

Typology of entrance to Persian gardens

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the significance of the conceptual and physical role of entrances to Iranian gardens has been widely neglected, while the entrance to Iranian gardens has been of considerable importance and diversity, which can be used as an intelligent and efficient element in today's parks and spaces. The typology of the entrances to the Iranian gardens is key to better and easier understanding of the portals and entrances to Iranian gardens and their application in the realm of urban landscape design, especially for recreation centers and urban green spaces. The research employs descriptive-analytical method in which the information is collected through archives from library resources. This component can take various forms that is able to create different spatial qualities in various types of gardens. In this paper, entrances to Iranian garden are typologically studied using semantic approach, historical approach, spatial approach, functional approach, applied approach, each of which is further divided into separate categories.

Keywords: Typology, Entrance, Portal, Door, Iranian garden

Introduction

The extent and variety of research on Iranian gardens indicates their global popularity and fame. Studying various components of the garden as its constituent elements and gaining though understanding can contribute to its timely application in contemporary landscape architecture. The entrance to the garden is the first spatial element in the the Iranian garden that appears as a part of its façade as it distinguishes the interior and exterior spaces, hence the significance.

Typology in Iran

The typology of an element can greatly contribute to its recognition and comprehension. Like space and shape, type is by definition interpreted through the viewpoint of its user. Although it has a clear definition, i.e. a representative of a group of objects with common properties, the definition of “properties” is the notion that can be manipulated depending on its interpretation (Memarian and Tabarsa, 2013). It can be said that in Iran, the idea of classifying buildings based on their commonalities was first done about three decades ago. This issue was first seriously discussed in the faculties of architecture and urban planning, and the by-products of which were several master's theses. Moreover, geographical studies on cities and villages of Iran were performed in the aforementioned sphere. Typology was a prominent part of some of these studies (Homayoun, 1977).

• Typology of entrance to Iranian gardens using a semantic approach

✓ Moving towards the light

The ancient Iranians seem to have believed in a spatial shape and pattern that has three distinct parts: upper, lower, and middle, in which the “lower” was metaphorically a symbol of ignorance, immaturity, rawness, darkness, and other similar trait, while the “upper” was a symbol awareness, maturity,

sophistication, happiness, and light among others. This belief and division of values was propelled way in to the society of after Islam and was particularly employed in shaping spaces (Barati, 2011). Studying the Persian conception of the world and its reflections on the Persian garden with a uniaxial pattern suggested that according to their worldview, transition from darkness to light involves dividing the world into three parts, namely, origin (i.e. darkness), destination, and the path to destination (i.e. light). In the Persian garden, this transition is projected on entrance to the pavilion, which is the destination and the royal residence. In this worldview, the spirit of the Iranian garden is interpreted in motion and not in stillness: moving from darkness to light in a conservative line (Figure 1).

In Iranian gardens, the entrance is usually at a lower altitude than the pavilion, making the walk therebetween to be opposite to the flow of water, that is from the bottom (darkness) to the upper (light) where the garden pavilion is located. The transition from darkness to light is reflected in different aspects in Iranian Gardens. The walk from the entrance with a dark porch to the light in a straight line and from bottom to top is exemplified in Figure 2 (Barati et al., 2017).



Figure 1: Enclosure and entrance to the garden in Shahnameh (Source: Khansari, Moghtader and Yavari) (Source: www.mehrnews.com)



Figure 2: Prince Mahan Garden of Kerman

✓ Sense of Invitation

It is noteworthy that “direct movement in a place offers a sense of purpose, urgency, reflection to man.” This is particularly the case in Iranian gardens, whether in uniaxial or quadrangular gardens, in the process of walking towards the pavilion or fountain. This is because humans instinctively tend to move toward “goals, that is, sensory cues, for which one usually chooses the easiest path and tends not to deviate from

moving in a certain direction until he is compelled to do so.” Furthermore, “moving upwards in the environment in terms of altitude, excites the feeling of exploration, and motivates to go higher.” The slope in the Iranian garden is a contributing factor herein, as it is perceived that the walk from entrance to the pavilion creates such feeling and motivation (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Prince Mahan Garden of Kerman
(Source: www.irangardionline.com)



