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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Tracing the Islamic Influences on the Garden Design of Nineteenth Century Cairene Gardens

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

By
Radwa M. Elfardy

Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Bernard O’Kane

The American University in Cairo

Tracing the Islamic Influences on the Garden Design of Nineteenth Century Cairene Gardens

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Radwa M. Elfardy

To the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts

Has been approved by

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Aims and Methodologies of Research

The Ottoman rule of Egypt that lasted over three centuries provided this country with a notable cross-cultural exchange between imperial Istanbul and colonial Cairo. This exchange reflected notably on the architecture and landscape planning of both capitals. The mutual influence continued even after the end of Ottoman colonial rule in Egypt. Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha seized the opportunity to declare himself as Egypt's ruler after Napoleon Bonaparte's French Expedition in Egypt and Syria (1798-1801). Muhammad ‘Ali and his dynasty created the autonomous tributary state of Khedival Egypt (1867-1914) that was loosely connected to the Ottoman Porte in Istanbul.

This dynamic exchange allowed Egypt to be closer to a state of its own rather than a colonial one. The change not only affected the Egyptian ruling system but Egyptian culture, economy, education, and urban planning as well. Khedival Egypt witnessed a construction boom during the reign of Muhammad ‘Ali and his dynasty. During this phase students were sent to Europe to seek knowledge and education, changing Egyptian cultural awareness dynamically during the nineteenth century.

One of the most noted changes in Cairo was urban and landscape planning which flourished under the rule of Khedive Isma‘il (1863-1879) whose building patronage has been described as the *belle époque*. Representing the most beautiful nineteenth-century phase of building in Cairo and the first step of its modernization process, the *belle époque* witnessed an increase in gardens and parks, multiplying the number of green spots in Cairo. These included palatial gardens such as the Gezira Palace garden (1867) and public parks such as Azbakiyya Park (1837). Earlier scholars highlighted the Western impact on the design of these gardens as Khedive Isma‘il imported architects and landscapers from Paris, yet they overlooked the influence from Cairo's local traditional architecture in parallel with its Ottoman heritage.

To be able to analyze and trace such influences one must be aware of the contextual development of landscape architecture of the nineteenth century. A major factor was the designer himself, Jean Pierre Barillet Deschamps, and his assistant Gustave Delchevalerie, both of whom influenced greatly the landscape architectural development of nineteenth-century Cairo. To be able to evaluate their work in Cairo, their original works in Paris must be evaluated first. Deschamps' most noted works in Paris are the Bois De Boulogne (1855-60) and the Park Monceau (1860).

In this thesis, I research the double impact of Ottoman landscape design and Western landscape design on the nineteenth and early twentieth-century development of landscape architecture in Cairo. I aim to trace the characteristics of Islamic gardens within the layers of development added by the Westernization process in nineteenth-century Cairene gardens and to prove that nineteenth-century Cairene gardens were neither French nor a pure Islamic or Egyptian product, but a very special outcome of accumulated centuries of cross-cultural exchange of ideas and building traditions. The final aspect of these gardens stems from the layering of historical landscaping traditions.

This thesis will use comparative analysis methodology to study the Islamic and Western features that formed the complex character of the nineteenth-century Cairene landscape. The second layer will be traced through studying Ottoman gardens, since the Ottoman Empire dominated Egypt even during the Khedival era. Ottoman gardens to be compared are the Yildiz (1877) and Beylerbeyi (1826-1832) Palace Gardens in Istanbul, as well as Taksim Park (1865) in Pera, Istanbul. The third major point of comparison is the only documented Mamluk garden, Azbakiyya, reflecting the Cairene community and its development, which was also a garden redesigned by Deschamps himself. The Gezira Palace Gardens and Azbakiyya garden will be used as comparative material.

Since Deschamps and his assistant were working on the design of Cairene landscapes based in the middle of an authentic Islamic community which clearly affected their designs and procedures, one must also study earlier examples of Islamic gardens. The most famous and well-

preserved in the nineteenth century were the Alhambra and Generalife Palace gardens. They represent the best known and preserved Islamic gardens existing in the nineteenth century which Jean Pierre Barillet Deschamps may have studied before starting his projects in Cairo.

Based on the above there is still a significant headway to be made regarding the recognition of the vigorous character of nineteenth-century Cairene landscape architecture. Thus, with the aid of this visual comparison stated previously of Ottoman, Hispano-Umayyad, Parisian, and Cairene parks, this thesis will take a closer look at nineteenth-century Cairene parks and the cultural and architectural layering resulting in its diverse character.

The three areas mentioned above are the background to Deschamps' projects which define the characteristics of all the famous Parisian gardens that he designed. After summarizing the basic guidelines Deschamps worked with, I hope to analyze the works he did in Cairo with better recognition of the origins of every element framing his methodologies and techniques of design. His most important Cairene gardens were the Gezira Gardens and Azbakiyya Park on which he worked with his assistant Gustave Delchevalerie. Their Cairene projects were laid out in Delchevalerie's book *Les promenades et les jardins du Caire*. Two other volumes dealing particularly with Gezira and Azbakiyya gardens are: *Flore exotique du jardin d'acclimatation de Ghezireh et des domaines de S. A. le Khedive* and *Le parc public de l'Ezbékiah au Caire* which represent the main textual sources of this research.

1.2. Sources Consulted

Most scholars writing on the topic of the Islamic gardens were clearly devoted to a particular type of garden, a certain theme, or a specific region. They frequently wrote about the eschatological or paradisiacal theme of these gardens and their direct and indirect relation to Qur'anic verses describing heaven. However, most of these gardens barely still exist in their original design, although one can occasionally reconstruct some of them with the aid of travelers' accounts. Nevertheless, some scholars managed to capture the bigger picture of the major design criteria of Islamic gardens and their development from the seventh century until today.

Studying nineteenth-century Cairene gardens and landscape is considered a challenge, since much of the scholarly literature is on the social and building patronage of the Muhammad ‘Ali dynasty and its horticultural activity, with relatively little analysis of specific gardens. Not only has the literature been slim on this area, but also most of the gardens have largely disappeared. The challenge lies in the relation of the general surveys of the topic and the period to the analysis of the gardens in terms of landscape design. I will divide the sources into five major groups discussing and relating their sources.

1.2.1. Understanding the Consistency of Islamic Gardens (origins and borrowed traditions)

The first group tends to clarify the general criteria of any Islamic garden in terms of form, function, aesthetics, and architectural elements. Islamic gardens were frequently discussed by a wide range of scholars throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Selected works were chosen to compile a list of the general criteria of Islamic gardens, among which is Prabhakar B. Bhagwat’s article *Gardens of India: History, Research and Orientation* (1976). He discusses some of the famous Indian gardens before and after the foundation of the Mughal dynasty. He traces chronologically the development of architectural design elements in the Indian Islamic garden until the introduction of the new English style garden in the nineteenth century.

Johnathan M. Bloom and Sheila S. Blair’s account of Islamic gardens in *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture* (2009) sets the scene clearly for the general understanding of typologies within the development of Islamic gardens. The usage of architectural and landscape elements throughout each zone of the Muslim world is discussed separately in different entries giving more insightful if short accounts of these zones.

1.2.2. Meaning and Symbolism in Islamic gardens

The second group of literature complements the aims of the first one yet discusses the criteria of Islamic gardens simultaneously with their symbolic meaning and their relation to the

eschatological theme frequently associated with Islamic gardens by a variety of scholars. Patrick Villiers-Stuart's "The Indian Paradise Garden" (1931) is one of the earliest twentieth-century accounts reflecting on symbolism in his short account of Indian Islamic gardens. Christopher Thacker's book *The History of Gardens* (1979) surveys the development of landscape building patronage across the world. His chapter "Persian and Islamic Gardens" focuses on the paradisaical theme through the study of the Persian origins of symbolism in the garden and its relation to Ottoman and Moorish gardens.

Jonas Benzion Lehrman's *Earthly Paradise: Garden and Courtyard in Islam* (1980) examines the development of gardens chronologically as well as in terms of dynasties and geographic locations. This helps to set a general frame for understanding the Islamic garden in terms of spatial experience within an enclosure, an unusual approach. He reflects frequently on the paradisaical theme and provides textual and material evidence to back up his arguments on the spatial experiences of Islamic gardens.

John Brookes' *Gardens of Paradise: The History and Design of Great Islamic Gardens* (1987) also mainly reflects on the paradisaical theme. Emma Clark's *The Art of the Islamic Garden* (2004) provides a manual for the design of an Islamic garden in our modern world. She studies thoroughly some Qur'anic verses and their reflections on garden design and symbolism. Brookes classifies paradise gardens into two main types. The first is the centripetal, directing the contemplative gaze inwards, where a fountain or any other joyful feature was present in the center. These gardens were meant to be viewed closely while standing inside them, focusing the contemplative gaze on meticulous details. They were suitable for urban contexts as they had an intimate scale. The other type of paradise garden was the centrifugal, suiting more rural environments and palatial contexts, which frequently had a relatively large scale. These gardens had a central pavilion, encouraging a wider gaze into the vast landscape.

Both volumes (Brookes' and Clark's) detail the methodology of designing an Islamic garden starting with geometrical patterns and ending with the abundant use of water and kiosks of

Islamic palatial gardens. In between the previous two accounts lies Donald N. Wilber's book *Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions* (1994). It focuses mainly on the paradisaical theme and meaning in the Persian gardens, reflecting on the developments of gardens within Iran and Central Asia.

One of the most organized, concise but comprehensive studies is D. Fairchild Ruggles' *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (2011). She argues that Islamic gardens were not meant to be understood within the imaginative and symbolic frame of paradise garden only, but to be perceived within more elaborate environmental, social, economic and political frames. Her book shows how most Islamic gardens were designed and she greatly assists and directs the viewer's perception while experiencing these gardens. She noted the most significant gardens providing pictorial and visual aids complementing her textual sources. Her volume provides an account of the development of gardens in the Muslim world, reflecting thoroughly on their relation to each other.

1.2.3. Understanding the Contexts of the Gardens

1.2.3.1. The General Islamic Context

The third group is mainly concerned with understanding the social and environmental context of the gardens. This group has literature dealing with Cairo, Granada, Istanbul, and Paris, mainly dealing with the behavioral patterns of the under a certain dynasty. They are major sources for the comparison, analysis, and evaluation of the nineteenth century Cairene gardens.

The volume *Islam: Art and Architecture* (2004) edited by Markus Hattstein, Peter Delius, and Pierre Riches sets the context for the three phases of Islamic gardens discussed in this research (Cairo, Istanbul, Granada), providing a chapter for each phase, region, and dynasty. It analyses each dynasty in terms of history, architecture and decorative arts. In Egypt's case the book does not provide any garden studies. It sets the scene for the gardens of Nasrid Granada and Ottoman Istanbul with a chapter on the history, decorative arts, and architecture of each phase of the two.

1.2.3.2. The Cairene Context

Nezzar Elsayyad in his book *Cairo: Histories of a City* (2011) sums up the social, political and architectural contexts, pulling together the various perspectives about the city's structures through travelers' accounts varying from Ibn Battuta in the thirteenth century to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European travelers. His account shows that social and political events often determined the urban forms. He closely ties political movements to the development of Cairo from Ancient Egypt to the present. He dedicated a chapter to Khedive Isma'il's patronage, reflecting superficially on the Gezira Palace and frequently on Azbakiyya Garden. Other scholars tackled Ottoman rule in Egypt from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century. Michael Winter's *Egyptian Society Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1798* (1992) discusses the period characterized by ethnic and political clashes since the fall of Mamluk rule in 1517 until the advent of the French Expedition in 1798. The approach is mainly social and also includes accounts of world travelers highlighting pre-modern Egyptian and Cairene society.

Much has been written in the context of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Cairo and Egypt in general. The *Description de l'Egypte* (1809) is the most significant documentation of nineteenth-century Cairo. It provides a contemporary account of art and architecture with plates, maps, scholarly essays, and a detailed index, reflecting on the daily life of the Egyptians. This publication is used repeatedly in this research specifically for its maps and plates. The commentary on the book by Angele Kopoïan-Kouymjian and Dickran Kouymjian named *The Splendor of Egypt: A Commentary on Napoléon Bonaparte's Expedition (1798-1801) and the "Description de l'Egypte"* (1975) analyzed the texts, plates and maps within their context.

Muhammad 'Ali's rule of Egypt has a wide range of studies as well. His modernizing process and special interest in education, architectural and urban development were highlighted in many scholarly works. Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot's *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (1984) discusses the change Egypt witnessed during its transformation into a nation, reflecting on the army,

education, land ownership laws, relation to Ottoman authority and the reflection of all these aspects to urban and architectural patronage. She highlights Muhammad 'Ali's contribution to the development of Azbakiyya garden as well as his interest in the horticultural activity showing how agricultural development was part of his program to develop the economic system. A more recent and precise study of Muhammad 'Ali's ruling in Egypt is Khaled Fahmy's *Mehmed Ali: From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt* (2009). It provides a further developed study of Muhammad 'Ali's ruling system in Egypt, however; it reflects more on his life before becoming a ruler and his relation to the Ottoman Porte. The architectural patronage is well tackled relative to Marsot's account.

The topic of domestic architecture in Cairo and urban compact gardens has been rarely studied. Jacques Revault and Bernard Maury's *Palais et maisons du Caire du XIVE au XVIIIe siècle* (1975) studies the development of domestic architecture and its gardens. It usefully highlights the pre-khedival building style and traditions common in Cairo and contributes to the understanding of why these traditions were abandoned and replaced by the modern European styles and traditions in the nineteenth century. Nihal Tamraz's *Nineteenth Century Cairene Houses and Palaces* (1998) highlights the introduction of new European neo-classical styles of architecture and the means and reasons of their propagation by Muhammad 'Ali's dynasty. She analyzes these factors through a case study of the palace of 'Abbas Hilmi I, developing the understanding of how European-imported artists and architects employed their techniques and new styles in Cairo. Then she reflects on the propagation of these new styles through a detailed study of the development of new neighborhood of 'Abbasiyya. Shirley Johnston and Sunbul Sharif's *Egyptian Palaces and Villas: Pashas, Khedives, and Kings* (2006) deals directly with the palaces and villas built in the Khedival period and reflects on the collections within these palaces. The Gezira palace is analyzed thoroughly, however, there is no real criticism of the styles or traditions of its design. Heba Farouk Ahmed's thesis *Pre-Colonial Modernity: The State and the Making of Nineteenth-Century Cairo's Urban Form* (2001) focused on the introduction of a new infrastructure and the

interventions made to uplift the city's performance. She discussed the development chronologically focusing mainly on Khedive Isma'il's patronage, and his attempts to turn Cairo into a European city. She shows how neo-classical Islamic architecture became more widespread in the Cairene community in the second half of the nineteenth century. She agreed with Mohammad Al-Asad's article "The Re-invention of Tradition: Neo-Islamic Architecture in Cairo" (1993) in drawing attention to the revival of traditional architectural and design elements in nineteenth-century buildings. Robert Ilbert and Mercedes Volait's "Neo-Arabic Renaissance in Egypt 1870-1930" (1984) analyzed the similarities between the earlier traditional architecture and the more modern style in the Gezira palace and its gardens.

Numerous surveys have been made of the social, economic, and political contexts and their relation to architectural patronage in Cairo in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most accounts related the nineteenth-century building patronage of Khedive Isma'il to French origins. Trevor Mostyn's *Egypt's Belle Epoque: Cairo and the Age of the Hedonists* (2006) studies the social and economic contexts of Cairene architecture and frequently reflects on Khedive Isma'il's fascination with French and European development and Princess Eugenie. However, despite his superficial study of architecture, he dedicated a chapter to the Gezira Palace providing textual sources and another chapter listing rather than criticizing the hotels of nineteenth-century Cairo. The same approach was taken by Cynthia Myntti in her book *Paris Along the Nile: Architecture in Cairo from the Belle Epoque* also focusing on Isma'il's French-mania. She documents two hundred nineteenth-century buildings and reflects mainly on their deterioration and neglect.

1.2.3.3. The Istanbul Context

Nineteenth-century Istanbul was much different from Cairo, it being the imperial capital. Westernization in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Istanbul was evident in both public and private architecture, changing the face of the city. However, the most complex imperial structure of Istanbul was the Topkapi Palace that remained intact after the abolition of Ottoman rule. Gülru

Necipoğlu's *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (1991) unfolds the history of the palace gradually. Although the palace suffered earthquakes and fires, it is still relatively intact. She tackles its surprisingly non-monumental character. She summarizes travelers' accounts, letters sent and received by visitors and inhabitants of the palace, a daunting task regarding the amount of written literature and their different languages. She integrated a vast range of sources, dedicating a chapter to the walls and the outer court, two chapters to the second court and five to the third court including the gardens. An equally important chapter is dedicated to the kiosks overlooking the Bosphorus. Her central thesis is that the palace was conceived of as an architectural and ceremonial expression of the imperial image of the Ottoman ruler and thus the dynasty. Wanda Reif's "The Magnificence of the Topkapi Palace" (2000) reviews the social and historical development of the Topkapi Palace from the fifteenth century to the end of the Ottoman rule.

