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Oriental Dreams.
Reimagining Paradise in the Urban Context

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Abstract: *The integration of gardens into the urban fabric of Muslim cities has a rich historical background, dating back to the early days of Islam and influenced by classical and Persian cultures that cherished the idea of incorporating gardens into urban designs. As a result, gardens became an inseparable aspect of Muslim cities, intricately woven into their urban structures. This architectural trend extended far beyond geographical boundaries, spanning vast regions of the Muslim empire from Arabia, Greater Syria, and North Africa to Spain, Iran, and India. Gardens held a profound and symbolic importance for Muslims, closely intertwined with their religious beliefs. The Quran, the sacred scripture of Islam, frequently referred to the concept of 'gardens', assuring followers of the prospect of dwelling in lush gardens in the realm of paradise. This heavenly vision inspired the creation of earthly gardens, providing a tangible way to experience and connect with the essence of paradise during mortal life. Islamic gardens emerged as a quintessential element of Muslim cities, embodying the values and aesthetics of Islamic culture. Beyond their visually stunning appearance, these gardens also served practical purposes, offering shelter from the sun, refreshing water features, and ample space for social gatherings. This article aims to explore the significance of gardens in Islam, delving into their embodiment of the promised paradise. It will trace the origins of these gardens, examine their diverse forms, analyze their spatial organization, and unravel their multifaceted functions within the landscapes of Muslim medinas.*

Keywords: *Muslim cities, Islamic culture, Quran, urban grid, landscape design*

In the 7th century, the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula occurred in a geographical context that lacked significant urban planning and developed landscape features. Islam, as a religion, displayed a remarkable capacity for adaptation, incorporating elements of philosophy and art from preceding cultures. Central to this integration was the Muslim belief in mathematics and the veneration of perfect geometric forms as symbolic representations of divine perfection, and consequen-

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tly, of God. This profound conviction led to a deliberate fusion of mathematical knowledge with various artistic disciplines, including art, architecture, and landscape design, resulting in the creation of distinctive 'perfect' forms. This amalgamation of mathematical precision and artistic expression became a defining characteristic of Islamic art, with geometrical shapes and arabesque motifs serving as exemplars of these idealized forms. These art forms extended beyond mere aesthetic appreciation to influence architecture, landscape design, and the planning of gardens. Gardens held a significant symbolic role within the broader context of landscape design in Islamic culture. They were conceived as more than mere physical spaces; rather, they embodied profound symbolism, serving as a bridge between humanity and nature. In this symbolic framework, gardens represented human efforts to structure and represent the natural world, effectively bridging the gap between the divine and the human-made.

On the one hand, they offered an earthly interpretation of the divine order, while on the other, they provided individuals with an oasis from the demands and complexities of urban life, fostering a sense of connection with the divine. The scholarly fascination with Islamic gardens can be traced back to the 17th century, a period when Western scholars developed a growing desire to explore the allure of the exotic Orient. However, it was not until the 20th century, during the era of Western colonization in the Islamic world, that the study of Islamic gardens gained significant momentum. This colonial influence sparked the curiosity of European scholars, compelling them to initiate comprehensive research and analysis into the captivating world of Islamic gardens[2].

Sacred Serenity: Exploring the Significance of Gardens in Islam

Islam perceives gardens as a representation of paradise on earth, a concept echoed in numerous verses of the Quran that depict the various elements of heaven. The Quran regards gardens as a central symbol of the spiritual ideal, where the divine and human creativity harmoniously intertwine. Additionally, these gardens serve as a space where untamed

2. Most notably the book of the English Constance Villier Stuart "Gardens of the Mughal", and of the Polish Marie Luise Gothein "Die Indische Garten".

nature is tamed, transforming the wild and unpredictable, *Locus Ferax*, into a serene and pleasant environment, *Locus Amoenus*.

The notion of space within the Arab culture that evolved in the desert is inherently focused on preserving living space, thereby establishing the enclosure as a fundamental symbol of distinction, not only separating the nomadic from the sedentary but also distinguishing between oases and deserts, irrigated and arid lands.

