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THE GARDENS OF TIMUR: NEW PERSPECTIVES

The subject of the formal garden has attracted more attention in recent years than many of the more traditional subjects of Islamic architecture. It involves various domains of inquiry, not only the history of architecture, but also architectural ensembles and town planning, horticulture, hydraulics, patronage, and signification. The Timurid garden of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century, in particular, has attracted attention probably because of the widely held belief that it served as a model for the great Mughal gardens of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Lahore, Agra, and Delhi. For this reason, most studies of the Timurid garden have concentrated on morphological questions. More recently, attention has turned to the social context of these gardens and their possible meanings. The hypotheses emerging from such studies suggest several new perspectives, relative to both the morphological and semiotic aspects of the Persian garden.

PLACEMENT OF THE PAVILION

Morphological questions become especially disconcerting when they have an impact on semiological ones. Taking into consideration those “Persianate” gardens which survive, that is, the gardens of the Mughals, the most common form has a major fourfold division with a pavilion in the center. Pools are found at the intersection(s) of a grid of water channels. Within this repertory the arrangement found in the Taj Mahal complex, with its pavilion at the end of the formal garden, appears aberrant and has led some scholars to seek a semiological explanation. Others point to the river palaces in Agra which do have pavilions at the end as nearby models for the Taj Mahal. The question then becomes, why did Shah Jahan choose this form of garden over the predominant form in other works sponsored by himself and his predecessors? While it is not my intent to answer this question, it draws attention to the availability of two models for the formal garden. The question I will deal with is, since the visual culture of the Mughals was inspired by that of their ancestors, the Timurids, which of these gardens represents the “classical” Timurid chahar-bagh? The two provide very different experiences. The central pavilion remains in view from all parts of the garden. The pavilion at one end comes as a climax, its impact on the visitor building like a crescendo the closer one gets to it. The prince sitting in such a pavilion would have a grand view of the avenue of approach, including the spectacular pool at the crossing of the chief axes. For the river palace, locating the pavilion at one end allowed for a viewing of the river and its palatial structures, as well as a viewing of the building cluster when approached from the river.

Timur’s Quadripartite Gardens

Textual and archaeological evidence, sifted through by many scholars, indicates that the garden with a centralized pavilion predominated in Timur’s time (1370–1405). In fact, none of the gardens attributed to Timur are known to have followed the second model, nor do there seem to be any pre-Timurid examples. Five of Timur’s gardens are described in some detail in Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi’s Zafar-nama and the report of the Spanish envoy to Timur, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo. “Dawlatabad,” one of the gardens built some distance from the city, has been identified and excavated. These descriptions are worth reviewing because they suggest a certain progression in the development of the early Timurid garden.

Bagh-i Bihisht (Paradise Garden): Built by Timur’s order to the west of Samarqand in 1378, the Bagh-i Bihisht combined twelve existing gardens (“as many as the zodiac”) into one. A lofty pavilion (qasr) was erected in it, but there is no indication of the pavilion’s sitting.

Bagh-i Shimal (Garden of the North): The Bagh-i Shimal already existed north of the city when Timur, in the spring of 1397, set up his royal tent there and ordered the building of a palace (qasr). For a month and a half he resided there, while the palace was under construction, calling upon the engineers and architects of Fars, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Baghdad, and other places for the purpose; they drew its plan (“with the pen of understanding on the slate of skill”) and when Timur had accepted it,
astrologers ascertained the favorable moment for construction to begin, and work started in Jumada II 799 (March 1397). He assigned the supervision of the construction of each of the four corners to his amirs, under whom he appointed the international masters. They built solid foundations, and in each corner they set up pillars of marble brought from Tabriz. The surface of the walls was decorated with lapis and gold, surpassing “the Artang of Mani and picture room of China.” The floors were paved with marble. Outside and inside the walls were revetted with glazed tiles (kāshi-kārī): “Paradise abounds in the lapis of its inscriptions/Inscribed is: ‘Long may you have power and existence.’”

It is difficult to imagine how four different supervisors could work on a single building of the type characteristic of Timur’s other gardens (the cross-in square, or cruciform, pavilion described below). Perhaps this structure was a large courtyard-centered building like Timur’s palace at Shahrisabz. The reference to an abundance of Tabriz marble columns would fit with a colonnade around a courtyard. Alternatively, although this comment follows the mention of the pavilion, the “four corners” may refer back to the garden itself, with four separate structures, one in each corner of the enclosure. The text does not give the specific location of the palace within the garden.