House of the Sultan: Topkapi Palace Imperial Harem (2012) examines the relation of the *harem* to other sections of the palace including the gardens, complementing Necipoğlu's study. Yasin Çağatay Seçkin's article "Gardens of the Nineteenth-Century Imperial Palaces in Istanbul" (2003) is useful for understanding the context of garden patronage at the time. He included in his study three palaces of nineteenth-century Istanbul and evaluates their Western influences. He sees the Dolmabahçe Palace (1839) as a turning point as it showed royal interest in Western gardens and architecture. He reflects briefly on the five gardens included in the palace. He views the gardens of the Beylerbeyi Palace (1826-1832) as French and Italian incorporating Baroque style. He compares the Yildiz Palace (1877) with its smaller pavilions to the Topkapi palace. Shirine Hamadeh's "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the Inevitable Question of Westernization" (2004) relates to Seçkin's account on a broader theme. She argues that the generalizations made about the Westernization process in Istanbul should be revisited. She reflects nineteenth century approaches to reviving traditional architecture including that of Egypt.

1.2.3.4. The Muslim Spain Context

On the topic of the gardens of Spain, the literature is vast. D. Fairchild Ruggles' many publications are the most comprehensive concerning Islamic gardens in general, and in particular about the Alhambra. Earlier Western literature on the Alhambra and its gardens perceived them in an exotic and paradisiacal way. Thus, studies of gardens predating the Alhambra and relating them to the context of both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds were necessary. Ruggles' "The Mirador in the Abbasid and Hispano-Umayyad Garden Typology" (1990) compares the mirador with Abbasid developments in Samarra. The context of ninth-century Islamic gardens constitutes a background necessary for judging later Islamic garden developments. She gives a broader view of Madinat al-Zahra in her article "Historiography and Rediscovery of Madinat al-Zahra" (1991) as an example of gardens predating the Alhambra and relates it to the Alhambra and later developments.

Jerrilynn Dodds' *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (1992) is a general source examining the intimate link between North Africa and Spain, the influences of Muslim Spanish architecture on the Islamic world in terms of ceramics, textiles, the arts of the book, and also the gardens of the Alhambra. Ruggles gives much information about the connection between the seat of Muslim Spanish rulers and other centers of power in North Africa. M. S. Lundstrom's "Experiencing the Alhambra: An Illusive Site of Oriental Otherness" (2012) reflects on the perception of the Muslim Spanish world by Western communities. It compares accounts of one French and one Finnish traveler of the nineteenth century. The article argues that the Alhambra was perceived as a distant dreamland, representing imaginative romanticism in the eyes of the Western world which led to its study by the Western scholars as an exotic heavenly-arranged garden.

The amount of literature dedicated to the Alhambra and Generalife gardens and palatial complexes in particular is vast. The general context of the gardens has been discussed by several accounts such as Margret E. Lee's *The History of Alhambra to 1915* (1935) on the development of the palatial complex and its significance within the Western world during the early twentieth century. Several accounts followed Lee's approach describing the palatial complex's development,

restorations, conservation, slowly unraveling its secrets and long-lost glory. Robert Irwin's *The Alhambra* (2004) traces the influence of the Alhambra on art, architecture, and literature on Spain and the rest of the world, especially on architecture in modern Arab countries including Egypt.

Much scholarly literature centralized around re-evaluating and re-examining the Alhambra within its historical, political and religious contexts. John H. Isaac's thesis *Cultural Landscape Reconstruction: The Alcazaba of Alhambra in Granada, Spain* (1997) clearly follows this approach. He rejects the simple and traditional method of analysis based on the description. He argues that all Islamic forms are interpretations of past experiences. He uses experiential and bibliographic research to study meaning in the Alhambra's urban and architectural forms, for its users and compares them frequently to those of Moorish architecture in North Africa. April L. Najjaj's thesis *The Alhambra in Comparative Perspective: Towards a Definition of Palace-Cities* (2005) thoroughly studies the two palatial cities of Alhambra and Madinat al-Zahra and compares them extensively with the Umayyad Khirbat al-Mafjar and the Palace of the Popes in Avignon (14th century), reflecting on the similarities between the four. She deduces the influence of the Hispano-Umayyad palaces on the Western world. She argues that exchanges were made between the cities that lead to exchanges of architectural traditions too.

Other textual sources revisited earlier scholarly accounts and compared them with the current and most recent accounts. C. A. Hrvol Flores' *Owen Jones: Design, Ornament, Architecture, and Theory in an Age in Transition* (2006) thoroughly assesses Owen Jones' works in the fields of art, architecture and theory, especially the work done by him on the Alhambra. She revisits his works on the Gezira palace as well comparing it sporadically with his works on the Alhambra, arguing that the Alhambra was his main inspiration for it. Andrea M. Johnson's thesis *Incongruous Conceptions: Owen Jones's Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of Alhambra and British Views of Spain* (2016) revisits Owen Jones' interpretations of the Alhambra, arguing that it was not based on analysis of the actual palaces at the time, but was a recreation of the palatial complex based on Jones' British orientalist views. He reviews the palatial complex in terms of the

forced British conceptions which were: “Spain’s status as both the Islamic and Catholic other” and “its frequent interpretations through both romantic and reform-oriented lenses”.¹

Some scholarly accounts focused particularly on a single space or palace reflecting on the meanings and symbolism within either the religious or political contexts. Mansoor Ming Chor Ma’s thesis *In Search of the Lost Garden Atmosphere within the Court of the Lions: A Landscape Architectural Perspective* (2007) reconstructs through graphical technologies the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra based on travelers’ accounts from the fifteenth to the nineteenth. Another account focusing on travelers’ reports and constructing spaces based on it is Hernández-Bermejo et al.’s article “The Huertas of the Generalife in the Alhambra, an Approach to the Evolution of this Landscape Based on Travelers’ Accounts” (2013) which studies closely the Generalife palace and reconstructs it. Luis José García-Pulido’s “The Last and Most Developed Nasrid Palace in the Alhambra: The Alijares and its Country Estate (Fourteenth Century)” (2017) is the most recent study discussing a fourteenth century palace of the Alhambra in a detailed manner, it also reflects on further developments associated with the palace until the twenty-first century.

All the previous textual accounts contributed to the understanding, evaluation, and re-evaluation of the Alhambra and Granada’s Islamic landscape in general. However, the most comprehensive account is D. Fairchild Ruggles’ *Gardens, Landscapes, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (2006) which sums up and refutes most of the previously published accounts. She challenges the common belief that Islamic gardens of Spain were meant to be enclosed gardens recalling paradise imaginative imagery and starts to present these gardens within social and economic contextual studies. She argues that the Nasrid rulers and builders infused their gardens with both political and religious meanings in parallel with their continuation of the forms of palace and garden architecture. She argues that these palaces represented both paradise and paradise lost for the Nasrid rulers.

¹ Johnson, *Incongruous*, 5.

1.2.3.5. The Parisian Context

Textual sources on the French nineteenth-century garden developments are not the core of this study, however, the subject is important for comparative analysis. Luiza Limido's *L'Arts des jardins sous le second empire* (2002) examines works executed by Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps (1824-1873), the first Chief Gardener of the Promenades and Plantations Department of the City of Paris, and the developer of the landscaping of the capital at the time of its transformation by Haussmann. She studies the transformations of the Bois de Boulogne and Vincennes, Parc Monceau, and Buttes-Chaumont, where Haussmann inaugurated a new type of garden, characterized by the undulating forms of paths and lawns, and the richness of the vegetation. She argues that Parisian gardens reflected society's desires, principles, and values, revealing at the same time its weaknesses and contradictions. This new garden type was welcomed in the many towns abroad including Geneva, Milan, Turin, Vienna, and Cairo. However, she failed to examine the influences of traditional gardens predating the French imported typologies within these societies.

These gardens are also thoroughly examined in Gideon Fink Shapiro's thesis *The Promenades of Paris. Alphand and the Urbanization of Garden Art, 1852-1871* (2015). He shows how the basics of French picturesque garden design were established by Adolphe Alphand and Jean Pierre Barillet Deschamps in nineteenth-century Paris and how far the application of these new garden principles was accepted and welcomed in French society.

1.2.4. Evaluating the Gardens within their Social, Behavioral, Economic, Morphological and Geographic Contexts

1.2.4.1. Nineteenth-Century Cairene Gardens

Nineteenth-century Cairene gardens are considered a challenge in terms of literature, documentation, and preservation. Most of the gardens do not exist today in their original forms, the most comprehensive and inclusive source being Gustave Delchevalerie's *Les Promenades et les jardins du Caire, avec un catalogue général détaillé des plantes, arbres, et arbustes utiles et*

d'ornement (1899). It documents and highlights Delchevalerie's work with Deschamps in Egypt listing three projects done by them and developments they added to existing gardens. The book provides plans and maps with detailed descriptions of the existing and added landscape elements and has much information on the plants imported and then cultivated in Egypt. The book is the most detailed primary source associated with the topic of this research, tackling every detail of the Gezira Palace especially. The Azbakiyya garden can be studied through Doris Behrens-Abouseif's *Azbakiyya and its Environs from Azbak to Isma`il, 1476-1879* (1985) which documented it from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. She used *waqfiyya* documents to reconstruct the palace of Azbak from the fourteenth century and other palaces as well, recreating the long-lost garden. She highlights the changes made by Bonaparte and his officials to the area followed by its appropriation by the Muhammad 'Ali's dynasty. The book provides the background and analysis necessary for the Azbakiyya garden analysis in this research.

Behrens-Abouseif revisited the topic in 1992 in "Gardens in Islamic Egypt," tracing the gardens of Cairo from the Fatimid period to the end of the nineteenth century. She reflected on the character and spatial experience of Egyptian Islamic gardens highlighting their different character to the Islamic gardens of India and Spain. Alix Wilkinson's articles "Gardens in Cairo Designed by Jean Pierre Barillet Deschamps" (2010) and "James Trail and William McCulloch: Two Nineteenth-Century Horticultural Society Gardeners in Egypt" (2011) focus on nineteenth-century gardens built under the patronage of Khedive Isma'il and Muhammad 'Ali. The first studies the two palaces of Gezira and Giza and the development of their gardens by Delchevalerie and Deschamps. She includes the descriptive account of Delchevalerie to provide an understanding of the gardens' consistency and reflects on the European influence present in the palace. However, she ignores earlier studies concerning the neo-classical style of the palace and some of the garden features. Her second article tackles some gardens predating Khedive Isma'il's patronage.

1.2.4.2. Nineteenth-Century Istanbul Gardens

The literature on the Topkapi Palace gardens is rich. Most of this literature built on Neçipoğlu's earlier work. Godfrey Goodwin's *Topkapi Palace: An Illustrated Guide to its Life and Personalities* (1999) reflects on the social life and stories of residents of the palace rather than the rulers. However, his account of the gardens is merely descriptive. Nilgün Ergun and Özge İskender's "Gardens of the Topkapi Palace: An Example of Turkish Garden Art" (2003) focuses on conservation and preservation of the gardens. They provide a detailed account of the existing gardens and their gradual evolution.

Shirine Hamadeh's "Splash and Spectacle: The Obsession with Fountains in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul" (2004) examines the new behavioral patterns of the Ottoman community and their continuous usage of public fountains. Her book *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (2008) revisits the same topic in a more detailed and precise manner relating to the Westernization process undertaken in the late eighteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century. She argues on several occasions that the fountains were more reflective of the traditional Ottoman heritage than Western styles. Sharon Mizbani's thesis *Istanbul's Fountains in Nineteenth-Century European Narratives* (2016) is the most recent study of Istanbul's fountains. It complements Hamadeh's work reflecting mainly on Western narratives and detailing the fascination of the Western world with the exotic Muslim world.

Special features of Ottoman gardens are elaborate pavilions and tents featured in Ottoman miniature paintings and manuscripts, in textual accounts of travelers, and in some cases in photographs. Nurhan Atasoy's "Ottoman Garden Pavilions and Tents" (2004) studies royal pavilions as well the emergence of pavilions in public gardens. Her study complements Hamadeh's earlier work.

1.2.5. The Bigger Picture of Landscape Design and Development in the Nineteenth-Century Muslim World (particularly Istanbul and Cairo)

The fifth group of literature used in this study, a particularly important one, is the one that compares cities to each other in full awareness of their political and religious contexts. J. H. G. Lebon's "The Islamic City in the Near East: A Comparative Study of Cairo, Alexandria, and Istanbul" (1970) compares nineteenth-century Istanbul and Cairo. He reflects on Khedive Isma'il's ambition to develop Cairo and his French and Ottoman inspirations, a topic not dealt with in detail previously. Some other accounts compared the cities to each other and reflected on the chronological developments of urban forms within them such as Heba Farouk Ahmed and Basil Kamel's "Three Cities, Three Periods, Three Maidans" (1978) which traces the development of the *maydan* or city square through the development of the governmental systems. They explore the changes made to three squares: Bayn al-Qasrayn in medieval Cairo, Opera Square and Azbakiyya garden in Khedival Cairo, and Mostafa Mahmoud's Square in Republican Cairo. They reflect on the developments carried out by Khedive Isma'il's government on Cairene landscape development and connect these developments to Parisian and Ottoman systems.

Marie-France Auzépy's *Palais et pouvoir: de Constantinople à Versailles* (2003) relates the form and structure of palatial gardens to the power of authorities building them. She reflects on historical palaces and their gardens from the date of the establishment of Constantinople to the development of Versailles in the nineteenth century. She tackles the Topkapi Palace gardens as well as other nineteenth-century palatial gardens within the borders of Istanbul and compares them to the Parisian models. She also discusses the influences of French picturesque gardens on those of Khedival Palaces in nineteenth-century Cairo but highlights only the similarities. Gaëlle Gillot's "Du paradis à Dream Park, les jardins dans le monde" (2006) sums up the development of landscape architecture from the nineteenth century to the twenty first century through the study of gardens in Damascus, Rabat and Cairo. Her account reflects critically on the perception and use of

these new-style gardens and evaluates the extent to which they succeeded within their Arab and Islamic contexts.

Agnieszka Dobrowolska's *The Sultan's Fountain: An Imperial Story of Cairo, Istanbul, and Amsterdam* (2011) links the architectural developments in the Cairene eighteenth-century Sabil Kuttab of Sultan Mustafa III to the developments carried out in Istanbul at the time. Anna McSweeney's "Versions and Visions of the Alhambra in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman World" is the most important account of the development of Alhambresque style that took over the world after Owen Jones' publication *Plans, Elevations, Sections of Alhambra* (1842), reflecting on the extensive use of the style in nineteenth-century Istanbul and Cairo using the Gezira Palace in Cairo and the Ministry of Defense in Istanbul as comparative material.

In spite of the existence of this amount of literature on Islamic gardens generally and gardens of Khedival Cairo specifically, there is no study of the Khedival nineteenth century Cairene gardens character and correspondence to the surrounding contexts. This research aims to put together the gathered data from the previously mentioned and discussed sources in order to be able to reconstruct the image of the architectural and social real character of these gardens. The second aspect this research aims to add to the existing literature about the topic is to examine the Cairene connection to the Ottoman Porte in terms of architectural and urban developments.

Chapter Two: Islamic and Egyptian Gardens

2.1. Islamic Gardens

Islamic gardens were considered to have a clear association with an eschatological or heavenly theme from the eleventh century onwards.² Islamic gardens have enjoyed much attention from both Western and Arab travelers, architects, and painters who contributed enormously to the preservation and documentation of these gardens.³

Although these gardens had a major universal appeal, their documentation by travelers, architects, and artists has been descriptive rather than analytical.⁴ This documentation resulted in the debate, still ongoing until the twenty-first century, by scholars tracing the origins of the two major plan typologies that have always been attributed to the Islamic garden.⁵ These two plan types are the cross-axial plan or quadripartite plan (commonly known as the *chaharbagh*) found extensively in Islamic cities from the tenth century onward such as the Alhambra and the Generalife gardens (fig. 2.1), the Mughal palace and tomb gardens (fig. 2.2), and in some cases in the Ottoman empire too (fig. 2.3), while the other type is the linear plan common in Central Asia as well as in the Moorish gardens of Spain (fig. 2.4), and in present day al-Azhar Park in Cairo (fig. 2.5).⁶ The debate sometimes attributes both plan types to Roman origins, as with James Dickie, who traces the cross-axial plan origin to the Roman rural villa typology and the linear one to the enclosed courtyards of urban houses. Georges Marçais contests Dickie's account with his assumption that both types could be traced to Iranian origins since Persian carpets and book paintings depict both types simultaneously.⁷ One could assume his argument makes more sense if the cases of the palaces in Samarra such as *Jawsaq al-Khaqani (Dar al-Khilafa)* (fig. 2.6) and Balkuwara (fig. 2.7) from the ninth century. Nonetheless, it could also be assumed that each of the design approaches had a

² Ruggles, and Taboraff, "Gardens and Landscaping".

³ Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 5.

⁴ Ruggles and Taboraff, "Gardens and Landscaping".

⁵ Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 5-6.

⁶ *Ibid.* 169.

⁷ Ruggles and Taboraff, "Gardens and Landscaping".

different origin regarding the widespread appearance of the linear plan in the Mediterranean context connecting it to Roman origins, while the cross-axial plan dominated the eastern world connecting it to Mesopotamian origins.⁸

Distinctive design typologies of Islamic gardens arose from regional climatic and cultural needs. Despite the regional context of each garden type, some common features were essential, such as water and the development of irrigation systems. Water existed in most Islamic gardens in different forms, such as reflective pools (fig. 2.8), flowing streams connecting interior and exterior spaces (fig. 2.9), and fountains (fig. 2.10), all of which were apparent in the courts of the Alhambra.⁹ One more feature that was widespread in Islamic gardens in the east and west was the use of fruit trees not only for their aesthetic and fragrant values but for economic values as well. This was seen even in the case of some mosques like the Great Mosque of Cordoba, and in palatial gardens as well, such as the Topkapi Palace gardens in Istanbul.¹⁰

2.2. Chronology and Geographic Location

In this study I will focus only on the parts of the Islamic world that still have surviving gardens (fig. 2.11) in parallel with their significant contribution to the hierarchical development of the garden's architectural, horticultural and practical aspects. I have divided them into five major regions discussed below.

2.2.1. Central Region and North African Gardens (7th-13th century)

By the central Islamic region, I mean the area including Iraq, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. Two main garden types spread in these regions with the advent of Islam,¹¹ the first, commonly known as a *hayr*, included a wide range of zoological gardens, fields for sport, and

⁸ Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 5-9.

⁹ Bloom and Blair, "Garden," 86-8.

¹⁰ Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscapes*, 15-6.

¹¹ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 87.

agricultural lands. The second was more common, namely, the courtyard garden known as a *rawḍa*.¹² Both could be traced back to Persian origins.¹³

Some Umayyad desert palaces (7th-8th century) have the earliest examples of Islamic private and palatial gardens, displaying walled private gardens typology with a domed pavilion and a central fountain.¹⁴ These palaces were dwarfed by the vast constructions of the Abbasids at Samarra in the ninth century featuring elaborate quadripartite (cross-axial) garden plans, considered the earliest dated *chaharbaghs* of Islamic gardens. In most cases the plant beds were on lower levels than the streams or the pools within the gardens.¹⁵ The *ḥayr* typology was rarely found in the Abbasid era except the case of *Hayr al-Wuhush* near Samarra.¹⁶

Egypt and North Africa (11th -13th century) followed Abbasid design features closely. Their lack of Abbasid wealth led to relatively smaller gardens and the production of new water features to serve these smaller models. The development of the *salsabil* that dominated gardens from the eleventh century onward could be traced back to this point.¹⁷ On a parallel course, Morocco and Algeria developed their own version of the cross-axial court plan, merging the Persian *chaharbagh* with the Roman peristyle court, usually featuring a central pool or fountain and two-story pavilions. The *ḥayr* was more common in Algeria.¹⁸ Regarding the horticultural facts, little could be traced, however Mediterranean gardens generally featured fruit plants especially of the citrus family in parallel with calla and water lilies in pools.¹⁹

2.2.2. Anatolia (Ottoman) (14th-20th century)

The Ottoman Empire with its center based in Anatolia had a very special context and subsequently a special climate, where courtyard garden use was limited and instead houses, villas,

¹² Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, 27-8.

¹³ Blair and Bloom, "Gardens," 87.

¹⁴ Grabar, "The Umayyad Palace," 231.

¹⁵ Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 183-4.

¹⁶ Blair and Bloom, "Gardens," 87-8.

¹⁷ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 35-6.

¹⁸ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 87-8.

¹⁹ Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape*, 16-7.

and palaces were placed within walled gardens.²⁰ These gardens were planted with many fruit trees for their aesthetic and economic value. Even the Topkapi palace (fig. 2.12) had gardens supplying the necessities of the kitchen and the market as well.²¹ Their revenues went straight to the Sultan's private coffers.²²

Eighteenth-century Istanbul witnessed an unprecedented development in terms of social openness, where public gardens were designed to host families on picnics and casual outings.²³ In Anatolia, gardens were cultivated outside the city walls.²⁴ Palace gardens in Istanbul were perceived and depicted as private sanctuaries separating the owners from the hustle and bustle of the city, imitating the Topkapi Palace and its sultans.²⁵

The best-documented case of palatial gardens is, of course, the Topkapi palace itself. One could find depictions of it in miniature paintings, illustrations, and tiles, as well as in textual sources and poetry. It had a variety of gardens. The outer court had many cypress trees and cascading terraces overlooking the court and the Bosphorus. Formal gardens were restricted to the inner palace with paved terraces with lavish flowers and orchards.²⁶ Kiosks were built adorning reflective pools and surrounded by splashing fountains as well, such as the case of Revan and Baghdad kiosks adjoining pools built in the seventeenth century.²⁷ Belvederes and miradors were built as at the house of Ibrahim Pasha and other eminent authorities, imitating the Sultan. Their gardens in Istanbul and outside the city had minor and major kiosks next to pools.²⁸

The nineteenth century witnessed another landscape design boom accompanied by a general distaste for the European styles that had been widespread in the first half of the century.²⁹ Elaborate terraced and parterre gardens had lavish planting benefiting from the natural cascades of

²⁰ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 93-4.

²¹ Sharon Mizbani, *Istanbul's Fountains*, 15-6.

²² Blair and Bloom, "Gardens" 94.

²³ Hamadeh, "Splash and Spectacle," 125.

²⁴ Mizbani, *Istanbul's Fountains*, 27.

²⁵ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 93.

²⁶ Reif, "The Magnificence," 261-2.

²⁷ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 93-4.

²⁸ Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, 35.

²⁹ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 46.

the site. Particular elaboration and sophistication of water features arose. Elaborate *salsabils* with sculptures playing musical sounds of trickling waters were seen for the first time.³⁰ Marble use was mastered in both fountains and paving, along with elaborate pebble and mosaic paving designs.³¹ Marble caves and grottoes were the newest trends in houses of viziers and pashas. Evergreens, especially cypresses, were planted towards the exterior walls and elaborate flowering plants (especially tulips) in the inner courts,³² isolating them from the city's pollution and noise.

2.2.3. Central Asia and Iran (11th – 19th century)

The association of eschatological themes and the garden could be considered indigenous to Iran long before the advent of Islam.³³ However, the most special feature about Iranian gardens stems from their association with water, frequently associated with a paradisaal theme.³⁴ Sometimes gardens were erected around springs as at Shah Guli in Tabriz and sometimes spring waters were collected in small lakes, a feature never seen before. The increasing interest in gardens led to the digging of canals to water special gardens such as at the sixteenth-century Bagh-i Fin in Kashan (1587) (fig. 2.13).³⁵

The debates previously mentioned attributed the origins of the *chaharbagh* to Persia.³⁶ Thus, the *chaharbaghs* were used extensively throughout Islamic ages in Iran as a walled garden enclosing water (pools or fountains) and flower beds, with or without pavilions. Fruit trees were planted in combination with lush vegetation and flowers.³⁷ Despite the loss of the early gardens, textual sources and poetry described them as having pools, fragrant flowers, fruit and shade trees, and pavilions; other descriptions mentioned the presence of textiles and carpets. However, the best evidence is found from the fifteenth century onwards where manuscript illustrations supported the

³⁰ Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, 78-9.

³¹ Gladiss, "The Ottoman Empire," 567-8.

³² Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 95.

³³ Wilber, *Persian Gardens*, 19.

³⁴ Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, 19-30.

³⁵ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 91-3.

³⁶ Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 5-9.

³⁷ Wilber, *Persian Gardens*, 19-22.

textual accounts.³⁸ In the fifteenth century, Sultan Husain built a garden in Herat named the Bagh-i Jahanara (1469). It had several cascading terraces and a central pool with a pavilion called a Chahar Kushk. The vast garden (275 acres) displayed ornamental and fruit trees. Only the archeological remains of it survive today.³⁹

In Iran, gardens were part of private palaces as well and in most cases they were walled.⁴⁰ Elaborate gateways adorned the walls separating the palaces and the gardens from the public. Sometimes pools were replaced with tanks as in the case of Bagh-i Naw (Samarkand) in the early fourteenth century, while in the Bagh-i Khalva (Samarkand) six tanks surrounding the palace were connected via a stream. These royal gardens were found in both Samarkand and Herat.

Sixteenth-century Isfahan was laid out on a large cypress-bordered promenade with water streams and jets, crossing the Zayinda River (fig. 2.14).⁴¹ The promenade was separated from the Shah's court gardens by straight walls with belvederes, overlooking thirty gardens with elaborate plantations, pavilions, and cross-axial plans. The *chaharbagh* was later used even in different settings than that of Isfahan, such as the sloping gardens in eighteenth-century Farahabad and Ashraf in Mazanderan. In Shiraz, similar pools, pavilions, fountains, belvederes, fruit trees, water streams, tanks and, in some cases, topiary were displayed.⁴² The same traditional Iranian garden type continued in Tehran until the mid-nineteenth century when English style picturesque gardens were introduced.⁴³

2.2.4. India

India is one of the few nations that had a continuous developing civilization since 3000 B.C., and this civilization has always been attracted to gardens and parks. India developed town

³⁸ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 111-2.

³⁹ Subtenly, *Timurids in Transition*, 131-2.

⁴⁰ Hattstein, "Iran, Safavids," 497-503.

⁴¹ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 116.

⁴² Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, 25-30.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 93.

planning around 1000 B.C. with gardens and parks, and Buddha was born in a park around 563 B.C.⁴⁴ Gardens dating back to three hundred years before the Mughal Empire were established but information about them is limited.⁴⁵ Some textual evidence of Sultan Firuz Shah (mid-fourteenth century) shows he created a large number of gardens in and around Delhi and others around Chittor and Salaura. These were mainly fruit orchards combined with recreational fields with running water features scattered among them.⁴⁶ His best-described garden featured a centrally placed madrasa among orchards of fruit and flowering trees which suggests the typical arrangement of a formal Islamic garden.⁴⁷

The best preserved gardens are those of the Mughal Empire, especially those of the founder of the dynasty Babur who was known for his passion for gardening and building alike.⁴⁸ When he arrived in Agra he immediately started his first garden named the *Char Bagh*.⁴⁹ His gardens resembled each other with the usual Persian plan of sloping terraces, relating to the religious concept of paradise.⁵⁰ Paradisal gardens had eight sloping terraces signifying the eight divisions of paradise.⁵¹ In the terraced gardens, royal pavilions were placed either on the top terrace or the lowest one to enjoy the view of the whole garden.

In India, gardens were developed in three typologies: courtyard gardens, mausoleum gardens and recreational pleasure gardens. Mughal courtyard gardens were usually intimate, with a quadripartite plan, and were laid out geometrically with a fountain or other water feature in the middle.⁵² One of the finest examples is the Anguri Bagh in the female quarters (Khas Mahal) of Agra Fort (fig. 2.15-6).

⁴⁴ Bhagwat, "Gardens of India," 54-62.

⁴⁵ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 95-8.

⁴⁶ Bhagwat, "Gardens of India," 56.

⁴⁷ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 96.

⁴⁸ Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, 25-30.

⁴⁹ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 96.

⁵⁰ Barrucand, "The Garden," 490-3.

⁵¹ Bhagwat, "Gardens of India," 59.

⁵² Villiers-Stuart, "The Indian," 806-8.

Mausoleum gardens were the most developed and are the best preserved of the Indian examples. This type developed the quadripartite plan, accompanied by much water use as well. Many were built on flat ground as at Humayun's Tomb (1556) (fig. 2.17), the Ibrahim Rauza Complex (1626) (fig. 2.18), and the famous Taj Mahal (1658) (fig. 2.19).⁵³ These gardens also had elaborate marble. Both narrow and wide water channels were used, in combinations with playful water jets and chutes.⁵⁴

Pleasure gardens became an important tradition under the Mughal dynasty. The Nishat Bagh in Kashmir (1633) built by Jahangir is one of the finest examples (fig. 2.20), displaying twelve terraces split by a water stream, with fruit and shade trees side by side.⁵⁵ The stream pours into a rectangular pool with water jets and fountains. Waterfalls adorned with marble or stone thrones and tanks could be found around pavilions as well. The most impressive of the Indian pavilions is the Baradari, a pavilion opened from the four sides maximizing garden views (fig. 2.21).⁵⁶

The development of similar garden typologies continued towards the end of the nineteenth century despite the introduction of new English garden styles. However, the Indian community remained inclined towards Mughal gardens which fit best with the traditional community and climate. The arrangement of flowering and fruit trees in parallel with cooling water was irreplaceable for the community.⁵⁷

2.2.5. Spain

Spain includes within its borders some of the most well-documented and well-preserved Islamic gardens, namely the gardens of Alhambra and Generalife. Nonetheless, Islamic gardens predating the Alhambra and Generalife existed in Spain following the same concepts and ideas of

⁵³ Barrucand, "The Garden," 490-3.

⁵⁴ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 143-4.

⁵⁵ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 96-8.

⁵⁶ Bhagwat, "Gardens of India," 59-60.

⁵⁷ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 96-8.

the previously discussed Islamic gardens. Madinat al-Zahra (fig. 2.22), the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus, was established by ‘Abd al-Rahman III in 936 on the hills of Jabal al-‘Arus about six kilometers from the Umayyad Capital Cordoba.⁵⁸ It was a palatial city of its own, closely related in consistency and complexity to the Umayyad seventh century palaces like Khirbat al-Mafjar (2.23) and the Abbasid ninth-century palatial cities of Samarra (*Jawsaq al-Khaqani* and *Balkuwara*) (fig. 2.6-7). It had a terraced garden design seen later in Islamic Indian gardens. The complex consisted of three terraced platforms housing different palaces, like the *haramlek*, the house of Ja‘far, the prime minister, and the Caliph’s private suites, and each of these had its quadripartite garden. Ja‘far’s garden was the best preserved featuring a central fountain, and the Caliph’s meeting hall had a *chaharbagh* as well.⁵⁹

On the second terrace platform was the magnificently decorated Salon Rico (fig. 2.24) which was the main reception hall of the Caliph.⁶⁰ This overlooked the most extravagant garden of the whole complex. It consisted of pools reflecting the pavilion made for the caliph, surrounded by three small basins on its sides. This combination of pavilion and basins is enclosed within the upper garden that featured a *chaharbagh* of cultivated crops and decorative plants.⁶¹

The third terrace included the lower garden which was also a *chaharbagh* design with decorative plants and a central water feature. All the water features and systems of the three terraces were connected due to the need to design a system that brought water to the top of Jabal al-‘Arus.⁶² This terracing allowed the presence of various miradors for the enjoyment of the scenic views of the cascading gardens. On this terrace as well, the Prince’s garden was built by the son of ‘Abd al-Rahman III nine years later; it was a miniature version of the previously designed Salon Rico garden.⁶³

⁵⁸ Triano, “Madinat al-Zahra,” 27-8.

⁵⁹ Ruggles, “Historiography,” 131.

⁶⁰ Idem, “The Mirador,” 75.

⁶¹ Idem, “Historiography,” 132-3.

⁶² Triano, “Madinat al-Zahra,” 29-30.

⁶³ Ruggles, “The Mirador,” 76-7.

Muhammad ibn Mardanish built the Castillejo of Monteagudo (fig. 2.25) (1147-72), a small fortified palace above the city of Murcia in Spain.⁶⁴ The castle was basically a garden confined within walls. It was arranged around a *chaharbagh* with two pools on the northern and southern ends of the garden. Water was raised to the garden by a *noria*. The hilltop palace enjoyed different scenic views of the inner and outer landscape as at Madinat al-Zahra.⁶⁵

The Alcazar of Seville is one more example of a garden predating the Alhambra. The original palace was built by the Almohads and it dates to the tenth century but the gardens that survive until today are from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. The palace (fig. 2.26) is arranged around four main courts, the Patio del Crucero, Patio del Yeso, Casa de Contratacion (fig. 2.27), and Patio de Doncellas (fig. 2.4).⁶⁶ The four gardens are all varieties of the same plan with water features varying from sunken pools to streams and fountains, all fitted into a single or multiple *chaharbagh* design. The garden designs were complemented by sophisticated stucco carvings that might be connected to eschatological themes, but nothing proves this yet.⁶⁷ The whole palace was rebuilt and redecorated by the Christian kings in the fourteenth century in *múdejar* style, which make the dating difficult.⁶⁸ Gardens of the Nasrid period in Granada (the Alhambra and Generalife) had more developed versions of the previously highlighted features including the joy of water use, movement experienced in both water and light, *chaharbaghs*, fountains, pools, water jets and streams, fruit trees, and pavilions.

