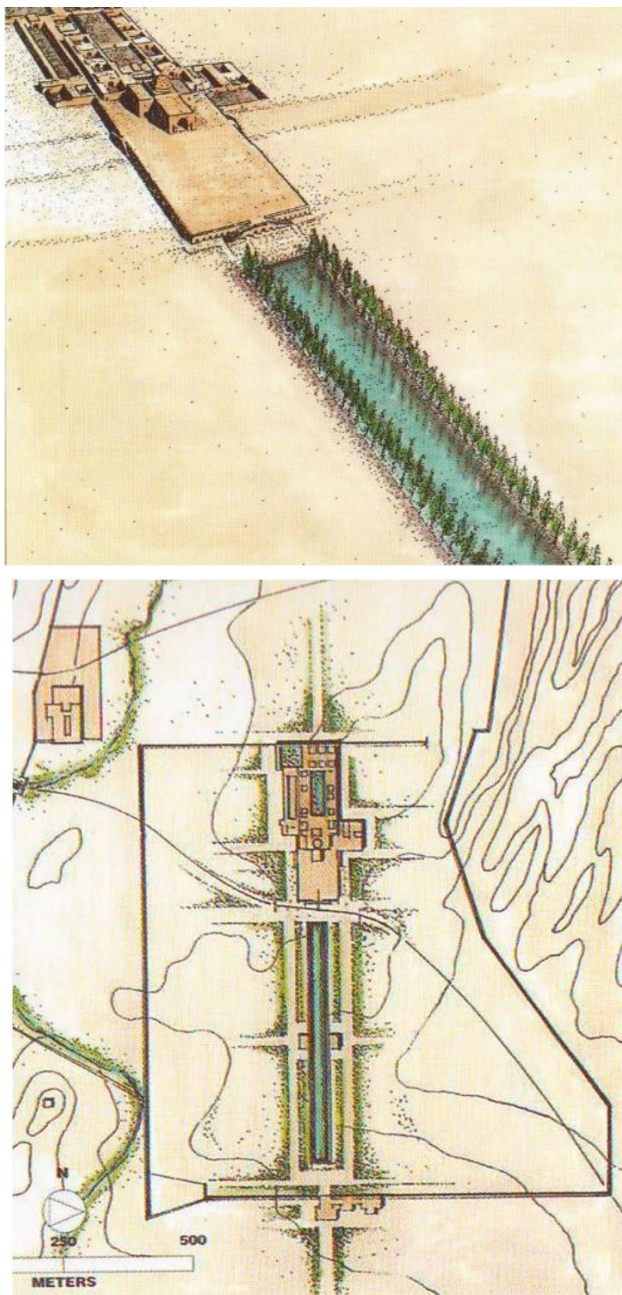


Fig. 2. Creating a long axis with a water passage in the middle and planting trees on both sides is considered one of the ancient patterns of forming gardens, which is commonly seen in various examples of Iranian gardens before the arrival of Islam in Iran. "Sassanid gardens were mainly divided into four parts and long, tree-lined pathways connected the official palace to the residence" (Faqi, 2007, 32). Examples of such gardens include Khosrow Palace Qasr-e-Shirin. Source: Khansari et al., 2004.

arranged along the main street of the garden according to the expansion of the palace building" (Khansari, Moqtadar & Yavari, 2004, 56).

• The arrival of Islam in Iran

From the arrival of Islam to Iran until the mid-9th century AH, very limited documentation of Persian gardens exists; during this period, gardens played an important role in creating city structures and we witness the formation of

axes from Transoxiana to the center of Iran, which are all gardens and orchards inside the city (Jamaledin, 2015, 19). The characteristics of Persian gardens in the pre-9th century AH indicate that the street was select and special place. From its relationship with the myths of the ancient people to the location of the tombs of powerful rulers and kings along it or the holding of ceremonies and festivals, all the evidence indicates the spiritual connection of the street with sacred and blessed concepts (Atashinbar & Motedayen, 2018, 74).

