

The gardens are graced with the presence of fruit-bearing trees, their boughs laden with the promise of nourishment and delight. Citrus and pomegranate trees stand in cultivated rows, contributing to the visual splendor while providing practical sustenance to those who wander beneath their branches. Terraced layouts amplify the garden's appeal, enhancing the play of light and shadow as one ascends through verdant layers. At the level gently slopes, each level reveals new vistas, inviting repose and contemplation.

These terraces create a harmonious passage between the natural landscape and the Paradise architect's vision. Symmetry and geometry, hallmarks of Islamic aesthetics, find their expression in the meticulous arrangement of paths & water features.

PARADISE GARDEN

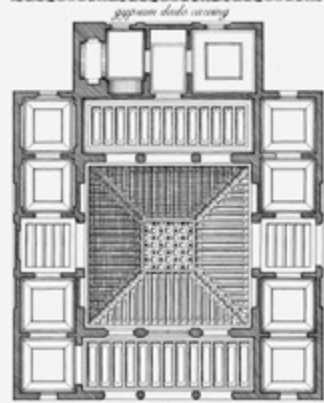


The adherence to mathematical precision contributes to a sense of order and equilibrium, creating an environment where both the mind and the senses find solace. Stone structures, often resembling intricate pavilions, punctuate the gardens. These structures provide refuge from the sun's ardor, offering spaces for leisure, reflection, and social gatherings. They also serve as focal points, demonstrating the interplay of function and form inherent in Islamic design. Fountains and reflective pools, essential elements in Islamic garden philosophy, These water surfaces provide visual interest, their shimmering surfaces capturing both eye and heart. The gentle symphony of rippling water arranges serene scenes of nature. Floral arrangements grace the corners of life.

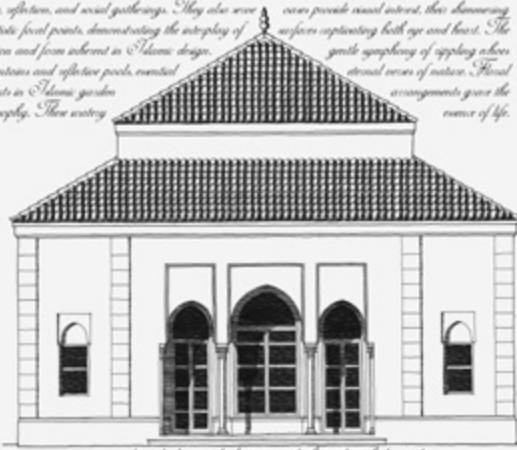


view across through central maqra and auxiliary galleries

Entering one of these paradises, I find myself surrounded by a symphony of colors and scents that enthralls my senses. The air is heavy with the fragrance of blooming flowers and the earthy aroma of herbs. The meticulous arrangement of plant life reveals a deep understanding of horticulture and an aesthetic sensibility that is unparalleled. The gardens are a tapestry of diversity, housing a rich assortment of flora from distant lands. Tall cypress trees stand as sentinels, their dark green foliage reaching towards the heavens. They are like guardians of this botanical haven, sheltering the garden from the harsh sun and providing a sense of enclosure. Beneath their protective canopy, flowering fruit trees - oranges and pomegranates - abound, their branches laden with ripe and tantalizing fruits. As I stroll along the meandering paths, my feet tread upon



