

## Original Research Article

## Isfahan, the City of Sightseeing: Recognizing the Viewpoint-driven Architecture of the Safavid Era

GholamReza Kiani-DehKiania\*

Department of Conservation and Restoration , Art University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

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### Abstract

**Problem statement:** Having fundamental objectives regarding the historic urban landscape is the basis of a comprehensive understanding and approach towards identification, evaluation, preservation, and management of the historical urban landscapes; therefore, the material and spiritual significance and potentials that could shape the historical character of a city as urban landscapes are the primary notions that should be identified and recognized. There are valuable research studies regarding Iranian architecture and Persian Gardens, as well as the viewpoints in gardens or pavilions. However, urban viewpoints have not been addressed separately, as one of the valuable aspects of urban architecture. In historic reports and notes made by European orientalist, the importance of these locations was not neglected; yet they have only been indirectly highlighted in these reports. Urban viewpoints are significant in ways that they could be necessary for affecting our perception and understanding of the landscapes and the reciprocal relation between the viewer and the views. Since the most significant urban developments occurred during the Safavid era in Isfahan and this city has been a suitable urban model for other cities in Iran because of its architectural design and landscape features, it can serve as a research site. While Isfahan has been the capital of two important historical eras, most of its urban landscapes, including its architectural elements, are either distinguished or has undergone drastic urban changes. Based on existing evidence in Isfahan, most of the historic urban landscapes in this city date back to the Safavid era.

**Research objective:** The present article aims to identify the concepts and viewpoint-driven significance of urban architecture in the construction of the Safavid capital.

**Research method:** The research method in this article is based on archival research and field studies and the emphasis has been on historic textual resources. For this purpose, reports and prevailing concepts in the specialized literature regarding urban architecture were revised according to the extant evidence from the Safavid period to identify and understand the viewpoint-driven significance of the Safavid architecture in Isfahan.

**Conclusion:** Surveying the urban architecture in Isfahan indicated that Safavid designers had a strong will to integrate urban spaces with nature; thus, through the use of rectangular geometry, water runnels, and tree rows in all urban spaces, they aimed to emphasize the places that resembled gardens. Therefore, Isfahan could be seen as a vast garden, where the architectural edifices in its urban landscape were designed semi-open and semi-closed to create certain viewpoints. These viewpoints embodied the notion that “a prototypical Persian Garden was a model for urban architecture and Isfahan during the Safavid era, hence, making Isfahan a city of spectacles and sightseeing.

**Keywords:** *Safavid Isfahan, Historic urban landscape (Manzar), Sightseeing or spectacles (Nezāreh), Viewpoint (Nazargāh), View or scenery (Manzareh).*

\* +98 913 309 1925, gh.kiani@au.ac.ir

## Introduction

The use of concepts like sight and insight, viewpoint, sightseeing while observing, landscape, and view or scenery<sup>1</sup> have a long history in Iranian architecture and have been interpreted in various ways in traditional teachings and contemporary literature. Throughout history, humans have relied on their ability to overlook the surrounding environment, particularly to dominate the flat terrains to live safely, manage natural resources, and tackle challenges efficiently. Therefore, they recognized the significant and elevated regions in their natural environment, which could be used as suitable viewpoints to overlook the surrounding views and events that occurred in them.

Throughout Iranian history until modern times, one common feature has been the continual impact of nomadic peoples on different aspects of society. Today, mainly due to the influences of nomadic culture, the use of tents has remained an important aspect of people's lives in this region (Pope, 2008, 1658). The basic requirements in the nomadic or pastoral lifestyle, also experienced by the Iranian peoples, were protecting the herd and livestock, as well as remaining vigilant of natural events and safety incidents. This lifestyle greatly influenced the way nomadic settlements (tents<sup>2</sup>) were shaped and situated since ancient times. For instance, the nomadic black tent<sup>3</sup> in the mountainous areas had a semi-open space and rectangular plan whose main entrance was defined by a pair of wooden posts on the front sides, an entirely open entrance along the majority of its length. The other sides, however, including the backside of the tent, were not open as the tented tissue was drawn back and fastened to the ground using rope and pegs. In this way, this front-runner shelter was very convenient for human-scale inhabitation. To set up a tent in the opted location, the ground was usually leveled out by adding. In the doctoral dissertation entitled, "Preservation of the Historic Urban Landscape in Isfahan," identification and recognition of the established order in the city's spatial organization have been addressed while

focusing on some components of the Safavid urban landscape in Isfahan and some references have been made to their viewpoint-driven significance (Kiani-DehKiani, 2016). However, there are limited research studies on urban viewpoints, locally known as "Nazargāh" (Berque & Mansouri, 2019; Mansouri, 2005; Mansouri & Mokhles, 2017; Mansouri, 2004). Among the few available studies, there is a study on Nazargāh as the main element of the Persian Garden in the illustration of the gardens in Persian paintings, which is conducted by Teimouri Gorde and Heidarnattaj (2014). In another study by Heydarnattaj and Rezazadeh (2016), reflections on Persian Gardens revealed the repetition of patterns and a three-way relationship between water, plants, and Nazargāh. It was also mentioned that an attempt to apply water and botanic landscapes, which are the most important natural elements, could be traced in all existing types of Persian gardens as a Nazargāh or place of seeing (Heydarnattaj & Rezazadeh, 2016). Furthermore, the study on the *Hasht-Behesht* Pavilion as a viewpoint investigated this garden as one of the Safavid gardens in Isfahan as per the principles of viewpoint-driven architecture or *Nazargāhi* architecture (Bina & Etezadi, 2015). In addition, Rezazadeh, Bahramian, Aminpoor, & Heidar Nattaj. (2021) analyzed the role of landscape in the positioning and spatial structure of the main pavilion in a Persian Garden, using the case studies of Safavid gardens in the northern part of Iran. In all the aforementioned studies regarding the gardens, how water, plants, and the location of viewpoint were applied are seen to be the integral and fundamental components of their formation. The present study, therefore, will investigate the importance of viewpoint in the architectural products of the Safavid urban architecture, including the palaces, squares, roads, and bridges.