Bagh-i Dilgusha (Heart’s Delight Garden). Descriptions of the Bagh-i Dilgusha are far more detailed than of the others. It was built in 1396 at the south edge of the Kan-i Gil meadows (on the east side of Samarqand; see map, fig. 1). The garden occupied a square area 1,500 gaz on a side. If the gaz used for the Ahmad Yasa shrine contemporary with this is 60.6 cm., the garden measured 909 m. square. One gate stood in the middle (dar mīyān) of each side. The vaults of the gates were filled with muqarnas, revetted in glazed tile (kāshi-kārī). Each corner had a tower, decorated with tile (kāshi). In the Calcutta manuscript these are referred to as dove towers. Most intriguing is Yazdi’s description of the layout of the garden itself: “He [Timur] divided the open space of the garden geometrically into square walkways and hexagonal and triangular chamans (planting beds). He ordered poplars to be planted along the edges of the walkways and the hexagons and triangles of their borders to be arranged with various fruit trees and diverse trees bearing flowers and fruit.” The result must have been something like the geometric pattern of chamans found in the old Rajput gardens at Amber. Engineers from every country were called upon. Perhaps the garden based on a complex geometric pattern was something new to Samarqand, coming from Fars and Iraq as did the mosaic faience which occurs here and on contemporaneous buildings at the Shah-i Zinda. A long poem mentions some of the fruits and plants found in the garden. In the middle of the garden they built a pavilion consisting of three vaults and a dome. The poem which follows mentions “marble columns at the edges of its corners/foundations...” According to Clavijo (see below), the three vaults formed arms of a cross, the fourth of which was probably an entrance iwan. A dome was situated at the crossing. The geometrical arrangement of the garden itself may have been new to the Samarqand region, but the placement of the pavilion at the center of the square enclosure (as indicated also by Clavijo) follows the early Timurid pattern.

Bagh-i Naw (New Garden). The Zafar-nāma does not refer to this garden by name, but it describes the Bagh-i Naw in detail, as does Clavijo. Situated south of the Bagh-i Shimal, its construction had begun before the
arrived at the foreign envoys in 1404 and was just being completed at that time. Like the Baghi Dilgusha, as Clavijo was to note, it was approximately 1,500 gaz on a side and had round corner towers. The palace had a cruciform plan and a large tank in front. Clavijo praises the blue and gold tiles. According to the Zafar-nama, it was something very special. The pavilion (qayr) "in its midst" (dar miyan-i an) was to be larger than any built under Timur to that time. The architects (hannat'an) came from Egypt and Syria ("Misr and Shām").

Since the decoration of buildings in Syria is of marble, and running water is very common in all habitations, builders from those parts are extremely skilled in stone cutting, stone inlay (fissūs-kārī), and the contriving of running fountains. The work which inlaid bow makers do with ebony, ivory, and other materials, they do on walls and floors, using stones of many colors with the same intricacy and delicacy. Consequently, they have produced elegant works of marble inside that pavilion of wondrous form, giving testimony to their cleverness and skill. Their disposition of very pleasant fountains causes moisture to abound. Craftsmen (tamāla) from Fars and [Persian] Iraq have decorated its exterior with mosaic faience of the utmost elegance and strength.

When the building was finished, Timur called for a celebration, to which the whole household was invited, as well as the foreign ambassadors. The celebrations were held in Kan-i Gil on Rabi I 807 (September–October 1404).

While the pavilion is still placed in the center of a square garden enclosure, this garden appears to have introduced several innovations, owing to the contributions of the Syrian and Egyptian architects. Water plays a significant role, and one could imagine a garden with terraces running down one of the slopes north of the city, like the later Timurid gardens founded there. The Zafar-nama situates it south of the North Garden (Baghi Shamal) and, to judge by the location of the celebrations, near the Kan-i Gil meadows west of the city. The intarsia pavements and fountains, for which Mamluk architecture was famous, must also have been a novelty in Samarqand.

Baghi Dawlatabad (Garden of Good Fortune). Masson argued for the identification of the Baghi Dawlatabad, visited by Timur on his return from India in 1399, on the basis of its place on Timur's itinerary and the indications of toponymic traditions in the area. He relates it to the enclosed orchard and vineyard near the village of Misr where Clavijo was detained. Clavijo's description is borne out by excavations carried out by Sukharev. The palace stood on top of an artificial mound. A major waterway ran along the axis of the orchard, and there were six great tanks in an orthogonal grid of walkways. A moat around the hill was crossed by two bridges. The orchard and adjoining square vineyard formed a double-square rectangle. Baghi Dawlatabad thus provides yet another example of the square garden with a pavilion in the center.

The Late Fifteenth-Century Chahar-bagh

In contrast to what seems to be the garden plan characteristic of Timur's foundations is the description of the formal garden (chahar-bagh) in the agricultural manual, Irshād al-Zira'ā, composed in Herat by Qasim b. Yusuf in 1515. The description is based on the garden tradition practiced in Herat under the later Timurids. While many of the elements accord with Timur's gardens, the single most significant difference is the placement of the pavilion. It was to be located at one end of a rectangular enclosure, looking out on the formal fourpart garden.

Thus, what appears anomalous in the design of the Taj Mahal garden can be explained as a characteristic Timurid plan, but possibly one that developed toward the end of the century. We should not imagine that landscape design was static and did not evolve. In Timur's own lifetime there seems to have been a growing interest in complex garden designs and the variety of plants that could be grown in them. Under Timur's successors this interest is reflected in the expansion of cultivation in Herat and a heightened interest in all aspects of agriculture, including experimentation. The treatise on agriculture, the Irshād al-Zira'ā, based on practices in late Timurid Herat, may in fact have itself been the inspiration for the Taj Mahal complex. A manuscript of this manual existed in the Mughal royal library. The diversity which appears in Mughal gardens merely reflects the diversity in the Timurid models, available to the Mughals from eye-witness reports, descriptions in the chronicles and agricultural manuals, and manuscript illustrations.

