

Recognize of the Form and Spatial Structure of Safavid Historic Gardens. Case Study: Bagh-i Shah of Ashraf al-Belad City (Behshahr's old name), North of Iran

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1. ABSTRACT:

In Safavid period, some royal gardens have been created in *Ashraf Al-Belad*, a city that was established in place of an old residential village, in north of Iran which remained some traces of them at present time. One of these gardens is *Bagh-i Shah* that was built by *Shah Abbas Safavi* as *Divan-Khaneh*, a place for visiting ambassadors, contemporary with *Ashraf Al-belad*'s foundation.

This historic garden changed so much in its long life such extensively that it seems a modern park more than a Persian garden today. Nonetheless, its geometric order, aged trees array and water circulation system etc, which remained until now, remind a general image of Persian garden. While, conservation and urban planning without respect to original construction of this garden could make incorrect perception from its true aspect. On the other hand, inattentiveness to such noteworthy historic gardens and converting their feature like a modern park result in irreparable damage and elimination vestiges of its genuine face as a document of historic background of the city. Therefore, *Bagh-i shah* as an important sample of Safavid gardening tradition and also as one of the characteristic elements of the city, is an essential subject. Thought major parts of the garden have been changed, it assumes possible to recognize its main form and structure based on remained documents and literatures. This paper tries to identify the original features of this garden and its evolution over the time according to field researches and historical documents.

2. INTRODUCTION

Development of cities, their non-normative and partly uncontrollable updates causes changes around the historic building's view. Nevertheless, sometimes inattentiveness to historic and esthetic values of such monuments in urban planning exposes them to destruction danger. This problem is so important about historic gardens; because of their organic construction. On the other hand, elements that form the feature of a garden are so changeable inevitably. Withering of flowers, fading of trees and growing of unwanted wild plants are some of damages, which can convert feature of a garden due to careless. *Bagh-i Shah* in *Behshahr*, north of *Iran*, is one of these gardens which be harmed so much because of disregarding its values in urban planning and because of incorrect attendance. Fortunately, some remained parts of this garden preserve its general structure until now.

As regards new feature of *Bagh-i Shah* made an illusory imagination from it, in this article has been tried to general shape and true structure of this garden be recognized with surveying remained parts of it and studying historical documents and literatures that has talked about this garden.

3. PRESENTATION OF BAGH-I SHAH

In this part, will be described that where is *Bagh-i shah*'s location and how does it formed. Then garden's evolution and its current position will be studied based on historical documents and literatures studying results.

3.1. Garden's location and its forming process

Bagh-I Shah is located in *Behshahr* that is one of *Mazandaran* province's cities which is one of the northern provinces of Iran. Various archaeological evidence which has been found in this city, point to its so much antiquity¹. Nevertheless, glory age of this region had been in *Shah Abbas I* (1587-1629 AD) in Safavid

¹ In fact, this history belongs to some settlements that exist in same area on different dates, which named *Behshahr* now. In a part of documents, some of these settlements have been mentioned such as *Kabood-Khaneh*, *Hezar jarib*, *Khar-gooran* and etc.

period. After removing local government system, *Shah Abbas* attend this district and come there for hunting and trip; eventually he Founded *Ashraf Al-Belad* town in 1612AD in the area which had placed a village on the time (Rabino 1986: 105). *Sir John Chardin* (1643-1713 AD), French tourist who visits from *Mazandaran* in *Shah Abbas II* (1632-1656 AD), said:

“This great victor king and grand politician transplanted so many of Armenians and Georgians to *Ashraf Al-Belad* and repopulated there again. ... But when I guest in *Mazandaran*, I saw that decrease Christians number to four hundred family during this 40 years”² (Chardin 1971: 25).

After establishing the town, *Shah Abbas* proceed to constructing a complex of royal gardens in *Ashraf Al-Belad* and then commanded to built a complex of publish building such as bazaar, bath (*Hammam*) and water store (*Aab Anbar*) in to there. *Pietro Della Valle*, who visits these gardens when they were under building, said that access to *Bagh-i Shah*, which *Shah Abbas's Dowlat-Khaneh*³, is possible after passing a long street and crossing a grassy square (*Sabza Maydan*), which in fact is a place for public visit (Della Valle 1991: 275-276). Location of royal gardens and some of other remained elements can be recognized in *Ashraf's* new map (Fig. 1).