gigamash darul-cinay

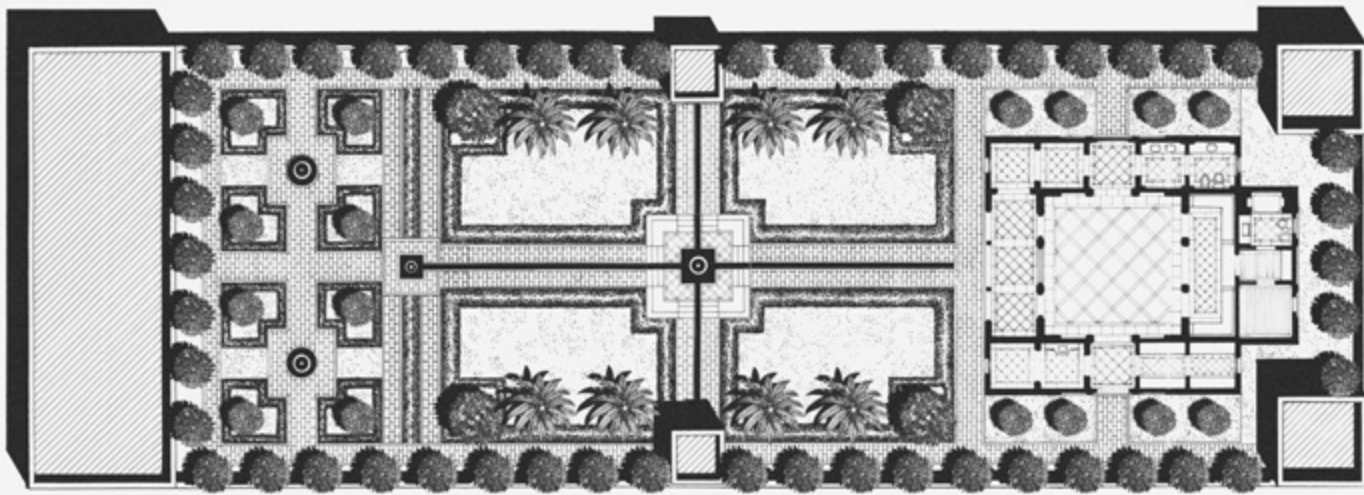


garden side elevation looking towards the triple arched maqra

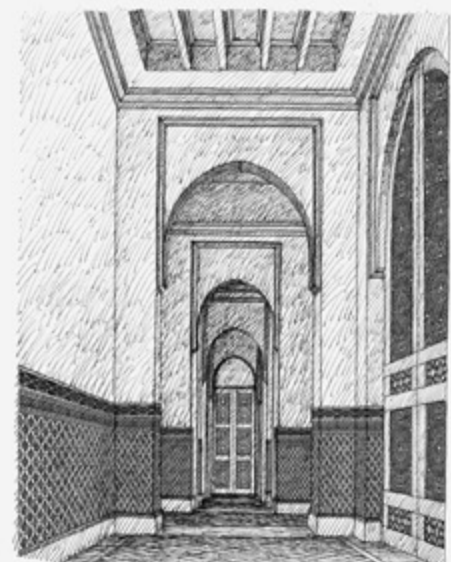
The paths are lined with low-slung hedges, meticulously pruned into geometric patterns that contrast with the wild beauty of the surrounding plants. These hedges guide me through the garden, leading to hidden corners and peaceful alcoves where one can find solace. In the heart of the garden, a central fountain plays a murmuring tune. Water gushes forth from intricately carved marble basins, catching the sunlight and casting shimmering reflections on the surrounding surfaces. The sound of trickling water is a soothing melody that mingles with the songs of the birds, creating an atmosphere of serenity and peace to rest and admire the beautiful garden.



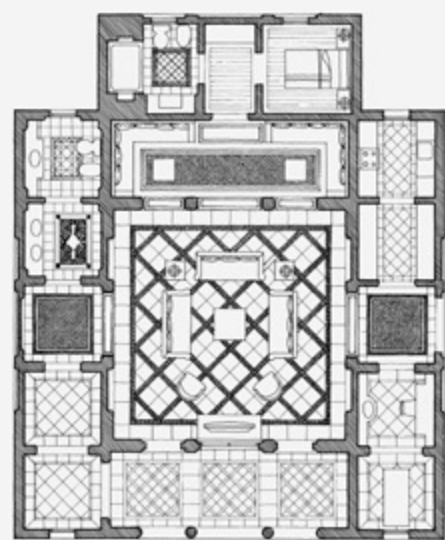
longitudinal section of the garden and darwajah



garden site plan



view in the gallery that indirectly leads to the main maqra



darwajah floor plan



view at the entrance terrace

Mohamad Hamouié, Karim Hamouié, Nour Hamouié

The Gardener-Architect

El arquitecto-jardinero

O arquiteto-jardineiro

Abstract | Resumen | Resumo

The spiritual essence and symbolic significance of gardens of paradise (i.e. formal Islamic gardens) have often been overshadowed by modern observations focusing on their physical attributes. But these gardens are not merely earthly landscapes but profound reflections of the divine. Drawing upon Plato's theory of forms, we find that our world is filled with symbols, and human interactions reflect what our souls once comprehended in a previous existence. Gardens, with their unmistakable spiritual nature, are tangible reminders and impressions of paradise on earth. This article considers the garden's symbolic significance across all major monotheistic religions, and the garden as the original sanctuary, from the time God created humankind. It recalls the earliest recorded imitations of paradise from the era of Cyrus the Great and examines the various iterations of paradise gardens through the age of Islam, all of which seek to manifest the promised paradise recurrently mentioned in the Quran. These gardens hold the key to unveiling deeper spiritual truths and serve as a bridge between the visible and invisible realms.

La esencia espiritual y la importancia simbólica de los jardines del Edén –como los jardines formales islámicos– a menudo se han visto eclipsadas por las observaciones modernas que se centran en sus características físicas. Sin embargo, estos jardines no son meros paisajes terrenales, sino profundas reflexiones sobre lo divino. A partir de la teoría platónica de las formas, encontramos que nuestro mundo está lleno de símbolos y que las interacciones humanas reflejan lo que nuestras almas comprendieron en una vida anterior. Los jardines, con su inconfundible naturaleza espiritual, son recuerdos y huellas tangibles del paraíso en la Tierra. En este artículo se analiza la importancia simbólica del jardín en las grandes religiones monoteístas, y el jardín como santuario original desde que Dios creó a la humanidad. El artículo recuerda las primeras imitaciones del paraíso de las que queda registro, que datan de la época de Ciro el Grande, y examina las diversas iteraciones de jardines del Edén en la época islámica, cuya finalidad era poner de manifiesto el paraíso prometido del que habla reiteradamente el Corán. Estos jardines tienen la llave para revelar verdades espirituales más profundas y son el puente entre el reino de lo visible y lo invisible.