## Sightseeing (Nezāreh) and Viewpoint (Nazargāh) in Literary Contexts and Culture

Persian concepts like "Nezāreh," "Manzar," and

“*Nazargāh*,” respectively meaning sightseeing, landscape, and viewpoint in English, are the nominal forms in Farsi that have been in use in historical literary contexts; hence, they have gained various extended meanings over time in Farsi and Persian literature, with which poets and writers have created various combinations and notions. Different conceptual aspects are manifested, through the application of figures of speech (e.g., metaphor and amphiboly). In the poetical literature, these words created a worldview for dealing with diverse morales and meaningful topics.

*Wajh-e Khodā agar shawadat manzar-e nazar .*

*Az botān ān talab ar hosn shenāsi ey del .*

In the traditional Iranian culture, “*Nazar-bāzi*”<sup>4</sup> denotes the concept of not seeing the world as merely an object<sup>5</sup> and not taking it too seriously. Moreover, it refers to the notion of trying to unveil the hidden truths or letting them reveal themselves<sup>6</sup> in a way that can lead to profound discernment, which varies among different observers (Shayegan, 2014, 139). “*Manzar*” includes both conceptual and manifest aspects; while the manifest aspect deals with narrating the form<sup>7</sup> and is an allegory for the ethical attributes, its conceptual aspect has a more physical and literal approach in interpreting the concepts, hence, dividing them into two categories, manifested and unmanifested<sup>8</sup> (Mansouri & Mokhles, 2017, 19). In Farsi lexicons, “*Nazargāh*,” as a Farsi equivalent of *Manzar* (with an Arabic root and word formation), also refers to seeing and place of seeing, spectacle, view, and landscape (Dehkhoda, 1994). The act of seeing or observing something with watchfulness and inner contemplation, or even for mere pleasure (6098).

*Ahd kardim keh bi doost be sahrā naraavim .*

The word “*Tamāshāgah*”<sup>9</sup> refers to the place for sightseeing and entertainment that can be seen and looked over. Apart from its external physical form, it has superior features that enable entertainment (Mansouri & Mokhles, 2017, 17). Mullah Jalal highlights the sightseeing role of the *Naqsh-e Jahān* Square as a landscape: “The square with a

water runnel all around its length and width, which resembled a great river, was encircled by beautiful cypress and willow trees, rendering a public thoroughfare and gathering place for both opponents and supporters” (Monajjem Yazdi, 1987, 236).

In the Safavid era, the term “*Tamāshāgah*” was used in various ways. According to Figueras, “every day, a group of men and women sat on the grass in the middle of a street for talking and entertainment. Iranians considered this type of pastime and entertainment ‘*Tamāshā*,’ which was a different notion from any other form of entertainment” (Figueras, 1984, 137). Quoted from *Borhān, Nazargāh* or viewpoint is synonymous with the place of *Tamāshā* or sightseeing as spectacles, or *Manzar* (landscape); it is mentioned that in times of ‘Alā Al-Din a tent-garden has been built as a *Tamāshāgah* (Dehkhoda, 1994, 6098). Similarly, the other derivatives of these two terms are considered synonymous<sup>10</sup> and could be traced with a similar meaning in textual resources that date back to the 9-10th centuries (3rd-4th HS).

In the travelogue of Pythagoras, we read that “outside the city (Susa), I was at the entrance of a dark cave, and amazed by determining, from afar, a place for celebrating the brightest stars, we entered along with the spectators and stargazers (Maréchal, 1984.66). Turkaman (2009, 568) has written a historical report in which we read: “...when the radiance coming from the world-enlightening dome of the sacred shrine, which captures all manifestations of the divine lights shone (the sun, symbolizing the beginning of brilliance), the eyes of the spectators<sup>11</sup> of inner realms of longing were filled with its light.” He also extensively reports the gardens of Ordubad<sup>12</sup> in the king’s journey and mentions a famous mountain known as “*Nazāreh*,” which makes this mountain a recreational place<sup>13</sup> for people. According to him, the joyous gardens and orchards that fall in the foothills, and the Aras River, passing through the West, were quite pleasant as he noted, “His majesty has brought water from the high mountains to the *Nezāreh* fountain and created a palace consisting

of an octagonal tent with a courtyard on each side, and projected a portico (or iwan) on each side with a chamber on top of that. The water circulated in the palace, and a pool was placed in front of each iwan” (ibid., 757).

Moreover, as mentioned in *Rawzat Al-Jannat fi Madinat-el Harat*, “*Nazargāh* Garden” was one of the royal gardens and palaces in Herat. As described, “His Highness (Sultān Husayn Bayqarā, 1438) descended to the *Nazargāh* Garden. A week later, he moved from the *Nazargāh* Garden to Bashertu prairie and regions near the Sālār Bridge” (Esfezazi, 1963, 347). In these historical texts, it is reported that Kandahar, Kazeroon, Shiraz, Kerman, and Isfahan (Safāhān) all had gardens of spectacles, which were locally known as *Nazar* Gardens.<sup>14</sup> In the report regarding the construction of the *Naqsh-e Jahān* Square, it is stated that “on the opposite side of the river, in front of the Safavid royal ensemble, Dawlat-Khāneh (government building), they laid out the plan with an approximate width of 100 yd<sup>15</sup> and decorated it with various fragrant flowers and trees, such as orange, lemon, and citron. Since it could be viewed from Dawlat-Khāneh, it was named ‘Bāgh-e Nazar’ (garden of gaze, or a place for viewing and contemplation)” (Jenabdi, 1999, 840). Mullah Jalal describes the gardens and streets in Isfahan and mentions the new bridge in Isfahan (Allāhverdi Khān Bridge), which had beautiful openings: “There was an order to finish, with the fullest care and consideration, construction of the bridge whose eastern and western porches (*iwans*) overlooked the water and had gardens on one side” (Monajjem Yazdi, 1987, 237).