Figure 4 Prince Mahan Garden of Kerman
(Photo by Hamed Eftekhari)

Prince Mahan Garden Kerman is perhaps one of the best such examples. Upon entering this garden, the viewer feels lower from the pavilion located on the other side of the garden, while the natural slope of the ground intensifies this feeling. Shaping a view at arrival of Prince Mahan's garden, the entrance of which functions as a frame, and the mediating role of the entrance from arid surroundings lands to the greenery of the garden excites a sense of invitation (Figure 4).

✓Portal to Heaven

Since Iranians have traditionally perceived gardens as paradises on earth, their entrances were likewise considered as portals to heaven.

“As they arrived upon the heavens, there opened the gates, the sentinels of Paradise saying to them: Peace be upon you, may Paradise be to your whims, come in, you will always reside here. They say: Thank God, they made God's satisfaction from the pious, that is (Rezvan), as the sentinel of Paradise, because without God's satisfaction, no one has the right to enter Paradise. Thus, in the popular traditions, Rezvan became a very active royal figure who carefully examines those who want to enter the Garden of Eden (Goodarzi and Mokhtabad, 2013).

On both sides of Aali Qapo1 Street in Qazvin, there were two entrance gates, one of which was Dolatsara Gate and the other was Bagh Saadat (Sultanzadeh, 2004).

On one side is the Saadatabad gate/which reminds of the garden of paradise

One the other side is the Dolatsara Gate/house of divine mercy

(Paradise of Fruits)

Saadatabad here is in fact the same mansion of Aali Qapo Portal in Qazvin.

Typology of entrance to Iranian gardens using a historical approach

- **Entrance to Iranian gardens during the Timurid empire**

Unfortunately, presently there are not many traces on the entrances to the gardens of the Timurid period. During the time of Timur, many gardens were built around Samarkand and other cities, which are known as the gardens of the Timurid period. Numerous gardens in Samarkand exhibit common aspects suggesting that they were the blueprint of gardens created in the following centuries (Figure 5). These gardens

¹ Meaning the Great Gate

nonetheless soon disappeared. These gardens all had elegant and luxurious entrances (Javaherian, 2004). According to Clavijo (1987), some aspects of Samarkand gardens appear to be strange, such as devising large spaces for the garden and employing a square space and elegant entrances decorated in blue and gold colors. The use of high porches on the upper floor overlooking the flower gardens is an aspect that is common in Samarkand and is a symbol of the sultan's desire to create opulence (Clavijo, 1987).



Figure 5: Babur Watching Baghe-Vafa Ceremonies (Source: Wilber, 2015)



Figure 6: Sultan Husayn Bayqara Mirza in the garden (Source: Victoria Museum)

- **Entrance to Iranian gardens during the Safavid era**

In overall, although the realm of design, architecture and gardening was greatly progressed the Safavid period, it was nevertheless generally influenced by the Timurid style (Rouhani, 1977). The garden barrier is usually made of raw clay, mud or brick walls that confine the garden on both sides of the entrance. Moreover, fences were employed to separate various parts of the garden or regular parts from the irregular ones (Niakooi, 2007). During the commanding rule of the Safavid in Iran, the political security and economic prosperity of the era led to formation Tajir garden as gardens with a lattice wall, as the first

necessary condition for creating such gardens is proper security (Ansari, 1999). Moreover, the combination of public and private spaces in this period led to the invention and presentation of a new definition for the Iranian garden. This point is very significant in the development and design of Iranian garden architecture with urban scale, and it can be argued that the architect and urban planner of the Safavid period exhibited his inclination towards urban vision and landscape in the design of Tajir Garden (Shahcheraghi, 2016).