A essência espiritual e a relevância simbólica dos jardins do paraíso têm sido frequentemente ofuscadas pelas observações modernas que se focam nos seus atributos físicos. Mas estes jardins não são apenas paisagens terrenas, mas reflexos profundos do divino. Baseando-nos na teoria das formas de Platão, descobrimos que o nosso mundo está repleto de símbolos e que as interações humanas refletem o que as nossas almas compreenderam numa existência anterior. Os jardins, com a sua inconfundível natureza espiritual, são recordações e impressões tangíveis do paraíso na terra. Este artigo analisa a relevância simbólica do jardim em todas as principais religiões monoteístas, e o jardim como santuário original, desde que Deus criou a humanidade. Recordamos as primeiras imitações do paraíso que foram registadas desde a era de Ciro o Grande, e examina as várias iterações de jardins paradisíacos ao longo da era do Islão, todas elas procurando manifestar o paraíso prometido, recorrentemente mencionado no Alcorão. Estes jardins contêm a chave para a revelação de verdades espirituais mais profundas e servem de ponte entre os reinos visíveis e invisíveis.



- 1: Watercolor aerial view of the Paradise Garden at Dar Al Ansari
- 2: Watercolor view from the central fountain toward the *diwaniyah* pavilion
- 3: Watercolor view from the central fountain toward an arched gazebo

Paradise Lost

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden: and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. (Genesis 2.7)

Here the Old Testament evokes mankind's original sanctuary, the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve resided before being deceived and disobeying the word of God, and being exiled from that celestial sanctuary to this earthly realm. On Earth, Adam and Eve repented their wrongdoing and sought God's forgiveness, longing for the serenity, beauty, and abundance of Eden. This longing – the desire to return to a state of harmony and bliss – has resonated throughout human history and appeared recurrently in cultural expressions.

Paradise Recollected

Then, Simmias, our souls existed formerly, apart from our bodies, and possessed knowledge before they came into man's shape.

Then before we began to see, and to hear, and to use the other senses, we must have received the knowledge of the nature of abstract and real equality; otherwise, we could not have compared equal sensible objects with abstract equality, and seen that the former in all cases strive to be like the latter, though they are always inferior to it? (Plato, 428-347 B.C.)

In *Phædo - On the Soul*, Plato gives a final account of the teachings of his late mentor Socrates, sentenced to death by the Athenian court in 399 B.C. He depicts Socrates in his latter days, immersed in contemplation and surrounded by friends. Socrates discusses the immortality of the soul: the concept that the soul exists prior to earthly forms, residing in the realm of truth previously to our temporary life, and eventually returning to the eternal realm. Socrates infers that within the span of a lifetime, knowledge of the soul becomes obscured, only to be regained in the physical world through recollection, a recovery of forgotten wisdom, and that earthly form is merely a shadow, an inferior imitation of eternal truth.

Imitating Paradise – The Persian Garden

From one of the earliest recorded monotheistic religions emerged what we refer to as the *chār bāgh*, Persian for “four gardens”: the gardens of paradise mentioned in the Quran’s Surah Ar-Rahman, an earthly attempt at rendering the lost sanctuary of eternal truth into tangible reality.

لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ

And for him, who fears to stand before his Lord, are two gardens (Ar-Rahman 55:46)

وَمِنْ دُونِهِمَا جَنَّاتٍ

And beside them are two other gardens (Ar-Rahman 55:62)

Cyrus the Great (590-529 B.C.), the first of the Achaemenid dynasty, was a pious and just Zoroastrian ruler, whose empire stretched from Persian homeland of Persis westward to the shores of the Aegean and eastward to the mountainous steppe of Central Asia. At its heart he founded the imperial capital of Pasargadae, in the Murgháb Plain. Here is the great monarch’s final resting place, surrounded by a grove of trees watered by streams and a meadow of long grass.

Six hundred meters from the tomb are the ruins of his palaces. Several gateways remain, along with a lofty column amidst a grid of derelict pedestals, the site of a grand canopied veranda. The palaces were three in number, one a private residence and the other two official buildings of Cyrus’s court. In front of them were watercourses carved in stone, several of which long remained covered by soil and came to light only during excavations in 1951, when it became clear that the palaces stood in a great walled garden, with stone watercourses and cisterns laid out symmetrically before it, providing a fresh and pleasant outlook from the colonnaded verandas.

The deep appreciation for natural beauty in Persian culture is rooted in a conception of divine beauty resulting in the cultivation of exquisitely crafted gardens inspired by a nostalgia for a lost paradise, arranged symmetrically along flowing streams and lush with fragrant flowers and fruit-bearing trees. They were created as reflections of divine order and earthly manifestations of heavenly paradise.

For two centuries after the death of Cyrus, the Achaemenid Empire continued to expand. At its height it extended from the Indus and Central Asia in the east to the Balkans and Egypt in the west. With military and administrative conquests came periods of cultural dissemination, and similar gardens were produced throughout the empire, such as those of Susa or of Persepolis.

The rise and fall of dynasties and empires brings cultural exchange, cultural adoption, and cultural evolution. The Achaemenid Empire fell to Alexander the Great during his campaigns of 334-327 B.C., and the young Macedonian commander, who studied, respected, and had an affinity with the character that was Cyrus the Great, paid his respects to the late emperor's tomb on his arrival at Pasargadae. Many Persian records and scientific, medical, and philosophical texts were transported to Greece for study and translation. And so the culture of that empire, which had endured over 220 years, was assimilated into Hellenistic culture.