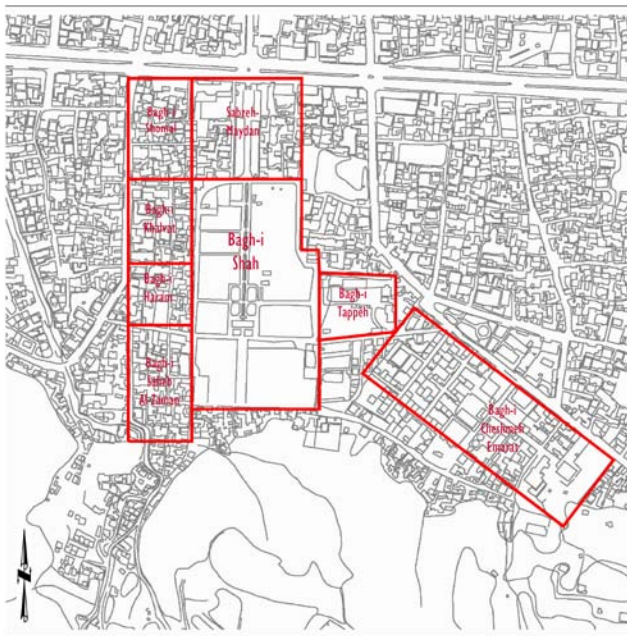


Fig. 1: Old gardens' boundaries overlaid with plan of gardens' around fabric

In other Safavid king's time attentions to *Ashraf* were decreased but *Nader Shah* (1696-1747 AD), *Afshari* king, used these gardens as residence when he was fighting with *Lezgies*. *Ashraf* was forgotten again After *Nader Shah*. This condition continued until the absconding *Agha Mohammad Khan* (1709-1762 AD), who established *Qajar* dynasty, from *Shiraz* to there. He encouraged people to repair the *Ashraf*. In *Pahlavi* period, this town was attended more and began to developing. This city named *Behshahr* in *Reza Shah's* era; But regards to value of remained historic sites be reduced when modernism arrived to Iran and modern urban movements has been started. It means that sometimes authenticity of these monuments be sacrificed for function improvement. This procedure continued after the islamic republic of Iran. According to such actions, major part of Safavid gardens and old urban foundations has been destroyed or are destroying now.

3.2 garden's Present Feature

At present remains nothing from what named *Ashraf Al-Belad* in Safavied period. Modern *Behshahr* with its modern street construction and buildings is not similar to its old visage anymore and just located some remain parts of old gardens in it. The town's main street that stretched between the grassy *Maydan* and the sea which in the end reached to the gate of *Bagh-i Shah*, has been changed to an overcrowded secondary street that a wider street cut its connection to what remain from *Maydan*. A damaged water store just remained from town public buildings. In this different view of the city in compare to *Ashraf Al-Belad's* simple and green appearance, some parts of Safavid complex gardens has remained as yet; although what

² Quotations have been translated to English by author.

³ Where *Shah* visited ambassadors and his guests.

remained hardly seems to be a complex because they are just some sporadic pieces of monuments that can be seen hardly between recent adverse constructions (Fig. 2). In such situation only the *Bagh-i Shah* that revitalized as a public park, preserved some parts of its structure against the changes. Main great pool of the garden transformed to a croft of decorative plants and free driving in its roads changes garden's serene condition (Fig. 3). However, maybe most important fact that cause difference between present feature of garden and its true aspect, are its situation in the city and peoples imagination about it. *Bagh-i Shah* which was king's place in its glory age and all of urban elements tried to make it more imperial, changes to a messy and not-youthful park that a lot of peoples who crossing it daily, don't have enough time to enjoy its beauties.



Fig. 2: A feature of garden's old pool which changed to some crofts with decorative plants



Fig. 3: *Chaeshmeh Emarat* pavilion which surrounded with local houses

3.3 A Glance at Garden's Revolution

Such as what said before, *Bagh-i Shah* is one of the complex of gardens built in *Shah Abbas's* time in the new established *Ashraf Al-Belad*. We do not have any visual document from appearance of the garden in its genesis time; but we can catch them rarely by studying descriptions that noted in itineraries. One of most important of them is the *Pietro Della Valle's* itinerary. He was treated in *Bagh-i Shah* when he came to *Ashraf Al-Belad* for visiting *Shah Abbas* and described details of the garden and its house clearly:

“This garden is a quadrangle located in the end of the flat and near the woody hills ... *Divankhaneh* that is situated in the middle of the garden, is a building which its length is three times longer than its width. In front of this building is open entirely but there is a wall with many windows has been built on the back and two sides of it. The floor of the house is two-step upper than the ground. The Building's open area which is in longitudinal direction faces north, toward to entering gate. There is a long cobbled path in front of the building, which a channel is in the middle of it and the water flows into it from the garden's main pool always. The path continues after the *divankhaneh* and goes to the end of garden, near the hills. In the center of the south wall of *divankhaneh* a door has been situated on the direction of the axe of the path, all the length of the path can be seen when it is open” (Della Valle 1991: 215).

Although *Della Valle* described the pavilion more than the garden, we can perceive garden's true feather by his description from other gardens of Safavid complex. There are not any reports from condition of *Bagh-i Shah* in Safavid period after *Della Valle*. Garden's pavilion destroyed in *Afghans* invasion by fire and ignored until 1731AD when reconstructed by *Nader Shah* who was a Safavid general yet. He although renamed garden and pavilion's name to *Chahel Sotun*. In this time, some travelers visited from garden and its building and drew some plans too. One of the first sketches that *Nader Shahi's* building can be seen in it, is a

picture that *Hommair De hell* presented in 1847AD (Fig. 4). *Hanway* who visited from these gardens in 1743AD and wrote his observations in a travel book, wrote about *Bagh-i Shah* as:

“*Shah Abbas* founded a famous palace in this town which I don’t see a same one near the lake of *Caspian*’s coast. There is a sign of the lion and the sun (*shir o khorshid*) on the top of the great interior gat. There is a street with trees in front of this interior, which have been build thirty house in every side of it for guards. Another gate is opened to one garden that have been situated a stoned water channel in it with have three feet width and one foot depth. ... Water falls into little pools in four places. Some holes carved in stoned sides of a pool, which candles put into them. These holes numerous is about one thousand. This pool’s depth is about six feet. There is a imposing porch near the pool” (Hanway 1753: 85)