2.3. Design Criteria and Meaning

The frequent association of the Islamic garden and the theme of paradise led to the development of some criteria that were present in almost all examples. A sense of unity in all these elements discussed helps to achieve the joyful and contemplative spatial experience of the Islamic

⁶⁴ Idem, *Gardens, Landscape*, 141.

⁶⁵ Idem, *Islamic Gardens*, 156.

⁶⁶ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 44-5.

⁶⁷ Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 89.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 157-8.

garden. The concept of harmonious design with the right scale and proportions for blending these elements played a major role in Islamic garden design.⁶⁹

2.3.1. The Joy of Water Use

The Islamic garden is a basic celebratory feature since the Muslim world usually had an arid nature. Besides the celebration of bringing water into gardens for irrigation and agricultural purposes, the strength of water use in the Islamic garden lies in its strong symbolism. Islamic gardens encourage Muslims to contemplate His creation and reflect on their promised paradise (*janna*). Water had the richest symbolism to achieve this, since it was perceived as a miraculous tool making the desert bloom, bringing vitality and vibrancy with it.

Overflowing water basins were used in mosque courtyards for ablution, representing purity. Gardens layout were determined primarily by their irrigation channels which formed part of major design elements.⁷⁰ Still reflective pools provided tranquility while fountains and water jets disturbing the settled surfaces providing joy to the eyes and ears simultaneously. Pools contained fish and ducks in some cases, enhancing the sense of movement. Water represents a welcoming feature as it directs users throughout the garden.⁷¹ It works on the sensual and contemplative side of its perceivers, providing the sound while masking external noises and enhancing contemplation. It could be heard, sensed, felt, and seen. It supplied the environment with needed tranquility. In parallel with joy, it represented sparkle and lightness, purity and delight, movement and serenity, grandness and excitement, a center of attention and refreshment of the environment.⁷²

⁶⁹ Clark, *The Art*, 37-8.

⁷⁰ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 35-7.

⁷¹ Clark, *The Art*, 26-30.

⁷² Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 37-8.

2.3.2. Movement

Movement could be seen around every corner of an Islamic garden. The garden was not designed to be viewed statically but created for the viewer to enjoy the gradual unfolding of its components. Movement through the garden is guided by the symmetrical design elements. Thus, water welcomes the user and guides him to a pavilion or a kiosk where the state of completion is reached. The spatial experience differs simultaneously with the changing views, where in one case the experience could be tranquility and serenity, while the other could be intense celebration and joy.⁷³ Other movements rather than that of the viewer are of the water itself.⁷⁴ The captivating sound accompanying moving water brought life to the garden, whether it was the roar of a waterfall or the gentle trickle of a narrow stream.⁷⁵

2.3.3. Light

Light as an element of garden design in arid Muslim lands, is a sustainable resource connecting directly with the cosmic order. Three values of light could be appreciated, the cognitive value as it defines objects in terms of shape and brightness, the aesthetic value as it glorifies the aesthetics of a garden, and the third is associated with order and unity.⁷⁶ Each material introduced in the garden is designed to react differently to sunlight associated with Muslim desert lands, where wood, stone, marble, earth, and water each had its way of reflecting, distributing, blocking, or absorbing light.⁷⁷ For example, the brightness and luminosity of pavilions and kiosks were obtained from the reflection of light on the surface of a still pool. Color as well came to be appreciated in the garden using light, where patterns and flowering trees flickered in the sunlight.⁷⁸

⁷³ *Ibid*, 82-4.

⁷⁴ Clark, *The Art*, 30-1.

⁷⁵ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 82-4.

⁷⁶ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 86-7.

⁷⁷ Clark, *The Art*, 38-40.

⁷⁸ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 41.

2.3.4. Patterns

Patterns are a product of geometry and mathematics associated with the cosmic order, especially since the depiction of animals and humans was rarely encountered in a religious context.⁷⁹ The Muslim designer interpreted the proportions of nature into elaborate and sophisticated patterns reflecting this order.⁸⁰ The patterns depended mainly on plant and natural forms abstracted into geometrical patterns with a strong sense of continuity and repetition. The development of these patterns was unprecedented, reflecting unity and order, principles discussed before.⁸¹ The complexity of single-plane patterns was obvious, nevertheless, the real complexity lay within the patterns carved in different layers, which enhanced contemplation. Patterns in the Islamic garden gave the indoor and the outdoor surfaces (of pavilions or kiosks) a sense of endless contemplation and unified interiors and exteriors.

2.3.5. Form

Form in the Islamic garden is coherent with the idea of the spring of life from which four rivers depart, famous in Persian legend.⁸² The four rivers symbolize fertility and timelessness.⁸³ On the other hand, in Islam paradise was described as providing shelter, with lush vegetation and flowing water. Surat Muhammad contains the following: “*The Paradise which the righteous have been promised. There shall flow in it rivers of unpolluted water. Rivers of milk forever fresh; rivers of delectable wine and rivers of clearest honey*” (47:15). Other *suras* described paradise with four gardens divided by four rivers (55:46-70).⁸⁴ Most Islamic gardens shared common points when it came to form and appearance.⁸⁵ Magnificent portals or gateways led to a rectangular plan, based on the irrigation system. Watercourses formed the main axes, embraced by paths and trees, with one or

⁷⁹ Grabar, “The Umayyad Palace,” 231.

⁸⁰ Barrucand, “The Garden as a reflection,” 491.

⁸¹ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 74-7.

⁸² Ardalan, “‘Simultaneous Perplexity’,” 10-12.

⁸³ Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, 27-9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸⁵ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 61.

two side pathways cutting it perpendicularly. The central intersection point had a pavilion, kiosk or a fountain symbolizing the center of life, while in some cases buildings were on the sides to provide the best view.⁸⁶ The quadripartite plans provided the ability to create four sunken beds with lavish plantation whose user gets the impression of walking beside a vibrant floral carpet.⁸⁷ Cypress and fruit trees defined sharp pathways and main axes. Colorful flowers came in pots and flowerbeds glimmering against the marble pavilions.⁸⁸

2.3.6. The Spatial experience

The spatial experience on the beholder in the Islamic garden was one of the most developed. The walled garden, whether with real walls or masses of trees and vegetation, resembled a building in defined space.⁸⁹ This defined space delivered awe and impressiveness especially when one entered the garden on a central axis. The spatial experience varied with the scale of the garden where awe was often achieved with vast gardens, and intimacy on smaller scales in courtyard gardens. Changes of levels maintained the variety of spatial experiences, yet the most impressive viewpoint was the belvedere or the mirador viewing the whole garden or the countryside beyond. This continuation and hierarchy of spatial experiences provided an unprecedented fascination for the viewer.⁹⁰

2.4. General Criteria of Islamic gardens concluded

Based on the previous discussion of origins and meanings of Islamic gardens general criteria of Islamic gardens can be formed. These elements sustain the spatial experience of serenity, tranquility, joy, celebration, calmness, refreshment and exuberance. Within walled gardens one can find a *chaharbagh* or linear layout. Most of these displayed elaborate gateways, where privacy and

⁸⁶ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 31-33.

⁸⁷ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 62-3.

⁸⁸ Bloom and Blair, "Gardens," 86-7.

⁸⁹ Clark, *The Art*, 26-8.

⁹⁰ Lehrman, *Earthly Paradise*, 48-61.

enclosure were necessary aspects. Gardens commonly had cypress trees on the outer walls and featured elaborate flowering plantations within the inner courts, enhancing the sense of privacy and enclosure. Cypress trees were used to emphasize central axes as well. Most Islamic gardens had fruit trees, especially of the citrus family. Kitchen gardens were common within palatial complexes.

Islamic gardens used water elements extensively such as fountains, streams, *salsabils*, waterfalls, chutes, and still water like reflective pools and tanks. The elaborate use of water allowed an opportunity to have water plants such as lilies. Sometimes water was moving between cascading terraces or platforms. These terraces and platforms provided the opportunity to create miradors, belvederes, or *manzaras* overlooking the changing scenic views of the garden. Geometrical patterns were used within the layout, decorating the pavilions or kiosks, and sometimes for the layout of the plant beds. Plant beds were usually sunken, displaying colorful flowering shrubs. Pavilions and kiosks were lavishly decorated with stucco, tile or stone carving.

2.5. Islamic Gardens of Egypt

2.5.1. The Fatimid Fustat House

Fustat was densely settled, the majority of its houses having an interior court with a garden (fig. 2.28-9). These gardens could have scented flowers, palms, medicinal plantations, vines, water elements, and sunken pools.⁹¹ These represented the first Islamic gardens in Egypt. Some Fustat houses had roof gardens with flowers, orange, and banana trees.⁹²

2.5.2. The Garden of Humarawayh (10th century)

Ibn Tulun established his own dynasty in Egypt after gaining independence from the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. He constructed his new city al-Qata'i' beside Jabal Yashkur where

⁹¹ Rabbat, "A Brief History", 51.

⁹² Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens*, 170.

he constructed a new palace, mosque and hippodrome. Later this hippodrome was converted into a garden by his son Humarawayh. The garden had many palm trees, exotic trees, and flowers, but also gilded copper-covered palm trunks, a mercury pool, and architectural elements including a pavilion, a stable, and a hippodrome. The garden was not located beside the Nile which forced him to construct an aqueduct to irrigate it.⁹³

2.5.3. Bustan al-Kafuri al-Ikhshidi (949-968)

A garden was planned by Kafur al-Ikhshidi shortly before the Fatimid conquest of Egypt on the eastern bank of al-Khalij al-Masri. There is no specific data or source mentioning the specific use of al-Bustan al-Kafuri at this exact point or whether it was public or private property.⁹⁴ Behrens-Abouseif mentioned that this garden had walls similar those of Fatimid Cairo and iron gates. Some other sources claim that it had towers for breeding songbirds and some other animal breeding facilities.⁹⁵

The Fatimids built their city on the eastern bank of al-Khalij al-Misri and incorporated al-Bustan al-Kafuri in its plan. The garden kept its name during the Fatimid era and it was used in a royal context.⁹⁶ Underground passages connected the royal eastern palace with the garden to ensure the privacy of the caliph and his family and for security issues as well.⁹⁷ Later after al-‘Aziz built the western palace, the garden becoming part of it until the Ayyubid era. The only remaining parts of the palace were incorporated in the Qalawun complex. Some *iwans* with *shadiriwans*, which are probably Mamluk, survived (fig. 2.30).⁹⁸

⁹³ Behrens-Abouseif, “Gardens in Islamic Egypt”, 303-4.

⁹⁴ Rabbat, “A Brief History”, 44.

⁹⁵ Behrens-Abouseif, “Gardens in Islamic Egypt”, 304.

⁹⁶ Rabbat, “A Brief History”, 44.

⁹⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, “Gardens in Islamic Egypt”, 304.

⁹⁸ Rabbat, “A Brief History”, 44.

2.5.4. Gardens of ‘Abbas (10th century)

These were established by the Fatimid dynasty in the tenth century as pleasure gardens. They existed on the western outskirts of the city below the now existing citadel and beside the complex of Sultan Hasan. They bordered one of the seasonal ponds formed by the annual floods. The garden was adopted by Salah al Din’s brother Sayf al-Islam and renamed after him *basatin* of Sayf al-Islam.⁹⁹

2.5.5. Hippodromes or Maydans (12th-13th century)

The Ayyubids introduced a new typology of open spaces into the city, namely *maydans* or hippodromes as a result of their association with military activities. One other reason behind the new trend may have been to make up for the large *basatin* of Fustat which were burnt in the defense of the city against the Crusaders.¹⁰⁰ During their reign many Fatimid gardens were converted into hippodromes and palatial complexes were constructed around them.¹⁰¹ Although they were huge plots of land they were not designed to be used by the common people, but were designed for royal polo and equestrian activities.¹⁰²

The Qara Maydan and its adjacent Maydan Rumayla (12th-13th century) were built by al-Kamil Muhammad for equestrian parades, on the site of the old parade ground built by Ibn Tulun in 876. The *maydan* was an important one for many sultans and was refurbished many times by patrons such as Baybars, al-Nasir Muhammad, and Sultan al-Ghuri. Al-Nasir Muhammad in particular had a number of wells dug especially to provide it with irrigation.¹⁰³ This *maydan* is the only one of eight medieval ones remaining until the modern era.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 177-8.

¹⁰¹ Behrens-Abouseif, “The Mamuk city”, 300.

¹⁰² Rabbat, “A Brief History”, 45.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 45-6.

¹⁰⁴ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 178-9.

The new town of Siryaqus on the outskirts of Cairo was built by Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad. It included a palace, a hippodrome, a *khanqah*, and a *bustan*. His complex attracted wealthy merchants and emirs to the new town. The *bustan* had imported trees from Syria, palms, water elements, and a lavish tent where he preferred to stay instead of at his palace. This particular *bustan* was also famous for its fruits.¹⁰⁵

2.5.6. The Mamluk Era (13th-16th Century)

Mamluk rule in Egypt was characterized by architecture. The Mamluks excelled in creating buildings that commemorated their names. These buildings mostly depended on an endowment system (*waqf*) which led to secondary such as gardens and agricultural lands (*ghayt*).¹⁰⁶ Most of these developments were associated with the ponds created by the Nile flood every year (fig. 2.31).¹⁰⁷ Many gardens belonged to emirs and high authorities of the Mamluk ruling elite (figs. 2.32-3).¹⁰⁸

2.5.6.1. Ganibak Garden (1462-3)

A new tradition of specialized buildings emerged in particular for Sufis. The Mamluk emir Ganibak built a garden on the Nile bank on 1200 feddans in order to house Sufi events. He built a marina to receive foreign Sufis coming to Egypt, as well as two domed structures for the events itself and sometimes for musical performances. Ibn Taghribirdi mentioned that this garden was comparable to that of Humarawayh.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Behrens-Abouseif, "Gardens in Islamic Egypt" 306.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ AlSayyad, *Cairo*, 104-5.

¹⁰⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, "Gardens in Islamic Egypt", 306.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 307.

2.5.6.2. Mattariyya and Ḥusayniyya (late 15th Century)

The emir Yashbak min Mahdi followed the steps of emir Azbak, the founder of Azbakiyya (see Ch. 4) and constructed two new districts in the northern outskirts of the city. Both were designed with many gardens, residential units, domed mosques, and commercial venues. The sources present better information about the Ḥusayniyya complex than the Mattariyya. A hippodrome existed within the complex.¹¹⁰

2.5.6.3. Balsam Garden (15th Century)

One of the most famous Mamluk gardens existed was in the Mattariyya district, yet nothing proves that Emir Yasbak built it. It was described by many European travellers as a marvellous one until its destruction in 1494, but Sultan al-Ghuri managed to revive it in the early sixteenth century and imported plants especially for it. The Balsam Garden represented a source of national pride as Egyptian balsam was famous as a medicinal material and was highly sought after by Europeans.¹¹¹

2.5.8. Ottoman Gardens in Egypt

In 1517 Egypt became an Ottoman province.¹¹² No large-scale landscape projects were built by the Ottomans.¹¹³ This may have been caused by the departure of many craftsmen and builders to Istanbul.¹¹⁴ Gardens were limited to private residences on a small scale. Yet this era

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 307-8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 308-9.

¹¹² Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 178-9.

¹¹³ Behrens-Abouseif, "Gardens in Islamic Egypt", 309.