The Quran consistently associates paradise with gardens. Throughout its verses, the Quran vividly portrays paradise as a realm adorned with lush gardens, abundant trees, flowing fountains, and meandering rivers.

> The righteous have a reward: gardens and grapevines [An-Naba': 31-35]
> God has promised the believing men and women a garden with rivers flowing beneath it, wherein they will abide, and a good dwelling in Paradise. And they are more pleased with God. That is the great victory [At-Tawbah: 72]
> These are God's limits, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and transgresses His limits, He will cause him to enter a fire to abide therein, and he will have a humiliating punishment [An-Nisa': 13-14].
> And those who believe and do righteous deeds, We will admit them to a garden beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. God is truly counted, and who is more truthful in word than God [An-Nisa':122]

The Quran gave seven different levels of Paradise: *Jannat Adan* (Garden of Eden, of everlasting bliss), *Jannat al Ferdaws* (Garden of Heaven), *Jannat al Naim* (Garden of abundance), *Jannat al Ma'wa* (Garden of retreat), Jannatu al Khouloud (Garden of immortality), *Dar ul Maqaam* (Garden of safety), *Dar al Salam* (The adobe of peace). Therefore, according to Islamic belief, paradise is depicted as a multi-layered garden. Described in the Quran, paradise encompasses flowing rivers, lush plants, abundant fruits, towering trees, soothing shade, and radiant sunlight – all the elements of a magnificent garden (*fig*. 1). The Quran's promise of a heavenly paradise highlights the significance of the oasis as a stark contrast to the harshness of desert life, emphasizing the importance of water.

The concept of gardens permeated the entire expanse of the Muslim empire. The prevalence of gardens in the Islamic world can be attributed to three key factors. Firstly, a religious factor is at play, as these gardens symbolize the earthly manifestation of the promised paradise

for Muslims. Secondly, climatic conditions played a significant role. Considering that the Islamic empire primarily encompassed hot desert regions, and gardens with their water features, vegetation, and shaded areas were crucial for improving the quality of life. These gardens epitomized the captivating interplay of sunlight and shade, offering respite from the scorching heat that pervaded the lands of the Islamic empire. The Islamic Garden, whether designed for private or public use, served primarily as a sanctuary of privacy. It was carefully enclosed and shielded by towering trees to guarantee seclusion for those within. This notion of an enclosed garden finds its roots in the Quran's depiction of paradise, which describes it as being encompassed by gates and guarded by gatekeepers.

> Those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups. Until, when they arrive to it, its gates will open, and its keepers will say to them, Peace be upon them. May you be well, so enter it for eternity [Al-Zumar: 73]

The mention of the gates of Paradise, symbolized as a garden, instilled in Muslim architects the belief that their earthly gardens should be enclosed and safeguarded by walls, with access granted through gates. This religious notion corresponded to the idea of protecting the living elements within the gardens, a significant consideration given their scarcity in the arid desert environment that initially characterized the Arab Muslim world.

It is worth noting the striking contrast between the colder countries where the primary concern revolved around protection from rain, hence the need for a roof, and warmer countries where Islam originated, shielding oneself from the desert sands and the relentless heat of the sun was paramount, leading to the necessity of walls and enclosures. Intriguingly, this concept extends to the Arabic language, where idiomatic expressions like "a roof over one's head" in English, signifying a place of residence that safeguards against external threats, find equivalent meaning in Arabic through phrases such as "a wall" or "an enclosure". Moreover, the Arabic word *ma'wa*, translated as "shelter" in English, places greater emphasis on the presence of a protective wall rather than a roof. Even the word *dar*, meaning "house" in Arabic, originates from the notion of encircling or enclosing, further emphasizing the concept of an enclosed space.

Lastly, the influence of royal pleasure gardens, originating in pre-Islamic Persia, left an indelible impact. These majestic gardens had existed in Persia since the 6th century BCE, and when Islam reached the region, Muslims were influenced by and continued to incorporate these garden concepts into their own designs.

