



BAHĀR-E KESRĀ

BAHĀR-E KESRĀ “The spring of Kōsrow” (Ṭabarī), Farš-e zamestānī “Winter carpet” (Baḷ’amī), or *Bahārestān* “Spring garden” (*Ḥabīb al-sīar*), a huge, late Sasanian royal carpet. The carpet measured 60 cubits (*araš*, *derā*) square (ca. 27 m x 27 m), that may have covered the floor of the great audience hall (Ayvān-e Kesrā) at the winter capital of Madā’en. Representations of paths and streams were embroidered on it with gems against a ground of gold. Its border was embroidered with emeralds to represent a cultivated green field in which were flowering spring plants with fruit embroidered with different colored gems on stalks of gold with gold and silver flowers and silk foliage. It was used as a place to drink, as if in gardens, when the winter winds blew. The *Ḥabīb al-sīar* explains that when one sat on it in winter, it was as if it was spring.

When Madā’en fell to the Muslims in 16/637 this carpet was too heavy for the Persians to carry away so it was taken with the other booty. The Muslims called it *al-qetf* “the picked” and, since it was left over after Sa’d b. Abī Waqqāṣ divided the booty, he sent it to ‘Omar in Medina. Although the assembly agreed that ‘Omar should use his own judgment in disposing of it, ‘Alī was concerned lest someone be deprived of a rightful share in the future; so ‘Omar cut it up and divided it among the Muslims. Although ‘Alī did not receive one of the best pieces, he sold his for 20,000 dirhams.



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