The word “*Nazar*” (action and means of seeing and viewing) and its derivatives, such as *Nāzer* (viewer or spectator), *Nazargāh*, *Nezāreh*, and *Bāgh-e Nazar* have profound literal meanings that could either directly refer to a place or become the action of seeing. Accordingly, the notion of *Nazargāh* refers to the place of viewing and viewpoint, indicating a place. In other words, *Nazargāh* is similar to a window to the conceptual and physical landscape

that would call forth the spectators to observe nature and contemplate (Mansouri & Mokhles, 2017, 21). In describing Mount *Nezāreh*<sup>16</sup>, EskandarBeyk addressed the concept of *Nezāreh* as a recreational place and a source of removing the sorrow from one’s heart whose observation would be a means of enlightenment for the seers of the heavens and gazers of celestial bodies (Turkaman, 2009, 757).

### Nazargāh in the Specialized Literature of Architecture

An important topic in Iranian architecture is how mansions were combined with open spaces to create natural landscapes in gardens. The Persian Gardens emerged from the notion that elevated elements could create perspectival domination over the surrounding environment. The essential origin of *Nazargāh* was initially to create an elevated location with an appropriate view towards the opposite landscape; this incentive has not changed throughout time and has also gradually been added to building constructions, where the *iwan* was added to the landscape or interior courtyard as an architectural element (Mansouri, 2005, 75). *Nazargāh* or viewpoint is, therefore, a place whose identity is defined through the action of *Nāzer* (a spectator who sees and contemplates). Iranian Architecture is a vast and diverse world where *Nazargāh* takes on many forms and meanings through various quantitative and qualitative measures. Whether it be a humble rural house portico or a monumental portal in a royal palace, each is referred to as *iwan*, united by their shared purpose. This simple yet fundamental condition fulfills the needs for presence, observation, and contemplation in nature, offering respite from the outside world. In this context, due to the origination of the term “*Nazargāh*” from another Farsi word of Arabic origin, “*Nazar*,” the importance of a viewpoint towards a landscape is connected to the significance of observing nature. *Nazar* (viewing and sight) remains the main bilateral relation between the spectator and the preferred landscape (*Nāzer* and *Manzareh*). Therefore, this two-sided

relationship between the inner and outer realms, the spectator's position and desired landscape, could be addressed as *Nazargāh* (Bina & Etezadi, 2015, 38-39). Urban viewpoints are considered landmarks due to their prominence and continual use by the inhabitants and visitors as important places of the urban landscape that are also visually distinctive, and many activities occur in them. Also, they serve as visual and mental symbols in the city's memory (Mansouri, 2004).

### Viewpoint-driven Architecture

Pope considers the formation of *ivan* in Iranian architecture as an old yet self-sufficient architectural element, which is associated with the garden-house,<sup>17</sup> resembling a small room with one of its sides completely open. It is denoted that individual *ivan* in a garden could be the original form, which was later integrated into building plans. Also, houses designed with a single *ivan*, i.e., a summer house, were the intended notion that could also be seen in various miniatures and representations from the 10th century AH. In these representations, the single *ivan* typically features a main façade defined by a sharp arch, which is often embellished with intricate tilework on the exterior, and interior walls adorned with colorful paintings. The building floor is slightly raised above the ground, and the façade is completely open without railings (Pope, 2008, 1660). Based on theories outlined previously, it is important to trace the viewpoint-driven roots of a nomadic lifestyle and understand how these roots have manifested themselves in urban lifestyle. One of the key ways to do this is by examining the use of elevated platforms as a means of gaining perspective and surveying the surrounding environment. Similarly, the most evolved examples of these manifestations could be seen in *iwans* and pavillions in gardens that were built for creating viewpoints. The historic architectural evidence, such as balconies, pavilions, and upstairs rooms<sup>18</sup> in the paintings of Islamic periods, as well as reports by orientalist and European travelers, validate this

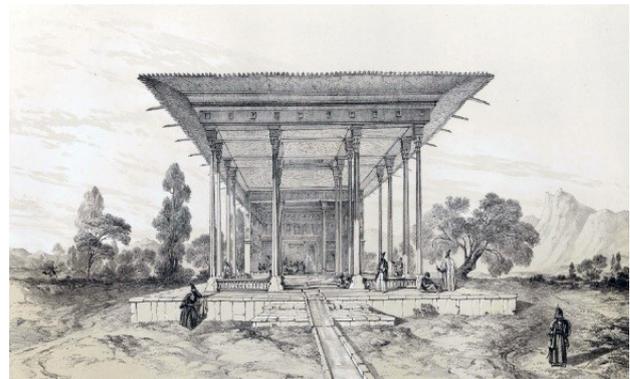


Fig. 1. Aineh-Khāneh Palace, Isfahan. Source: Flandin, 1851.

subject. As observed in Fig. 1, Pope (2008, 1659) concluded that the construction of a second floor in a garden pavilion was intended to achieve two main objectives: first, to obtain an elevated height that would provide a better viewpoint for enjoying the surrounding landscape; and second, to improve the airflow quality within the pavilion (Mansouri, 2005, 75).

According to the study by Mansouri (2005, 75), in Iranian culture, there seems to be a tradition of incorporating elevated and dominating architectural elements to enhance the experience of both built and open spaces (buildings and gardens) and to make the most of the surrounding natural environment and sceneries. This approach seems to reflect an unchanged perspective from which the Persian Garden has emerged, a desire to harmonize human-made and natural elements, making the built environment seamlessly integrate with nature through the use of an elevated location with a suitable view toward the opposite landscape.