In the pictures related to the gardens of the Safavid period (Figures 7 and 8), there are venues carpeted with mosaics or bricks on a platform higher than the ground level. Garden pavilions and mansions and courtiers' activities formed on this platform. This space is separated from the neighboring area by a fence with red or gold railings, through which the garden can be seen. In Figure 7, at the top of the gate that opens to the garden, there is an inscription with the line “.” The same very phrase appears on the inscription of the entrance in Figure 8 (Rahimova and Polyakova, 2002).



Figure 7: Source: Nezami's Khamse, Ajand, 2005

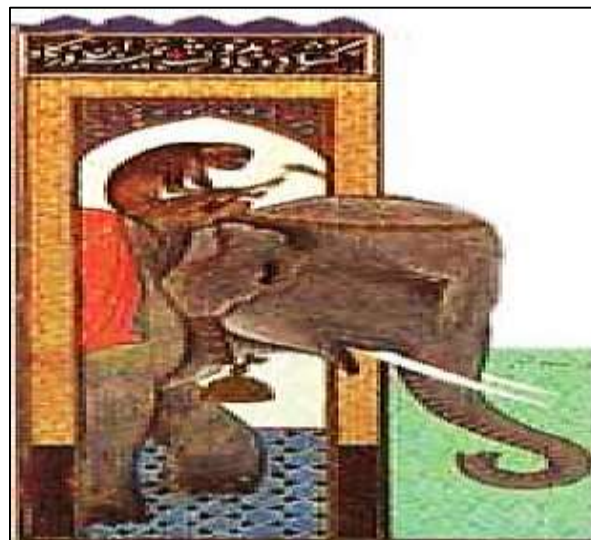


Figure 8: Source: Shahname, Welsh, 1997

- **Entrance to Iranian gardens during the Zand era**

In an elaborate description of the settlements of Mir Hassan Khan (ruler of Tabas), Mirza Ali Monshi Bashi refers to a highly elegant street in and a garden above it (Golshan Street and Garden, Javadi et al., 2004) is considered to be constructed at 1791 A.D., at the end of Zand period.

Golshan Tabas Garden was built by Mir Hassan Khan, the third ruler of Tabas, who was appointed by Nader Shah. On the path of Golshan Street, the entrance portal is constructed next to a square. On the first floor of the entrance building, a porch with two columns faces the square. The entrance of the garden is built below this porch and in line with axis of the building and the garden. The second level of the garden is accessible through stairs. The garden has a plan as if it was first built as a palm grove (Daneshdoost, 1990).

- **Entrance to Iranian gardens during the Qajar era**

The construction of an arched portal and construction of the main building at the end of the main path or at the intersection of the two main path in the center is typical in the entrance to Iranian gardens in the Qajar period. The structure of the garden was divided into interior and exterior, and the flow of water was established along the route between the entrance and the main building.

Typology of entrance to Iranian gardens using a spatial approach

- **Main entrance (portal building)**

The main gatehouses were usually built as the main entrances to the Iranian gardens. These gates, also known as portal building or Sardarkhaneh, were in fact the focal point of design in large Iranian gardens, which were built somewhere along the outer wall and next to to the main access road to the garden. In terms of function, it was mostly the residence of guards, gardeners and other garden service staff (Pirnia, 1979). Of course, in a few cases, the portals were themselves large mansion that accommodated the main inhabitants of the garden (Shahcheraghi, 2016).

Typically, gardens, particularly government-residential one, mostly have a main entrance, for which a separate building, called the portal building, was designed. A direct main road was devised from the portal to the main building, which in most cases was the residential mansion (Sultanzadeh, 2004). It is concluded from here that the entrance to the Iranian garden was the start of the path to the destination, i.e. the pavilion.