• The first centuries AH

In documents and texts from the first century AH, only the names of Sasanian period gardens are mentioned and there is no information about their structure and geometry (Zanghe, Lorenzi & Rahmati, 2012, 397). However, in areas under the rule of the Abbasids such as Iraq and southern Spain, which were under the control of the Umayyad dynasty, gardens with regular axes have been mentioned. One of the most important examples of this is the city of Samarra, where excavations and remains emphasize at least eight gardens (Hillenbrand, 2001), including Balkuwara or Qasr al-Ashiq (Fig. 3). This palace on the eastern bank of the Tigris River is about 1250 meters long and 15 meters high, with three courtyards, nine halls, residential spaces, and mosques. This magnificent complex is organized around a main axis that continues to the highest point of the site and includes a courtyard and a walled garden to the riverbank (Al-'Amid, 1973).

• The fourth century AH

In the fourth century, AH (10th century CE) saw the rise of the Ghaznavid dynasty, which had gained power in the eastern regions of Iran. They built magnificent buildings and gardens to display their splendor and power, most of which were located in present-day Afghanistan and unfortunately have been lost. Bayhaqi mentions Ghaznavid gardens in various parts of Khorasan such as Balkh (Khaseh Bagh, Mohammadi Bagh), Herat (Adnani Garden and Palace, Bilab Garden), Ghazni (Sadhehazare Garden, Victory Garden) and Neyshabur (Shadiyakh Garden, Abu al-Qasim Khazani Garden, Khoramak Garden) and has described and reported on them. One of these gardens is Shadiyakh Garden (Fig. 4), which Bayhaqi describes as being located in the city of Neyshabur, along with a palace of the same name. He describes a picture of a street that extends from the entrance to the main hall called Tāj Sofeh, where the colonels would line up with their troops and flags and the two rows of slaves would stand, passing the messengers and nobles in the middle of the two rows of the army from the garden gate to the Tāj Sofeh and the entrance" (Bayhaqi, 2010, 38 & 39).

• Fifth and sixth centuries AH

The Seljuks were a nomadic Turkish tribe who, after taking control of Khorasan and forming a government,

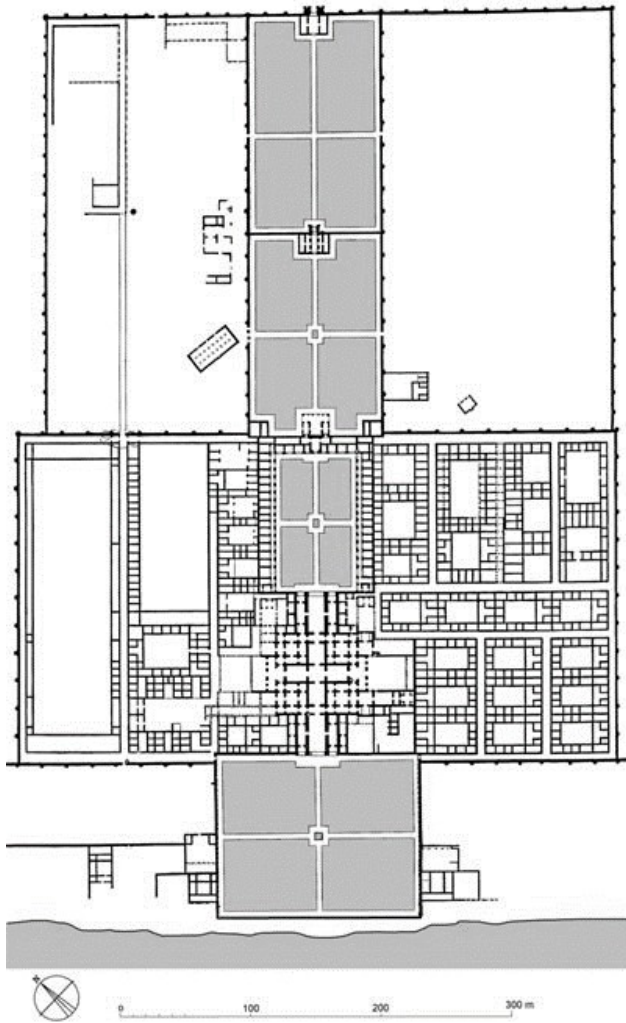


Fig. 3: In the early Hijri (AH) centuries, the tradition of gardening in Iran took shape around a central axis according to the past pattern. In this period, new small spaces were added to the collection. The Balkuwara Palace in the city of Samara, which was built during the Abbasid era, is a clear example. Source: Ruggles, 2000.