### Urban Viewpoints in the Capital City

An urban viewpoint is a specific location within a city that provides a panoramic view of the city, giving citizens and visitors a shared point of reference and a common understanding and memory of the city (Heydari, 2010). The Safavid rulers inherited the technical expertise in urban development from the previous eras in Iran, such as the construction of neighborhoods, gardens, pavilions, and Bazaars. The seemingly innovative

features in many architectural edifices originated from past teachings in this era. This is because the pre-Safavid architects were already familiar with the concepts of thresholding,<sup>19</sup> intensive seasonal effects, and organized transformation of viewpoints (Falamaki, 2008, 565). In the Safavid period, designers, engineers, philosophers, astronomers, and last but not least, the king (as an epitome of good, authority, and the grandeur of the Safavid dynasty) considered the capital as a utopian city; accordingly, Isfahan had to be designed and built to symbolize half the world's grandness, reflect the heaven's beauty, magnificence, and bliss, and evoke the spectators' awe and amazement. To achieve this purpose, the capital city had to translate the highest intended qualities in design, construction and maintenance to convey these ideas to the audience in the best possible way.

The Safavid designers were faced with the old city on one side of the river, yet the gardens, southern mountains, and the valley of the *Zāyanderud* River were on the other side. There is consensus that the Safavid Art in Isfahan applied a conscious use of the environmental capacities to create a smart connection between the new and old cores of the city. Since the land was nearly flat with a slight slope, the designers of the new capital had to focus on creating vast spaces and tall buildings to fulfill the desired scenic views. Therefore, in addition to creating unique urban landmarks, special viewpoints that offer suitable views of the cityscape were also planned and constructed (Fig. 2). According to EskandarBeyk in his description of *Chāhār-Bāgh*,<sup>20</sup> the urban landscaping as well as constructing height levels for viewpoints were in focus. As mentioned in this historical essay, "... [to build] an appropriate mansion, which corresponded to the entrance portal and with a high sunshade gallery<sup>21</sup>, *iwān*, and upstairs rooms, [were designed] in ultimate beauty and decoratives" (Turkaman, 2009, 544). According to former studies, the architectural elements of the urban fabric in this period were functionally multifaceted and complex. To emphasize the



Fig. 2. View of Isfahan landscape from the South. Source: Flandin, 1851.

viewpoint-driven aspect of the architectural products, as part of the urban landscape, viewpoint could be categorized concerning the gardens, streets, palaces, bridges, and the square.

#### • Garden Viewpoint

As previously discussed, the gardens were the first architectural innovations, in which the necessity of creating viewpoint-driven places was considered to be particular locations to see and appreciate the landscape. The Safavid dynasty built numerous gardens in their territory. The city of Isfahan, having a river and a particularly interesting natural setting, provided a suitable ground for building gardens; thus, it became one of the main regions that were tremendously developed during the Safavid era. *Hezār-Jerib* Garden was more than a simple garden viewpoint. It has been an urban viewpoint due to its topographic location and bilateral relationship with the city. The topography of the northern and southern sides of the *Zāyanderud* River is such that it is aligned with the valley's slope. Because of the short distance between the southern slopes of the river, it has a steeper slope compared to the slight slope of the expanded valley on the northern riverside. The hills were land-leveled for the construction of these gardens (serving as summer dwellings), and the southern slopes were arranged in a geometrical pattern towards the river and *Chāhār-Bāgh*. Creating a sequence of green surfaces not only presented a unique landscape for the observers across the river, but also provided a topographic viewpoint at different levels and positions for the panoramic view of the cityscape and Safavid *Dawlat-Khāneh* (Kiani-DehKiani, 2015; 2016). Historical reports

have mentioned these amazing landscapes that were influenced by the landscape designs on the way back and forth from.

In this way, the southern mountain slope was a topographic viewpoint, standing as an important city gate. This viewpoint has served as a source of inspiration for many representations, designs, and descriptions of the urban landscape during the prosperous periods in Isfahan (Kiani-DehKiani, 2015; 2016, 149). However, having witnessed the destruction and devastation period in this city, Vámbéry (2002, 105) describes Isfahan in 1864 while leaving it: “We eventually left Isfahan and headed towards the southern mountains. When we arrived at the top of the altitude, we looked at the infinite houses, gardens, and city ruins once again.” Furthermore, although designed and built at different times and locations while following the topography and reversed slope, both *Chehel-Sotoon* and *Hasht-Behesht gardens* feature mastabas at varying height levels that were different from each other. *Chehel-Sotoon* was located near the square and farther from the river. Accordingly, it was raised only three steps above the surface, whereas *Hasht-Behesht*, being closer to the river and farther from the square, has been raised seven steps above its surrounding area. This attention was not only seen in the pavilions. To have a proper and significant view of its vicinity, most mansions and edifices were constructed over a step-like platform, which would locally be known as *Soffeh*. Overall, the three prototypical components of the garden – water, botanica, and viewpoint – were important in Safavid gardens. Hence, the designers’ efforts in selecting a proper location for viewpoints were evident. They wanted to benefit the most from the landscapes.

#### • Street Viewpoint

In the Safavid urban layout, the previous architectural measures were transformed. For instance, the streets’ direction and width were changed. The city “street”<sup>22</sup> was objectified as it was planned as a straight and vast street similar to its adjacent city square. Therefore, a different geometry

layout started to take shape in the city. *Chāhār-Bāgh* was one of the most beautiful streets with various functional layers and an important connecting.

The street façade featured rows of trees and water runnels, simultaneously providing visual borders. Thus, commuting, which was previously its main function, became secondary. The street added a vertical dimension to the path, thus making it a three-dimensional canal in vision’s depth of field. In other words, this void led to a delightful expansion of the view toward the surrounding environment. The building height levels, along with a relevant width, in this street, influenced its viewpoint-driven perspective, forming the street character (Arnheim, 2009, 105, 108-109).

*Chāhār-Bāgh* was the widest and longest Safavid street and recreational urban space, which passed through the gardens of the *Chāhār-Bāgh* neighborhood. Also, it connected two significant viewpoint-driven buildings (*Hezār-Jerib* mansion and *Jahān-Nemā* palace, respectively, on the southern and northern sides of the *Zāyanderud* River). In the middle of this street, *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge<sup>23</sup> was designed and built, which allowed the street to continue its path across the river. Using natural components like water runnels and plants in its design, the street was a green path with attractive landscapes on both sides. This landscape was not only a beautiful viewpoint for the special residents but also served as a pedestrian walkway for newcomers and, at times, a more public space for everyone else to engage in certain ceremonial, recreational, and scenic activities (Fig. 3).