Tracing the Origins of Islamic Garden Design

The inception of organized Islamic gardens can be attributed to the early days of Islam, particularly during the early Abbasid period (750-1258 A.D.). As the Muslim capital shifted from Damascus in the Umayyad period to Baghdad in 762 AD and Samarra (836-892 A.D.), in Mesopotamia under the Abbasid dynasty in the 8th and 9th centuries, Muslims came into contact with the gardens of Mesopotamia that had been cultivated since the 6th century B.C. Evidence of this can be found in Babylonian literature dating back to 2000 B.C., which describes the planting of trees in the king's palace, providing shade and fruits over 4000 years ago[3].

Samarra was home to one of the earliest gardens of the Abbasid period[4]. Before the advent of Islam, Mesopotamia was under Persian rule, and its gardens had been famous since the Babylonian and Assyrian eras. These gardens were built within cities to replicate paradise[5]. The construction of such gardens would not have been possible without the use of advanced irrigation systems, which were developed by the civilizations who inhabited Mesopotamia due to the need to protect themselves from frequent floods and droughts. The origins of these complex irrigation systems in the region can be traced back to the 5th and 6th millennium BCE[6].

The Assyrian king Tukultī-Ninurta I (1233-1197 BCE) provides one of the earliest known references to irrigation systems in Mesopotamia. He describes the opening of his "canal of justice" to bring water to arid land near the Tigris River[7]. These canals were considered remarkable engineering

3. Dalley 1993, p. 1.
4. Northedge 2023, p. 1.
5. Dalley 1993, p. 1.
6. Lerner-Meacham-Burns 1998, p. 14.
7. King 1904, p. 43.

feats by the Assyrian kings, as evidenced by their frequent mention in royal inscriptions[8]. This advancement in irrigation systems and canals enabled the Assyrians to create gardens within their cities and palaces, giving rise to a landscape phenomenon that was previously unimaginable.

British Assyriologist Stephanie Dalley identifies five types of gardens used in the Assyrian period: courtyard gardens, hunting parks, city gardens, temple gardens, and hanging gardens[9]. This classification highlights the intentional planning and diverse functions of these gardens, underscoring the importance the Assyrians placed on these landscapes by creating a specific type for each of the functions needed. Going forward, during the Persian conquest of Mesopotamia in the 6th century BCE, the Persians gave a lot of importance to the gardens as well, as a representation of their paradise. The Greek historian Herodotus mentioned the love of King Darius I for gardening. Xenophon, the Greek philosopher and historian, mentions the use of the word paradise to describe the Persian gardens.

> And more than this, continued Socrates, at all the places which he dwells in or visits, he [the Persian king] takes especial care that there shall be gardens which they call 'paradises', filled with everything good and beautiful that grows there naturally. And it is in these gardens that he spends most of his leisure, unless prevented from doing so by the time of year[10].

In fact, the word paradise in English was derived from the word *pairi-daeza* meaning an enclosure or a park in old Avestan, an old Iranian language that predated Persian. The Greeks used the word *Paradeisos* from the Persians, and they applied it to refer to the supreme bliss of Eden or the rewards of the faithful as promised by the Quran and didn't limit its meaning to the sublimity of the Persian garden[11].

The Persians reflected their religious beliefs about the world in the design of their gardens. Using the concept of the division of the world into four, a concept adopted by the Zoroastrians[12], the Persians considered their universe as divided into four parts, hence reflecting this design in their gardens and creating a type of gardens called the *chahar bagh*, which is a quadripartite garden design from *chahar* meaning "four" and *bagh* meaning "garden" (*fig*. 2).

8. Wilkinson *et alii* 2005, p. 27.
9. Dalley 1993.
10. Xenophon, 1876 [1971]. *The economist of Xenophon*, New York: B. Franklin, p. 26.
11. Lehman 1980, p. 31.
12. Boyce 2001, p. 113.