The Old Persian word *pāiri-dāēza*, meaning "walled garden", was adopted by the Greek philosopher and historian Xenophon of Athens, as *paradeisos*. The term was later used for the Garden of Eden in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Thus the notion of earthly paradise in Persian literature influenced the gardens of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire and also the Ptolemies of Alexandria.

1: A plaster craftsman carving geometric and organic details in a muqarnas corbel

2: Finely carved patterns decorate arched openings on the upper floor of a narrow courtyard





3



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3: Deep archway leading to the central courtyard

4: Double tiered muqarnas corbel over a finely carved capital in the main majlis space of the diwaniyah

Promised Paradise

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسْكَنٍ
طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

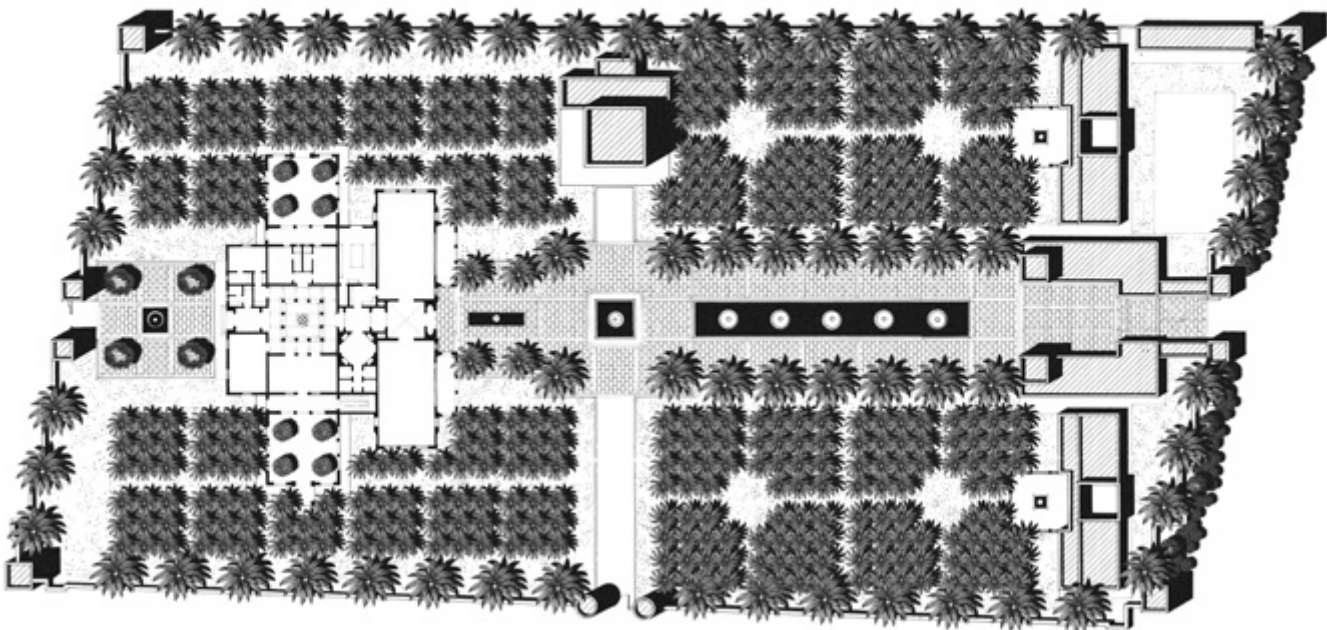
Allah has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens under which rivers flow, to stay there forever, and splendid homes in the Gardens of Eternity, and above all the approval of Allah. That is truly the ultimate triumph. (At-Tawbah 9:72)

The word *Jannah* (Paradise) appears recurrently in the Quran, in various forms – singular, dual, and plural – denoting either Paradise, Gardens, or Gardens in Paradise. This equivalence between the term and its context indicates the nature of what is promised for believers in the afterlife.

Such heavenly gardens are depicted as sanctuaries of eternal bliss and delight, with streams and springs, pleasant dwellings, shaded pavilions for believers to recline in, and fruit within reach. This Quranic imagery of paradise as a serene and bountiful sanctuary in turn determined the qualities, spiritual symbolism, and ambiance of earthly interpretations of paradise, with an emphasis on elements such as water, fruit-bearing trees, and shady recesses.



Watercolor of the main residence and *diwaniyah* surrounded by date palms



Plan and longitudinal section of Qasr Al Nakheel

Imitating Paradise – During the Age of Islam

The portrayal of paradise as an exquisite garden gives gardens a central role in Muslim culture as a haven for relaxation, pleasure, and privacy while simultaneously having spiritual and symbolic dimensions. They invite contemplation of divine creation and are a reminder of God's blessings. The Quranic description is vivid but not detailed. Reference is made to branches casting shade, unfailing fruit trees, fountains of running water, and tranquil pavilions.