It is reported that *Shāh Abbās* made an order for the women of his Harem so that they could benefit from parading and talking in the *Chāhār-Bāgh* street and use it as a viewpoint: “Wednesdays should belong to women of the palace in this recreational space to do activities like the ones men do” (Monajjem Yazdi, 1987, 361). According to this decree, it is evident that both *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge and this street had important roles with their viewpoint-driven aspects. Similarly, this significance has been highlighted



Fig. 3. Chāhār-Bāgh, Isfahan. Source: Flandin, 1851.

in some reports by European orientalists and travelers. For instance, Chardin (1965, 305) believed that *Chāhār-Bāgh* was built as a forested public recreational space in Isfahan and also considered it the most beautiful street ever seen or heard of, which has been built for “*Nezāreh*” (sightseeing and contemplation). This wide and spectacular street preserved its primary functions, but during certain periods of the year, it had a function similar to that of an urban square for ceremonial rituals, entertainment activities, and spectacles. EskandarBeyk has reported that “on the first day of Cancer season, according to the astronomers and astrologers, it was a benevolent *Jam-Rooz*<sup>24</sup> for “water sprinkling.”<sup>25</sup> There were public spectacles of splashing water in *Chāhār-Bāgh* of *Safāhān*.<sup>26</sup> On that day, more than a hundred thousand people from all societal castes gathered on *Chāhār-Bāgh* Street and sprinkled water on each other. Since too many people sprinkled water, which they had taken from the river, *Zāyanderud* dried up. This was indeed a mind-blowing event” (Turkaman, 2009, 838). Since *Chāhār-Bāgh* featured various functions and incorporated all three prototypical components of a Persian Garden (water and planting for the delightfulness and viewpoint-driven aspects), it can be concluded that *Chāhār-Bāgh* was a viewpoint.

#### • Palace Viewpoint

The *Jahān-Nemā* Palace and *Hezār-Jerib* pavilion-garden were both two-storey buildings that were designed as important urban viewpoints; the former was elevated at the northern end of the *Chāhār-*

*Bāgh* street, and the other one was placed on the southern hillsides. These two elements were located at the northernmost and southernmost points of *Chāhār-Bāgh* as distinctive urban symbols and landmarks. This street was straight and aligned with the setting’s topography. *Si-o-Se Pol*, located in the middle of the street, connects the southern hills to the northern plains and the old city center. A prominent feature of such streets was that by placing a polarizing element at one end of the axis, the street direction ended in another similar element. The *Chāhār-Bāgh* Street was designed outside the old city in connection with the new city and new urban square. Also, the *Jahān-Nemā* Palace, at the northern end of *Chāhār-Bāgh* Street, served as a connecting point to the entrance of *Dawlat-Khāneh*. Therefore, with a dominant height over *Chāhār-Bāgh*, it has had a viewpoint-driven design and featured an important viewpoint. This recreational royal palace was as monumental as the *Hezār-Jerib* mansion on the other side of *Chāhār-Bāgh*. It was a three-floor building. The king’s Harem was situated on its back and left sides, with no exit. One of the first European travelers, Della Valle, who had visited *Chāhār-Bāgh*, described the architectural details of *Jahān-Nemā* pavilion and mentioned its viewpoint role as the purpose of its construction: “... on both sides of this building, they have built balconies and windows adorned with patterns and other types of decorations; the entire length of the street could be viewed from the top of this building” (Della Valle, 2011, 39-40). Chardin further referred to both architectural edifices at the two ends of *Chāhār-Bāgh* Street and stated the following: “On both sides of the *Jahān-Nemā* mansion, there are windows that instead of being made of glass, are designed in a way that allows the outside to be seen while the inside remains unseeable... *Shāh Abbās* built this palace so that the women of Harem could observe courtly events, such as the entry of ambassadors and processions” referred to a mansion in the middle of the garden with a hall in the center and four rooms at the corners, where people could overlook the street,

fountain, and waterfall. Based on the evidence and reports, it could be concluded that in addition to the existing topography, the aquatic, botanic, and architectural systems lets to designing viewpoints to benefit from the natural landscapes and sceneries (Fig. 4).

#### • Bridge Viewpoint

The remains of monumental bridges on the rivers flowing on the Iranian plateau indicate a rich history and advanced engineering that led to the construction of such architectural products. Bridges have also been a prominent architectural feature in the Safavid capital, Isfahan. As a result, bridges have played an important role in the formal and structural urban continuity of the city and its geographical landscapes. Furthermore, bridges, like other architectural constructions, such as buildings and urban developments, are multidimensional and influential components in an urban landscape. The bridges over the *Zayandehrud* River were different from previous ones (e.g., design, structure, form, decorations, and function) in the way that they seemed to be built in connection with the Safavid landscape and character of the new Isfahan. As public viewpoints with a social function, people could enjoy the river landscape and its surrounding natural environment with these bridges. During the Safavid era, four bridges were built in Isfahan on the *Zāyanderud* River; each was, according to Tavernier, a quarter league<sup>27</sup> distant from the other

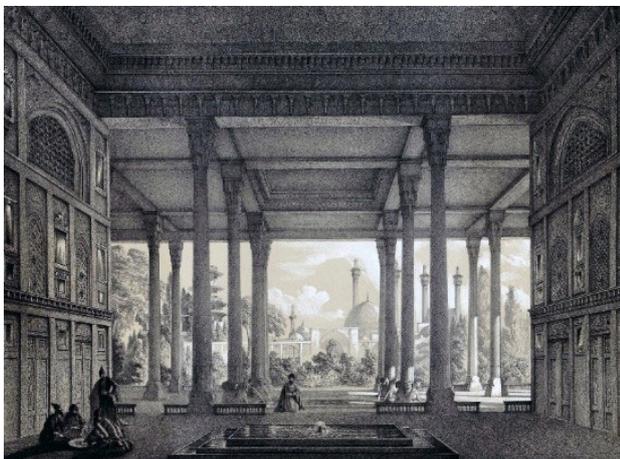


Fig. 4. Chehel-Sotoon Palace, Isfahan. Source: Flandin, 1851.

adjacent one (Tavernier, 1984, 396). According to Pope, the bridge design was more than just a means of crossing the river. They were designed to benefit from the river's cool breeze and vitalizing<sup>28</sup> water flow, as places to pause and.