Fig. 3: Picture of *Nader Shah*’s pavilion which presented by *Hommair De hell*, (*Vilber 2009: 140-141*)

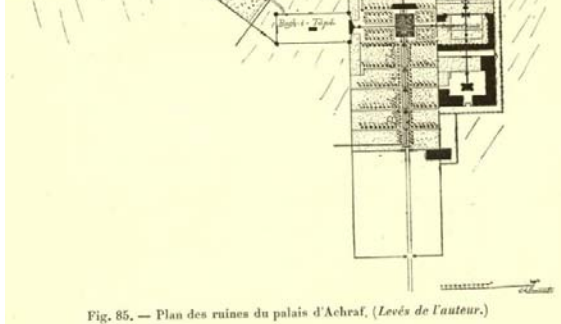
More documents that described the garden and its building belong to *Naser Al-din Shah-i Qajar* (1831-1896AD) period. Travellers and scholars’ visits from this place and great interest of Shah and courtiers in photography that was a new hobby, causes a good documentation from *Ashraf Al-Belad*’s remained historic monuments. In this time garden’s house repaired totally and this changes its face a lot. Fortunately, some pictures that catch from building before and after the repairs appear its *Nader Shahi* face and quality of changes clearly (Figs. 5, 6). *Melgunov*, Russian traveller who visited *Ashraf* at 1860AD in *Naser-Adin Shah* period and stayed there for some time, describe this house as bellow:

“*Chehel-Sotun* is a building which has a one-story hall with 16 wooden column and two-story rooms in its two sides. In its rooms was light fire and there is nothing expect three doors. The rooms already were used as habitation” (*Melgunov*1985: 88).

Melgunov note In other his description, before repairs the garden had been such destroyed that animals and birds were living in it. *Mohammad Hasan-Khan Etemad Al-Saltaneh*, *Naser Al-Din Shah*’s *Vazir* who had been seen the garden before its repairs, presented some descriptions (*Etemad Al-Saltaneh* 1985: 195).

In addition to, *De Morgan*, a French archaeologist, has visited from *Ashraf* in *Naser Al-Din Shah* period and drawn an exact plan from the complex of gardens which can help us for finding true garden (Fig. 7). He described garden’s feature and changes of the pavilion:

“In whole the garden, water channels which branch off from mountains flow in various water falls; but original building has been failed in this time and replaced with a more habitable building but with a loathsome style” (*Baba Asgari* 1971: 202).



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Fig. 6: A picture of *Chaehel-Sotun* pavilion before *Naser Al-Din Shah's* repairs, (*Golestan* palace museum)

Fig. 85. — Plan des ruines du palais d'Achraf. (Levés de l'auteur.)

Henry Viollete is another one who visits this place in this time. He drew some accurate plans for each Safavid garden and a total one for the complex. Building's plan, quality of water circulation system and even old cedars' place are signed in plan of *Bagh-i Shah*. Another issue in this plan is correction of garden's east wall that its correct shape has some nicks, though it supposed straight in other plans. Do not seems that garden has been regarded in *Naser Al-Din Shah's* repairs except two little croft which add to the back of pavilion. It supposed that garden was damaged so much in this time because *Naser Al-Din Shah* noted in his *Mazandaran* travel book that whole of his retinue pitched their tent in the garden's area when he was stayed in *Ashraf* (*Naser Al-din Shah-i Qajar* 2006: 71).

After that *Bagh-i Shah* was ignored again until first Pahlavi period that *Ashraf* was attended and renamed to *Behshahr* (*Shayan* 1984: 71). In this time garden has changed a lot. Its building reconstructed again as a different feature house. Old Aerial photographs can help us to realise Pahlavi garden's aspect. *Donald Vilber* (1907-1997 AD) who visited the garden in this time, presented a good plan from complex of

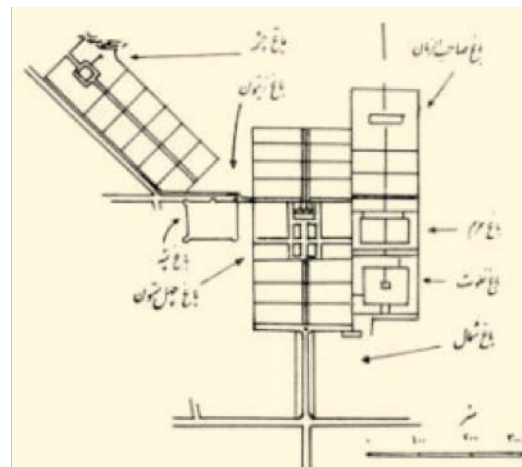


Fig. 7: Plan of *Bagh-i Shah* and other gardens, which situated around it in 1890AD, (*De Morgan* 1894: 181)

Fig. 8: Plan of *Bagh-i Shah* in 1913AD, (*Vilber* 2009: 137)

gardens (Fig. 9). Most important subject in this plan, which related with *Bagh-i Shah* is changing main pool to four little croft. Aerial photograph, which was taken in 1957AD shows that in this time decorative trees was planted in these crafts. After the Islamic republic of Iran, garden and its building are preserved and changed a lot. Most important reformations occurred about the building in 1987AD, which changes it from a one-story building to a three-story one. In addition, building's function has been changed to municipality and garden changed to a public park with name *Park-e Mellat*.

