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GARDEN VI. IN PERSIAN ART

The garden as an artifice has inspired other forms of art, particularly poetry, painting, and the decorative arts. As with poetry, reference to the garden and its vegetation may recreate the garden in another form, use the garden as a setting, or allude to elements associated with the garden. For poetry (see BĀḠ iii) the first category would include descriptions and impressions of gardens as the subject of the poem (e.g., see Farroḵī's pp. 53-55, description of the royal garden in Ḡazna; ʿAbdī Beyg Šīrāzī, apud Ṣafarī, pp. 206-209), while the second mentions the garden in passing (e.g., Anwarī, I, pp. 183-84, 187-88). The third comprises figures of speech and garden imagery, usually comparing aspects of the loved one to beautiful or fragrant plant elements. For the decorative arts, the "garden carpet" is the quintessential re-creation of the garden, while paintings depict the garden as a setting for events. Vegetal motifs as ornament may be understood as generic allusions to the garden. In special circumstances, these allusions may be viewed as allusions to paradise themes.

Garden reproductions. The tradition of simulating the formal garden layout in a floor covering is considerably older than the earliest surviving garden carpet. According to Ṭabarī (I, pp. 2452-54, tr., XIII, pp. 31-34), the Arab conquerors of Ctesiphon (q.v.), the Sasanian capital, discovered an immense carpet in the audience hall, bearing the design of a garden, complete with water channels, flora and fauna, bejeweled and threaded with gold and silver, which was then cut up and divided among them. It is referred to as Bahār-e Kesrā (q.v.; The Spring of Ḵosrow), Farš-e zemestānī (The Winter carpet; Balʿamī, ed. Rowšan, I, p. 466; *Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 2274-75), and

Bahārestān (*Ḥabīb al-sīar* I, p. 483). However, there is no evidence for the continuation of this tradition in the Islamic period until the time of Shah ʿAbbās I (996-1038 /1588-1629). A garden carpet now in the Jaipur Museum has inventory labels dating its arrival in Amber as a "foreign" carpet in 1632 (Dimand, pp. 93-96). Most garden carpets date to the 18th and 19th centuries, but all follow the style of the Safavid model. The garden is presented as a ground-plan, showing the network of intersecting canals and pools, but the vegetation and animal life are represented as in paintings. This makes for some confusion in the image, but the carpet would have been viewed from many different directions and levels. One of the earliest representations of a garden in Islamic times, appearing on a bronze salver dated to the 8th-9th centuries (Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, catalogue 1979, no. 119; Ringbom, figs. 15-18), displays the facade of the pavilion in the center, surrounded by an arcade with vegetation. A cartographic approach was thus used for depicting the garden on both the carpet and the salver.

Garden elements were also reproduced as three-dimensional objects (Ettinghausen, 1976, pp. 7-10). The Abbasid caliphs had trees of gold in the courtyards of their city palace, complete with golden birds (Lassner, p. 90). The octagonal garden pavilion with upper balconies for viewing, served as a model for a ceramic drum-like table in the 13th century (Plate V).

The garden setting. Since some of the more notable events in the lives of important persons and heroes took place in garden settings, the garden was frequently depicted in art. A domed pavilion similar to the one on the salver is represented in an Arabic manuscript of pseudo-Galen treatise on antidotes (*Ketāb al-deryāq*) dated 595/1199 (Bib. Nat., Paris, Ar. 2964, fol. 27a; ill. Ettinghausen, 1962, p. 85). This type of pavilion recalls the form of the canopy mausoleum represented in the Samanid tomb at Bukhara. At least two illustrations from the famous Mongol *Šāh-nāma* manuscript, known as the "Demotte *Šāh-nāma*" (q.v.; copied ca. 730/1330, now dispersed), take place in garden settings. Both folios are now kept in the Arthur Sackler Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (Brian no 6, s86.0100 and 8; Brian no. 43 s86.01016; Lowry, pp. 90-91; Brian, p. 108).

Garden settings appear frequently in Persian miniature paintings from the late 14th century on (De Angelis and Lentz; Serajuddin). A fenced patio with a pool often fronts a pavilion with balconies. On the patio the prince sits on a raised carpeted dais, often under an awning. Flowering trees and plants appear beyond the fence, and the more elaborate scenes show a narrow

stream or even some of the workmen in the garden (e.g., Neẓāmī's *Ḵamsa*, in the British Library, London Or. 2265, fols. 26b, 48b, 60b, 77b; Binyon, pls. v-vi, ix-xi). Another view of the garden emphasizes the lofty pavilion (eg., "Ḵosrow's visit to Šīrīn's palace," from a manuscript of Neẓāmī's *Ḵosrow o Šīrīn*, dated ca. 807-11/1405-10, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., no. 31.36; Gray, 1979, p. 106, pl. xxxiii; or "Homāy visiting Homāyūn," from the *Dīvān* of Ḵᵛājū Kermānī, dated 798/1396, British Library, London, Add. 18113, fol. 26v; Gray, 1961, p. 46). The story of the master eavesdropping on the bathing girls from Neẓāmī's *Haft peykar* called for a large pool, giving the artist an opportunity to show the entire garden (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, no. 13.228.13, fol. 47a; Gray, 1979, fig. 90; Plate VI). Representations of the prince hunting are ubiquitous, but usually without indication of a formal garden setting as distinguishable from an open meadow.

Mughal gardens were inspired by the Timurid gardens of Khorasan and Transoxania, and the realistic renditions of gardens by Mughal painters add significant information. Ẓahīr-al-Dīn Moḥammad Bābor (q.v.) himself is shown in several illustrations of the late 16th century, laying out the parterres of his garden (Pinder-Wilson, fig. 7). Safavid painting emphasizes the lush quality of the vegetation as well as the richness of the architectural decoration.

Allusions to the garden in art. Floral and foliate ornament has always played an important role in Persian art, and in the Islamic period it predominates. Life-sustaining vegetation found its way into the arts of the ancient Near East, both as motif with possible iconographic associations and as ornament or pattern. The "tree-of-life" flanked by two animals appeared on seals and stelae going back at least to about 3000 B.C.E., which "probably expressed certain ideas about the vital forces of nature" (Porada, pl. 5). This motif continues to appear in Persian art down to the Sasanian period and may have retained some vestige of meaning, evocative of strength and fertility (Porada, p. 213; Grabar, p. 207). With the arrival of Islam the role of vegetal ornament entered a new phase. In religious and official settings it displaced types of ornament that encouraged figural representation, and was therefore given scope to develop in new directions, such as the abstract style associated with the building of the ʿAbbasid city of Samarra. Vegetal subjects found favor for every context demanding ornament, whether as solitary representations or elements in repeating patterns. As such, this ornament cannot be considered as anything more than an "evocation" of nature (Grabar, p. 207).

The question has often been raised as to whether the natural imagery in

Islamic art might have paradisiac symbolism related to the relevant descriptions of paradise in the Qurʾān. Most of the vegetal ornament in Islamic art acts as pattern and therefore cannot convey a message of any sort very effectively. A case can be made, however, for assigning paradisiac significance to representations of gardens when they are associated with funerary contexts, such as mausoleums (Golombek, pp. 241-52).

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