¹¹⁴ Riemer, "Egyptian Views" 150-2.

witnessed the introduction of two types of architectural monuments associated with gardens: domed mosques surrounded by gardens and *takkiyas* (buildings for Sufis) with a garden.¹¹⁵

2.5.8.1. Garden Mosques

Garden mosques were built to follow Istanbul-style mosques which usually had a garden surrounding them open for the public. Three of those mosques are still standing but their gardens sadly have disappeared. These are the mosques of Sulayman Pasha (1528), of Sinan Pasha (1571), and of al-Malika Safiyya (1610). The latter was famous for its garden, the *waqfiyya* mentioning gardeners who took care of its landscaping.¹¹⁶

2.5.8.2. Takkiyas

Takkiyas were residences for certain Sufi brotherhoods supported and encouraged by the Sultan. The *takkiyas* had fountains, sunken beds, porticos, dense planting, and pathways. Two of them still exist with their gardens: the Takiyya of Sultan Sulayman II (1543) (fig. 2.34) and the Takiyya of Sultan Mahmud II (1750).¹¹⁷

2.5.9. The Qasim Bey Palace Garden (18th century)

Qasim Bey, the Ottoman governor in Egypt, built a palace overlooking Azbakiyya pond. It was the seat of the French Expedition in Egypt. Qasim Bey designed a pleasure garden (fig. 2.35) and opened it to the public. He built seating and coffee shops for them to enjoy. Fruits, palms,

¹¹⁵ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 178-9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 179.

flowers, and shrubs were planted, and especially clover to make it profitable.¹¹⁸ With its dense vegetation and non-geometrical layout, it resembled European gardens rather than Islamic ones.¹¹⁹

2.6. Conclusion

Gardens of the Islamic world were always admired for their eschatological or heavenly meanings. They were seen as a representation of the Qur'anic verses describing heavens for the righteous ones. However; Islamic gardens represented further complexities than just this eschatological theme. They were influenced directly by the geographic, economic, and political contexts in which they were built. Gardens of the Islamic world shared several elements that contributed to their identification as Islamic, for instance, the geometrical layout. However; every country or region responded differently to its specific context creating its own garden typology. Egypt is one of these regions in which Islamic gardens were not closely attributed to the eschatological theme.

Based on the previous review of gardens of the Islamic world, and the gardens of Islamic Egypt one could conclude that most gardens in Islamic Egypt were based on direct attachment to the River Nile or ponds. These gardens bore a more natural character rather than the geometric character that was present in the gardens of Persia, India, or Muslim Spain. The association of naturally grown gardens with ponds that spread over Cairo's map from the Fatimid rule to the end of the Ottoman rule in Egypt was a characteristic of Egypt, where the River Nile flood was a prosperous event celebrated annually in Egypt.¹²⁰ This flood created a swampy landscape with different bodies of water varying in shape and size, resulting in gardens with a relatively natural layout rather than designed ones.¹²¹ As everywhere in the Islamic world water

¹¹⁸ Behrens-Abouseif, "Gardens in Islamic Egypt", 309.

¹¹⁹ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 178-9.

¹²⁰ Rabbat, "A Brief History," 45-6.

¹²¹ Behrens-Abouseif, "Gardens in Islamic Egypt," 310.

played an important role in the formation of the Egyptian Islamic garden. However; the garden creators in Egypt did not adopt the symmetrical plan common in Persian, Indian, and Moorish gardens; they dug lakes and created non-geometrical ponds instead. This feature was present in the nineteenth-century Cairene gardens such as Azbakiyya and Gezira Palace gardens. The introduction of nineteenth-century public parks in Cairo was indeed European, however; it was not a new feature to the Egyptian community, where ponds, naturally laid out gardens with dense vegetation and curving pathways, musicians, and rowing boats had all been common features of their gardens.

Chapter Three: The Gezira Gardens

3.1. Nineteenth-century Cairene Scene

Jean Pierre Barillet Deschamps (1824-1873) was a French gardener who made his reputation by teaming up with the Adolphe Alphand (1817-1891) to bring the new Paris Haussmannian transformation to reality. Deschamps was the head gardener with the title *Jardinier en chef du Bois de Boulogne et de la ville de Paris* of this project.¹²² He worked with Jean Charles Adolphe Alphand a French civil engineer and landscaper who was a chief engineer in the *Services des Promenades et Plantation*, a position that brought him in direct association with both Deschamps and Haussmann.¹²³ The two became superstars of the gardening and landscaping community of Paris after working together on the on the *Bois de Boulogne* (after 1855) and its *Jardin d'acclimatation* (1859-60), the *Bois de Vincennes* (1860-5) and the *Parc des Buttes-Chaumont*.¹²⁴ Shortly after their success Deschamps gained his greatest triumph with designing the garden of the Universal Exposition (1867) which gained him an international reputation. Because of this, he obtained an invitation to be a guest of the Suez Canal opening in 1869.¹²⁵

Haussmann mentioned him on several occasions, commenting on his talent and skill. He then was appointed as the Director General of the Service of Promenades and Plantations of the Egyptian Government and the Private Estates of His Highness the Khedive of Egypt.¹²⁶ He became responsible for the private estates of Khedive Isma‘il (r. 1863-1879) who wanted to transform Cairo the way Haussmann did with Paris, a movement already started by his great ancestor Muhammed ‘Ali Pasha and his son Ibrahim Pasha.¹²⁷ Both Muhammed ‘Ali Pasha (1769-1848) (r.1805-1848) and Ibrahim Pasha (1789-1848) were horticultural enthusiasts.

¹²² Wilkinson, "Gardens," 124.

¹²³ Taylor, "Alphand," 8.

¹²⁴ Taylor, "Barillet Deschamps," 14.

¹²⁵ Editorial, "Revue Horticule," 14.

¹²⁶ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 124.

¹²⁷ Hamdy, "A Study," 268.

Both rulers enjoyed pleasure gardens and valued the shade and aesthetics of the gardens they planted in Cairo, however; they also valued the commercial aspects of the orchards, vegetable, and fruit gardens they planted. A third advantage was a local supply of hardwood. Both rulers planted gardens and imported crops from various corners of the world including India and the Far East. Their patronage introduced many fruits and plants that are still traded in Egypt until today. They sent students to Europe to obtain the necessary knowledge and skill to develop their own projects in Cairo. Ibrahim Pasha got Scottish gardeners from the Royal Horticultural Society to work on his gardens, a tradition followed by his son Khedive Isma‘il who hired Deschamps in 1870.¹²⁸ Deschamps’s position in Egypt acquired him the reputation and the respect of the royal authorities. He spent his last three years in Egypt working on projects for Khedive Isma‘il with his assistant Gustave Delchevalerie. Thanks to his *Les jardins et les promenades de Caire* and *Flore exotique* the detailed sketches and plant lists of Gezira Palace gardens and Azbakiyya gardens have survived until today.¹²⁹ Their works in Egypt were extensive, as even Haussmann mentioned in his diaries.¹³⁰

3.2. The Gezira Palace: Neo-Arabic Renaissance Architecture and French Picturesque Garden Design

3.2.1 Gezira Palace Gardens

The Gezira Palace (fig. 3.1) was built in 1867 by the German architect Julius Frantz¹³¹ by order of Khedive Isma‘il on the island of Zamalek previously named Gezira (fig. 3.2).¹³² The palace is now occupied by the Cairo Marriott Hotel. The palace was built with the intention of hosting the guests invited for the inauguration of the Suez Canal such as Princess Eugénie, the wife

¹²⁸ Wilkinson, “James,” 83-4.

¹²⁹ Wilkinson, “Gardens,” 124.

¹³⁰ Taylor, “Barillet Deschamps,” 14.

¹³¹ Ahmed, *Pre-Colonial Modernity*, 100.

¹³² ElSayyad, *Cairo: Histories*, 199.

of Napoleon III.¹³³ Later after the inauguration process, the palace was used for ceremonial events and khedival meetings.¹³⁴

3.2.2. The Palace Designs

The drawn-out building process of the Gezira Palace made it a controversial topic of discussion. Although the palace was claimed to recall the Tuileries Palace (fig. 3.3) in France,¹³⁵ the interior design sketches by Carl von Diebitsch prove the opposite (fig. 3.4).¹³⁶ The palace attracted controversial views, some perceiving it as an alien to the Egyptian community, while others saw in it a new modern Arabic style. It was criticized for many years as a purely Western product¹³⁷ although other scholars such as Mohammed Al-Asad, Robert Ilbert, and Mercedes Volait echoed the architect's own words: "it is the most beautiful building of modern Arabic style".¹³⁸ The association of foreign architects with the palace and its gardens might have caused confusion regarding its style origins, however; the vogue of nineteenth-century neo-Arab classicism was employed by foreign architects,¹³⁹ such as the Alhambresque style.¹⁴⁰ A team was hired to design the Gezira Palace. Julius Frantz was to design the palace itself, Owen Jones to decorate its rooms based on his famous Alhambra studies, and Carl von Diebitsch was to create an Alhambra style portico and grand kiosk.¹⁴¹

The same claim was made by 'Ali Mubarak in his *Khitat*, where he expressed on several occasions that the revival of Islamic heritage in Cairo was not intended as a continuation of traditional architecture but an expression of the interest of the elite community in heritage revival. The architecture attributed to the era was created in the form-of modified models rather than

¹³³ *Ibid.* 200.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Al-Asad, "The Re-invention," 425-8.

¹³⁶ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 53-4.

¹³⁷ Ilbert and Volait, "Neo-Arabic Renaissance," 28-9.

¹³⁸ Al-Asad, "The Re-invention," 430.

¹³⁹ Ilbert and Volait, "Neo-Arabic Renaissance," 29-34.

¹⁴⁰ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 51.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 51-3.

recreated ones.¹⁴² This tradition evolved existing styles but also coincided with the Western communities' interest in Orientalism.¹⁴³

Many European architects, including Julius Frantz aimed to develop a new modern Arab architectural style specific to Egypt.¹⁴⁴ The architectural forms and styles included stalactites on the corners of buildings, balconies placed within wooden enclosures resembling *mashrabiyya*, minarets set on the corners of modernized apartment buildings, equally superfluous crenellations on roofs, and Arabic or Islamic motifs framing windows and doorways.¹⁴⁵

The palace was a complex creation. Carl von Diebitsch designed some of the palace rooms (fig. 3.4), the portico and the monumental garden kiosk. He had earlier spent a year in Granada studying the Alhambra and making squeezes of the facades (fig. 3.5). He also used the same typology of decorations in the Gezira palace. He designed the furniture for the palace rooms (fig. 3.6) in the same style, however, it has not survived.¹⁴⁶ His surviving furniture collection is in neo-Islamic style for his Moorish house in Berlin (fig. 3.7). Although the house itself was demolished, the preserved collection gives an impression of how the furniture in Gezira Palace might have looked.¹⁴⁷ Following his successful design of the grand Alhambresque kiosk, Khedive Isma' il continued commissioning him for the Gezira Palace and its garden. He was commissioned to build several kiosks and pavilions, as well as a bathhouse within the garden.¹⁴⁸

One of Carl von Diebitsch's sketches for the interior of one of the halls of Gezira palace (fig. 3.4) features a series of Islamic elements directly adopted from the Alhambra: the ceiling displays a meticulous arrangement of geometrical patterns. The walls feature three types of arches. The first, dripping stalactite arches (with *sebka* motifs), resemble the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the ones decorating the *Patio de les Leones* (fig. 3.8). The second type is round decorated arches

¹⁴² Al-Asad, "The Mosque," 108-124.

¹⁴³ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 49.

¹⁴⁴ Ahmed, *Pre-colonial Modernity*, 101.

¹⁴⁵ Ilbert and Volait, "Neo-Arabic Renaissance," 29-34.

¹⁴⁶ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 51-3.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 53.

¹⁴⁸ Technische Universität Berlin Architekturmuseum, "Café und Badehaus, Kairo," <https://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de/index.php?p>

and the third the horseshoe arch, both found in the Alhambra. The complexity of the interiors resembles the intricacy found in the Alhambra's *Patio de les leones* not only in the architectural and decorative elements used but also in terms of scale and proportions.

French imported decorative pieces, in parallel with the oriental elements, were meticulously integrated with the Islamic elements. An integration of the Islamic elements and motifs within the French composition is evident through the extensive use of marble, *mashrabiyya*, wooden arcaded terraces, and walkways, as well as crenellations.¹⁴⁹

Given the concept behind the palace's architectural style, one could easily deduce that the gardens were designed in a similar way. Borrowed French elements had been introduced to gardens in Egypt even before Delchevalerie and Deschamps's arrival in Egypt. Delchevalerie states:

*"The Khedive Isma'il created several important gardens around his Gyzeh palaces and in the island of Ghezirah; the public garden of Ghezireh, later recreated by us already contained in 1867 more than a million useful and ornamental exotic plants of which three or four times that number were planted in squares and public gardens in Cairo, in other parks and khedivial walks, and in many private gardens".*¹⁵⁰

Delchevalerie commented on the existence of acclimatization gardens – which were commonly claimed to be a French-introduced element¹⁵¹ - in Gezira Island even before his arrival in Egypt. In fact, both Muhammed 'Ali Pasha and Ibrahim Pasha had already built public gardens, showing that Isma'il just continued a tradition established by his ancestors.¹⁵²

3.2.3. Palace Garden Analysis

The gardens of Muhammed 'Ali Pasha and his son Ibrahim Pasha that precede the designs employed by Deschamps and Delchevalerie have been little studied. The data about them are mainly retrieved from one map as of 1858 and some travelers' accounts. The map of 1858 shows a rectangular layout centered by a *rond point*. The travelers' accounts are descriptive but

¹⁴⁹ Ahmed, *Pre-colonial Modernity*, 103-4.

¹⁵⁰ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 3.

¹⁵¹ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 125.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 3-4.

somewhat vague. One traveler, the English governess of Khedive Isma'il's son, described them as follows:

“...an almost earthly paradise; for it is impossible to conceive any idea of their beauty, and the skill with which they have been laid out.... male and female statues ... dotted about among orange trees and myrtle hedges”.¹⁵³

3.2.4. The New Designs by Deschamps and Delchevalerie:

While Deschamps worked with Delchevalerie on the palace gardens, the latter would oversee the private garden and the former was mainly concerned with public parks. The Gezira gardens expanded over two hundred thousand square meters and it took two years to complete them and to host the Suez Canal celebrations.¹⁵⁴ Delchevalerie noted that gardens of the Egyptians had to be studied first. Thus, he embarked on research on Ancient Egyptian gardens, as well as those developed later by the Mamluks and Ottomans in Cairo. The research was published as a chapter in his *Flore exotique*. In particular, he mentioned the extensive use of palms by both ancient Egyptians and the Ottomans in Egypt¹⁵⁵ and commented on the European style lush plantations that existed within these Ottoman houses (fig. 3.9).¹⁵⁶ This could explain the lush vegetation and frequent importation of tropical plants within both the Gezira and Azbakiyya gardens, like those found in the house of Qasim Bey (fig. 3.10). However, Delchevalerie's account focuses only on the use of palms as an Ancient Egyptian tradition and lush vegetation as a more recent tradition of Egyptian houses.

3.2.5. The *Jardins d'acclimatation de Gezira*

The garden was huge at the time when it drew the attention of the horticultural society. On one occasion, the editor of the *Revue Horticole* described the designs and approach of

¹⁵³ Wilkinson, “Gardens,” 125.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 125.

¹⁵⁵ Delchevalerie, *Flore exotique*, 9.

¹⁵⁶ Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 80.

Deschamps and Delchevalerie as an attempt to create the largest public garden the world had ever known, referring to it as a '*jardin d'acclimatation gigantesque*'.¹⁵⁷

The gardens had been designed in alignment with the Harem Palace to the north and at an angle to the main palace. Two major features acted as design pivots, the palace itself on the western banks of the Nile and the monumental central garden kiosk. The gardens were merged with the help of the stream coming from the eastern side and forming a lake in front of the palace. A path was also added from the east to connect the main path with the kiosk.¹⁵⁸ Deschamps had to meet the deadline for completion of the gardens and parks before the inauguration ceremony of the Suez Canal in 1869. However, the shallow soil prevented him from including the characteristic dells he had previously made in his famous parks in Paris.¹⁵⁹

In the updated plan of Gezira palace gardens published by Delchevalerie in 1871 (fig. 3.11), it is easy to notice the resemblance to the French - and generally Western - gardens with their curving paths and complicated plant layouts. Alex Wilkenson points out that the designs of the gardens were based on those created by Deschamps and Alphande in Paris especially evident in the Bois De Boulogne (fig. 3.12). Both include irregular plots, featuring meticulously arranged floral compositions laid out side by side with the winding pathways and curving streams.¹⁶⁰ Despite the notion that the gardens were in French style, travelers' accounts reflected some confusion as in some cases they were described as 'English Style Gardens' and on other occasions 'on a European plan'.¹⁶¹ A French visitor's notes on his visit to the palace in 1870 described the vigorously planted 'English style garden' and echoed Amy Fullerton's account as of 1871 that mentioned that the garden was laid out 'in the English style'.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 126.

¹⁵⁸ Delchevalerie, *Flore exotique*, 18-9.

¹⁵⁹ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 125-6.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 126.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Gillot, "Du paradis," 422.