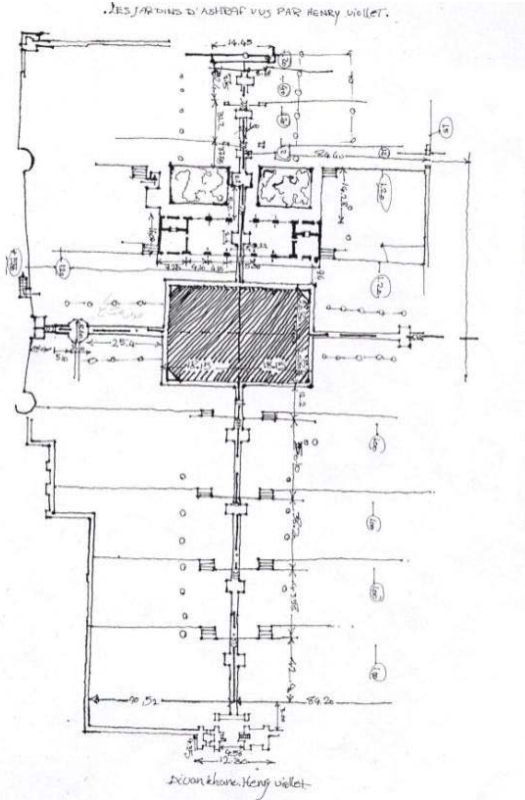


Fig. 9: Plan of *Bagh-i Shah* and other gardens, which situated around it in *Pahlavi* period, (Violet 1913, Cultural heritage, handy crafts and tourism organization of Iran)

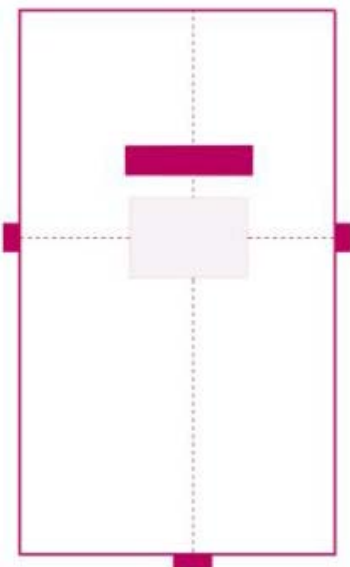
4. RECOGNITION OF TRUE IMAGE OF GARDEN

As mentioned above, *Bagh-e Shah* which was established by *Shah Abbas* in *Ashraf al-Belad*, changed during its life frequently. It was burned In *Afghan's* invasion, rebuilt by *NaderShah-e Afshar*, and repaired in *Qajar* period substantially. In this section try to investigate original features of garden based on documents and literatures. Therefore, different elements of garden are surveyed separately. Then its structure will regard in the past and future.

4.1 General Field of Graden

Because of the *Bagh-e Shah* of *Behshahr* is restricted among the other gardens and has relevance to them, it could be part of a "garden in garden patern"; and in fact central nucleus of that. As mentioned *Ashraf al-Belad* is a city between jungled mound and flat plain spreaded to the bank of *Khazar* sea. Royal gardens are in upper part of city and closest to the spring of drinking water, between jungled mound which have dominant position in all the city. On the other hand, the city was a village during the *Shah Abbas*, and was not a permanent place for him. It was in used only in parts of a year. Then, the royal complex was remained useless.

Therefore, selecting "garden in garden patern" with introspection access system seems logical. Nonetheless, in designing process and in connecting gardens to the city, like other built cities on that time, of public squares and a long street which has had connected the royal complex to the



city have used. *Bagh-i Shah of Behshahr* similar to a large number of persian gardens also has been built in an incline ground which natural slope of ground was used for conducting water and internal dividing (*Kart*). This factor has had great influence in future decisions and general features of garden.

Fig. 10: A diagram from general field of garden

General structure of *Bagh-i Shah* shows simple and regular geometry which affected by the slope of ground and stream of water (Fig 9). At a glance, the shape of garden could be assumed rectangular in which two axes at a vertical position to each other are the main paths of the garden. In the cross there is a large pool, and the main palace is in linear axis direction at the back of the pool. The palace and the pool as two important parts of garden are not exactly in middle of garden. Indeed, they have tendency to northern part of garden which is due to accession paths of water from *Bagh-Tappeh* and *Bagh-Haram*. One may say in spite of all changes and adhesions, this general structure was stable over time.

4.2 Watering Circulation System of Garden

Water is most vital element of garden. In addition to make an effort to achieve a better use of water in *persian garden*, try to display it in extreme beauty. In this way all visual and audible aspects have been used. For investigating the role of water in *Bagh-i Shah of Behshahr* and understanding its characteristics in this garden, it is necessary to study sources and entrance of water to the garden.

Principally water of garden have been prepared from two sources which have been specified in sketches by *Jan jak De Morgan*. One water supply is a spring in the right side of garden, which *Cheshmeh Emarat* garden have been built on it. The spring first irrigated the *Cheshmeh Emarat* garden, then streamed into the *Bagh Tappeh* garden. The additional water conducted through channels and *Tenbusheh*, which were upside the garden's wall, into *Bagh-i Shah*.