Bruce Lincoln tries meticulously to identify the origin of the word Paradise and its use by the Achaemians. He concludes that the word *Paradeisos* wasn't

> a vacation spot, a national park, zoological garden, dream palace, or diversion for royal collectors, still less, the Disney World of antiquity. Rather, if I am not mistaken, it was a space of re-creation in the most precise and most profound sense. The surviving descriptions of paradeisoi consistently emphasize their exquisite beauty, their abundance of water, and the pro-fusion of plants and/or animals with which they were filled: that is, the elements which constitute the sustenance – and, more important – the happiness of mankind, as is signified by the name of a paradeisos attested in two of the Persepolis Treasury texts: Old Persian vispa- siyatis, "All Happiness"[13].

Hence, paradise in the Persian culture was not a simple garden, it was a place of recreation, a perfect place that reflects the power of the creator. One of the best examples of a *chahar bagh* is the garden of Pasargadae, considered one of the earliest Persian gardens using this typology. This garden was built during the reign of Cyrus, and whether he was Achaemenian or Zoroastrian is not relevant here, yet the Zoroastrian concept of dividing the world into four parts is evident in the design of his garden in Pasargadae. The garden of the city has a rectangular shape, divided into four parts by two perpendicular axes, and is built in the center of the palace, surrounded by a portico with colonnades (*fig*. 3). Inside this portico, there was a royal throne with seats for the nobles who could contemplate the garden from inside, or even go out to enjoy its vegetation. The garden has two entrance gates with two irrigation canals that lead the water inside[14].

The importance of this garden is that it puts the foundation of the concept of the garden city, which is an ensemble that incorporated a garden inside a palace, and that was the prototype used in the Achaemenid empire. Many other examples of these garden cities using a quadripartite typology have been built during the Achaemenid period, including Bishapur, Gur, and Siraf.

This concept continued to be used with the arrival of Islam, and it was exported to Syria, Andalusia, and central Asia, as a place of perfect harmony, a concept that was promoted by Islam as a perfect divine shape.

The earliest known Islamic gardens are the gardens of Baghdad and Samarra. While some gardens in Syria, and Jordan have been identified

13. Lincoln 2003, p. 153.
14. Stronach 1989.

by an unpublished article by Antonio Almagro and D. Fairchild Ruggles, entitled "Early Islamic Gardens in Syria, Jordan, and Iraq" in the Umayyad settlements of Qusayr Amra, Rusafa and Qasr al Hallabat, it remains relatively hard to certainly identify these gardens, knowing that buildings can somehow be identified over time even by rubbles of stones, while the gardens are planted spaces, and over time, the vegetation is erased.

From the grand hanging gardens of Babylon to the exquisite palace gardens of Mari, Mesopotamia exerted a significant influence on the development of Islamic gardens during the Abbasid period. This concept, emphasized by Islam, found its roots in the Mesopotamian landscape.

Although the dominance of the *chahar bagh* style was not prominent during the Abbasid period, and no known examples of Abbasid quadripartite gardens with four rivers, characteristic of Persian gardens[15], exist, the influence of the *chahar bagh* continued to shape Muslim gardens in later periods, ultimately becoming the quintessential Islamic garden concept. Particularly significant is the description in Hadith[16], referring to the four rivers that emerge from paradise: Euphrates, Nile, Sayhān, and Jayhān. This description aligns with the division of gardens into four parts, characteristic of the *chahar bagh*.

The Muslim fascination with the *chahar bagh* garden stems from the connection between Islam and the pursuit of perfection. Islamic art, renowned for its precise shapes and straight lines, seamlessly integrates with the rectangular form and orthogonal division of the *chahar bagh*. Thus, the *chahar bagh* perfectly aligns with the principles of Islamic art, becoming an enduring symbol of Islamic gardens.

The Art of Islamic Garden Design: Exploring Order, Space, and Form

Several factors played a role in the design of Islamic gardens, leading Muslims to seek a reinterpretation of the *chahar bagh*. When examining Islamic art, it becomes evident that there is a deep appreciation for perfect shapes highlighted through the use of geometry. Islam skillfully merged mathematics and geometry with art, aiming to achieve impeccable forms that symbolize God and His perfection (*fig*. 4). Thus, when

15. Al Samarrai 2002, p. 7.
16. The hadith is the second written source of Islam after the Quran. It's a series of stories told by the Prophet Mohammad.