#### - Allāhverdi Khān Bridge Viewpoint

Based on existing evidence, the first architectural attempts, as part of the new urban landscape and Safavid development plan in Isfahan, were related to a natural factor: The river in Isfahan that led to the construction of *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge during the reign of *Shāh Abbās*, the first. As can be seen in Fig. 5, this bridge is a definite factor for the street's continuity across the river, adding up an extra 3 km until the royal gardens of *Hezār-Jerib* on top of the urban slope (Pope, 2008, 1639). Furthermore, the construction of this bridge in the middle of *Chāhār-Bāgh* Street has been attributed to the location of the river in the actual center of the developing street (*Chāhār-Bāgh* Street) in the Safavid urban layout (Jenabdi, 1999, 761). Coste (2011, 66) describes the bridge structure as follows: "This bridge is 295 m long and 13.75 m wide. The entire path is mostly paved with stone; 1.20 m of its width is reserved for riders, caravans, wagons, and animals. On both sides of the bridge, there are covered arcades for pedestrian use. Despite their low height, people could pass under these arches.

"On the contrary, what fascinated Della Valle the most was the exquisite architectural quality and captivating beauty of the view, which he enjoyed through the corridors located underneath the *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge. Additionally, he cherished the refreshing cool breeze and the soothing sound of water flowing during the hot seasons (Della Valle, 2011 [1390 HS, 31]). Also, Figueras (1984, 346) reported that, unlike many other bridges, *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge offered a variety of unique integrated features and uses. In addition to connecting spaces like staircases, a special royal space was constructed in the middle of the bridge for royal entertainments, such as *Tamāshā*, or ceremonial performances like water sprinkling rites. Tavernier added to the



Fig. 5. Allāhverdi Khān Bridge, Isfahan. Source: Coste, 2011.

description of the passages by noting a promenade area whereby individuals could access the upper levels of the passages to enjoy the refreshing air (Tavernier, 1984, 396). This bridge played a significant role in organizing the urban landscape, at first, by serving as a key point of connection between the two riversides and a continuation of the *Chāhār-Bāgh* Street towards the southern gardens. Secondly, this bridge is part of the *Chāhār-Bāgh* landscape and an urban landmark. Due to its location and relation to the surrounding views of the river and other viewpoints, it offers a variety of landscape views for viewers at different height levels (Fig. 6). Therefore, this building was part of the *Chāhār-Bāgh* axis and an independent viewpoint that accompanied pedestrians and invited onlookers to pause and watch the river and its surrounding views on the bridge. By creating openings on the bridge, the designers provided special viewpoints for the viewers on the bridge to have a pleasant experience and benefit from the cool river breeze; especially since they would be in the narrow corridors, they had enough privacy, in the open and closed spaces, from the passengers' eyes and simultaneously were offered interesting viewpoints and a moment to enjoy. On one riverside, they welcomed the river and enjoyed singing along with the water's streaming sound, while on the other side, they accompanied the gentle flow until the next destination (Kiani-DehKiani, 2015, 2016).

While describing the various functional and architectural dimensions of the bridge, Figueras referred to the observable scenery from this viewpoint. He stated the following: "Allāhverdi Khān Bridge features five distinct passages; that is, a central road for caravans and animals, two roofed corridors located between two walls that functioned

as fences, and two passage corridors which formed the roof of the formerly mentioned corridors. The latter two corridors are used more than others due to their desirable views. One of the most mesmerizing and captivating sights is the panoramic view of the picturesque small towns resting along the right side of the bridge while embracing the tranquil river on each side (*Tabrizihā* and New Julfa)" (Figueras, 1984, 233). The *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge features an architecture that emphasizes viewpoints, with a balance between open and closed spaces. Public areas allow for visitors to both see and be seen, while a special ceremonial chamber in the middle of the bridge was excluded from public access. The middle of the bridge was excluded from public access. This bridge was a viewpoint that offers one of the best panoramic views of the *Zayanderud* River, showcasing the surrounding natural landscapes and plant arrangements along the riversides.

#### - Khāwju Bridge Viewpoint

Researchers believe that the *Si-o-Se Pol* has been a suitable experience and a perfect model for building a more technical, complete, and beautiful bridge during the reign of *Shāh Abbās, the Second*. The *Khāwju* Bridge is an exceptional engineering masterpiece in both bridge and dam construction in Iran. The bridge plan appears to be nearly identical to that of the *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge. The lower level is supported by stone pillars that have gaps between them. When certain drawer lids are placed over these gaps, the water can accumulate, rise to 6 m, and create a lake behind the bridge (Mokhlesi, 1997, 64). The *Khāwju* Bridge serves as an urban symbol and multifunctional complex, boasting a more royal panoramic viewpoint compared to the *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge (Fig. 7).