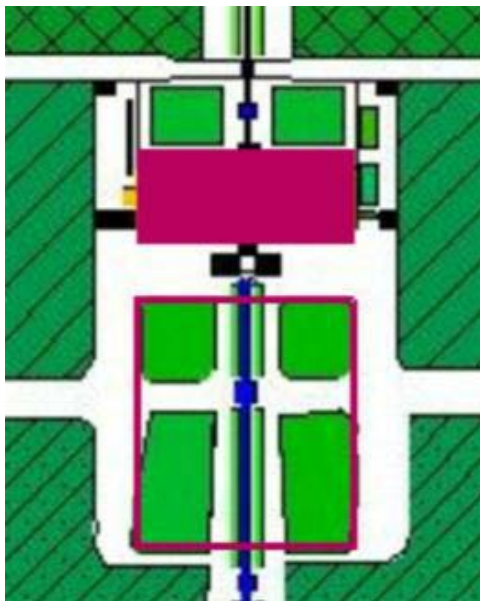


Fig. 11: A diagram, which shows that four crafts replaced on place of garden's main pool



But flowing water from upper part of palace, south of garden, is quite irrational based on entrance points of water into the large middle pool and the situation of water sources. *Pietro della Valle's* sketch shows the channels of water which also confirms this issue. The sketch does not indicate the water channels which flow from upper part of palace into pool. In addition, it is impossible according to stair way of *Divan Khaneh* which *della Valle* shows in front of building. The pool have been demolished now so the channels parallel to width streets have been destroyed and water is only flowing in longitudinal axis of garden. water sources have been also changed and water conducts by pipeline toward the upper part of garden, start of water's circulation.

In original design of garden, the most important place for presenting water was the large pool situated in the cross of two main axes. Flowed water through garden poured down to the pool and from there toward the longitudinal axis channels. Main role of this deep pool may be staying water and reflecting the image of *Divan Khaneh* building. Place of pool which earthed in *Pahlavi* period is not clear exactly. *Henry Viollet* specified in his plan from garden the accurate dimensions of the pool. Drawing the pool and the pavilion based on *Viollet*, then overlaying the plan on the presented plan of garden, shows that there are four crafts in place of old pool now (Fig. 11). However, this claim should be evaluated by more researchs and also archaeological excavations.

In addition to large pool, there were two smaller pools which placed in the middle of the east and west width streets. These pools could only be seen in a plan of garden by *Henry Violet*. Smaller pools have been built in rectangular and octagonal shape. In addition, there were some smaller pools bellow *Abshorehs*.

Fig. 12: A picture of carved stones (*Abshoreh*), which situated in channels way

In the stream line of water in garden has not been used fountain as *Della Valle* emphasized this issue in his letters (*Della Valle* 1991: 266). Nonetheless, to present the beauty of water, carved stones (*Abshoreh*) have been used in stream line in the *Bagh-i Shah* which some of them have remained (Fig 12). When these *Abshoreh* set in garden is not obvious. *Della Valle* which have seen and described this garden in the time of *Shah Abbas Safavi*, did not say anything about that. However, in pictures of Afsharid building and later *Abshoreh* can be seen obviously. On the other hand, *Henry Violet* which have seen the garden in Qajar period, located each *Abshoreh* in his map. Perhaps in Safavid period there were these carved stones which were lesser because of shorter stream line path.

Walls of channels and pool's body have been built from stone plats. *De Morgan* has described details of how was channel's wall built (*De Morgan* 1894: 184). *Donald Vilber* has mentioned holes upon the channels' wall which used for holding bright candles (*Vilber* 2009: 142). Main structure of the channels (except destroyed parts) and the holes have remained to the present time; although The candle holes have arranged irregular and it is obvious which some stones have been substituted. In *Pahlavi I* during the palace's changes, the large pool was destroyed and stream line of water passes under the pavilion now. To sum up, according to documents and literatures, watering system of *Bagh-i Shah* in different historic periods can be drawn as shown in chronological plans (Figs. 24-27).

4.3 Garden's Pathing

Bagh-i Shah has two main paths perpendicular to each other which in spite of lots of changes in garden, have remained partly. Infact, these two paths may assume as skeleton of garden, which have been located according to stream lines of water. One of the paths is in the middle of and in the direction of longitudinal axe of garden and another one is in the direction of lateral axe of it, situated a little near to northern side. Along by these paths visitor is faced with various views such as a path with tall green cedars and accompaniment of sound of flowing water. The old cedars in both sides of these two paths are indicative of their authenticity that confirm their true place, even in spite of losing its main elements like the water channels in the middle of the lateral path. There is another important path in the garden but it is more subsidiary than two mentioned way, a lateral path that located on the back of the buliding. In addition, one way go around just near the interior part of garden's wall. This path is a narrow way which limited by lined cedars and garden's wall on the other side.

4.4 Garden's Trees

In *Bagh-i Shah* both evergreen and deciduous trees or fruitful and fruitless trees have been used similar to many persian gardens. Cedars have been planted in path's sides and orange and sometimes pomegranate and walnut trees have been placed in the crofts. Many travelers and scholars who have described *Bagh-i Shah* noted the cedars and orange trees as the main plant type of the garden (*Della Valle* 1991: 265, *Melgunov* 1364: 90). Fortunately, new planting style of the garden follows its origin one (Figs. 13, 14).



Fig. 13, 14: two pictures of garden's fruitful and fruitless trees

Garden's trees can be classified based on age and type. Most of cedars which are main type of garden's shady trees are young with the exception of some old cedars which their thick trunks are indicative

of their age. Old trees have been remained in the back of the pavilion or on the sides of the main path. Most of other original trees have been destroyed or replaced with younger ones. Although all of the orange trees are young, they have been placed in the exact position of the original ones in the crofts. Moreover, there are some decorative trees added in garden design which no historic documents included images and literature imply that they were not in the original design. Such trees may be planted in Pahlavi period in the central area of the garden, in front of the pavilion and also in the place of main pool that change to a craft now.