Muslims encountered Persian gardens, they wholeheartedly embraced the geometric beauty of the *chahar bagh*. This exquisite design featured a perfect rectangle divided by two perpendicular axes, resulting in four impeccable sections. Muslims across the empire enthusiastically adopted this concept, incorporating it into their own gardens.

By examining gardens throughout the Muslim empire, one can gain insight into how Muslims embraced the *chahar bagh* typology. From Andalusia (Spain) to India, numerous examples showcase the adaptation of Persian garden principles, capturing their inherent order, space, and form.

The concept of order in gardens originates from the aspiration to reflect the divine, giving rise to symmetrical layouts and proportionate elements. The pursuit of achieving perfect shapes creates a sense of balance. An exemplary embodiment of this principle can be observed in the Humayun's Tomb Garden located in Delhi, India, dating back to the 16th century. The design of this garden showcases a progression from the *chahar bagh* tradition, featuring a more intricate subdivision of the internal garden area, resulting in a visually pleasing and harmoniously balanced matrix. At the core of this garden lies the Tomb of Humayun, acting as the focal point where all the garden's axes converge (*fig*. 5). This convergence is further accentuated by the implementation of mirror symmetry, wherein the shapes and elements of the garden are mirrored at its center. Additionally, Humayun's Tomb Garden incorporates four gates that lead towards the central area, with water canals serving as connecting elements, linking all the components of the garden together (*fig*. 6).

While some gardens are pleasure gardens to be enjoyed by the living, some gardens specifically in India, like the case of the garden of Humayun's Tomb are made to be used by the living as well as the dead, hence having the mausoleum in the center of the garden[17]. This garden highlights the order as a crucial element of the Islamic garden, where the garden is organized around a central element, whether a pavilion or in that case a mausoleum.

The concept of order is prominently expressed through the overall design and orthogonality, while the perception of space is often influenced by the size of the garden. The size of the garden plays a significant role in creating a sense of intimacy or a more open and expansive atmosphere. This distinction in the understanding of space within gardens

17. Lehman 1980, p. 62.

becomes more evident when comparing two different examples from various regions of the Muslim empire. One such example is the Garden of San Giovanni degli Eremiti in Palermo, Italy (*fig*. 7). Despite being built by the Normans in the 12th century, the Arab Moorish influence is unmistakable, «particularly in the charming scale of the enclosure, with its luxuriant planting bounded by straight paths»[18]. The small size of this garden suggests its intended use for private and intimate purposes.

In contrast, the Garden of Chashme Chahi in India presents a completely different ambiance and sense of scale. Built in the 17th century, this garden continues to follow the principles of the *chahar bagh* layout, but its larger size indicates a more inviting and public character. The spatiality of the Garden of Chashme Chahi diverges from the Garden of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, creating a distinct atmosphere and usage.

Examining these two gardens offers a deeper understanding of how size influences the perception and utilization of space. The Garden of San Giovanni degli Eremiti evokes privacy and intimacy, while the Garden of Chashme Chahi presents a more expansive and public-oriented environment. This contrast showcases the diverse approaches to spatiality within Islamic gardens across different regions.

The perception of space within the Islamic Garden is strongly influenced by the enclosure, with the shape of the enclosure defining the overall form of the space. Typically, the enclosure takes a rectangular shape, providing a clear boundary for the garden.

Entrance gates play a significant role in shaping the experience of the space inside the garden. These gates create a specific perspective that directs the visitor's gaze toward particular elements and emphasizes the central focal point. In a way, the gates act as quadrants of a painting, highlighting the intended focal points and guiding the visitor's attention. The convergence point of the garden is always at its center, and regardless of which of the four gates the visitor enters from, he is invited to focus on the central area while simultaneously perceiving the entire garden as a whole. This arrangement surprises the visitor by presenting the entirety of the garden at once, thanks to the orthogonality of the space, rather than gradually revealing it over time.