The unique design of the *Khāwju* Bridge, or rather, its main difference from the *Si-o-Se Pol*, is the semi-octagonal chambers that eliminate the homogeneous design. These chambers are adorned with uplifting poetry and prose, such as "Indeed the world is like a bridge; drop it and pass through. On this passage, measure anything you encounter and discern that

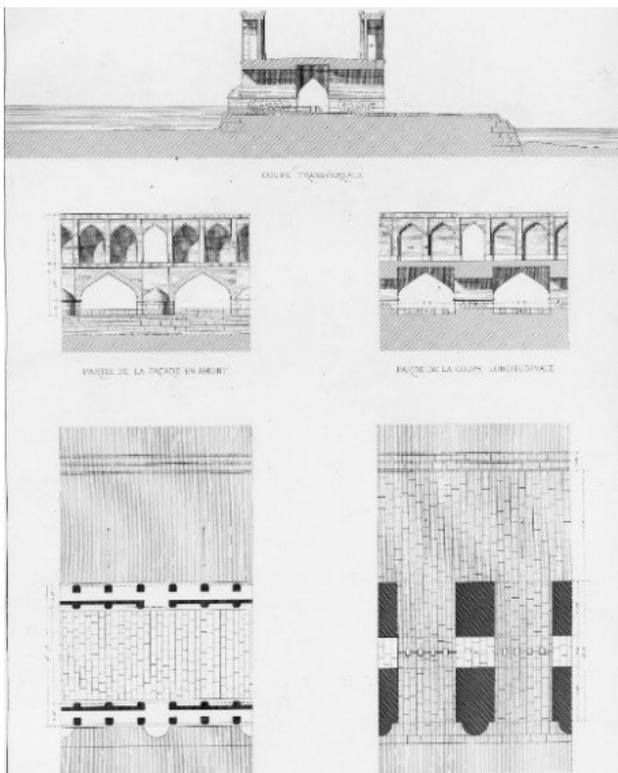


Fig. 6. Sections of the Allāhverdi Khān Bridge at different height levels. Source: Coste, 2011.



Fig. 7. Pedestrians and onlookers of the Khāwju Bridge, Zāyanderud river, Isfahan. Source: Coste, 2011.

everywhere, evil has overshadowed the good and surpassed it” (Chardin, 1965). For Isfahani people, this bridge is an evening recreational place like *Chāhār-Bāgh*. De Bruin described the people who sought to stroll for some fresh air and gathered on the riverside or bridge, some on horseback and some on foot, enjoying their coffee or smoking (Blunt, 2005, 147). According to Blake, the main feature was the pavilion-like structure for residence and leisure activities, with *iwans* in the façades that maximize the Zayandehrud view for sightseers (Blake, 2009, 89). Therefore, the *Khāwju* Bridge, a scenic view from the surrounding landscapes, became a unique urban landscape and provided beautiful views for the ones in palatial mansions like *Āineh-Khāneh*, *Haft-Dast*, and *Namakdān* (Luschey, 1985, 144).

The architectural proportions, building mass, and materials applied at different levels of the bridge are in such a way that it has become a very secure passage that encompasses pedestrians. In different spaces of the bridge, people could go in any direction and benefit from every view. Its design responded to a series of functions at three height levels. On the first level, it was a passageway for caravans from and to the south; on this level, similar to the *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge, it provided special viewpoints on both sides of the bridge for both special and public viewers. On the second level, it was either a safe location for pausing and singing along the river’s murmuring sound or a cool and pleasant location for relaxation, sightseeing, and contemplation. Finally, on the third level, which is located on the lowest level (the river bed), the observer may directly watch the famous river view and become one with the river. In addition to these three levels, the viewpoint-driven roof level should be mentioned too. In the illustrations of Pascal Coste, the spectators were depicted on the roofs of the pavilion-like structures of the *Khāwju* Bridge (Fig. 8).

In terms of the plan and façade classification, the *Khāwju* Bridge, with an emphasis on the initial, middle, and final points, represents an evolved model of bridge architecture in the region. The central point of the bridge was crucial, and it was marked by placing the main pavilion in that location. In this region, the prototypical example of such a design could be first attributed to the *Allāhverdi Khān* Bridge. This innovative space has evolved differently in the *Khāwju* Bridge with a different formal structure, breaking the skyline and creating a physical variety at the center. By highlighting the bridge center on the lowest level, pedestrian circulation for viewing the surrounding landscapes has been improved. This decision has facilitated a central place for viewing, allowing for enjoyment from both the upper and lower levels of the bridge. Tavernier (1984, 398) has claimed that the construction of this bridge was primarily motivated

by the desire to capture the serenity and beauty of the river landscape (Fig. 9).

The *Khāwju* Bridge was designed with viewpoint-driven, royal, and public functional aspects for viewing and being viewed. One of the design features of this monument is the viewpoint-driven places that protrude from the walls and overlook the river and ongoing activities in it. In addition to its structural properties, the design of the bridge also included specific viewpoints and spaces, which offer a three-dimensional view of the river landscape and its natural surroundings. Therefore, the bridge provides an immersive and engaging experience for visitors to enjoy the beauty of the surrounding environment.

From the perspective of the new entrants to the city from the south, the bridges were viewed as city gates and the first urban entrances to the Safavid capital. In order to attract visitors to enjoy the urban features (river, palaces, and surrounding gardens), the elements consisting of the viewpoints should have been designed and built in a way that made them prominent symbols of the Safavid urban landscape. In this way, before entering the city, they could revive their energy and prepare themselves

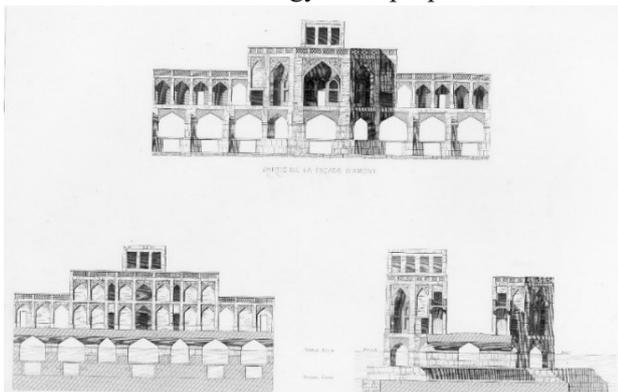


Fig. 8. Sections of the Khāwju Bridge at different height levels. Source: Coste, 2011.