The entrance building had several rooms on the first floor and several rooms on the above floor, which opened to both the outside and inside of the garden. Outside the garden, there is mostly a square, a road or another garden in front of the entrance, while on the upper floor of the interior of this building, there was an attic or porch where residents could sit (Pirnia, 2008). Clavijo describes the Delgosha Garden as “when the designing and flowering of the garden was completed in every way, an engineer built long gates in the middle of each wall, some of which were as long as 750 meters” (Wilbur, 2005).

- **Secondary entrance (regular gates)**

Regular gates in Iranian garden were generally intended for side entrances (Figure 9). Some garden included side gates, such as the garden of Ghadmagah Neyshapour (Naima, 2006). In some cases, there was just an ordinary door instead of a main gate (Figure 10), in front of which was a lattice wall that made the inside of the garden not directly visible to the outside (Pirnia, 2008).

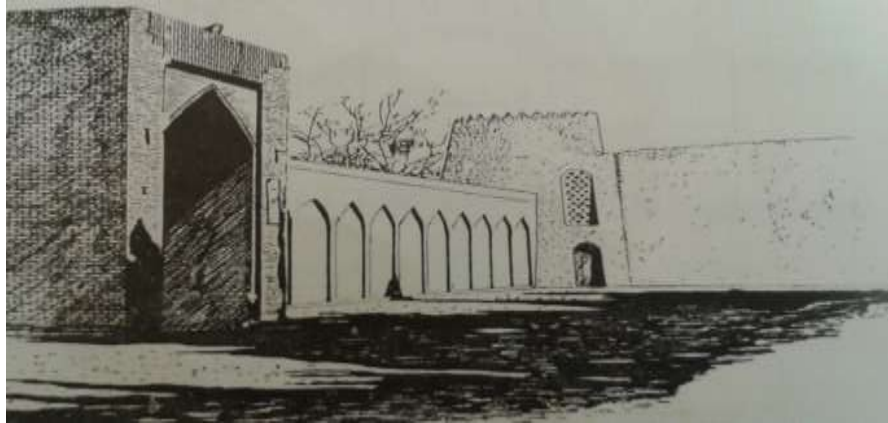


Figure 9: Fence and fortification of one of the corners and side entrance of Kashan Fin Garden (Source: Introducing a number of traditional Iranian architectural buildings, authored by Mohammad Moradi, Atosa Amir Kabirian)



Figure 10: Gate of the Pahlavan-Pur Garden in Mehriz, Yazd (Source: mehrnews.com)

- **hierarchical entrance**

The hierarchy in the gardens is mostly introduced from the entrance or in some cases, the square and the waterfront in front of the garden and passes through the foyer and the main axis all the way to the garden pavilion (Heidarnataj, 2010). The front house is connected to the main yard or inner courtyard through the garden entrance and generally has access to the garden servicing spaces (Figure 11).

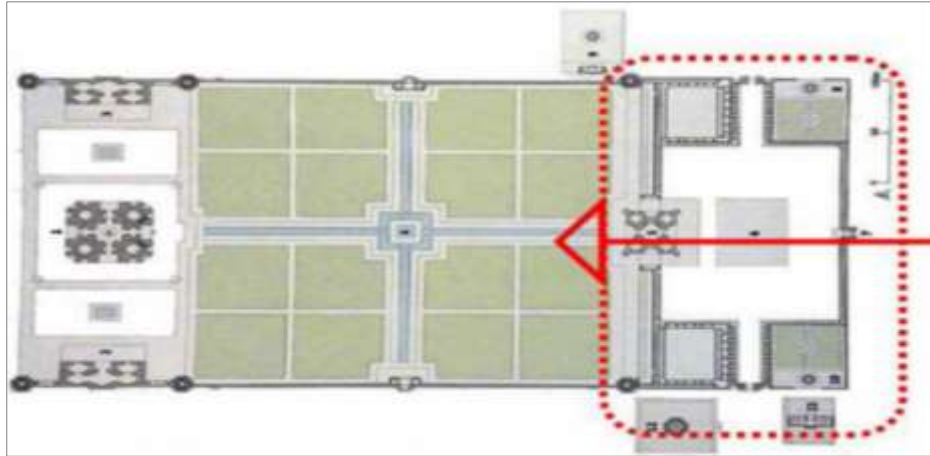


Figure 11: Taj Mahal Garden-Tomb, the garden threshold is well-defined and has an entry hierarchy.