The architects of Islamic Gardens skillfully integrate various organic elements into a cohesive, proportioned, and orthogonal form, thereby

18. *Ibidem*, p. 214.

creating a distinct spatial experience. This design approach ensures that visitors are instinctively drawn towards the central area of the garden while allowing them to appreciate the garden as a whole from their vantage point. The role of the garden designer in the Muslim tradition is to harmoniously combine diverse organic elements, transforming them into a unified and structured composition.

> The gardens form was considered as a highly structured geometrical scheme, it became a powerful metaphor for the organization and domestication of the landscape, and even more this function promoted it as a symbol of political territory[19].

Although the overall form of the Islamic Garden remains consistent, characterized by the rectangular enclosure of the *chahar bagh* and the internal division created by two perpendicular axes, certain factors influenced variations in this design. Specifically, the climate and landscape of the garden's location played a significant role in shaping these adaptations. While the fundamental layout of the garden remained unchanged, Muslim architects had to carefully consider and adjust their designs to suit each site's specific climatic and topographic conditions.

Looking at the garden of Medinat al Zahraa in Cordoba, Spain, the form of the garden has been shaped by its landscape to the sense that the garden planners had to consider the site's slopping when designing the gardens, leading them to build it on two levels, the upper garden and the lower garden. In fact, it is not surprising to see the adaptation of the *chahar bagh* typology in the gardens of Medinat al Zahraa, since the influence of the Abbasside on the caliph of Cordoba was enormous; it wasn't only a political rivalry, but an artistic borrowing as well. The 'Abbasidization' of Al Andalus had started in the 9th century[20], one century before the work started on Medinat al Zahraa.

Similar to what the Abbasides did in the Jawsaq and Balkuwara palaces in Samarra, Abdel Rahman III and his planners in Medinat al Zahraa, incorporated their buildings into the landscape to create predetermined views of the exterior. The site was divided into three levels cut into the mountain, and from the middle level, the Salon Ricco opens on the upper-level garden and its center axis follows the center axis of the upper garden, hence converging to its center (*fig*. 8-9).

19. Ruggles 2008, p. 39.
20. Ruggles 1990, p. 74.

The concept of having two gardens in Medinat al Zahraa is a unique feature of the city. Maribel Fierro, in her article "Madinat Al-Zahra, the Paradise and the Fatimies" associates this idea with a verse from the Quran, which is explained by Al Tabari[21].

> And within them are fruits, diverse and plentiful. [They will be] of every kind, two spouses [Quran 55:52].

Fierro interprets this verse as a representation of the fruits depicted on the walls of the Hall of Salon Ricco[22], hence the presence of a pair of each, one on the walls and the other in the garden itself. However, this verse can also be linked to the presence of Medinat al Zahraa, referring to the idea of a pair of each. The Umayyads of Andalusia, in their rivalry with the Abbasids, felt the need to design gardens that showcased their capabilities and aligned more closely with the Quranic description of paradise[23]. This explains why the gardens of Madinat al Zahraa adhere to the description found in the Quran and in 'Abd al-Malik B. Ḥabīb's book, "Kitāb Waṣf al-firdaws", while also following the typical layout of the *chahar bagh* seen throughout the Muslim empire, thereby establishing their connection to other Muslim lands. The Umayyads used the garden to promote it as a symbol of political territory[24], hence connecting themselves to the Muslims of the East.

Conclusion

Islam has consistently demonstrated its adaptive nature as a religion. While it emerged as a novel social, economic, and cultural concept that stood in contrast to its predecessors, it did not discard the rich cultural heritage that preceded it. The Muslim *medina*, on the one hand, drew significant inspiration from classical urban planning in the Western world, while on the other hand, its gardens were influenced by the opulent Persian empire of the East. The Islamic Garden stands as a testament to the

21. Al Tabari 1905, p. 86.
22. Fierro 2004, p. 307.
23. The Umayyads of Andalusia were diligent in adhering to the teachings of the Quran. In this context, they notably heeded the verse aforementioned, which stipulates the provision of two pairs of every type of fruit.
24. As mentioned by Ruggles 2008, p. 39.

religion's ability to embrace and incorporate multiple cultures, filling in a missing piece of the cultural mosaic that defines Islam.