abandoned their nomadic lifestyle and blended the traditions of settled areas with those of conquered regions. They ruled over Iran during the fifth and sixth centuries AH. (Rahman Pour, 2015). Isfahan was one of the most important cities of this period and was conquered during the time of Tughril and received special attention from him to the extent that it reached its peak as the capital during the reign of Malikshah. During the Seljuk period in Isfahan, four royal gardens were built by the order of Malikshah: the Karan Garden, the Beit al-Ma Garden, the Ahmad Siyah Garden, and the Bekr Garden, which is repeated in numerous sources: *Rahat al-Sudur* (Ravandi, 1921, 132); *Seljuqnama*, (Neishaburi, 1953, 32) Mafarrukhi (2006, 49-58) Despite serious limitations in visual documents and historical texts of this period, with a comprehensive and analytical approach, it is not unreasonable to explain the hypothesis that the essence of the Chaharbagh in Isfahan during the Safavid period is based on the ancient art of gardening, with an emphasis on the Street of garden in this period: "Some researchers have considered today's Chaharbagh Street as the location of the future Hezar Jariab Garden, and some have also considered today's Jolfa as the location of the Flasan Garden" (Ahmadi & Enteshari Najafabadi, 2022, 8).

• The eighth and ninth centuries AH.

One of the written sources on agriculture and gardening during this period is the book "Asar va Ehyaye Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamadani", which, in addition to the beautiful and recreational nature of the garden, emphasizes its agricultural and farming aspects. One of the most important gardens of this period was the Fathabad (Fig. 5) and Rashidabad Gardens located in the northern part of Rab'-e Rashidi city. The Fathabad garden consists of three main parts: the inner garden, the outer garden, and the forested garden, and due to its location

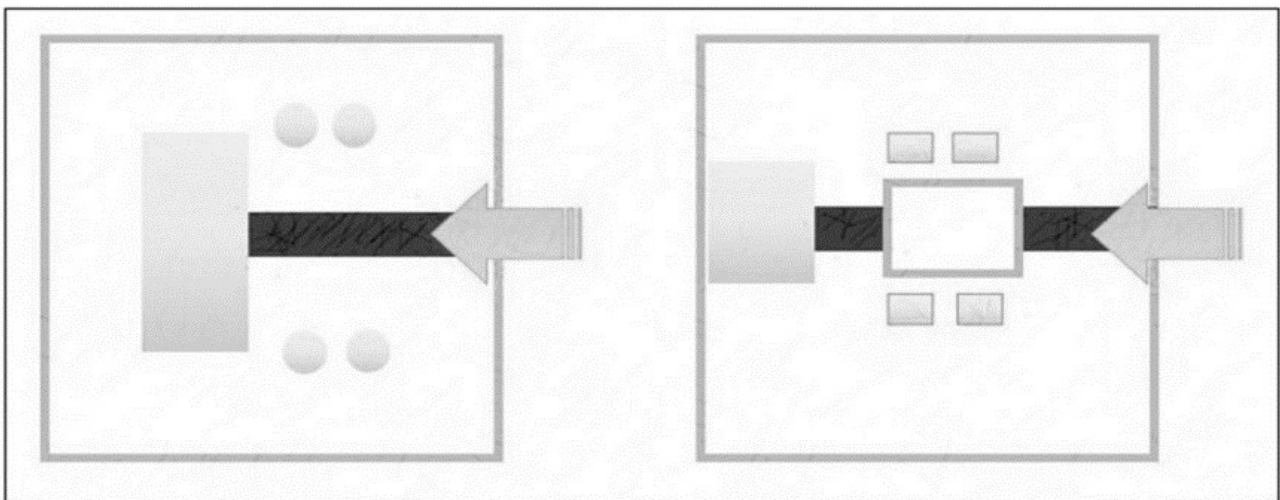


Fig. 4. A sketch of the Shadiyakh Garden taken from the descriptions of Beyhaghi. The emphasis on the main axis of the garden is evident in this sketch. It is also possible that the Shadiyakh Palace played the role of the same central pavilion. Source: Jamaledin, 2015, 83.