The veneration in which the Mughals held their Timurid ancestors is well known, and Shah Jahan, in particular, sought inspiration from Timurid culture. The fact that the garden with a pavilion at one end may not have existed in Timur's Samarqand was not relevant. When the Mughals wished to emphasize their descent from Timur, they were not pedantic. They chose freely from the full menu of artistic traditions developed over the entire Timurid century. More than any other medium, the garden lent itself to this sort of reverie. As Thomas Lentz has suggested, the garden was where Timur's de-
scendants went to get in touch with their noble ancestry and the fantasies which they generated about Timur’s nomadic lifestyle.34 Lentz was referring to the later Timurids, but the observation is probably more pertinent to the Mughals. This association of the garden with a nomadic lifestyle brings us to questions about the original function and meaning of these gardens.

THE SEMIOLOGY OF THE TIMURID GARDEN

If we are to understand the meaning of the garden for Timur, we must look at the history of Timur’s garden-building activity. Maps reconstructing Timurid Samarqand show a necklace of gardens ringing Samarqand, as many as nine, supplemented by others along the route between the capital and Shahrisabz, Timur’s hometown and second capital (fig. 1).35 By eliminating from consideration those which he did not found or use, we reduce the total from nine to seven. Each of these gardens had a history, which can be pieced together from the scattered references in the Zafar-nāma. The following list includes several gardens which were not mentioned above because there is no description of them, and does not include the Dawlatabad garden, which was along the route to Shahrisabz.

Garden Histories

Bagh-i Bihishi, (west of the city) is the earliest noted, though we cannot be sure which garden Timur built first. It was founded in the name of his new bride, Tuman Agha, in 1378, and visited by Timur in 1399 and 1404. Bagh-i Shimal, (presumably somewhere north of the city), was where in 1397 Timur built a palace for Miranshah’s daughter, Bikisi Sultan. A festival was held to open it and officially to invest Shahrukh with the government of Khurasan. Shortly thereafter, Bikisi Sultan was wed to Iskandar Sultan, Timur’s grandson. It was visited by Timur in 1399 and in 1404. Bagh-i Buland (the Exalted Garden), where Miranshah’s wife visited him in 1397, was visited by Timur in 1399 and in 1404.

Bagh-i Chanar (the Plane-Tree Garden) was where Timur’s chief wife Saray Malik Khanum stayed in 1399 and 1404. Nagshi-i Jahan (Image of the World), was located by Babur; it was attributed to the 1370’s by Pugachenkova, and visited by Timur in 1399.

Bagh-i Dilgusha was constructed in 1396, when Timur decided to take a new wife, Tutkal Khanum, and he built in her name the splendid Bagh-i Dilgusha on the south edge of the meadow of Kan-i Gil where the royal camp often stayed and where many of the major ceremonies took place. It was joined to the Firuzeh Gate by a poplar-lined street, suitable for processions. Thus, although Timur built it on the occasion of his marriage to Tutkal Khanum, daughter of Khizr Khvajeh Khan Chaghatai in 1397, this was, no doubt, to supersede all other residential gardens in Samarqand. It was visited by Timur in 1399 and in 1404.

Bagh-i Naw was the last garden; it was built upon his return from campaigns in 1404. It is unnamed, but Clavijo seems to be talking about the same garden described in the Zafar-nāma and calls it the “New Garden.” It was to be even grander than the Bagh-i Dilgusha.

Most discussions about Timur’s garden “circuitry” are based on only two references in the chronicles, corresponding to two notable occasions — his return from the Indian campaign in 1399 and his return from the Anatolian campaigns in 1404.35 A closer look at these itineraries reveals their intent.

On the first occasion he spent fifteen days in Shahrisabz (Kesh), where he visited the tombs of his spiritual leader and his father. He left on Tuesday and camped by the river; on Wednesday he camped at Chanar-ribat; on Thursday he stayed at Qu tulq Yurt; on Friday, at Takhti-Qaracheh (a garden); on Saturday, in the Bagh-i Qaratupa in the Kushki Jahan-nama; and on Sunday, in the garden he had built at Dawlatabad. Finally, he reached the outskirts of Samarqand. He spent Monday night at the Bagh-i Dilgusha, held a great feast for all his wives, princes, and retainers, and entered Samarqand the next day. This is the garden he had had constructed two years earlier for his new wife Tutkal Khanum. Wednesday seems to have been a full day, beginning with a visit to the shrine of Qusam b. Abbas and the khanaqah of his wife Tuman Agha near the complex north of the city. Next he visited three gardens: the Bagh-i Chanar and Nagshi-i Jahan, and the Bagh-i Bihisht, from which he dispatched the elephants (brought back from the Indian campaign) to the Bagh-i Buland. We are not told where he resided for the next three weeks until he orders the construction of the Great Mosque. During that time Timur held court near the mosque, alternating between the madrasa of Saray Malik Khanum, his chief wife, and the khanaqah of Tuman Agha, the next in seniority.34

The second mention of the garden circuit occurs upon Timur’s return from Anatolia in 1404. From the Bagh-i Qaratupa near Shahrisabz he moved to the Bagh-i Chanar. Disappointed not to find his wives there, for they were slow in returning with the baggage train, he
sent orders that they hurry home. When they arrived, Saray Malik Khanum went to the Bagh-i Chanar and Tuman Agha went to the Bagh-i Bihishit. Timur chose to go first to the latter to recover from an illness. Then he moved to the Bagh-i Shimul for several days, then to the Bagh-i Buland, and entered Samarqand. After ordering the construction of a mausoleum for his late grandson (the Gur-i Amir) and inspecting progress on the mosque, Timur moved to the Bagh-i Chanar and then to the Bagh-i Dilgusha for a few days.