Source: Michell & Pasricha, 2011:168



Figure 12: the lattice wall of Prince Mahan Garden in Kerman (Source: fa.wikipedia.org)

In this regard, professor Pirnia states: “... Every garden had an entrance, a building that was sometimes called the portal. This building is like the exterior of a traditional house where guests are entertained and catered. To enter, one must first pass through the pergola, and then enter the porch or the corridor. If the garden did not have a portal building, a lattice wall would be established in front of its door” (Figure 12, Pirnia, 2008). As for the privacy, In some gardens, the visitor first enter the porch and indirect corridors from the main entrance and from the lattice walls are accessible and passable and finally the main path of the pavilion is accessed (Pourmand and Keshtkar Qalati, 2011).

- **the Aali Qapo**

Aali Qapo is frequently used term in conversations, which is composed of the Turkish words Aali, meaning excellent, and Qapo, meaning door, giving the overall notion of “the Great Door” (Rafiei Mehrabadi, 1973). The Aali Qapos are generally related to the Safavid period, and are primarily intended for the entrance to the gardens.

- ✓ **the Aali Qapo of Qazvin**

The city of Qazvin was the capital of the Safavid era before Isfahan. The building of Aali Qapo of Qazvin dates back to that very same period. Aali Qapo mansion included a complex called Saadatabad Garden. Engelbert Kempfer, who visited Iran during the reign of Shah Suleiman the Safavid, prepared

several plans of the Aali Qapo mansion and the adjacent street and the courtyard of the Grand Mosque and its northern front, which was built by order of Shah Tahmasb, during his stay in the city of Qazvin. Kempfer also refers to the text of the inscription on the main gate, which is:

May this gate be always be open to the public Rightfully, I bear witness that there is no god but Allah

(Alami, Jeyhani and Rezai, 2008)

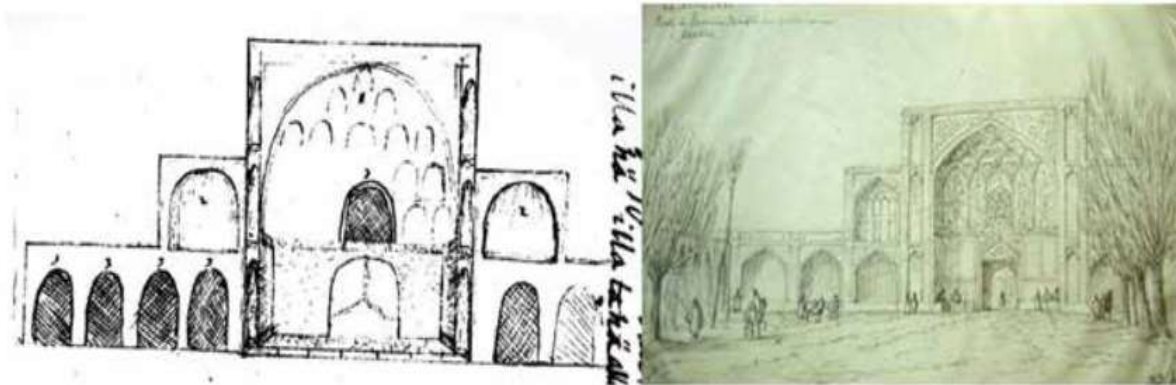


Figure 13: Aali Qapo Gateway by Kempfer (1684). Qazvin Street leading to Aali Qapo by Pascal Coust (1840)