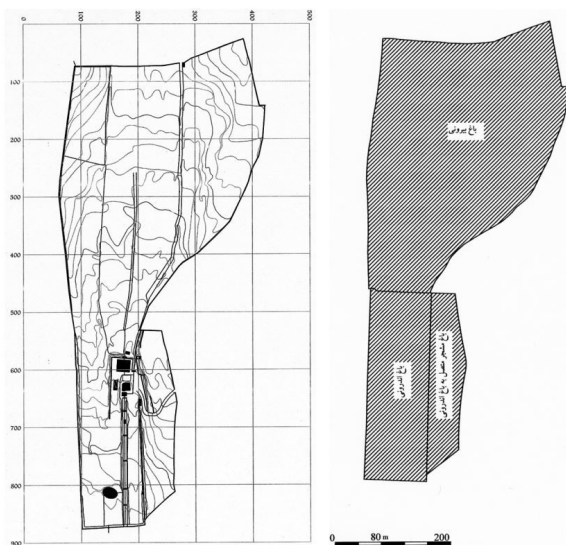


Fig. 5. Fathabad Garden, the main street, the organizer of the inner and outer garden. Sources: Kabir Saber, 2007, 51.

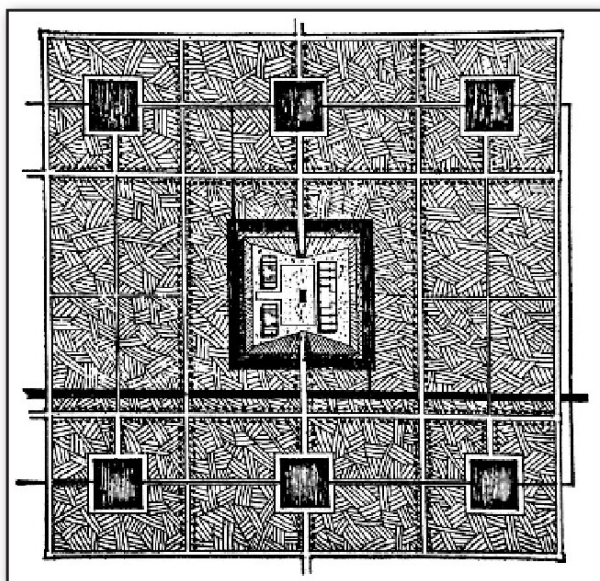


Fig. 6. Revival of a garden plan in Samarkand (probably the Red Rose Garden) by Wilber based on Clavijo's reports. As is clear in the image, the main street of the garden passes through the center of the geometric design where there is a pavilion. Also, two ends of the main street lead to two large ponds, some of which are six main ponds. Source: Wilber, 2014.

on the slope, its main structure conforms to the shape of the land (Kabir Saber, 2007, 51). What is important in this garden is the orderly role of the main axis that connects the inner and outer parts.

In the late 8th century AH, Timur, by establishing his power from Transoxiana to the west of the Mediterranean and choosing Samarkand as the center of his rule, ordered the construction of numerous gardens, mostly following the Persian style of gardening. According to detailed

reports of the gardening stages in the texts of Ibn Arabshah, Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, Hafez Abroo, Clavijo, and Babur Shah, the major recreational gardens of this period were concentrated in Samarkand, and cultural gardens were also located in Herat. Clavijo's descriptions of a garden near his residence in Samarkand called the Rose Garden or the Gol-Sorkh Garden (Fig. 6) is as follows:

"This garden is surrounded by a high wall, the area of which is about one farsakh. Six large pools can be seen in the garden, and a large stream flows throughout it, going from one pool to another. They have constructed five large streets in the garden and planted tall trees that provide shade on both sides

of them, paved their paths with stones, and made them into terraces [...] In addition to the five main streets, smaller streets also branch off from these five streets" (Wilber, 2014, 219-220).