The Garden as Encampment
To explain this constant shifting of residence from garden to garden and the apparent proliferation of these gardens, some art historians have looked to Timur’s nomadic habits. The garden is seen as providing both a practical solution to the problem of housing and a kind of theater in which certain ideological conventions could be played out. Scholars have drawn attention to the fact that Timur was always on the move, often in the company of his army and his household. This style of waging battle was derived from Mongol practice and supported by semi-nomadism. The royal camp, or *ardu*, was established in the campaign area, and the army moved back and forth to it. Whenever Timur returned to Samarqand, the army would encamp in the meadows on the east or at an appropriate site near pastureage, depending on the season. In most cases they pitched tents or built winter houses. Observing these facts, Monike Gronke came to the conclusion that the many gardens in which Timur pitched his tent while visiting Samarqand were little more than gentrified camping grounds, and that Timur, as a rule, held court in his royal camp. Under the Mongols, not only had the camp served a practical purpose, it was the preferred site for important ceremonies and festivals, and because such was the practice, it gained the force of tradition. So, under the Timurids investments, weddings, and other ceremonies took place in the out-of-doors. Bernard O’Kane recently described the great wedding festival held in the meadows of Kan-i Gil within a city of splendid tents and enclosures.

The impact of the nomadic roots of the Mongols and Timurids on material culture was underlined by Peter Andrews’s studies of the tents of Timur. Art historians came to recognize the tent both as part of the Timurid landscape and as a class of artwork, known primarily from the exquisitely ornamented examples in manuscript illustrations. In this capacity the tent served also as a signifier. In Mongol tradition the tent had stood for the abode of the khan, and under the Timurids the tent retained this ability to symbolize the presence of its absent owner. As a corollary, the enemy’s tent was considered a war trophy. Tents were given as gifts along with Arabian horses, fine garments woven with gold thread, and other gold and jewelled objects. In addition to the prestige which the tent held by reason of its importance to the nomadic lifestyle, its significance was compounded through its association with the Mongols. Timur carried forward many Mongol traditions as a means of identifying with his Mongol ancestor Chinghiz Khan, and thereby achieving legitimacy in the eyes of his supporters. Thus, the tent continued to have many of the meanings it had acquired as a result of its centrality in the life of the nomadic military organization, but it was all the more significant because of its Mongol associations.

The utilitarian and symbolic significance of the tent, for which there is ample evidence, has led scholars to extend these explanations to the garden itself: “He [Timur] resided mostly in different gardens... an extraordinary testament to his ability to re-create a nomadic environment in the microcosm of a city and its surroundings.” Under the Mongols royal gardens, such as that of Ujan, built in 1302 by Ghazan Khan, included tents or tent-like pavilions, that of the khan being known as the Golden Pavilion (*khargah*). The chronicles mention tents pitched in Timur’s gardens, and exquisite tents are often shown in formal gardens in Timurid paintings. The garden is thus seen as a means of facilitating the semi-nomadic lifestyle and legitimizing Timurid rule (through perpetuation of Mongol ceremonial practices). Thomas Lentz made the tantalizing suggestion that the later Timurids viewed their gardens “as something akin to dynastic sanctuaries, repositories of the Timurids’ own myths and practices that underlined the dual nature of their history.” While this meaning of the garden may yet prove to be true of the later Timurids, I do not see it as an active principle in Timur’s time.

Pre-Mongol Gardens in Iran
No one could deny the fact that Timur spent a great deal of his life on the road in tents and that tents held a special meaning for Timurid society. What must be challenged, however, is the necessity of linking this lifestyle to the building of gardens. Gardens are an artifice of a settled population. Consider the garden-building activities of pre-Mongol Iranian princes. The Bavandid ruler of Mazanderan (Husam al-Dawlah Ardashir, 1172–1206) built some fifty-two garden estates, the most elaborate of which, known as Dawlatabad, had two pleasure gardens.
and a nearby residence. One garden contained a pavilion with a pool and served as an aviary and granary. The other featured an artificial fish-stocked lake with a pavilion on an island in the center, reached by a drawbridge. In one half of the garden all kinds of trees and flowers were planted; in the other there was a menagerie. The Isphahbad’s garden-building impulses grew, not from any semi-nomadic affiliation, but at least in part from pre-Islamic notions of the garden as *ersatz*-cosmos, the prerogative of kings. Pre-Islamic traditions survived in this less accessible area longer than anywhere else in Iran. That the Isphahbad sought identification with ancient Iranian ideals of kingship is further suggested by his interest in the *Shāh-nāma*.

Could Timur’s semi-nomadic lifestyle have had an impact on the function of the traditional Persian garden? To respond we need a better idea of the uses of gardens before the Mongol period. Very little attention has been paid to this evidence, both textual and archaeological. Pinder-Wilson alluded to the gardens of the Seljuqs in and surrounding Isfahan, as described by al-Mafarrukhi. We do not know how the Seljuq princes used these gardens but, like Timur’s gardens, they surrounded the city and were quite extensive (1,000 *jarīb*) each. Each had one or two structures (called variously, *qajr*, *kushk*, *takīyah-gāh*) and pools, fed by channels of running water. We can imagine that, like Timur, the Seljuq princes moved about among them, savoring the different features which they individually presented. Thus, the creation of a suburban ring of gardens does not seem to relate to semi-nomadic patterns.