Source: Marseillie City Library, BritishLibrary, 2011

✓ the Aali Qapo of Ardebil

The present location of the tomb of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili was a large garden called Esferis about 700 years ago, in parts of which Sheikh Safi al-Din used to guide and instruct his followers. The beautiful and exquisite collection of Sheikh Safi al-Din was founded by his son Sheikh Sadr al-Din Musa after his death in 1335. The present location of the gravestone was initially the cloister and residence of Sheikh Safi al-Din, which was the concourse for his followers, while after his death, the Sheikh was buried there (Rezazadeh Ardabili, 1995). The Aali Qapo entrance was placed on the north side of the square, in front of the tomb, on top of which there is a timpani house. Owing to the damage caused by the earthquake, first the upper part was destroyed in the late Qajar period, and the lower part was destroyed in 1942 by the General Directorate of Archeology. In front of the tomb, there is a square called Aali Qapo, which used to be very large, and in the Safavid era, it was one of the rather elegant squares of the era with its surrounding walls, which was also a place for buying and selling merchants. It is now dismantled (Reza Zadeh Ardebili, 2012).

✓ the Aali Qapo of Isfahan

Aali Qapo mansion was in fact the entrance to the Safavid royal gardens next to Naghsh-e Jahan Square (Shahcheraghi, 2016). The beautiful Aali Qapo mansion, which is located on the western side of Naghsh Jahan Square and in front of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, was apparently built at the same time as the same mosque in the early 17th century (Janzadeh, 1987). Aali Qapo mansion seems to have two floors from the outside, but in fact it has six floors from the inside (Pirnia, 1990). What makes Aali Qapo one of the most magnificent and exquisite architectural works are stuccos carved on the last floor, in addition to the beautiful miniatures inside the mansion. The hall of last floor is also known as the music chamber.

Typology of entrance to Iranian gardens using a functional approach

• permeability

Since the walls in the Iranian garden are one of the first and original elements of the garden, without which the concept of the Iranian garden would not be formed (Mansouri, 2015), the entrance to the garden in the form of a gate or portal is the only way to enter the garden.

- **Systematization of the garden**

The presence of the main axis in the Iranian garden, i.e. the axis that runs along the main entrance of the garden all the way to the pavilion (in the middle or at the end of the garden) is the most prevalent geometric pattern evident in the Iranian garden. In gardens where the pavilion is located at the center of the garden, the presence of the garden entrance at the end of one of the axes makes that particular axis the most valued one (Barati et al., 2017).

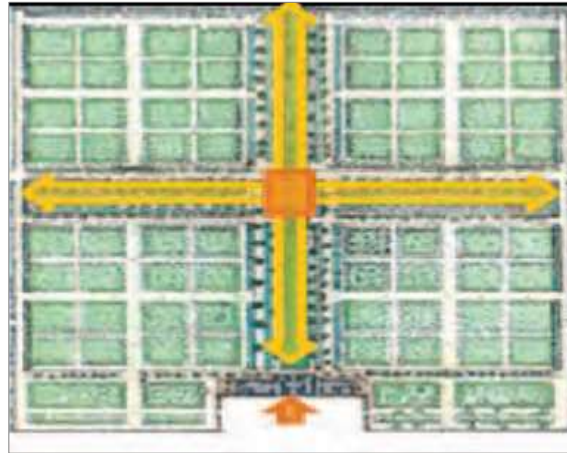


Figure 15: Entrance to the Golshan Tabas Garden, Source: Hosseini and Torbati, 2015

- **Urban aesthetics**

The continuities and discontinuities at the entrances of the Iranian garden, which was sometimes implemented with measures such as the entrance building, form a special place which, in addition to its inherent function, creates an exterior proper for the surrounding buildings and promotes the cohesion of urban texture (Medqalchi, 2017). For instance, Chaharbagh was an outstanding urban space designed with architectural and decorative elements that promoted the development of the modern city. Each of these gardens had a mansion and these entrances were placed symmetrically adjacent to the four gardens and formed an exceptional urban view (Alemi, 2006).