• The 10th to 12th centuries AH

Street of Garden in the Safavid era is a street that enters the city and plays a role as a living space in the structure of the city. From the early 10th century AH, the street was introduced with the concept of urban space, and its characteristics are explained with a Persian garden. The verse of "Erdat Khan"⁶ clearly describes the beauty of the street in our garden "is one of the most cited examples in dictionaries for explaining the concept of a street. This interpretation of the street may be related to Persian Garden cities. in the Greater Khorasan region before the 10th century AH (Atashinbar & Motedayen 2018, 75). Chaharbagh of Isfahan can be mentioned as one of the prominent streets of this period, (Fig. 7) which acts as a connector between the Safavid government gardens and the southern gardens of the city, linking both sides of the ZayandehRoud River. The description of Chaharbagh Street in the writings of various travelers such as Chardin, Delavalle, Olearius, and Kempfer is mentioned. This pleasant street, with a length of about one farsakh⁷ and a width of 50 meters, is described with rows of plane trees, flower gardens, ponds, and a fountain (Fig. 8).

"On both sides of this street, a large number of magnificent and leafy Plane trees have been planted. The leaves of these trees, which were as large as the leaves of a Grape tree, spread shadows over the street and made it more beautiful. This promenade started from under the Sofeh mountain and was terraced. The water of a fountain passes through a beautiful stone channel in the middle of the street. (Sansoon, 1967, 96)." "These streams were arranged with cut stones that were slightly higher than the ground level. The width of these streams was such that two horsemen could easily pass from either side, and the width of the stones on the edges of the pools was still as wide as the stones on the edge of the stream" (Chardin, 1996, 118).

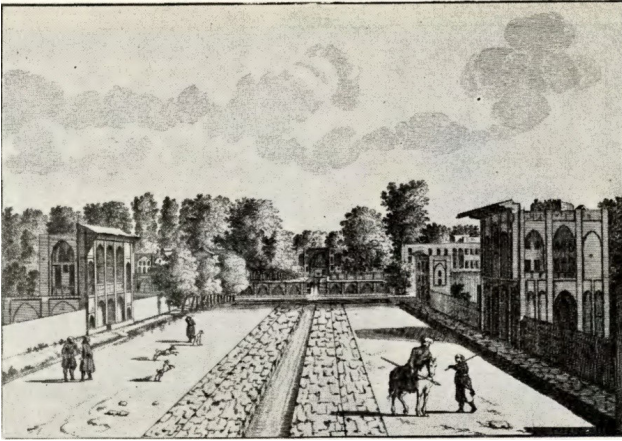


Fig. 7. right-The reconstructed map of Abbasid-Safavid ChaharBagh Street based on Kempfer and Wilber's drawings and descriptions provided in historical sources. According to the description of ChaharBagh by Engelbert Kempfer, it is a street that starts from behind the Shah Palace and continues southwest towards the HezarJarib Garden. Source: Gholipour, 2014.