Nothing remains of the Seljuq garden palaces, but for the Ghaznavids both the textual and archaeological evidence give a sense of the importance of such estates in urban settings as well as along essential routes. Mas’ud I (1030–40) founded numerous gardens (*bāgh*) in or near the major towns: Balkh, Herat, Bust, Nishapur, and Ghazni. His travels sound much like Timur’s as he continually surveyed his domains. While Mas’ud’s roots may have been nomadic, his lifestyle might better be compared with that of the profligate Umayyad prince, al-Walid II. As a young man, Mas’ud built a pleasure pavilion in a garden outside Herat and had it painted “from floor to ceiling” with images from the *Kama Sutra*. As for the use of gardens as encampments, this was not a new phenomenon in the Mongol period. The Ghaznavids entertained their military retinue in the royal gardens. Large armies required large spaces when not on campaign, and the most practical form of housing for them was the tent or temporary structure (*wūṭa‘a’, in Bā_excerpt20*). Sultan Mahmud himself, when informed of his son’s scandalous garden pavilion in Herat, rose from his midday rest and went to a tent (*khargāh*) to find a trustworthy officer to investigate.

Even the physical form of the Ghaznavid garden is not far removed from Timur’s suburban estates. The Ghaznavid sultans maintained several elaborate garden estates, two groups of which have been excavated. The complex at Lashkari Bazaar is particularly noteworthy as it contains a walled enclosure, which was probably square before its expansion toward the river, with a cruciform pavilion in the center. To the north may have been another type of garden. The texts speak of orchards, floral plots, fowl, game, and zoological curiosities. Animals were rounded up and hunted in the park.

The Ghaznavids were not the only garden builders concerned with creating a chain of resort-like lodgings along their frequently traveled routes. The Bavandid Isphahbad’s fifty-two garden estates were dispersed throughout his domains, each one comprising a palace, a garden, and a maqam.

In light of the pre-Mongol tradition of princely gardens in Iran, as exemplified by the gardens of the Seljuqs, Ghaznavids, and Bavandids, the quantity of gardens built by Timur does not appear extraordinary, nor does his use of them for encampments. Timur’s movements must be put into context and differentiated. In one category are those grand moves required by military actions and general surveillance, comparable to the Ghaznavids’ peregrinations between Balkh, Herat, and Ghazni or the Isphahbad’s sojourns through his territories. The smaller moves in and about the gardens of Samarqand reflect the princely tradition of escaping to a pleasurable and airy site outside the city, as practiced in pre-Mongol Iran.

**TIMUR’S GARDENS: THE FEMININE PERSPECTIVE**

There is, however, an element in Timur’s use of the gardens surrounding the city, the smaller movements, that has not been noted (and which may be peculiar to Timur). Our review of the sources suggests that Timur built the gardens on the occasion of marriages, mostly his, but in one case that of his grandson, so that each wife would have her own garden. Two, the Bagh-i Bihisht and Bagh-i Dilgusha, were built for new brides. Since the chief wife, Saray Malik Khanum, is recorded as meeting Timur at the Bagh-i Chanar, we may propose that this was her garden. Thus, in 1399 three of Timur’s living wives—Saray Malik Khanum, Tuman Agha, and Tukal Khanum—seem to have had personal gardens, in addi-
tion to the palatial quarters they enjoyed in the town. No garden is associated with Chulpan Agha, who is mentioned in events of the year 1391 and was seen by Clavijo in 1403, but perhaps the Naqsh-i Jahan or Bagh-i Buland, which are not otherwise associated, belonged to her. Might the last garden (Bagh-i Naw) have been built on the occasion of a marriage, perhaps to Munduz Agha or Jawhar Agha, who are mentioned by Clavijo? Timur also built a palace in a garden (the Bagh-i Shimal) for Bikisi Sultan, the daughter of his son Miranshah, who was about to marry Timur's grandson Iskandar b. 'Umar Shaykh. The concubines are rarely mentioned as being involved in events, but it is unlikely that real property, in the form of a garden, would have been bestowed on them.

The history of each garden is closely linked to the history of the woman associated with it. Because the information about these women is dispersed in the chronicles, it would be useful to review it here. Timur's married life passed through four phases. His first marriages were to Turmush Agha, who is mentioned as early as ca. 1356 as the mother of Jahangir and, later, Jahanshah (ca. 1566–67); and to Oljay Turkhan, daughter of Amir Musala b. Qazaghan, who died in 1365. Oljay Turkhan produced a daughter, Sultan Bakht Begim, who seems to have inherited her mother's high status in Timur's court. Perhaps even before his official marriages, Timur acquired two concubines: Tolun Agha, who gave birth to 'Umar Shaykh in 1351, and Mengli, who bore Miranshah in 1367.