Figure 16: Entrance functioning as the constituents of the cohesion of Chaharbagh, Source: Medqalchi, 2017

- **Media**

The entrances of Iranian gardens, especially the entrance mansions or halls was used as a medium to promote the significance of the era. For example, Engelbert Kempfer has mentioned The Aali Qapo of

Qazvin in his visit of the city during the reign of Shah Suleiman Safavid and refers to the text on its inscription, which is:

May this gate be always be open to the public Rightfully, I bear witness that there is no god but Allah

(Alami, Jeyhani and Rezai, 2008)

Or on the main entrance of Ashraf Gardens (Behshahr), there was a music chamber, which was customarily used to announce sunrise and sunset by drums and pipes (Naima, 2006).

- **Separation and combination of public and semi-public arenas**

In *Architecture and the Mystery of Immortality*, Alexander (2002) describes the transition of entry into an intermediate region as a need to shift the human mental framework from the exterior to the interior, that is, the entrance is “a transition area in which the direction, height, surface and landscape as well as the quality of lighting change” (Alexander, 2002).

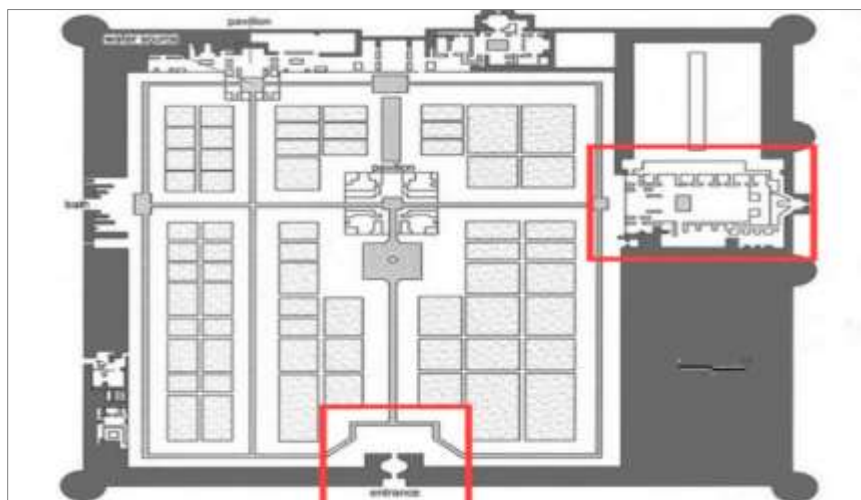


Figure 17: Enclosure and communication between the inside and outside by the gates and entrances in Iranian Gardens - Fin Kashan. Source: Fairchild, 2008: 188

- **Cultural symbol and political power**

The entrances to the Iranian gardens have also historically played a symbolic role in the glory, authority, and culture of the relevant government. For example, regarding the Safavid royal garden complex adjacent to Naghsh-e Jahan Square and the Aali Qapo in Isfahan, Janzadeh argues: This huge complex should have had a magnificent entrance worthy of the ruling dynasty, and so it was, because at a time when the markets around it were only one floor high, the two-story Aali Qapo looked much more magnificent than it does today (Janzadeh, 1987).

Typology of entrance to Iranian gardens using an application approach

- **Security and services**

In many residential, governmental and hybrid gardens, a building was constructed in the entrance area, which in most cases was the residence of guards, gardeners and other garden servicing staff (Naima, 2006).

- **Residential**

On rare occasions, the entrance mansion was itself a large mansion for the settlement and residence of the main inhabitants of the garden (Shahcheraghi, 2016).

- **Viewing platform**

In some Iranian gardens located in the capital or important cities, in front of the portal or the entrance hall, a ceremonial square was often constructed on the front for holding various ceremonies, parades, and religious gatherings. Often on the front of the courtyard mansion facing the square, a columned or columnless porch was built on the upper floor of the mansion as a viewing platform for senior national and military officials. The Aali Qapo of Isfahan is one such instance (Naima, 2006).