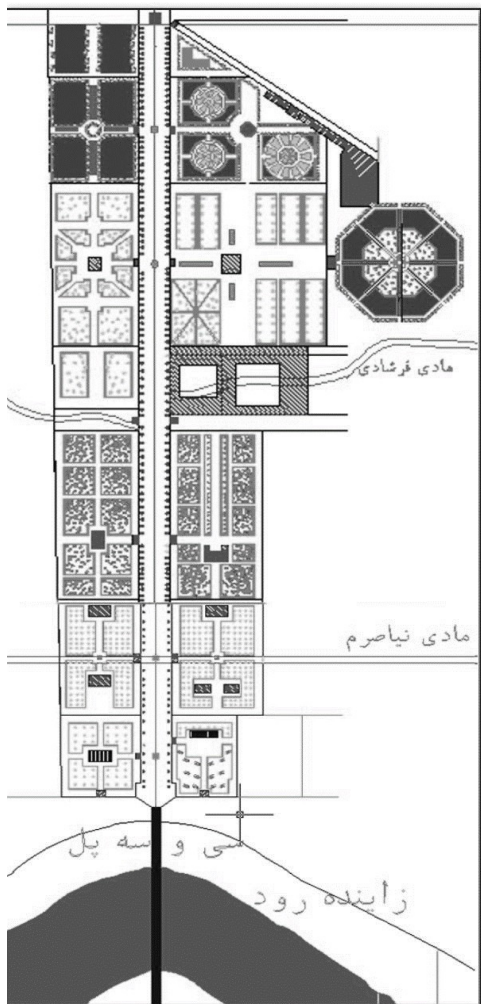


Fig. 8. Left-end of ChaharBagh street during the Safavid period, representation plan of Sanson. "The surroundings of this delightful and pleasant street are beautiful vast gardens, each of which has two Pavilion one of which is larger and in the middle of the garden and contains a hall that is open on all sides and in the corners of which there are rooms and Sandoghkane, and the other is built on the front of the garden and it is also open from all sides so that you can see the movement of people on the street. Source: Sanson, 1967, 97.

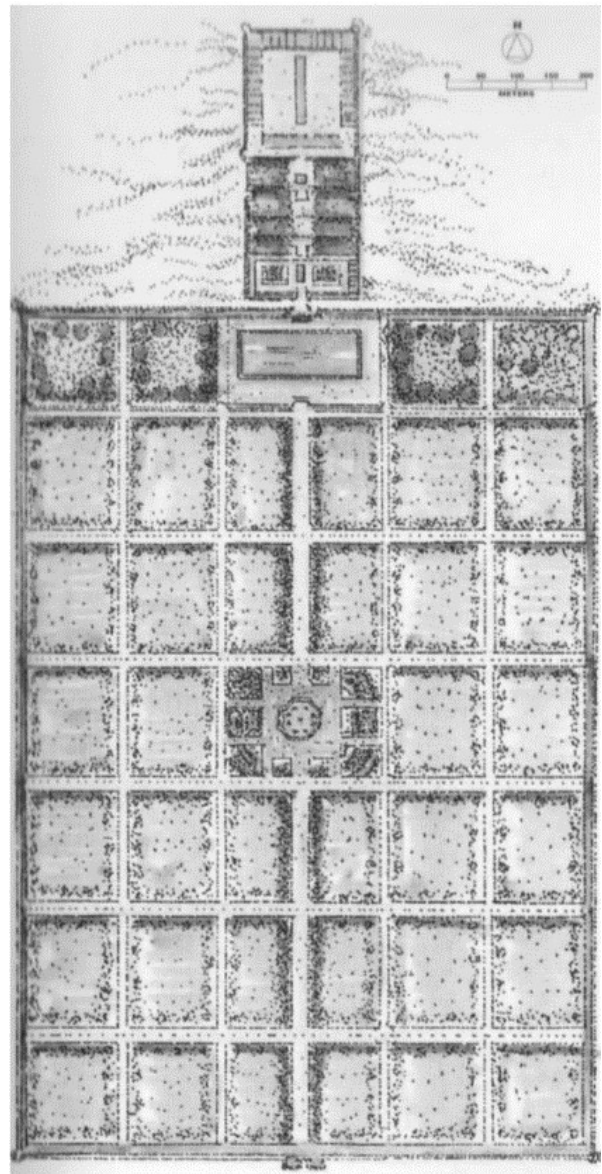


Fig. 9. The main parts of Qajar Palace- garden. Source: Khansari et al., 2004.