A second wave of marriages resulted from the defeat of Amir Husayn in 1370 and the taking over of his harem. Timur was then about thirty-four years old. He kept four of the free-born women for himself; he also kept some of the concubines and gave others to his supporters. Saray Malik Khanum became the chief wife and was Timur's mainstay for many years. The others are not heard from again. It is curious that Saray Malik, who followed Timur on many of his campaigns, did not bear him a living child. Perhaps the arduous journeys on horseback did not offer the best conditions for gestation. The same is true of the other wives who traveled the campaign trail, such as Tuman Agha. Timur's four marriages brought the number of living wives to five. At the same time the number of concubines was increased to Toghay Turkhan, the future mother of Shahrukh (b. 1377). About four years after the plundering of Amir Husayn's harem, Timur married Dilshad Agha Dughlat; and within another four, the forty-two-year-old Timur wed twelve-year-old Tuman Agha. This addition could have brought the number of wives to seven, but by 1383 it was reduced to, at most, six as a result of the death of Dilshad Agha Dughlat. Since aside from Saray Malik Khanum, none of the four women taken from Amir Husayn's harem are mentioned again, they may have died soon after. The number of wives could well have been kept to the four sanctioned by Islam.

A third phase begins with Chulpan Malik Agha, daughter of Hajji Beg Jatah, around 1389, when she is first mentioned in the chronicles. Two concubines (Nigar Agha and Durr Sultan Agha) are named as being in the company of Saray Malik in 1393. Dilshad Agha, the concubine inherited from Amir Husayn, accompanied Chulpan Malik Agha in 1394.

Despite the size of his harem and his failing health, Timur, at the age of approximately sixty, saw fit to make another set of alliances, constituting a fourth phase. The chief bride was Tukal Khanum, wed with great ceremony in 1396, the woman for whom the Bagh-i Dilghusha was built. Munduz Agha and Jawhar Agha, both mentioned by Clavijo, seem also to have joined the harem at this late stage.

During this late period, the chief wives, Saray Malik and Tuman Agha, were still powerful forces. However, they were clearly aging, and Timur felt a need to rejuvenate his harem. Tuman Agha was already thirty, and Saray Malik must have been at least fifty. Clavijo himself considered a woman of forty to be aged, as he remarks in observing Miranshah's estranged wife who was "now some forty years of age; she was fair of complexion and fat." There is no indication that the first group of wives were still living or played a significant role at the time of Timur's death. The chief wives normally traveled together, along with some of Timur's children and grandchildren by other wives, but had their own retinues.

Let us now attempt a "biography" of one of Timur's gardens, the Bagh-i Bihisht, relating it to the life of its proprietor, Tuman Agha. The Zafar-nāma locates this garden on the west side of Samarqand and says that Timur built it in 1378 out of affection for, or a sense of obligation to, his twelve-year-old wife Tuman Agha, whom he had just married. Timur seems to have left her shortly thereafter for his winter quarters in Zanjir-saray. At this time it was still Dilshad Agha Dughlat, wed in 1374, who traveled with him on his campaigns. In 1383 she fell ill, returned to Samarqand from Khurasan, and died shortly thereafter. Later that year when his wives, including Saray Malik Khanum, came to greet the Persian bride-to-be of Pir Muhammad b. Jahangir in Khura-
san, Timur retained Tuman Agha in his camp and sent the others home. As a young woman of seventeen she must now have caught his fancy. Timur was about forty-eight years of age. In 1388 on the death of Suyurghitmish Khan, Timur arranged for the installation of his son at a ceremony held in this garden in spacious, luxurious tents. Seizing the occasion, Timur also held three weddings, for his son Shahrukh and his two grandsons, the brothers Muhammad Sultan and Pir Muhammad. While the garden was associated with Tuman Agha, Timur used it freely for his own purposes. Perhaps this was also an indication of her rising status. She was now twenty-two.

However, in 1391 it was the (recently married?) Chulpan Malik Agha, daughter of Hajji Beg Jatalah, whom Timur retained in camp, sending the others back from Tashkent to Samarkand. The garden of Tuman Agha does not receive notice again until Timur returns from India in the spring of 1399, when it is just one of numerous sites he visited. He had sent the elephants there and now ordered them moved to the Bagh-i Buland, from where they were paraded across the city (from west to northeast). Tuman Agha was no longer the primary target of Timur’s affections. She was thirty-three.

The last mention of the garden falls in the context of Timur’s return to Samarkand in 1404, referred to above. Timur had sent messengers to his wives, who were at that time abroad, to return as fast as possible to Samarkand. He arrived at the Bagh-i Chanar while the other were still coming from Firuzkuh. As soon as they reached Samarkand, Tuman Agha went to the Bagh-i Bihisht and Saray Malik Khanum to the Bagh-i Chanar. Timur then went about inspecting the work at his mosque and ordering the construction of major building in a garden south of the Bagh-i Shimal.

In the course of this year Clavijo visited Samarkand and reports the addition of several “new” women to the harem. Tuman Agha was thirty-eight and Timur was sixty-eight. We have suggested that the Bagh-i Naw was intended for one of these new brides.

Timur’s garden-building efforts thus appear to be closely linked with marital alliances. Gardens were built at the onset of the marriage, and, as the woman aged, so did Timur’s interest in her garden wane! Of particular interest is a comment by the author of the Żafar-nāma, in relation to Timur’s building of the Bagh-i Dilgusha for Tukal Khanum in 1397: “Since, the efforts of the padishah were for the purpose of rendering agreeable the veil of majesty to the young virgin bride, because respecting her is required by the lofty Sunna and custom,”

Fig. 2. Sultan-Husayn Bayqara hosting a garden party. From a manuscript of Sa’di’s Bastan (1488), Herat, fol. 2a, left half of a double frontispiece. (photo: courtesy National Library, Cairo)

he dedicated it to Tukal Khanum. A similar statement was made on the occasion of the founding of the Bagh-i Bihisht. It is of interest that, as O’Kane has pointed out, Timur never built a large palace (saray/zanana) inside the city, or even in one of the gardens, to house the harem and its multitude of attendants, as did the Mughals and Ottomans. This phenomenon is probably due to the high esteem enjoyed by Timur’s wives, well connected in their own right, unlike the slaves appropriated to the Ottoman harem. It was through his marriages that Timur won the right to call himself “son-in-law” (gurgun) of the Mongol khan.