- 1: Staggered portion of a garden wall with square-based watchtowers
- 2: Main vaulted gateway with an iron-bolted timber gate
- 3: Residence and *diwaniyah* towers over dense date palms
- 4: Round towers in the side wall
- 5: Panoramic view of a lush walled garden in a desert setting



Miniature depiction of
Qasr Al Nakheel

In most of the Islamic world, gardens offer relief from heat and bustling streets. Terraces, canals, and cisterns serve horticulture and irrigation while running water also satisfies a desire for display and pleasant sound. Fruit trees cast shade while flowers offer fragrance and color.

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ

And we have created every living thing from water (Al-Anbya 21:30)

Water is a symbol of life itself, echoing the divine origin of existence. This resonates with the above Quranic verse, exalting water as the source of life. Transcending its utility, water is present and central to the design of gardens in its symbolic facet, and its various manifestations evoke an array of sensory experiences, both tranquil and dynamic.

Transitions from stillness to motion underscore the dynamic interplay of elements within a garden, fostering an atmosphere of harmonious coexistence. Motionless, the reflective pools become contemplative reservoirs of serenity. These mirror-like surfaces invoke a sense of divine presence, inviting contemplation and offering spiritual solace. Flowing through narrow channels or meandering streams, water conveys a sense of dynamism and vitality, a reminder of the temporal nature of earthly life and the continuous renewal of creation.

Fountains, perhaps the most iconic feature of Islamic gardens, are the pinnacle of aqueous metaphor. These ornate structures serve as points of convergence between the terrestrial and the celestial. Fountains are often positioned at the heart of a garden, symbolizing the centrality of water as the spring of life.



1



2



3



4



5

وَطَلِّحْ مَنْصُودٍ (28) فِي سِدْرٍ تَخْضُودٍ (27) وَأَصْحَبِ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَبِ الْيَمِينِ (29)
 لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (32) وَفَكِينَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (31) وَمَاءٍ مَسْكُوبٍ (33)

And those on the right hand; what of those on the right hand? They will dwell amid thornless lote trees, and clustered acacia with spreading shade, and water gushing, and fruit in plenty, neither limited nor forbidden. (Al-Waqi'ah 56:27-33)

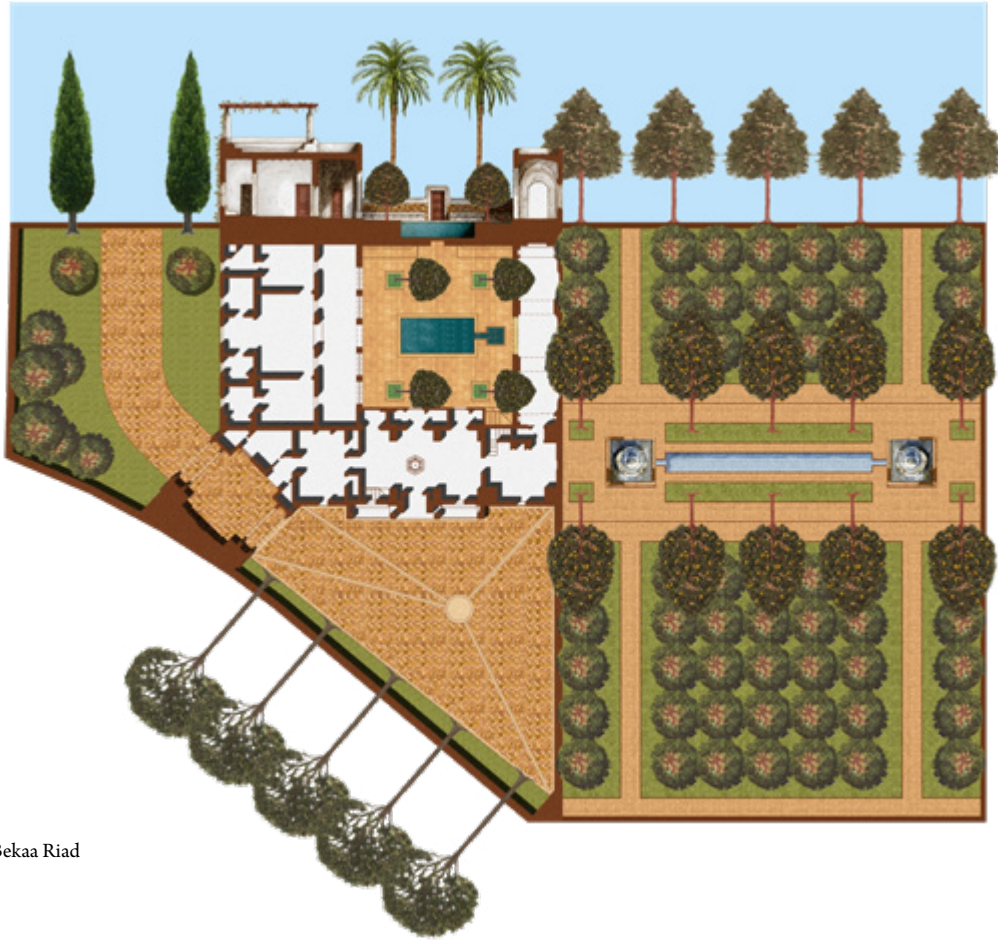
1: Side courtyard of the main residence with a carved stone fountain