4.5 Flooring of Garden

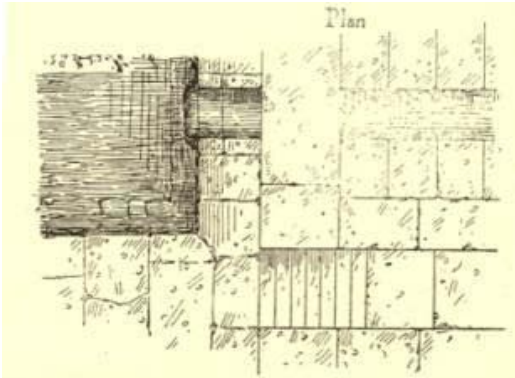


Fig. 89. — Cascades du parc de Châh Abbâs, à Achraf.

Fig. 15: Details of garden's stone flooring, which presented by *De Morgan*, (*De Morgan* 1894: 184)



Fig. 16: Some examples from Georgian letters, which carved on flooring stones

Floor of garden, after significant issues such plants, water and garden's arena, is the most structure element. As mentioned in travel books and literature, the floor of *Bagh-i Shah* has been covered with stone plates. Either remained stones in both sides of channels or details noted by *De morgan*, in qajar period, could be used to understand composition, dimension and arrangement of these stones (Fig. 15). Although, stones used in the floor like other masonry have been utilized by local inhabitants for buildings out of the garden, it could be perceived the similarity between the stones of floor, sides of channels and main pool base on documents. *James Freezer* which visited *Ashraf* in 1822 AD described in his book as:

"... Its cobblestone which most of them are six feet square and imported from *Bacco* and *Chirvan* with high cost and break marbles of façade and use parts of them in individual buildings" (*Freezer* 1364: 25).

Mirza Ebrahim has also mentioned this issue in his book (*Mirza Ebrahim* 1355: 84, 85). Notable subject in remained old cobblestones are carved patterns which could be seen on some stones (Fig. 16). *De morgan* have mentioned these patterns in his reports. He assign these patterns to Georgian letters which carved by Safavid stonemasons who were probably from Georgia and have been migrated to *Ashraf* by *Shah Abbas* (*Baba Asgari* 1350: 204).

Varieties of material used for flooring of *Bagh-i Shah* are seen now. Some parts of the path which use for driving have been covered with asphalt, parts devoted to pedestrians covered with mosaics, and pavilion's backyard abounded which changed to a weedy surface.

4.6 Garden's Buildings

Except to some types of skeletal elements, which noted above, we could sign to other elements like garden's collection of buildings as skeletal elements in spatial-skeletal structure in garden. However, this group include little space in comparison with garden's scale, they has a main role in formation of spatial image of garden insofar as imagination of garden without being them, will be imperfect and invalid. Buildings of *Bagh-i-shah* of *Behshahr* include the middle house and of garden's portals that at present time is destroyed or changed completely.

Bagh-i Shah had several portals in its original design, that there are not now, but we can find them from historic documents. one of these portals was main entrance of garden from front of *Maydan* that in fact is the most important of them. As signed before, Travelers described this portal, such as *Della Valle* which wrote in his fourth book as:

"After this area we passed another door⁴ which set little arcade on the top of it and then we entered the garden" (Della valle 1991: 276).

In addition, *Honwey* sign to this portal, he presented no explanation. Just *Henry Viollet* presented portal's plan in a sketch that drew from *Bagh-I Shah* (Fig. 17). In this plan, guard's room, entrance gate and a staircase, which probably conduct to top of portal' arcade, have been shown. For achieve to image of this portal, we can see a pallid picture from main portal by more precision in one of qajari photos, which *Viollet* has been taken from *Chehel-Sotun*. In this picture, portal's face is visible from faraway which has slope roof. (Fig. 18)

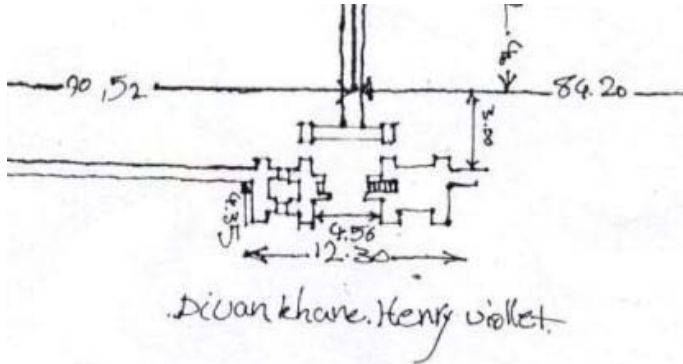


Fig. 17: A part of garden's plan, which shows portals plan, (Violet 1913, Cultural heritage, handy crafts and tourism organization of Iran)

At present this building has been destroyed completely and there is not any separator between garden's arena and previous square. Except to this building, based on *Henry Viollet's* plan, there were three portals, which do not remained any sign of them now and just have been noted in some of travel books.

However, the most important building of garden is the middle pavilion, which almost set in center of the garden and this issue can be emphasized its importance. In previous section, pavilion's shape and condition explained comprehensively. Based on available documents, this building was an outward pavilion in all historic periods, but its feature was changed a lot during time. Now, Pahlavi building can be seen in place of pavilion. After the islamic republic of Iran, its inner part has been changed from one-store to three-story.