For example, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who visited Shiraz during the Safavid period, takes note of a pleasing street, which was built by the order of Imam Qoli Khan and continued from the Quran Gate to the Isfahan Gate Bridge, with beautiful gardens surrounding the both sides. He writes in this regard: “On the sides of that street, there are various gardens, on the walls of which at certain intervals are gateways. These gateways are two-story high, above each of which are several rooms that face the street on one side and the gardens on the other side” (Shahcheraghi, 2016).

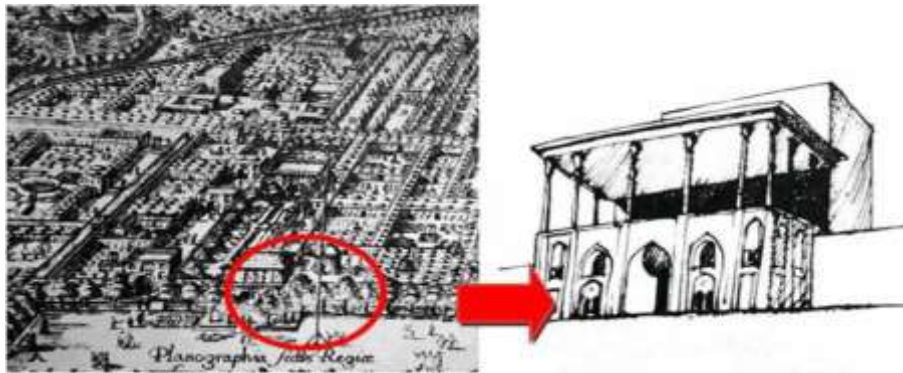


Figure 18: the Aali Qapo of Isfahan as the portal of Safavid gardens of Isfahan. Source: Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 2001 (right); Naima, 2006: 62 (left)

- **Governmental/Ceremonial purposes (Courthouse)**

In many residential/governmental gardens, the mansion the was built at the entrance to the garden was used as a court and government building, in which the rulers and bureaucrats could perform their tasks in a building which faced the interior of the garden on one side inside and a passage or a square on the other side. This was particularly effective as it was not necessary for the clients to enter the inner space of the garden, and as thus the privacy and integrity of the inner realms was well preserved. This practice essentially separated the realm of the court affairs from the realm of residence. These types of mansions were often called forums (Naima, 2006).

Conclusion

Any individual visiting an Iranian garden, primarily encounters the entrance or the gateway, which is in fact the portal between two different realms inside and outside the garden which generates mental and spiritual enthusiasm in the visitor, hence its high importance. Bearing in mind the aforementioned arguments regarding the entrances to Iranian gardens, it is safe to say that that gardening is an ancient practice in Iran which has progressed over different eras. Naturally, the entrances to the gardens have experienced the same evolution and has thus undergone various changes in different periods of time with cultural, social and economic changes. The typology of the entrance to Persian gardens can be performed with various approaches owing to their semantic commonalities, through which audience can have varying experiences based on the type of audience, purpose of the entrance and its design.

Table 1: Typology of entrance to Iranian gardens based on various approach

Semantic	Historical	Spatial	Functional	Applied
Moving towards the light	Timurid era	The main entrance	Permeability	Security and Services
	Safavid era	The secondary entrance	Systematization of the garden	Residential
Sense of Invitation	Zand era	Hierarchical entrance	Urban aesthetics	Viewing platform
Portal to heavens	Qajar era	The Aali Qapos	Media	Governmental/Ceremonial purposes (Courthouse)
			Separation and combination of public and semi-public arenas	
			Cultural symbol and political power	

Table 2: typology of the Aali Qapos (as a subset of typology based on spatial approach)

Aali Qapo		
Aali Qapo of Isfahan	Aali Qapo of Ardebil	Aali Qapo of Qazvin

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