2: Arcaded terraces

3: Carved stone fountain, looking toward the round side towers

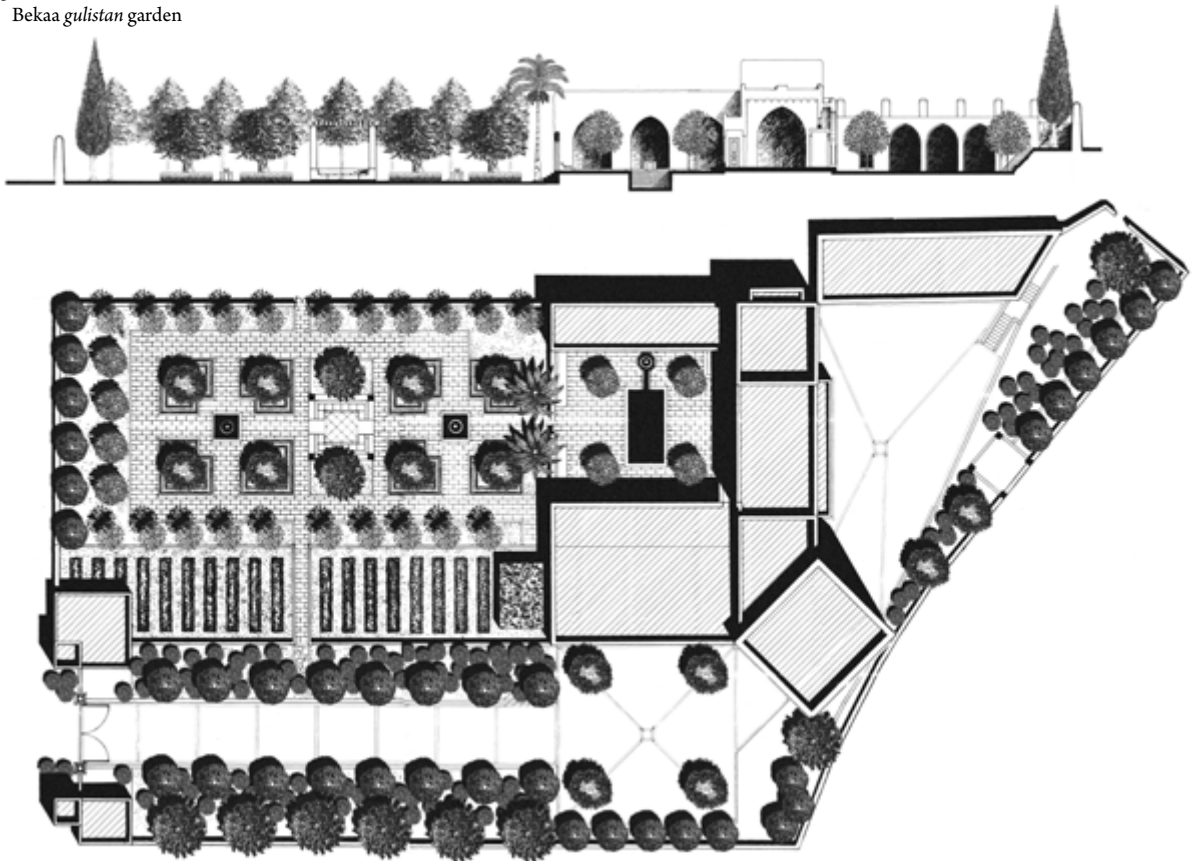
4: View of the main residence from the main gateway