> For most of its history, and especially in Antiquity, this [the area of Bilad Al Sham] was a frontier area, or a buffer zone in modern terms, between the main regional powers: Egypt and the successive Mesopotamian empires; Persia and Greece; the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms; Rome and Parthia; Byzantium and the Sassanians. As a result, it not only witnessed war, invasion, and destruction, but also fruitful economic and cultural interchange. This frontier was lifted twice: first, during the reign of Alexander, and, secondly with the rise of Islam[25].

Islam has achieved the unification of cultures worldwide, blending elements from both the East and the West. This metamorphosis is evident in the adaptation of cultural and artistic concepts within Islamic traditions.

The Islamic gardens, originally conceived as a paradise for Muslims in the afterlife, underwent a remarkable transformation and became a prominent feature of the landscape in the Muslim *medina*. Appreciating the significance of mathematics and geometry, Muslims incorporated the *chahar bagh*, a quadrilateral garden divided into four sections, into their culture. This adoption, which held cultural and architectural importance in both Muslim and Persian societies, harmoniously complemented the concept of Islamic art. As Islam expanded and evolved, so too did the concept of Islamic gardens, with the *chahar bagh* remaining a foundational blueprint for their design.

The design of Islamic gardens draws upon a combination of religious, climatic, and cultural factors. The influence of ancient Mesopotamian gardens, with their advanced irrigation systems, played a significant role in shaping the notion of creating lush oases within desert landscapes. Islam's emphasis on perfection and geometric forms led to the integration of mathematics and art, resulting in the use of precise shapes and straight lines in both Islamic art and garden design. The Quran's portrayal of paradise as a multi-layered garden further solidified the importance of gardens in Islamic culture.

Today, Islamic gardens stand as serene sanctuaries that seamlessly blend nature, art, and spirituality, providing a tangible link to the divine. They serve as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the Muslim world and continue to captivate and inspire people around the globe.

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25. Arce 2008, p. 491.

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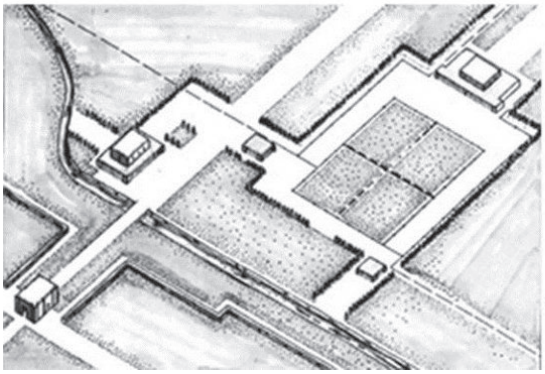
Fig. 1 – A Persian miniature depicting paradise from The History of Mohammed (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris).