There is no information about condition of this building in Safavid period. Just *Della Valle* describes *Divankhaneh* as bellow:

"*Divankhaneh* that is situated in the middle of the garden is a building which its length is three times longer than its width. In front of this building is open entirely but there is a wall with a lot of windows which has been built on the back and two sides of it. The floor of the house is two step upper than the ground. The Building's open area which is in longitudinal direction faces north, toward to entering gate. There is a long cobblestone path in front of the building that a channel is in the middle of it and the water



Fig. 18: A picture of south elevation of pavilion in Qajarid period and a zoomed picture of portal's aspect in this time, (*Golestan* palace museum)

⁴ "It is a little covered entrance. There is a guard gate too" (Alemi 1994).

flow into it from the garden's main pool always. The path continues after the divankhaneh and goes to the end of garden, near the hills. In the center of the south wall of divankkhaneh a door has been situated on the direction of the axe of the path, all the length of the path can be seen when it is open" (Della Valle 1991: 215).

Although, there is no picture of *Divankhaneh* in Safavid period except to *Della Valle's* one which in spite of some mistakes could be beneficial, condition of building could be perceived partly based on his descriptions. *Della Valle* describes *Divankhaneh* as a building surrounded by walls in three sides but there is no wall in northern part of building which is open. He mentions south, east and west walls, which have lots of windows. On the other hand, he describes only one door in the middle of south wall which when it is open the length of street from north to south could be seen (Fig. 19). Such design of building with regard to humid climate of this locale is logical and justifiable because opening the windows cause air circulation which decrease humidity. Use of this characteristic can be seen in local traditional architecture. There are not any descriptions about *Divankhaneh's* rooms neither in reports nor in sketches presented by *Della Valle*. Whereas, he describes other garden such *Bagh Tappeh*, *Bagh-i Khalvat* etc. in details. Therefore, it could be understand that in Safavid period, *Divankhaneh* contained only a hall used for royal treatments while other palaces were used for habitation.

To have a precise imagination of *Divankhaneh* in *Ashraf Al-Belad* town, descriptions of other Safavid *Divankhaneh-s* could be useful. *Honwey* who visited Iran in 1743 AD has explained word of *Divankhaneh* in his reports as bellow:

"*Divankhaneh* was a hall in which Safavid Kings decided about governmental issues. The hall was in the back of *Ali-Qaphoo* and in front of the hall was open completely" (Homayun 1348: 63).

Kempfer who visited *Shah Soleyman Safavi* in 1821 AD, describes a pavilion in Saadat Abad garden such:

"A wooden building which was open in the three sides, had been established among the garden. Interior walls had been painted delicately. Windows had beautiful carved motifs" (Homayun 1348: 121).

Also *Kempfer* express a sketch from ceremony of coronation *Shah Soleiman*. With according this description and with regard to that base on historic documents, Safavi's building in Afghan's invasion completely burned by fire, can imaging *Divankhaneh's* building, that built in *Shah Abbas* period, was a light and probably also the main structure of building is wooden. This theory with regard to region's climate, style of general building in this climate and local materials, seems logical.



Fig. 19: A Sketch, which presented in *Della Valle's* travel book for *Divankhaneh* of *Bagh-i Shah*. Mistakes in building's length maybe caused of delay to drawing this sketch, which, drawn after *Della Valle* and added to the book. Please note to south wall's door and not being any rooms in sides of the pavilion.

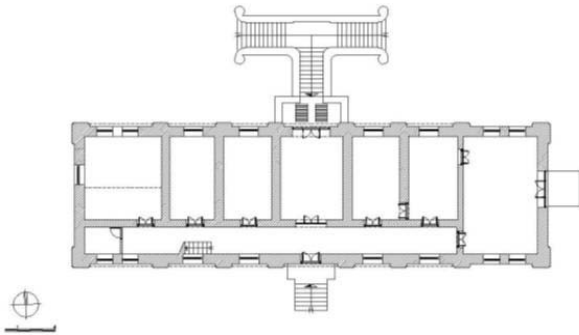


Fig. 20: First floor plan of Pahlavid pavilion at present, (cultural heritage organization of *Golestan* province)

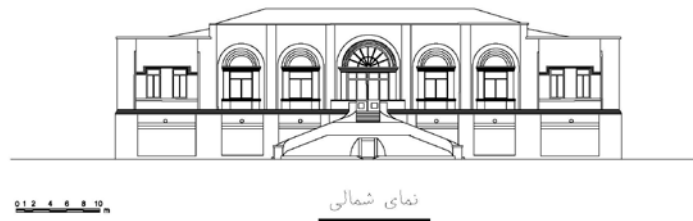


Fig. 21: North elevation of Pahlavid pavilion at present, (cultural heritage organization of *Golestan* province)

In *Nader Shah Afshar's* period, the pavilion was reconstructed. From *Hommair De hell's* drawing we can comprehend that *Nader Shahi's* building, according to its position in compare with main pool, was replaced as *Divankhaneh* and other researchers' presented plans emphasize it. Properties of Afshari's house architecture very similar to Safavid one. spaces, structure, wooden columns and even decoration, which was used in building quite remember the Safavid building. Maybe for this, in this time the building named *Chehel-Sotun* (the name, which related to a Safavid famous garden in Isfahan and distributed to garden after that). Figures, which were taken from Afshari house at Qajar period, emphasize this issue. Pavilion consists of hall on the center and some rooms in two-story which placed on its two sides at this time.