5: Lush garden with guard towers



Miniature depiction of Bekaa Riad

Plan and longitudinal section of the Bekaa *gulistan* garden



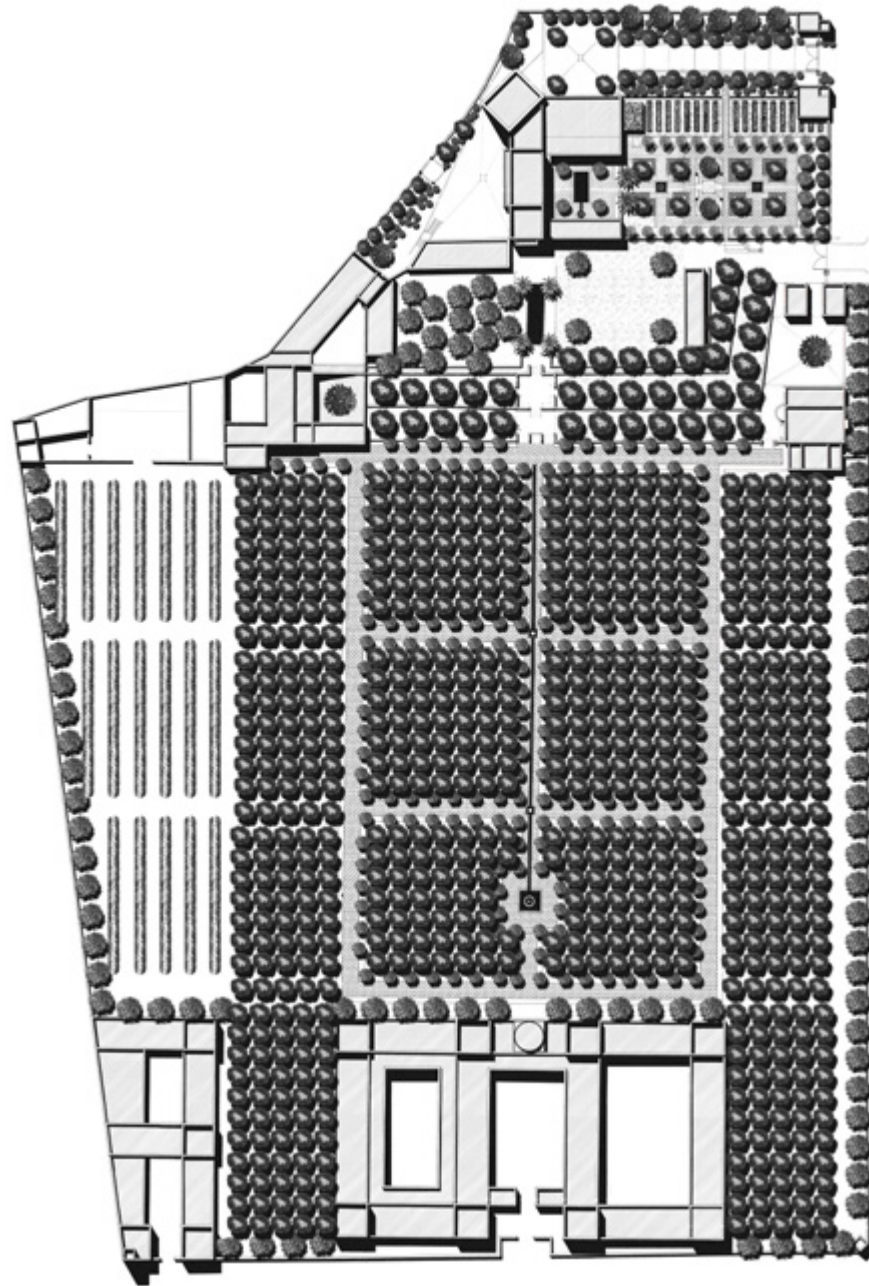


Various views in the Beqaa Farm Paradise Gardens

In Islamic gardens a presence of diverse and abundant plants reflects Quranic references to the richness of vegetation in paradise. Paradise is described as a place of lush verdant gardens and trees forever bearing delightful fruit – a place of shade and beauty. Dates, pomegranates, and figs are often mentioned, as are flowers such as roses and jasmine, filling the air with pleasant scents. Thus the careful curation of plant life in paradise gardens aims to create a harmonious and visually captivating environment representing the blessings and tranquility of heaven.

Types of Paradise Garden

Among various types of Islamic garden, palaces may have a large walled garden, such as a *chār bāgh*, surrounding a pavilion or occasionally the palace itself. A palace may also have an inner court garden, with areas for sports along with vines, orchards, and kitchen gardens. There are also pleasure gardens that contain just a pavilion; and in India, gardens that the owner enjoys not only in his lifetime but also thereafter, installed in a mausoleum set in a symbolic paradise.



Masterplan of Beqaa Farm with various garden types: *bustan*, *gulistan*, and *riad*

The *chār bāgh* is a quadrilateral fourfold design at the center of which is a pool or fountain surrounded by paths or water channels. Symbolically, the water springs from the fountain and flows outward in four directions representing the four rivers of heaven. This distinctive layout is the archetypal Islamic garden, to be seen in diverse interpretations throughout the Muslim world from Umayyad Andalusia and Safavid Iran to Mughal India.

The *bustan*, an enclosed orchard, is systematically subdivided into parcels containing an array of fruit trees and date palms. Assorted vegetables and herbs are cultivated in linear beds, occasionally in sunken plots, watered by a network of irrigation channels. Elevated walkways allow the garden to be enjoyed from above. Such gardens are naturally dependent on a consistent and regulated water supply, directed from a spring or well into a central cistern, before circulating through the channels to nourish the orchard.

A *gulistan* rose garden may take up a portion of a *bustan* courtyard. In most cases though, it is designed as a *chār bāgh*, enclosed with a fountain at the center of a quadrilateral layout. Unlike the