Fig. 2 – Charbagh *on an incomplete Persian 'garden carpet', 17th century.*



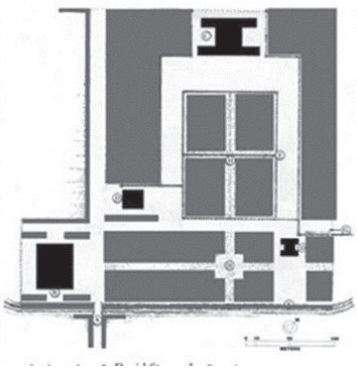
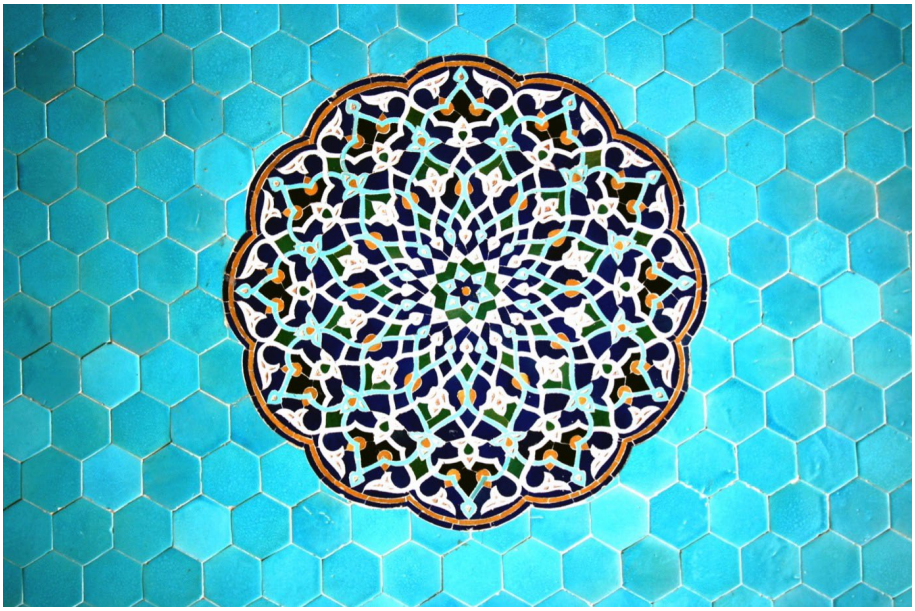


Fig. 3 – Garden of Pasargadae after David Stronach, 1978.



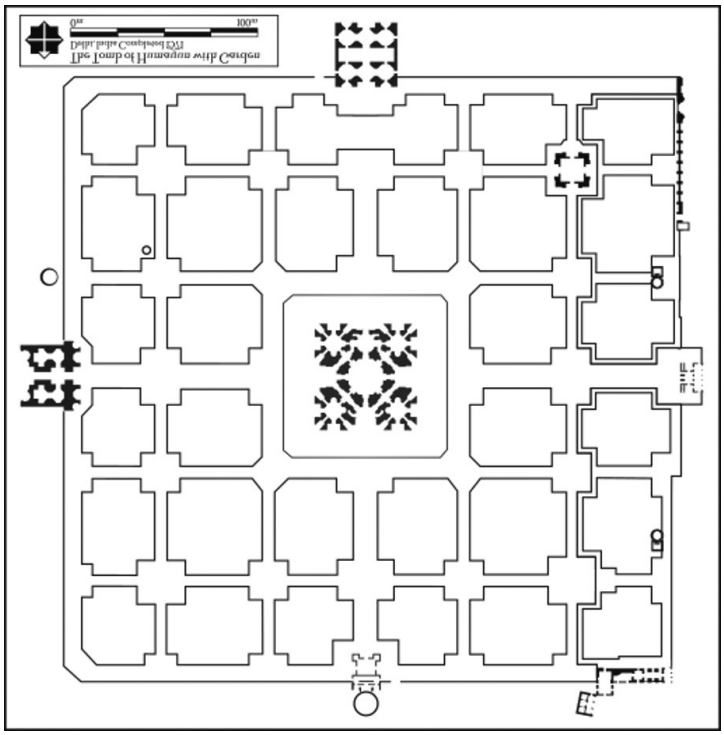


Fig. 4 – Yazd (Iran), Art of tiles inside the Jame Mosque.

Fig. 5 – Nizamuddin Delhi (India), Plan of the Emperor Humayun's Garden Tomb (BilliTheCat, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Fig. 6 – The tomb in the centre of the garden of Humayun's tomb shows the water canal passing through the garden (Udit Kapoor, CC BY-SA 4.0).
Fig. 7 – Palermo, San Giovanni degli Eremiti, cloister, palickap (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Fig. 8 – Cordoba, Salon Ricco at Medinat al Zahraa (R Prazeres, CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED)
Fig. 9 – Cordoba, Salon Ricco at Medinat al Zahraa (Justojosemm).