This building repaired and changed in *Naser Al-Din Shah's* period which mentioned in details before. It is perceived from remained pictures and plans of Qajarid pavilion that at this period general structure of pavilion did not have changed so much and only some of details were different. Rooms, space of two sides and middle hall have been preserved but with quite different feature. Roof of the hall had been secure on thin pillar and archers instead of wooden column and also the building was very simple, without any decoration.

Although, the building also changed essentially in Pahlavi period, with little attention yet could be found traces of previous building in the present building. This implies to preserve primary structure in spite of quite different feature of present building (Fig. 20, 21). As mentioned before in section of functional



recognition of garden, in recent years after changing function of garden to public park and municipality of *Behshahr* city, new functions like zoo, child's park, taxi station etc. were given to garden that resulted in constructing incompatible buildings into the garden. Some pictures shown condition of these buildings are as follow

Fig. 22, 23: two pictures from some of modern buildings, which built in gardens area for its revitalization

(Fig. 22, 23).

4.7. Garden's Chronological Plans

Regarding to the whole of which said along the article about the garden's changes such as revolution of water circulation system, planting system, remained buildings etc in several periods, whole of this

changes can be presented in some plans which show us garden and its pavilion's condition in each period (Figs. 24-27).



Fig. 24: imaged plan for garden's condition in Safavid period



Fig. 25: imaged plan for garden's condition in Afshadi period

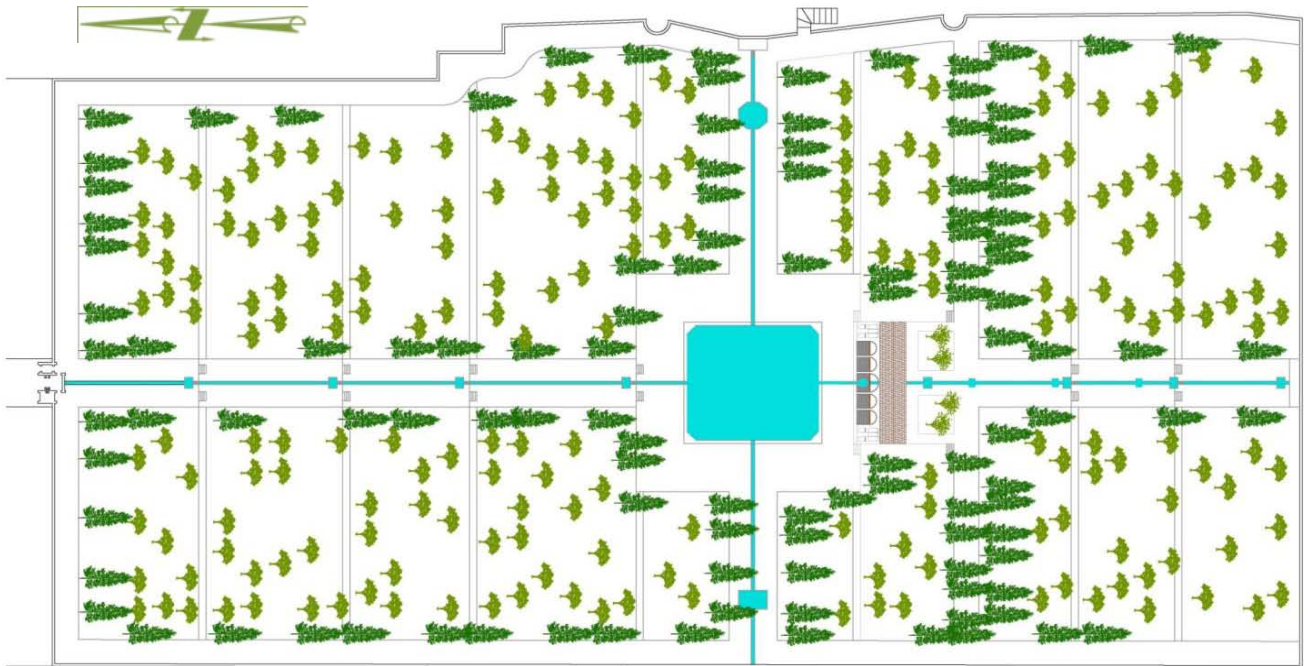


Fig. 26: imaged plan for garden's condition in Qajarid period



Fig. 27: imaged plan for garden's condition in Pahlavid period until now

5. CONCLUSION:

To sum up, results of discussions can be mentioned in three aspects. First, based on available documents *Bagh-i-shah* is recoverable. Recovering and back to the original garden and the authentic feature of garden's structure can be achieved with exact survey and some archaeological excavation. Second, importance of survey of *Bagh-i-shah* as one of the royal gardens of *Ashraf* town that must be considered during study. Because with regard to processes of changing in *Bagh-i-Shah* it can be said that the rate of changing increased when relation of *Bagh-i-Shah* with other parts of complex like square and the other gardens decreased for some reasons like changes in relation of spaces in contemporary urban planning. Third, most important reason for recovery of *Bagh-i-Shah* is the exact view to the quality of its fading in new urban fabric. Because this issue results in changes in garden's situation in the city which finally result in changes in identity perceived by visitors from garden.

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