Two planted areas formed the main plan. The first area faced the north entrance overlooking the Nile. It displayed a fountain surrounded by star-shaped flowerbeds. The latter were encircled by overlooking the river, dotted on edges of the curvilinear and straight paths. Flowerbeds dominated the design in the Western part.¹⁶³ One could conclude that the private garden of Gezira Palace layout and the harem garden (fig. 3.13) were indeed remodeled after the *Jardin zoologique d'acclimatation* in the Bois de Boulogne (fig. 3.14). But there was a striking difference between the formal plan of the palace, the Alhambra-style kiosk, the formal geometry of the harem palace, and the curves of the garden. Delchevalerie even commented on this in *Flore exotique* (1871), mentioning the contrast between the lack of geometry of the garden layout and the grand kiosk.¹⁶⁴

3.2.6. Kiosks

Standing in the center of this lavish garden, the grand kiosk acted as the pivot of the garden. It was built to resemble the style of the Alhambra, upon the ruins of an earlier kiosk believed to be built by the German architect Schmitz, Khedive Isma'il's architect. The kiosk extended almost 300 meters, yet it was only twenty meters in width.¹⁶⁵ The new structure was remodeled by the German architect Carl von Diebitsch and it had lavishly decorated open arcaded corridors on each side of a series of rooms.¹⁶⁶ The main dining room was decorated in white and gold with its floor made of marble, alabaster, and porphyry.¹⁶⁷ As previously mentioned, the architect made drawings and squeezes of the stucco work, *sebka* motifs, and arabesque designs in Spain during his travels, on which he based his design of the ornamentation of his kiosk in Egypt.¹⁶⁸

It resembled the Alhambra on a variety of levels, the kiosk (fig. 3.15) had a central projecting portal, which resembles that found in the *Patio de les leones* (figs. 3.16-17). It had an

¹⁶³ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 126.

¹⁶⁴ Delchevalerie, *Flore exotique*, 28-9.

¹⁶⁵ Idem, *Les promenades*, 3-4.

¹⁶⁶ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 53-4.

¹⁶⁷ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 129.

¹⁶⁸ McSweeney, "Versions and Visions," 51.

odd number of arches with almost exactly similar columns in both cases. On the corners of both, double columns were used. Both were also slightly higher than the rest of their structures. The arches in the protruded portal, resemble those found in the *Patio de la acequia* (fig. 3.18) topped by a series of arabesque floral motifs. A variety of *sebka* motifs adorned the rest of the kiosk arches as at the Alhambra.

Carl von Diebitsch's kiosk design included more than one element of ornamentation resembling Alhambra buildings. The detailed sketch of the column capital of the kiosk by Carl von Diebitsch (fig. 3.19) is an exact replica of a sketch published by Owen Jones in his volume *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra* (1842) (fig. 3.20). Various columns capitals of the Alhambra were adopted in the grand Gezira palace kiosk, including interior column capitals (fig. 3.21) and the columns of the *Patio de les Leones* featured in Owen Jones' volume (fig. 3.22). The friezes complementing the columns (figs. 3.23, 3.25) were adopted as well from the window friezes of the Alhambra (fig. 3.24). According to Delchevalerie's account of the celebration of the accession of Khedive Isma'il in 1870, white marble Alhambra-style fountains were placed within the walls of the grand kiosk with water falling over several arcaded circular basins.¹⁶⁹ He referred to one as 'a star-brightening fountain'.¹⁷⁰ His description matches a sketch by Carl von Diebitsch, showing a four-basin arched fountain adorned with a star within a structure resembling the interior of the grand kiosk of the Gezira Palace (fig. 3.26).¹⁷¹

The collection by Carl von Diebitsch found in the Architekturmuseum, Technische Universität, Berlin, includes the sketches for several kiosks and the waterfront pavilion (fig. 3.27) captioned by the architect himself as "Ghezireh Kairo".¹⁷² Although there is no proof of the existence of such a waterfront pavilion within the private garden of the palace, there were many

¹⁶⁹ Delchevalerie, *Flore exotique*, 8-9.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Technische Universität Berlin Architekturmuseum, "Pavilion, Kairo," <https://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de/index.php?p=79&Daten=135757>.

smaller kiosks scattered around the garden mentioned by travelers, including Delchevalerie.¹⁷³ In parallel with the kiosks, the collection features the waterfront café and bathhouse tagged “Ghizereh” as well, but there is no record of such a construction.¹⁷⁴ All the sketches by Carl von Diebitsch feature Alhambresque designs, showing Isma‘il’s patronage of Islamic revival style architecture which as we noted above, was mentioned by his minister ‘Ali Mubarak.

Other Alhambra-style kiosks were found scattered around the garden.¹⁷⁵ Photographs by Frédéric Béchar, the writer and traveler, showed two of these kiosks (figs. 3.28-9) resembling the designs of the Court of the Myrtles and the pool in the Partal Palace at the Alhambra. When those kiosks were built was not mentioned by Delchevalerie.¹⁷⁶ Some so-called ‘rustic houses’ used to be found in the gardens until 1878.¹⁷⁷ The same kiosk was depicted in an engraving featuring Empress Eugenie walking around the Gezira Palace garden with the grand Alhambra-style kiosk and smaller Ottoman-style kiosk in the foreground (fig. 3.30). The small kiosk resembles many Ottoman fountains and kiosks, such as the ablution fountain of Laleli Mosque in Istanbul (fig. 3.31) built in 1783.

Some of these other kiosks are thought to have been designed by Owen Jones, based on publications of the Alhambra. His sketches that feature several views of one of the kiosks for the Gezira palace have been preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (fig. 3.32). The kiosk features numerous Islamic and Arabic architectural and ornamental characteristics, including the domes decorated with stalactites, crenellations, replicas of the columns previously discussed in Carl von Diebitsch’s kiosk, central fountains (like the one found in the *Patio de la acequia*), and endless number of *sebka* and arabesque motifs.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 3-4.

¹⁷⁴ Technische Universität Berlin Architekturmuseum, “Pavilion, Kairo,” <https://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de/index.php?p=79&Daten=135757>.

¹⁷⁵ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 3-4.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Moore Jr, *Outlying Europe*, 50.

¹⁷⁸ Flores, *Owen Jones*, 165-7.

Two proposals for garden summer pavilions at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and labeled by Owen Jones as “Gezira Island Summer Pavilion” have survived (figs. 3.33-4) featuring many Islamic elements.¹⁷⁹ One of the pavilions features a *chaharbagh* interior court garden (fig. 3.35) with the central fountain; however, there is no record of these constructions having been built. Delchevalerie mentions in his account two types of kiosks: Islamic and Alhambra-style.¹⁸⁰ This description is complemented by photos of the early twentieth century that feature several smaller kiosks scattered around the garden and overlooking ponds or the Nile (figs. 3.36-9), that showed Ottoman-style influence.

3.2.7. Glasshouses and Greenhouses

Glasshouses in the Gezira palace were numerous: there were forty of them scattered around the gardens. They were custom-made to protect delicate plants from the weather and to provide the right humidity needed for them.¹⁸¹ There was a special conservatory for water plants in front of the harem, such as water lilies and *Amorphophallus*, along with tropical palms. A special glass house was designed for large tropical plants. Delchevalerie commented on their importance as they were common among in traditional Ottoman houses.¹⁸² According to Delchevalerie’s map (fig. 3.46), the whole island was covered with imported plants to be cultivated in Egypt. He divided the island into ten plant beds, each including glasshouses and greenhouses and provided a key for plantation in these beds.¹⁸³

3.2.8. Fountains

Many fountains dominated various center points of the garden; among them, one main fountain was repeatedly noted by travelers. It was in front of the northern main entrance, featuring a

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 170.

¹⁸⁰ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 3-4.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 3-5.

¹⁸² Wilkinson, “Gardens,” 133.

¹⁸³ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 8-9.

pharaoh holding a treasure aloft (fig. 3.40). It is believed to have been designed by Von Diebitsch and executed by Bonani,¹⁸⁴ the Khedivial marble master craftsman. According to some travelers, it symbolized the River Nile. One can find now an illustration of the original fountain (fig. 3.41) in the lobby of the Cairo Marriott Hotel. The illustration features the pharaoh standing on treasures leading to the conclusion that this figure resembles Osiris, the Ancient Egyptian God of prosperity. Below him, three lions dominate three basins that pour water into the main basin of the fountain. The lions could be a reference to the Court of the Lions at the Alhambra Palace.¹⁸⁵ The style in which the Pharaoh was fashioned belonged more to the Graeco-Roman style than the Ancient Egyptian.¹⁸⁶ Another fountain, mentioned by the English governess of Khedive Isma‘il’s son, was the fountain of Ceres that is still preserved in the hotel garden. It features Ceres standing atop of four basins, the lowest of which has four cherubs pouring water under her feet. Other pools and fountains existed at the time, but they bore minor significance, as most of them were not documented by Delchevalerie.¹⁸⁷

3.2.9. Menagerie and Grottos

A menagerie existed within the palace gardens. It included many birds, pets, and beasts, along with a rockery or a grotto, to entertain the harem of the palace. Lions, leopards, elephants, and birds were kept under the supervision of special keepers for each group. Most of these animals died after Khedive Isma‘il’s financial crisis.

Two grottos existed on the island: a private one within the palace dedicated to the harem, and a public one created later that survived until today bearing the name of ‘The Fish Garden’ overlooking the Nile. The private grotto was designed and executed by Sipoz, the Turkish rock craftsman of Khedive Isma‘il, before the arrival of Deschamps and Delchevalerie.¹⁸⁸ It

¹⁸⁴ Idem, *Flore exotique*, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Wilkinson, “Gardens,” 133.

¹⁸⁶ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 2-3.

¹⁸⁷ Wilkinson, “Gardens,” 135.

¹⁸⁸ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 3.

overlooked a pond behind which was a waterfall that fed both the pond and the stream connected to an artificial lake. The pond had rowing boats where visitors could row between the pond and the main lake enjoying various scenic views of the garden. One traveler mentioned in her diary that the grotto recalls Chinese garden design principles and contains Moorish chambers.¹⁸⁹ Sipoz created the grotto with fossilized wood fitted together with cement.¹⁹⁰

The other public grotto, today's Fish Garden dominated the western banks of the island. It was created in 1871 by Combaz and Dimilieu, two famous Parisian companies.¹⁹¹ It was made in the shape of aquarium expanding over 22,000 square meters, including artificially made hills. The grotto was made from rocks fitted together with cement rather than wood. The same structural technique mixed with pointed iron fixtures was used to create stalactites imitating natural caves and grottos. The caves had a wide range of decorative colors and were decorated with alpine plants.¹⁹² The public fish grotto is one of the few parks that has maintained its original form and composition until today (see development maps figs. 3.42-5).

3.3. The Rest of the Island's Gardens

The rest of the three miles long island was planted with orchards and flowers as a nursery for the plantations needed for the city. These plantations disappeared with the buildings that overtook the island. The green footprint of the Gezira has obviously shrunk to the extent that the only remnants of Khedive Isma'il's gardens are the palace, the two fountains, some statues scattered around the Marriott Hotel garden, parts of the Zuhariya Garden, the Fish Grotto Garden, and later developed Andalus Garden, and the Hurriya Garden. The only open space still existing is the Gezira sporting club, however, it is no longer in its nineteenth century form¹⁹³ (See development maps figs. 3.46-8).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 131.

¹⁹¹ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 3.

¹⁹² *Idem, Flore exotique*, 18.

¹⁹³ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 136.

3.3.1. The Zuhariya Garden

The Zuhariya Garden was a specialized one created for the acclimatization of plants imported from India.¹⁹⁴ It has survived for the same purpose until today, however, it is in a rather neglected state nowadays. One gardener was responsible for the development and upkeep of the garden in the nineteenth century, According to Delchevalerie's account, he was C. Gailly.¹⁹⁵ Later, under Mohamed Drar's management, the Zuhariya garden was restored and maintained for the original purpose; then it fell into despair again following the political and governmental changes that occurred in Cairo. Originally, the garden stretched from the Western banks to the eastern ones, in parallel with the palace and its gardens; however, the 1927 map of Cairo showed only some remnants of the garden on the eastern side¹⁹⁶ (see development maps figs. 3.49-52).

3.3.2. The Hurriya Garden

The Hurriya garden as it is known today was previously named the Kasr al-Nil garden or Bridge garden, as mentioned by Delchevalerie. It was described by Delchevalerie as a wide spacious public garden and as Isma'il's favorite. It used to have public seating, statues, and kiosks as well.¹⁹⁷ After Khedive Isma'il's financial crisis, the gardens of Gezira Island deteriorated. This shrank to be almost a quarter of its original area¹⁹⁸ (see development maps figs. 3.53-6).

3.3.3. The Andalus Garden

The Andalus Garden was part of the garden described by Delchevalerie as the River Garden or the River Promenade.¹⁹⁹ It was ordered by the Khedive Isma'il in the 1870s as a replica

¹⁹⁴ Delchevalerie, "Legende indienne," 24.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 55-6.

¹⁹⁶ Wilkinson, "Gardens," 136.

¹⁹⁷ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 14.

¹⁹⁸ Abdel Rahman, "Egyptian Historical Parks," 10-11.

¹⁹⁹ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 14.

of the Alhambra in mood and style although all the characteristics of other Islamic gardens were present, a geometrical layout with a *chaharbagh*, mosaic fountains, *salsabils*, and an enclosure.²⁰⁰ In 1935 the park was redesigned and reopened again by Mohamed Zul Faqqar during the reign of King Fouad I. It consisted of two parts, the South, the Arabian Eden or al-Firdaws al-‘Arabiyya, and the Northern part, the Pharaonic garden.²⁰¹ The creation of this garden in 1870s by Khedive Isma‘il again shows his interest in Arab-style revivalism simultaneous to the Westernization process. This emphasizes the duality present in the nineteenth-century development of Cairene landscape as well as in its architecture²⁰² (see figs. 3.53-6).

3.4. Conclusion

Gezira/Zamalek Island represented a glorious phase of modern Egyptian history. It also represented the controversy surrounding the Egyptian community during the second half of the nineteenth century. Despite the strong Europeanization that Cairo encountered during Khedive Isma‘il’s reign (1863-1879), traditional styles were not entirely abandoned. Both public and private gardens of Gezira Island clearly show French influence. However, a duality in character and architectural identity can also be seen in the architecture of the palace and the kiosks and pavilions scattered in the garden. The architectural elements displayed the royal patronage of traditional Alhambresque-style, one that had also been widely welcomed in Western communities.²⁰³

Although the adoption of Islamic architectural revival styles was first embarked on by Western communities, it was welcomed and revitalized in the Arab and Islamic world, as well. Its principal appearance in palace architecture rather than gardens mirrored the case of Istanbul. Palaces built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Istanbul featured a duality in character, with gardens designed in the new European style, and palaces with elements in Islamic revival

²⁰⁰ Gillot, “Du Paradis,” 423-4.

²⁰¹ Abdel Rahman, “Egyptian Historical Parks,” 10-11.

²⁰² Gillot, “Du Paradis,” 423-4.

²⁰³ Al-Asad, “The Re-invention,” 427.

style.²⁰⁴ The most evident cases were during the rule of Sultan ‘Abdul ‘Aziz III, who employed the Alhambresque style for the interior decoration of his Beylerbeyi (1864) and Çiragan (1857-1871) Palaces despite their exterior baroque style. Some of the public buildings displayed Alhambresque tradition, such as the Harbiye Nezareti (1865). These palaces and structures were surrounded by French- and English-style gardens.²⁰⁵

One might conclude that the inclination of Khedive Isma‘il towards the employment of both Westernization and Alhambresque styles, in the Gezira Island architecture and gardens could stem from the tradition established by the Ottoman Sultan earlier in Istanbul. However, the question of whether both Western and traditional approaches were applied as mere styles, or they bore further complex meanings and reflections about their political contexts, remains unanswered. Further studies are needed to prove the intentions and motivations of re-Islamizing the architecture and Westernizing the landscape of Gezira Island.

²⁰⁴ Seçkin, “Gardens,” 73.

²⁰⁵ McSweeney, “Versions and Visions,” 60-1.

Chapter Four: Azbakiyya and its Environs

4.1. History and Nature of Azbakiyya

The establishment and development of Azbakiyya as the garden we know today is completely attributed to the dynasty of Muhammad ‘Ali. However, this garden had a long history of developments attributed to the social, geographic, and morphological changes that led to the formation of its final shape we are familiar with today. These changes date to the pre-Islamic years.²⁰⁶ Before the advent of the Fatimids in Cairo the borders of the Nile were very different from its status today. Fatimid Cairo was established on the Eastern banks of al-Khalij al-Misri, the canal connected the Nile to the Red Sea (fig. 4.1).²⁰⁷ Rulers were encouraged to create pleasantries and other buildings every year during the summer when the al-Khalij al-Misri and the nearby ponds were flooded.²⁰⁸

On the eastern banks of the Nile the port of al-Maqs and its environs (today’s Azbakiyya) was populated by the Christians of Cairo. This area was incorporated within the city when Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi extended the city walls westwards to include both Fatimid Cairo and al-Fustat, thus al-Maqs was located on the western banks of the Khalij al-Misri facing Fatimid Cairo (fig. 4.2).²⁰⁹ Around al-Maqs port were gardens which were surrounded by lavish residential units, and a pond named Batn al-Baqara that originated in the Fatimid period was enhanced to supply the gardens with water and view.²¹⁰

After the Nile banks shifted west the topography and geography of the area changed creating a vast space providing urban and architectural development opportunities among which was the digging of al-Nasiri Canal (after its patron al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qalawun – 13th century). The new canal provided goods transportation to the Delta villages as well as an opportunity for

²⁰⁶ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 2-3.