• 13th century AH

formation of the Qajar dynasty, which coincided with major global changes and an increase in communication with European governments, leading to the introduction of foreign gardening styles such as Renaissance, Baroque, and Romantic to Iran (Soltanzadeh, 2003). However, the continuation of the Persian garden pattern with a focus on a central axis and its connection with the pavilion and fountain, symmetry, and the use of water flow and pools remained prominent during this period" (Mahan & Khorramrouei, 2020, 15). Among the most important gardens of this period, we can the Qajar Palace Garden and Negarestan Garden in Tehran. The Qajar Palace is a garden that was built four kilometers north of Tehran during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah and is one of the recreational gardens for summer. It is terraced and connected to a large

garden located on a flat land in front of it by a staircase axis, inspired by the Takht-e Shiraz garden. Along this axis, a large pool resembling an artificial lake is built, and an octagonal pavilion follows (Fig. 9).

Eugene Flandin describes the Qajar Palace and the gardens of Tehran in his travelogue as follows: "In one farsakh of Tehran, he has built a palace for his summer residence, which is called the Qajar Palace or the Takht-Qajar. The Built-up area of this palace is large and indescribable. There are gardens for an amphitheater and several floors with numerous stairs that separate the palace from the park. This palace is very good and desirable today. It can also be used as the residence of the king, but Mohammad Shah, who is more interested in the northern climate, has abandoned this place and built a palace for himself on a small stream on the slopes of Shemiran Mountain" (Flandin, 1977, 565-565).

Henry Binder writes in 1848 AD: "We walked through several brick courtyards adorned with colorful trees and flowers and had several large ponds and numerous fountains in Dooshan Tappeh Garden. We reached a dome from where we could see all the comings and goings [...] Often, the king comes there with a few riders for sightseeing in the afternoon" (Binder, 2019, 239).

Discussion: Changes in the role of the Street of Garden in the Persian Garden throughout history

Although the street is one of the most commonly used concepts in urban studies today, its civilizational roots are different in different cultures. In Persian culture, whether before Islam or after, the street is considered a concept of landscape, which has a dual presence in its most influential cultural pattern, the garden: both mental (with symbolic and semantic features) and physical (as a functional, structural, and spatial element). The street in the Persian garden before Islam has been associated with the concept of goodness, such as water. During this period, the Street of the garden is a long axis with an average width and the presence of water in it is mostly natural, and the mythical role of water in it is important. The strong and dense presence of symbolic trees such as cypress as a decorative element is directly related to the Street of Garden (khiyaban Bagh) in this period, emphasizing its symbolic and meaningful position. This process, as mentioned in the article, relatively continues, and the sacred aspect is also added to the mental dimensions of the Street of the garden. The selection of the Street of Garden stump, in the first to ninth centuries AH for establishing the tombs of the nobles is an example of this mental validation. During these centuries, the streets were wide and could even connect two neighborhoods. The Street of the garden in the Timurid period is central, meaning it is emphasized

at the central point on the pavilion, and its landscape is accompanied by agricultural culture.

During the Safavid period, with the change in the role of the garden from a sacred place to an urban space, the role of the street also changed. The street of the garden becomes wider and various combinations of trees are observed around it; a predetermined and completely geometrical order dominates it. The use of pavement and fountain design is considered as the decoration of the Street of Garden in this period. In addition, the mansion of the Entrance Building and its architecture are also prominent in the Street of Garden. In the Qajar period, the Street of Garden is a place for promenading; therefore, the use of colorful architecture in pavilions and entrances is noteworthy. The width of the street of the garden is average and its length is short. A combination of fruit and non-fruit trees can be seen around it and water has a decorative presence (Fig. 10).

In a general view, the street of the garden has undergone various changes in terms of form during different periods, which can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of its cultural significance. Before Islam and after it arrived in Iran until the 9th century AH, the long shape of the street, combined with symbolic trees, was the origin of the landscape and framing of Pictorialism. These visual features reflect transcendental and sacred concepts in interpretations and texts. A significant change occurred during the Safavid period when Street of Garden left the celestial ambiance behind and entered into the daily life of society, and Chaharbagh Street in Isfahan is the epitome of this transformation. In the modern period, this approach has reached its maximum form, and the soul of the Garden, meaning the street, entered the city. Just as the Persian garden space has always had a perceptual influence on the Iranian people's mentality, the modern period is an era in which the urban space has a significant impact on the audience's mindset. Therefore, with the street's entry into the city and social life, its maximum cultural significance was institutionalized.