Various views in the Beqaa Farm Paradise Gardens

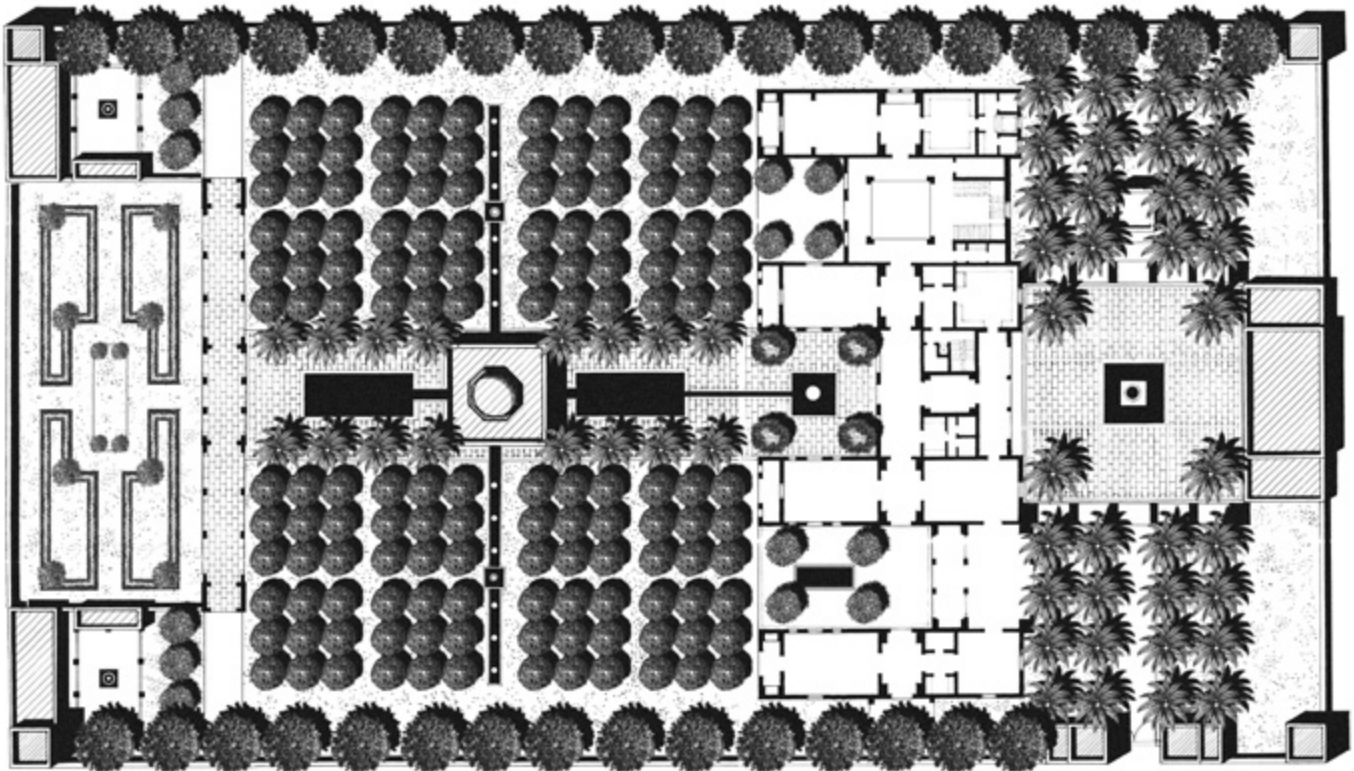
other types, these are known as pleasure gardens; they please the senses as colorful flowers fill the air with fragrance.

The *riad* is a primarily urban dwelling characterized by an inward focus toward a central courtyard, serving as a retreat from the dense urban fabric of Islamic cities. At the heart of the *riad's* architectural composition is an inner symmetrical garden, often with trees spanning two or more stories and centered around a decorative fountain. This central garden space would be meticulously designed to create an oasis of serenity and respite from the bustling exterior. In many instances, especially for wealthier patrons, the garden area was enclosed by a gallery or arcade that could be accessed indirectly through a narrow vestibule, safeguarding family privacy. Central gardens of traditional *riads* were frequently adorned with fruit trees, such as orange or lemon trees, for aesthetic appeal and practical utility. These gardens were an extension of the interior living quarters, fostering a harmonious coexistence between architecture and nature.



Axonometric view of a private *chār bāgh* garden in Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, under construction

Plan and longitudinal section of a private *chār bāgh* garden in Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, under construction





Views of the main *châr bâgh* garden and internal courtyards with reflecting pools, fountains and a variety of fruit trees and date palms

Biographies | Biografías | Biografias

Mohamad Hamouié

Mohamad Hamouié's private research and practice have made him one of the leaders of New Traditional Architecture in the Middle East. He is a member of the INTBAU College of Traditional Practitioners, a Professor of Practice, and Founding Chair of the INTBAU Levant Chapter. Hamouié established his private practice in 1993. His first project, the Central Mosque in Shkodër, Albania was nominated for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2001. He was nominated for the Driehaus Architecture Prize in 2020. Through his comprehensive knowledge of history and awareness of local context, Mohamad has designed and built more than 300 projects. As he collaborates with master craftsmen worldwide, his buildings are as much guided by contemporary theories as by traditional values.

Karim Hamouié

Karim Hamouié is a Lebanese/British architect and partner at Mimar Hamouié. He is a member of INTBAU Young Practitioners and the chapter coordinator of INTBAU Levant. He received a diploma in architecture from the American University of Beirut in 2018 and has since been working under the guidance of his father Mohamad Hamouié. Karim inherited a fascination for traditional architecture by observing his father's work and traveling to diverse and culturally rich locations. He represents a new generation brought up with an understanding of progress and continuity within tradition. He has collaborated in a variety of work including residential, sacred, mixed use, commercial, monument restoration, urban regeneration, and urban development projects.

Nour Hamouié

Nour Hamouié is Lead Landscape Architect at Mimar Hamouié. She received her diploma in Landscape Architecture from the American University of Beirut in 2015 and has since then closely collaborated with her father on garden designs for dwellings, mosques, and parks. Mimar Hamouié's architectural work springs from a deep understanding of the typological and historical context specific to each project. This also manifests itself in the design principles governing Nour's gardens, harmoniously complementing the practice's residential architecture.