Why does the Żafar-nāma enumerate Timur’s garden visits in such detail? The answer may lie in the discretion exercised by the chronicler. Instead of telling us outright
that Timur spent time with each of his wives and concubines, the author discloses this fact by recording Timur's movements. These movements have more to do with the harem hierarchy than with nomadism. Although Timur could use the gardens as need arose, the garden estate in his time became a "gendered" site. So when Timur went to the Baghi Bihsht, he was actually going to spend time with Tuman Agha. When the text tells us he stayed at the Baghi Chanar, it was Saray Malik Khanum whose comfort he sought. When he builds a new garden, it is likely that a royal wedding is in the offing.

While the Timurids, and probably their Mongol predecessors, tempered the garden of Perso-Islamic urban tradition with elements of the nomadic lifestyle, such as the tent, in the end it was the sedentary tradition that triumphed. As the garden was transformed into a place for important royal ceremonies through the emplacement there of the royal tents, so these tents themselves, made of richly decorated materials and assuming architectural proportions, were transformed into palaces. In both the literal and the figurative sense the Timurid garden became an affect of the feminine. Thus, to the garden, which is associated with the female element, figuratively, through the notion of growth and flowering, but also contextually, through its dedication to women, the tent brings concepts associated with the male principle—war, aggression, mobility, power. Nowhere is this incongruence made more visible than in Timurid paintings which display the richly ornate yurt, pitched on a garden patio, alongside the garden pavilion. In the frontispiece showing Sultan-Husayn Bayqara hosting a garden party seated on a dais in front of a pavilion, the "domesticated" yurt behind him appears out of place (fig. 2). It is perhaps surprising that the Zafar-nama is replete with discussion about what was planted in the garden. In the late Timurid period it is the arrangement of the plants within the chahar-bagh that captures attention. The "gendering" of the garden in Timur's time may be related to the broadening of interest in and popularization of horticulture mentioned above. So where the Timurid garden parted from its predecessors was not in the imposition on it of nomadic values, but in the fostering of an instrument of sedentary culture.

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**NOTES**

1. Because no Timurid garden survives, investigations have relied on textual and pictorial sources. These were identified in the seminal studies of G.A. Pugachenkova ("Sadovo-parkovo iskusstvo Srednei Azii v epokhu Timura i Timuridov," Trudy Sredneazitckogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta [Tashkent] 23 (1951): 143-68) and Donald Wilber (Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions [Tokyo, 1962]), although the sources were not always thoroughly or systematically utilized. Two garden sites in the Samarqand region have been excavated but poorly published (Dawlatadab: M. Masson, "O mestonakhozhdenii sada Timura Dawlatadab," Izvestia sredne-azitskogo Komiiteta, 3 (Tashkent, 1928), pp. 43-49; and the Baghcheh of Ulugh Beg at Samarqand: Pugachenkova, in the publication referred to above, p. 154). Drawings and photographs of remains in Khiva, Samarkand, and Herat suggest formal gardens that have never been properly studied (see study on the chahar-bagh by Maria Subtelny, comparing these with the model proposed in the late Timurid agricultural manual, Irshad al-Zira'a, by Qasim b. Yusuf, "Mirak Sayyid Ghivas and the Timurid Tradition of Landscape Architecture," Studia Iranica, 24 (1995): 19-60; Subtelny's interpretation improves on those of Pugachenkova, ibid., and Ralph Pinder-Wilson, "The Persian Garden: Bagh and Chahar Bagh," in E.B. Macdougall and Richard Ettinghausen, *The Islamic Garden*, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, 4 (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 60-85.  


4. The term chahar-bagh has been the subject of much discussion (see above, R. Pinder-Wilson, n. 1). The joining of the two words for "four" and "garden" must be interpreted in the same way as other examples in Persian, such as chahar-sufla (a room with four arched openings or vaults), chahar-si (an intersection of four bazaar passages), etc. In the case of the garden it probably referred originally to the intersection of water channels, which divided the garden into four parts, hence the "quadrupartite" garden. Later, it seems to have been used for any type of garden that had a complex network of intersecting channels.  

5. All references to this work (composed around 1425 for Ibrahimm Sultan, a grandson of Timur) are to the Tehran edition (Sharaf al-Din ʻAli Yazdi, *Zafar-nama*, ed. Muhammad Abbasi, 2 vols. [Tehran, 1336 S.]). Passages cited were checked in the Uzbek edition (facsimile ed., ed. A. Urnaboe [Tashkent, 1972]), but no substantial differences were noted. Zahir al-Din Babur (r. 1526-30), founder of the Mughal dynasty and a descendant of Timur, was well-acquainted with late Timurid Samarqand and describes its gardens, but only three (Naqbi Jahan, Chanar, Dilgusha) are specifically located (*The Baburnama in English*, 2 vols., trans. A.S. Beveridge [London, 1922], 2: 78).  