Conclusion

In Iranian culture, the garden is a landscape; in other words, a Persian garden is a phenomenon derived from the interaction between the Iranian mind and nature that puts the audience on a specific path to interpret the environment; therefore, this phenomenon underwent some physical changes from pre-Islam to the Qajar period, which was accompanied by the entry of Western colonizers, but its meaning remained constant for the Iranian audience. Street of Garden, as the main element of the Persian garden landscape, is the most important component of the garden landscape that manages the Persian garden like a comprehensive system and embodies various aspects of its

identity, aesthetics, and functionality; therefore, changes in the street of the garden have always been local and its nature as a symbolic whole has remained unchanged. The main street or core of the Persian garden has elements that make up its subsystems, including ponds, waterways, rows of trees, and the green landscape around the street, which in different combinations of width, length, changes in height, pavilions, and buildings create different landscape

designs that shape the landscape differences of the Persian garden in the audience's mind during different historical periods. "So it can be said that Main Street of Garden has been a stabilizing component of the Persian garden pattern throughout history; because the developments that have taken place in its surroundings or its decorative elements have not caused a change in the spatial order and hierarchy of its perception."

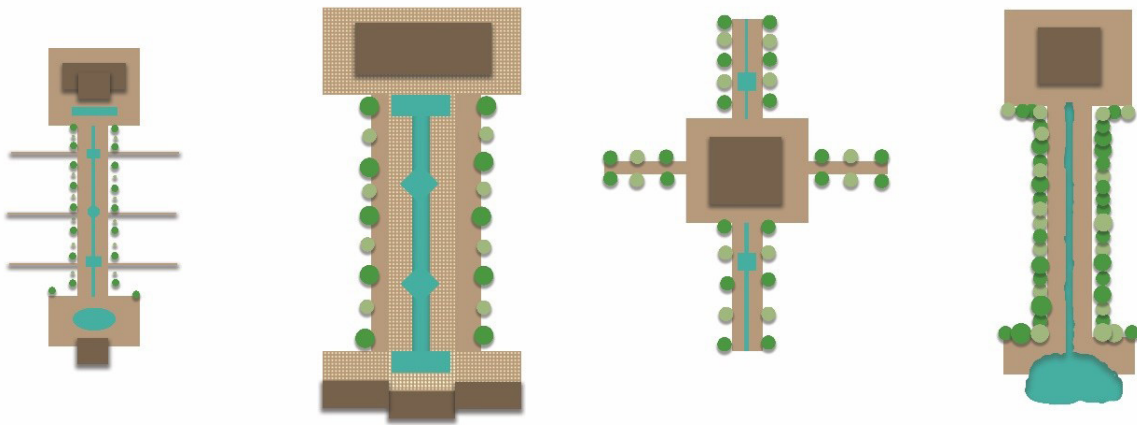


Fig. 10. The evolution of street landscaping, in order from the right: 1- Street of the garden before Islam 2- Street of the garden from the first century AH to the 10th century AH 3- Street of the garden in the Safavid period 4- Street of the garden in the Qajar period. Source: Authors Archive.

Endnote

1. Street of the garden throughout the article refers to the main street of the garden which is usually located on main axis of the garden.
2. Because other gardens, including hunting gardens, are out of a comparable geometry and scale or each other.
3. The basis for choosing the gardens (from pre-Islamic gardens to Qajar gardens) is the location within the geographical borders

of the Safavid period.

4. In Farsi, it is equivalent to the word "street"

5. quadruple division geometry Patterns in Persian Garden.

6. Iradat Khan Alamgiri, the author of the history of Iradat Khan, died in 1128 AD. / 68 years 919 to 984 AH.

7. Farsang or farsakh is a unit for measuring distance and is close to 6.24 kilometers.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Sadafi Kohneshahri, P. & Atashinbar, M. (2023). Reading the Street Landscape in the Persian Garden. *MANZAR*, 15(64), 6-15.

DOI: 10.22034/MANZAR.2023.415074.2258

URL: https://www.manzar-sj.com/article_179752_en.html