²⁰⁷ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 89.

²⁰⁸ Abdel Rahman, “Egyptian Historic Parks,” 9.

²⁰⁹ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 90.

²¹⁰ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 4-5.

leisure boats to roam around creating a view of the residential foundations existing on the banks of the newly established canal. However, gradually during the fourteenth century the canal started losing its allure as emirs preferred to build their religious establishments closer to the city core.²¹¹

4.2. Azbak's Azbakiyya

The Batn al-Baqara mentioned above was dug by the Fatimid Caliph al-Amir. On the same location, the eminent emir of Sultan Qaytbay, Azbak min Tutuh, initiated his major landscaping project and re-dug the old pond after it dried out, the eponymous Azbakiyya (fig. 4.3).²¹² Azbak had been granted this land by the Sultan. He constructed a promenade around his newly dug pond. He built his own palace overlooking it, a construction that encouraged other emirs and merchants to build their own residential units nearby. He also built a mosque and several commercial structures there, further encouraging development (fig. 4.4). The project was completed after eight years in 1484.²¹³

Azbak's development urbanized a deserted area on the western outskirts of the city at the time. The new quarter became a popular meeting place parallel to Rumayla square, where many events were held. Unfortunately, nothing has survived of Azbak's complex and the existing drawings and documentations are basically reconstructions after the surviving *waqfiyya* documents.²¹⁴ The whole area witnessed much deterioration after the end of Mamluk and the start of Ottoman rule.²¹⁵

4.3. Ottoman Azbakiyya

After a gradual deterioration that followed the beginning of Ottoman rule in Egypt, Azbakiyya's environs developed into varied quarters each housing one section of the diverse

²¹¹ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 91.

²¹² Behrens-Abouseif, "Gardens," 307.

²¹³ Elsayyad, *Cairo: Histories of a City*, 176-7.

²¹⁴ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 19-20.

²¹⁵ Abdel Rahman, "Egyptian," 9-10.

population of Cairo.²¹⁶ The Coptic quarter (fig. 4.5) developed in the older area of al-Maqs, which was the main area housing Cairo's Christian population during Mamluk and earlier periods. The Christian community kept developing there until it became the official Coptic quarter under Ottoman rule.²¹⁷

The French quarter developed in the area between al-Muski bridge and al-Maqs upon the signature of a treaty between the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent and the French King François I in 1533. The quarter included the house of the French consul in Cairo, the French council, an imported European goods market, French hostels to house traveling merchants, residential units for permanent residents in Cairo, as well as a church.²¹⁸ The French council provided the French merchants with the ability to dwell and trade in Cairo by establishing a European goods market around Azbakiyya, the first step taken towards making Azbakiyya a center of attraction for tourists and foreign residents. The house of the Consul was described by many travelers as including two halls, one in French style and one oriental style. Some of the shops and dwellings around the French quarter remained in Cairene style (fig. 4.6-7).²¹⁹

A Nubian quarter was established around the mid-seventeenth century by a Nubian qadi named Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Nubi. He owned a twelve feddan area located north of Azbak's mosque where he developed a few dwellings, shops, a waterwheel and a mill. He did not dwell in the quarter where the common Nubians who specialized in the professions of guardians and doormen used to live. Within this quarter the area of Darb al-Barabra developed in which was a gypsum factory reported by travelers as being out of context. This factory continued to exist until 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda converted it into a coffeehouse in the mid-eighteenth century.²²⁰

The development of coffeehouses around the quarters and streets of Cairo became common in the Ottoman period, when coffee became an essential aspect of the Egyptian lifestyle

²¹⁶ Elsayyad, *Cairo: Histories of a City*, 176-7.

²¹⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 37-40.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* 40-1.

²¹⁹ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 93-4.

²²⁰ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 44-5.

after its introduction through traders bringing it from Yemen.²²¹ Coffeehouses were established everywhere around Cairo as reported by travelers such as Evliya Çelebi who estimated their number to be around six hundred and fifty.²²² In many of them musicians performed and sang, continuing the musical character of the Azbakiyya area since the seventeenth century.²²³

4.4. Azbakiyya during the French Expedition

The presence of a diverse population as well as coffeehouses and attendant musicians it gave Azbakiyya its musical center nucleus that developed later.²²⁴ All these aspects made Azbakiyya the perfect spot for the French commander Napoleon Bonaparte to reside at when he arrived in Cairo. Its diversity was increased when he acquired the house of Alfi Bey and his men resided nearby.²²⁵ Bonaparte's *Description de l'Égypte* documented the area around Azbakiyya showing its traditional architecture as well as its pleasure boats (fig. 4.8-9). This documentation is the primary source on Azbakiyya before the modernization process carried out by Muhammad 'Ali and his dynasty in the nineteenth century. But by the end of the French Expedition Azbakiyya had suffered tremendously from several attacks and riots by Egyptians against the French invasion (fig. 4.10).²²⁶

Muhammad Khusraw, a Pasha sent from Istanbul to govern Egypt after the departure of the French Expedition in 1801, dwelt in Azbakiyya as well, also taking Alfi Bey's house as his residence. He made major restorations to enhance the quality of the whole area and especially to his house. He restored shops and built new ones providing space for weavers and tailors. However, during his restorations a relatively large amount of rubble and waste was dumped in the lake ruining its water and the view.²²⁷

²²¹ Abdel Rahman, "Egyptian," 9-10.

²²² Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 43.

²²³ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 92.

²²⁴ Ahmed, *Pre-Colonial Modernity*, 4.

²²⁵ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 93-4.

²²⁶ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 76.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* 64-6.

4.5. Azbakiyya as a garden

4.5.1. Muhammad 'Ali's Azbakiyya

Muhammad 'Ali arrived as a governor sent by the Ottoman Empire. He, following the steps of his predecessor Khusraw resided in Azbakiyya, however; not in Alfi Bey's house, but in the Bakri house that had been occupied by Khusraw's harem. Shortly after coming to Egypt, he seized power (in 1805) and killed the surviving emirs of the Mamluks in the famous citadel massacre in 1811.²²⁸ The Ottoman Sultan Selim III yielded to Muhammad 'Ali's activity as the Ottoman Empire's power was gradually decaying and Selim III did not want to lose Egypt as a financial resource.

Muhammad 'Ali carried out several plans to enhance the quality of life in Egypt and particularly in Cairo. His projects were based on planning unlike those of Mamluk emirs.²²⁹ He carried out several infrastructural projects and urban developments that affected Azbakiyya, such as enlarging Muski street, relocating the cemeteries that surrounded the lake and, filling in the lake and transforming it into a large park (fig. 4.11).²³⁰ Parks were viewed as a necessity for public hygiene during the early nineteenth century, following the newly established Istanbul fashion, which led to Muhammad 'Ali's interest in them.²³¹

His plan included strict policies on building around Azbakiyya, with the acceptable styles being only European, Turkish, and Greek. He banned the use of *mashrabiyya* or any other Islamic or oriental architectural elements. He transformed many old palaces into hotels and governmental buildings, at the same time face-lifting them and thus changing these buildings' character and identity.²³² Several hotels such as Shepherd's Hotel and the Hotel du Nil were constructed around the newly designed Azbakiyya park.²³³ Egyptian and Ottoman-style

²²⁸ Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 10.

²²⁹ Ahmed, *Pre-Colonial Modernity*, 58-9.

²³⁰ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 79-80.

²³¹ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 104-5.

²³² Sayyid-Marsut, *A History*, 79-80.

²³³ *Idem*, *Egypt in the Reign*, 50-5.

coffeehouses were transformed to European style. The theatre that had been established earlier by the French now had European musicians, invited by Muhammad 'Ali, instead of traditional ones.²³⁴

Muhammad 'Ali hired the architect Murtan Bey, whom he had sent earlier to study in Europe, to design and build the new park. The lake was filled completely, creating an irregular plot dedicated for the new park. The plan of the park featured three wide straight paths intersecting at a central round point displaying a decorative fountain, creating six triangular plots each of which displayed a different character;²³⁵ some were designed with a curving layout while others had straight intersecting paths.²³⁶ This diversity showed the contemporary duality found in Egyptian society and architectural patronage, where the newly erected buildings displayed European features within an oriental context.²³⁷

The park was surrounded by a canal adorned with several bridges allowing users to enter it. The wide paths were planted with Mediterranean and tropical trees imported by Muhammad 'Ali and his son Ibrahim Pasha, changing the overall character of Azbakiyya.²³⁸ Several districts witnessed a parallel change; they also alienated the traditional population from their own lands. The *mashrabiyyas* and windcatchers that dominated the surroundings of Azbakiyya were replaced by whitewashed Ottoman and Greek style facades.²³⁹ The boats that roamed around Azbakiyya lake and other ponds of Cairo disappeared after the filling in of these ponds, changing the landscape of the whole city.

The European-inspired Azbakiyya garden existing within the older dominant traditional oriental context reflected a duality of character. European travelers' expectations of the exotic east were continuously frustrated by the rapid Westernization process associated with Muhammad 'Ali's reign. One traveler commenting on the new character of Azbakiyya wrote;

²³⁴ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 84-6.

²³⁵ *Ibid.* 85.

²³⁶ Sayyid-Marsut, *A History*, 78-80.

²³⁷ Ahmed, *Pre-colonial Modernity*, 58-9.

²³⁸ Tignor, *Egypt*, 222-3.

²³⁹ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 90.

“When the mansions of al-Elfy and several other chiefs of the Mamluks adorned the Ezbekiya, the appearance of that place must have been much more handsome and picturesque than it is at present, with the modern whitewashed Turkish houses and palaces.”²⁴⁰

Muhammad ‘Ali’s fascination with the European models was obvious in his new enhancements, however; enthusiasm towards Turkish building patronage was evident as well. The Mamluk style buildings were replaced in several cases by Turkish facades. One of Muhammad ‘Ali’s buildings that bore a completely Ottoman Turkish character is his mosque constructed earlier in the citadel. Clearly Turkish architecture represented a model for the ruler which he wanted to closely imitate.²⁴¹ This imitation resulted in reflecting an Islamic style rather than a European one.²⁴²

Some scholarships consider that Muhammad ‘Ali’s attempts to modernize the Egyptian community was the first step towards the loss of the Islamic and Egyptian identity that characterized Azbakiyya. Others consider it the first step to transform Cairo and especially Azbakiyya into a modern neighborhood reflecting Europeanization and Westernization in the early nineteenth century.²⁴³ A third perspective might consider this process a trial, reviving traditional features redressed in a modern fashion, since the modernized gardens were laid out within an Islamic urban fabric, connecting Azbakiyya to the heart of medieval Cairo. The new Europeanized garden was embraced by the already existing Mamluk and newly furnished Turkish-style facades. This special mix of architectural and urban elements led to the creation of a new identity specific to Cairene architectural development of the early to mid-nineteenth century.

4.5.2. Isma‘il’s Azbakiyya

Isma‘il’s rule (1863-1879) was also characterized by modernization. Azbakiyya was the heart of this modernization process and its existence within the areas highly populated by foreigners

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 86.

²⁴¹ Tignor, *Egypt*, 211-13.

²⁴² Mestyan, *A Garden*, 79-80.

²⁴³ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 95-6.

and tourists increased the possibility of the success of this modernization attempt. The whole surroundings of Azbakiyya square were altered, the Nasiri canal and that dug around Azbakiyya by Muhammad ‘Ali were filled and transformed into wide roads.²⁴⁴ Muhammad ‘Ali street was enhanced and completed with arcaded buildings on both sides, opening the view to the Sultan Hasan complex. Muski street was enhanced and widened as well. Most of the houses of the Coptic quarters were demolished and owners were compensated, allowing the space for new palaces and modern villas to be built.²⁴⁵ However, some parts of the Coptic quarter survived with their original style featuring wooden *mashrabiyyas* and traditional building elements (fig. 4.5).

By the mid-1860s after the whole district had been redesigned, Khedive Isma‘il’s plan was to decrease the area of the park to eight feddans and to offer the rest of the area for sale in order to fund Azbakiyya as a public park project.²⁴⁶ The park was remodeled with an octagonal layout with straight paths intersecting at a central fountain and a small pond, a design very similar to Murtan Bey’s. The price of land surrounding Azbakiyya was highly inflated restricting it to Europeans and the extremely wealthy.²⁴⁷ Thus, most of the newly introduced buildings were owned by foreigners or foreign governments. Several hotels such as Hotel d’Orient and Hotel de la Cie Penninsulaire Orientale had an oriental architectural character. Other hotels had a modern European architectural character attracting foreigners and tourists such as Hotel d’Europe and Hotel de France. Several consulates such as those of Russia, Prussia and Italy enjoyed a good view of the modern park (fig. 4.12).²⁴⁸ All these radically changed the identity of Azbakiyya.

Larger changes to the area occurred after Khedive Isma‘il’s visit to the French Exposition in 1867. The Khedive, who grew up in Austria and joined Egyptian students studying in France in *bi‘that al-‘ulama* in 1844, was exposed to modern European urban development and

²⁴⁴ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 90-1.

²⁴⁵ Tignor, *Egypt*, 219-220.

²⁴⁶ Mostyn, *Egypt’s Belle Epoque*, 65-6.

²⁴⁷ Rashed, *Architectural Identity*, 106.

²⁴⁸ Mostyn, *Egypt’s Belle Epoque*, 149-150.

aware of the difference between these countries and Egypt.²⁴⁹ This might have been the first reason for the Westernization project he carried out in Egypt between 1863 and 1867. However, the Westernization process reached its peak after he met Baron Haussmann in 1867. The former mailed the latter asking for help in the development of Egypt and especially Cairo.

Alexandrie, ce 9 Octobre 1868

Monsieur le Baron Haussmann, Sénateur Prefet de la Seine

Mon Cher Baron

Les excellentes relations que j'ai eues avec vous à Paris et dont j'ai conserve un précieux souvenir m'autorisent à vous demander un petit service. J'aurai besoin d'un jardinier habile dans l'art d'entretenir des plantes d'agrément et d'en orner au besoin les appartements et les salons en cas de fete. Je voudrais que ce jardinier-chef fut assisté de deux aides don't l'un residerait au Caire et l'autre à Alexandrie. Chacun des aides sous la direction du jardinier chef et suivant les differences de climat des deux villes, étudieraient l'élève des plantes d'ornement et les utiliserait selon mes orders. Je n'ai pas été assez heureux pour pouvoir me procurer directement des artistes-horticultures repondant a mes idées. Ayant été témoin du gout déploye sous vos auspices dans les plantations de la ville de Paris et dans la splendide ornementation des salons de l'Hotel de ville, j'ai eu l'idée de m'adresser à vous pour me procurer les trois jardiniers en question et j'ai pensé que je pouvais vous demander ce service d'ami.

Un de mes employés, resident à Paris, Selim Bey, vous remettra cette letter, il prendra vos orders et réglera l'engagement des trios jariniers selon les conditions que je vous pris de vouloir bien fixer vous meme. Agréez, Mon cher baron, avec mes remerciements l'assurance de mes sentiments d'amitié.²⁵⁰

"The excellent relations I had with you in Paris and of which I have a precious memory allow me to ask you for a small favor. I will need a gardener skilled in the art of maintaining ornamental plants and, if necessary, decorating apartments and parlors in the event of a party. I would like this gardener-chef to be assisted by two helpers, one of whom would live in Cairo and one in Alexandria. Each of the assistants under the direction of the chief gardener and according to the climatic differences of the two cities, would study the ornamental plants and use them according to my orders. I was not lucky enough to be able to find horticultural artists to apply my ideas. Having witnessed the taste displayed under your auspices in the plantations of the city of Paris and in the splendid ornamentation of the lounges of the Hotel de Ville, I had the idea to address you to obtain the three gardeners in question and I thought I could ask you this friendly service.

One of my employees, resident in Paris, Selim Bey, will give you this letter, he will take your orders and will settle the hiring of the three gardeners according to your conditions and orders. Accept, my dear Baron, with my thanks the assurance of my feelings of friendship."

In this letter it is clear that Khedive Isma'îl was quite impressed with what he saw in Paris and he wanted to create a similar mood and atmosphere in Egypt for the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. The letter indicated the evident friendship between the Khedive and the Baron,

²⁴⁹ Ahmed, *Pre-Colonial Modernity*, 110-11.