9. There is no indication that there was any sort of "contest", as suggested by the French translator (Pots de la Croix, *Histoire de Timur Bey*, connu sous le nom du grand Timouran..., 4 vols. [Paris, 1722], 2: 408-11).


13. Illustrated in MacDougall and Ettinghausen, eds., *Islamic Garden*, pl. III.


18. Although dar miyân may simply indicate “in” as “in the garden,” this expression is used consistently in architectural descriptions to refer to placement in the middle, as “in the middle of each wall” (see above, description of the Baghi Dilgusha).


21. The location of the Baghi Shimal on the map in Pugachenkova (“Sadovo-parkovoe iskusstvo Srednei Azii,” fig. 2) is northwest of the city; Donald Wilber placed it (and most of the other gardens) to the northeast (Wilber, “Persian Borders and Garden Pavilions”) and in a revised map, to the southwest (Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, vol. 2, map 7); neither Pugachenkova nor Wilber gave sources for these maps.


32. See above, no. 21.

33. For 1399, see *Zafar-nāma*, 2: 142–43; for 1404 see ibid., 2: 419–20.

34. Ibid., 2: 415.


37. Gronke, “Persian Court between Palace and Tent.”

38. O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions.”


40. Full discussion of tent symbolism can be found in O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions.”

41. Timur stressed his connections with the Mongols in many ways, such as the retention of Mongol law (yasa) or in public demonstrations, such as the emblazoning of his genealogy on the portal of his mosque (Lisa Golombek, “Tamerlane, Scourge of God,” *Asien Art*, Spring 1989, pp. 30–61).

42. O’Kane, “From Tents to Pavilions,” p. 253.


44. Lentz, “Memory and Ideology.”

45. Ibn Isfandiyar (Baḥr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḵānsāy), *Ṭāʿirīk-i Tabaristan*, ed. Abbās Iqbal, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1941), 2: 122–23; this passage was kindly brought to my attention by K. Allin Luther many years ago at the University of Michigan.

46. Just preceding the passage which describes the Dawlatabad gardens, Ibn Isfandiyar describes the routine of the Isfahān, commenting that he relaxed at the end of the day to readings from the *Shahnamā* (*Ṭāʿirīk-i Tabaristan*, 2: 121).

48. See, for example, Abu'l Fadl Baihaqi, *Istoria Mas'uda*, trans. A.K. Arends (Moscow, 1999), p. 378; In 1021 Mas'ud went from Kabul to Farwan, where he spent five days hunting before moving on to Chaukan to drink wine and then to Valvālī for two days; when he reached Balkh, he went to the Kushki-Dar-i ʿAbdullāh and then to the Bagh-i Buzurg nearby, where he ordered some construction.


51. Ibid., p. 117 (Herat); p. 381: Mas'ud transferred to the Kushki-Dar-i ʿAbdullāh, which adjoined the Bagh-i Buzurg of Balkh, *because it was more comfortable and had two sarays. Officers and Troops (marabuah, ghilam) may stay there and perform rites of mourning and celebration. For these reasons, let’s return immediately to the garden*.

52. Arends gives both definitions in the glossary, ibid., p. 957.


57. Although the chronicles list as many as 18 wives and 26 concubines, no more than 4 or 5 of the wives seem to have been living at the same time (see below, n. 59).


59. Khvandamir (Hīsāb al-Sharīḥ, ed. Sāʿīd Nafisī, 4 vols. [Tehran, 1317 S.], 3: 541–42) lists 24 wives and 22 concubines, with some variations preserved in the *Muʿāẓz al-Ansāb* (see Thackston, *Century of Princes*, p. 107); few of these names appear in the chronicles.

60. In the fall of 776 (Zafar-nāma, 1: 191).

61. Another Dīshad Agha, mentioned in Khvandamir’s list of concubines, must be intended in the *Zafar-nāma*’s reference to her journey accompanying Chulpān Malik Agha (1: 472), as Dīshad Agha Dughlat died over ten years earlier (see below).


63. Ibid., 1: 418.

64. Ibid., 1: 472.


67. Ibid., 1: 278.


69. Ibid., 1: 357.

70. Ibid., 2: 143.

71. Ibid., 2: 15.

72. Saray Malik Khanum was the daughter of the Chaghatai Khan Qazan and thus the lynchpin in Timur’s claim to legitimacy. Oljay Tarkan Agha was the granddaughter of Amir Qazaghan, powerful chief of the Qara’unas clan and sister to Amir Husayn. Dīshad Agha represented the powerful Dughlat tribe of Moghulistan. The influential Amir Musa Tachhūr fathered Tumen Agha. Chulpān Malik Agha, daughter of Hajji Beg Jatah, and Tukel Khanum, daughter of Khizer Khvajeh Ughlan Khan, were princesses in their own right (on Timur’s marital alliances, see Manz, *Rise and Fall of Tamerlane*, p. 78). Saray Malik Khanum and Tumen Agha financed major construction projects (Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, cat. nos. 27, 21, 87).

73. For a discussion of the garden as a source of image clusters for the beloved in Persian poetry, see William Hanaway, "Paradise on Earth: the Terrestrial Garden in Persian Literature," in Macdougall and Ettinghausen, eds., *Islamic Garden*, pp. 82–54.

74. See also the painting showing the accession of Sultan-Husayn (A. Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts* [Los Angeles, 1992], p. 87, no. 29).