²⁵⁰ Original text of the letter between Khedive Isma'îl and Baron Haussmann obtained from the National Archives of Egypt.

which suggests that there were several correspondences between two of them, discussing urbanization and modernization of the city. Baron Haussmann replied suggesting Gustave Delchevalerie and Jean Pierre Barillet Deschamps for the job, which resulted in their travel in Cairo early in 1869.²⁵¹ Both gardeners started working on Azbakiyya and several other royal gardens.

4.5.3. Azbakiyya between Paris and Istanbul

The park area remained the same but the axial designed was replaced by a curving layout (fig. 4.13) similar to that of Park Monceau in Paris which had opened in 1873 (fig. 4.14).²⁵² Upon a closer look at the plans of both parks, one could easily deduce that the only thing they share is the curving layout, since Azbakiyya lacks both the complexity and vastness of Park Monceau.²⁵³ In Park Monceau the user enters through a monumental pavilion (fig. 4.15) leading to geometrically laid out gardens followed by gardens with winding paths.²⁵⁴ This complex spatial experience that allowed users to experience different scenic views was not applicable in Azbakiyya due to its smaller size. In Azbakiyya the park had one central pond, provided with small rowboats, and musicians played on the banks, as at the old Azbakiyya lake and Birkat al-Fil pond (fig. 4.8-9, 4.16).²⁵⁵ At Monceau however, several ponds existed which were connected via a large winding stream that encircled the whole park.²⁵⁶ The famous grottoes were a common feature of both parks, however; the Azbakiyya grotto featured a belvedere allowing scenic views of the park and its surroundings (fig. 4.17). Several belvederes were present at Azbakiyya, an element associated with the old site and many Islamic gardens²⁵⁷ such as Madinat al-Zahra and the Alhambra. Park Monceau lacked this feature as it was not part of French culture.

²⁵¹ Letter dated November 1868 in possession of the National Archives of Egypt.

²⁵² Delchevalerie, *Le parc public*, 2-3.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Limido, *L'arts des jardins*, 137-8.

²⁵⁵ Delchevalerie, *Le parc public*, 2-3

²⁵⁶ Limido, *L'arts des jardins*, 138.

²⁵⁷ Delchevalerie, *Le parc public*, 3-4.

Kiosks were found in both parks. Park Monceau featured several kiosks that resembled some ancient Roman models (fig. 4.18).²⁵⁸ Azbakiyya's kiosks bore a specifically Ottoman character (fig. 4.19-20), and even one of Chinese character (fig. 4.21). These kiosks were associated with Ottoman coffeeshops and musicians who played both oriental and Western music.²⁵⁹ The association of kiosks and coffeeshops with music was specific to Azbakiyya²⁶⁰ and did not appear to be a feature of Park Monceau. Association of music with coffeeshops developed during the Ottoman rule, a case seen also in Istanbul.²⁶¹ This made Azbakiyya comparable to the Pera district which had similarly developed as a musical center in Istanbul.²⁶²

Several theatres were developed around both districts (Pera and Azbakiyya) and their gardens. In Istanbul, Pera (fig. 4.22) was a location where foreigners lodged, like Azbakiyya. In both cases European and foreign embassies and consulates were found, and both districts were developed on the outskirts of the old city.²⁶³ In both locations residents of different background mingled, and they were both formed by the city's expansions around the mid-nineteenth century.²⁶⁴ Like what happened in Egypt, in Pera houses were demolished and replaced by new buildings and it became the center for new investments within the city.²⁶⁵

In Pera, theatres were developed along the *Büyük Caddesi* now commonly known as *Istiklal* street. These theatres featured Italian and French as well as traditional music, as at Azbakiyya.²⁶⁶ In 1863, when Khedive Isma'il started developing Azbakiyya and its environs, it already had a French theatre commonly known as the *Comédie* (fig. 23), and in his developments this theatre was renewed. He also encouraged foreign musicians to come and perform in it.²⁶⁷ According to a letter of November 1867, Nubar Pasha studied the collection of laws regarding

²⁵⁸ Limido, *L'arts des jardins*, 139.

²⁵⁹ Delchevalerie, *Le parc public*, 4-5.

²⁶⁰ Mestyan, "Power and Music," 684.

²⁶¹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 43-4.

²⁶² Çelik, *The Remaking*, 67.

²⁶³ Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, 87-8.

²⁶⁴ Idem, *A Garden*, 86-7.

²⁶⁵ Çelik, *The Remaking*, 70-1.

²⁶⁶ Mestyan, *Arab Patriotism*, 87-8.

²⁶⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 96-8.

Paris's redevelopment project by Baron Haussmann and decided that it was too radical to carry out in Cairo before the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. The letter stated that he decided to use the laws and regulations applied in Istanbul as a blueprint, and in this letter Pera and Azbakiyya were both mentioned.²⁶⁸

According to Zeynab Çelik in her book *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (1986), Egypt had separated its government from the Ottoman Porte whether the Ottoman Sultan admitted it or not.²⁶⁹ The competition between the development and developers of the two countries was one between rivals rather than a ruling country (Turkey) and a country under its rule (Egypt). Cairo competed with Istanbul, developing simultaneously.²⁷⁰ Çelik compares Azbakiyya Park (1871) to the new Taksim Park (1864) developed around Pera (fig. 4.24), whose urban fabric and design were similar (figs. 4.25-6).²⁷¹

After his 1867 visit to Paris, Khedive Isma'îl decided to build an opera house overlooking his newly refurbished park in Azbakiyya, naming it the Khedival Opera (fig. 4.27).²⁷² It took six months to build, a relatively short period, since it needed to be ready for the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869.²⁷³ It was built in a style like the *Teatro alla Scala* in Milan, which was also imitated in Istanbul's developments as well. Two of Istanbul's theatres claimed to have the same origins, the Opera House in Taksim (founded 1840) and the Naum Theatre in Pera (founded 1853).²⁷⁴ Both districts – Azbakiyya and Pera - had a common element specific to Islamic society, namely the harem boxes, which were found in Pera in the Gedikpaşa Theatre, at the Opera House near Taksim (burnt down in 1841), at the Naum Theatre in Pera (burnt down in 1870), and in Cairo at the Theatre Comédie, the Circus (also at Azbakiyya) and the new Khedival Opera.²⁷⁵ The possibility that the inspiration for the Khedival Opera was Turkish should not be underestimated

²⁶⁸ Mestyan, *A Garden*, 86-7.

²⁶⁹ Çelik, *The Remaking*, 70-2.

²⁷⁰ Michael, *Egyptian Society*, 280-1.

²⁷¹ Çelik, *The Remaking*, 70-2.

²⁷² Mestyan, "Power and Music," 685.

²⁷³ Fahmy, "The Khedival Opera," 2, <http://www.faridafahmy.com/pdfs/KhadivialOperaHouse.pdf>

²⁷⁴ Mestyan, *A Garden*, 89-90.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 95.

since the inauguration in 1869 featured the Manasse's French Operetta troupe from Istanbul. By that time the modernization process was ridiculed by the French press who noted how non-French it was.²⁷⁶

Both Azbakiyya and Taksim parks displayed exuberant plantations resembling the French picturesque style that was welcomed almost everywhere in the mid-nineteenth century. Istanbul had developed the tradition before Egypt and embarked on its Westernization process earlier in the eighteenth century.²⁷⁷ In the light of the previous comparisons, one might conclude that most of the development plans implemented by the Muhammad 'Ali dynasty in Cairo displayed a second-hand Westernization absorbed through the connection to the Ottoman Porte in Istanbul.

4.6. Azbakiyya's Endangered Legacy

Azbakiyya Park retained its character as a musical and entertainment centre of the Cairene community even after the British occupation in 1882. It served as a hub for the artistic and musical community after Isma'il until the reign of King Farouk. After the military coup and revolution in 1953 the park gradually deteriorated despite its connection with the artistic and musical communities. The Khedival Opera was burnt down in 1970 and a multi-storey parking is found in its place today.²⁷⁸ The deterioration kept decreasing Azbakiyya Park's area to the extent it became less than one feddan today (see development maps figs. 4.28-34).

²⁷⁶ Idem, "Power and Music," 696.

²⁷⁷ Erbey, "Changing Cities," 204.

²⁷⁸ Fahmy, "The Khedival Opera," 4, <http://www.faridafahmy.com/pdfs/KhadivialOperaHouse.pdf>

Chapter Five: Conclusion

To any urban historian, nineteenth-century Cairo represents a major challenge. Not only because it is difficult to decipher and understand the processes by which the city and the community changed, but also because of the number of travelogues concerning nineteenth-century Cairene development. These travelogues are valuable in that they reflected the aims and aspirations of their writers, but they did not convey the real story of the city's transformation. They reflected either their writers' fascination with the exotic Orient and their disappointment in not finding it in nineteenth-century Cairo or their fascination with the modernization process taking over the capital city. In either case these travelogues are not sufficient to convey the real intricacy with which the city developed.

As much as these travelogues have been helpful with descriptive details enabling the completion of long-lost scenes of the nineteenth-century, they are also vague and biased. Some of these travelers stayed in Cairo for only three or four weeks, making it difficult for them to capture the real essence of the city. They stayed within hotels owned by foreigners built within the heart of the urbanization process. They did not get a chance to mingle within the Cairene community and decipher its complex nature. They could not lay their hands on the real essence of the community where East meets West and Orientalism meets Westernization.

As a result of the continuous failure to capture this intricate and complex essence of nineteenth-century Cairene development, the city has been described on several occasions as one with a 'dual' character. This notion of duality highlights a misunderstanding of Cairo's urban form and culture. The duality, as perceived by the travelers, was between the rich and poor communities. Travelogues presented the older quarters of the city as poor deteriorated ones, and the newer developments as lavish and green ones. They highlighted the inequality and sense of division in the Cairene society. However; this was not the truth. The older quarters housed native Cairenes from all the social groups, while the new quarters housed mainly foreigners and a minority of natives. Thus, the generalization associated with the terms "city's duality", "two cities", or "the old and new

cities”, reflected only the travelers’ perception of the city, who found the recent developments closer to their own communities and the older quarters alien to them.

Cairene urban form and development was perceived through this narrow scope, and the nineteenth-century Cairene gardens are no exception. These gardens were always perceived as replicas of the famous French gardens associated with the second empire. They were not thoroughly studied considering their original complex social and cultural context, as well as extent to which the already existing gardens within the Cairene landscape were a major influence. Many gardens were designed under Khedive Isma‘il’s patronage such as Giza Palace Gardens (1872), Shubra Palace Gardens (1806), Gezira Palace Gardens (1867) and the Azbakiyya (1832) public park. These gardens displayed the interest of the whole dynasty in gardening and horticulturist activities. The inspirations of these gardens were various. The Giza Palace gardens (fig. 5.1) had a character close in composition and consistency to the Gezira Palace Gardens, where one could find winding paths, dense vegetation, ponds, rowing boats, oriental kiosks, and neo-Mamluk style of architecture.²⁷⁹ The Giza Palace Gardens were divided into three, the *Salamlık* Garden, The Fruit Orchard, and the *Haramlık* Garden.²⁸⁰ The latter was described by Delchevalerie as having a Turkish-style layout based on the Khedive’s wishes, which draws attention to Khedive Isma‘il’s interest in Turkish as much as French styles,²⁸¹ as well as the fact that Deschamps and Delchevalerie worked on other styles than the French picturesque style.

A similar case could be found in Shubra Palace Gardens originally constructed and planted by Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha in 1806. The gardens are described by Delchevalerie as having been laid out in the regular Oriental manner with the Egyptian style of dense vegetation. The gardens were described in 1859 by a traveler as ‘a masterpiece of Turkish horticulture’.²⁸² After Deschamps and Delchevalerie’s arrival in Egypt in 1868, they both worked on the redesign of the

²⁷⁹ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 11-12.

²⁸⁰ Wilkinson, “Gardens,” 136-7.

²⁸¹ Delchevalerie, *Les promenades*, 11-12.

²⁸² *Ibid.* 19-21.

Shubra gardens as per Khedive Isma‘il’s demand. The Shubra gardens were completed in 1870 and the plan was published by Delchevalerie in 1879 (fig. 5.2) featuring a geometrical design and other Oriental features, further emphasizing Khedive Isma‘il’s interest in Middle Eastern models.²⁸³ Such interests have been downplayed by European orientalists who highlighted the French picturesque style evident in the Gezira and Azbakiyya Gardens. The existence of such models (Giza and Shubra) in parallel to Gezira and Azbakiyya gardens proves that the landscape modernization process was not exclusively following the European or in particular the French model but it was inclusive of the Turkish and Oriental models too.

The interest in Orientalism was highlighted by ‘Ali Mubarak, as previously mentioned in chapter three, while the interest in the Turkish development model was highlighted by Nubar Pasha in chapter four. Such overshadowing makes it imperative to further study nineteenth-century Cairene gardens, and to re-evaluate them in the highlight of such interests.

It is now possible to conclude that the Azbakiyya Park model did not lie exclusively on the French picturesque garden design but could have been inspired from the Turkish model of Taksim Gezi Park in Pera (1865), Istanbul on 1865. These two parks (Azbakiyya and Taksim) bore a relatively similar character in terms of the development of their environs, their association with foreigners and travelers, their connections with musical society and musicians, as well as the development of their forms in the second half of the nineteenth-century. The presence of hotels, embassies, theatres, and consulates in both districts was common. The association of both with Western and Islamic architectural elements was evident as well. Both districts were at the heart of the Westernized development of each city, and both had French picturesque gardens acting as their centers.

The Gezira Palace Gardens (1867) is a more complex case where the main architectural elements displayed a strictly neo-Islamic character with an Alhambresque style applied to both the main palace and the grand kiosk. This Alhambresque style is the strongest evidence of Khedive

²⁸³ *Ibid.* 24.

Isma‘il’s interest in traditional Islamic architectural revivalism, which might be considered as clashing with the French layout of the gardens. However; I prefer to perceive the case as an attempt to create a new model specific to Cairo rather than a case of conflicting interests. The existence of oriental kiosks, the grand kiosk, and the palace represented the traditional architectural revivalism of the mid to late nineteenth-century, while the gardens’ winding paths, ponds, and lush vegetation represented the Westernization taking over the same era. The existence of both Alhambresque and Western design was evident in Istanbul at the same time too, such as the cases of Beylerbeyi and Yildiz Palaces, as well as the Ministry of Defense by Sultan Abdul ‘Aziz II. Since Egypt was then perceived as competitor to Istanbul rather than a follower one could assume the two rulers might have been keenly following each other’s patronage, suggesting that the Istanbul examples might have been an inspiration of the semi-Alhambresque semi-Western model evident in Gezira Palace and the Island Gardens.

The notion that semi-traditional and semi-European models were purposely created during the second half of the nineteenth century in both Cairo and Istanbul can be proposed, although further research is needed to confirm it. Both Cairo and Istanbul adopted the Westernization strategy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century followed with the revival of a traditional architectural style in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both cities introduced the public park resulting from a concern for public hygiene in the second half of the nineteenth century as well. The development of both cities on the scale of urban forms was paralleled during the second half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the development of both capitals was very different from the start of the twentieth century, with Istanbul’s public parks and gardens being maintained while Cairo’s parks and gardens kept shrinking.

The semi-traditional and semi-Western model could be seen still in Egypt in the twenty first century in the famous case of Azhar Park. In Azhar Park, one can see the Islamic elements of gardens such as symmetrical and geometrical designs, the *salsabil*, the neo-Islamic style of buildings in its restaurants, as well as European winding paths, ponds and lakes. Such a

composition recalls those of Azbakiyya, Giza, and Gezira parks although here we have definite information about the intentions of the project being more traditional than Western. The association of Islamic identity with Azhar Park is known through the publications and the aims of the founding organization. In the case of nineteenth-century Cairene gardens the aims and initiatives of Khedive Isma‘il were written and published by Orientalists and travelers who did not study the whole urban, social, and architectural developments of the Cairene community at the time. This argument raises questions about the urban and architectural identities of the nineteenth-century Cairene community as a whole.

The questioning of the architectural and urban development identity of nineteenth-century Cairo has been frequently tackled throughout the past few decades. Highlighting the Islamic or traditional architectural revivalism, many scholars proposed ideas about the intentions and aims of patrons and architects of the second half of the nineteenth century Cairene developments. Was the Orient for them just an exoticized ideal? Questions about their approach to Islamic architecture and its revivalism, whether their views were coming from direct experience of the monuments in their original settings or from textual and travel accounts have been explored. In this context, Islamic revivalism in nineteenth-century Cairo provides a solid base for raising the idea of eclecticism and questioning the exclusive adoption of the European model, or in the case of the gardens, the French model.

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