Fig. 9. A view of Zāyanderud river landscape, Joo'ei Bridge, Allāhverdi Khān Bridge (otherwise known as Si-o-Se Pol), and Haft-Dast Palace. Source: Flandin, 1851.

for anything they had planned, like the Bazaars or serving the king. The bridges over the *Zāyanderud* River had different and distinctive functions like serving as passages<sup>29</sup> and. Notably, one of the desirable components of Safavid architecture is the elevation of building height. To achieve this goal in *Dawlat-Khāneh*, designers. This northern-southern perspective created a definite and immediate encounter with the southern mass and the entrance porch of the *Shāh* Mosque (Mansouri, 2019). Stierlin considered the entrance to the square as evidence of its intelligent design: "Once you are immersed in the warm and intimate atmosphere of the *Bazaar*, which is lit only by an ambient light that infiltrates the space through the roof openings. However, by crossing the threshold, there is a sudden spatial expansion to a vast square bathed in dazzling light" (Stierlin, 1998, 63). According to Pascal Coste, the landscapes and sceneries of this square from the North were commendable (Coste, 2011). Another traveler who visited Isfahan at the beginning of the 19th century, De Rochechouart (1999), explained his encounter with the square in this way: "... we left the Bazaars and suddenly found ourselves in the great royal square. A hundred years later, if I am still alive, I shall still have not forgotten the awe and amazement, and admiration the sight of those historic buildings left in me." Viewing the Square from this excellent perspective, the main buildings were spectacles for the audience of the theatrical event, inviting them to take the trouble of walking along and reaching the pinnacle of their visual perspective (Babaie, Babayan, Baghdiantz-McCabe & Farhad, 2011, 108). The scenery in front of the entrance porch was an open viewpoint that besides the impressive perspectives, volumes and colors, its flowing water channels, pools, fountains, and rows of trees, that in a rectangular square resembled a hedged enclosure, all together created a garden-like atmosphere. Despite the various functions that are attributed to this Safavid urban square, the spirit of a garden could be envisaged here.

#### - Sharbat-Khāneh Viewpoint

As we know today, the northern side of the square was

the official and ceremonial entrance to *Dawlat-Khāneh*. It seems that designers wanted the visitors to suddenly discover themselves in this viewpoint location. As the most important and influential viewpoint in that era, this idea was to see the square and be amazed by it after having passed through the dim and covered corridors of the Bazaar. Apart from the symbolic significance, the *Qeysarieh* gate is a viewpoint with two height levels. As previously described, the first level was at the exit point of the *Bazaar* and the gateway toward the square. The second level, on the other hand, was on the upper floor, which is still the most special and observable point with unique decorations. This beautiful place was a spot for special guests to see a miniature view of everything the rulers or ambassadors should perceive and to understand the glory of the Safavid dynasty after passing through the *Bazaar*. The embedded windows in this *Nazargāh* provided scenes of all architectural elements as the last image that had to be kept in mind. The design of this viewpoint is based on an enclosed space for the private and ceremonial use of the interior, designed to benefit the view while not being viewed. Compared to the ground level, what could be perceived from this viewpoint on the upper floor of the *Qeysarieh* is limited and offers a frame for the miniature view of the square's open space (Figs. 10&11).

**- Viewpoint of Naqsh-e Jahān Square Open Space**  
*The Naqsh-e Jahān* Square was the central place for parades, games, and especially polo matches. The square's open space was designed with a marginal walkway, which had structural and technical reasons, too; simultaneously, it offered a fairly prominent viewpoint at a higher level and created a spectacle for passing, pausing, and viewing the "content" of the square. Historical reports have indicated that the wide viewpoint of *Naqsh-e Jahān* Square has been a spectacle for many observers, who were themselves the actors of another spectacle from the other perspectives like that of the upper-level floor and *Āli-Qāpu*. During the assemblies, the surrounding areas of the square were filled with crowds of spectators (Turkaman, 2009, 838). According to MirMansoor Semnani in "Isfahan's

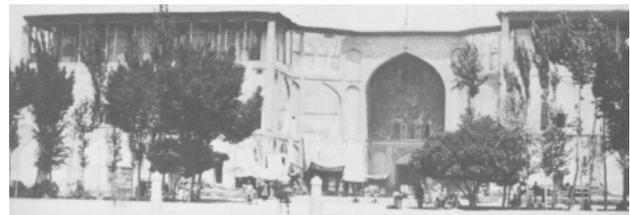


Fig. 10. Front view of the Qeysarieh Gate and Sharbat-Khāneh 1873. Source: Acemi-1376.



Fig. 11. View of Naqsh-e Jahān Square, the open space. Source: Coste, 2011.

Guidelines," it is described in this way: "... and as they reach the vast open space of the *Naqsh-e Jahān* Square, at once the entire space is like a spectacle full of excitement. The open space, crowded by the rush of people, resembles a world decorated with celestial bodies, similar to Resurrection Day, where a multitude of people is in line, risen from the dead, and walking is difficult.

*Meydān ke bovad molk dar-ou (ze molk o ham) afzoon-tar*. These chambers not only created proper orderly proportions in line with the objectives of the plan layout, but they also made desirable landscapes. The open space of the square was a place for urban events and ceremonies. While describing the repetitive patterns around the square and the special color contrast between the homogenous brick façades and the blue sky, Chardin believed that any deep reflection on the design of the *Shāh* Square [*Naqsh-e Jahān* Square] could discern that this square could not have been constructed more orderly than how it was built (Chardin, 1965, 453). The chamber porticos were viewpoints that, because of their semi-open space around the square, offered a unique viewing perspective towards the square; therefore, they were like small pavilions on the upper floor of the Bazaar, overlooking the sceneries of the other side of the square (Fig. 12).

#### - Āli-Qāpu Viewpoint

The construction of *Āli-Qāpu*, the highest royal tower and a government symbol of the Safavid dynasty, was completed in successive periods. This monument has

six floors, which readily transformed it into an elevated viewpoint. A royal and ceremonial viewpoint whose balcony provided visibility to the farthest and remote urban landscapes of the old city, all the spectacular surrounding views, and protruding volumes into the skyline, garden, and farms. *Āli-Qāpu*'s balcony, overlooking the square, was partially projected forth into its open space. This projection made it more visible in the public space. By adding a hall on the border between the public and the royal spaces, it gained further conceptual and functional significance as the most prominent showcase of various royal assets (Fig. 13).

Having witnessed a complete view of Isfahan's magnificent era, Coste has referred to the viewpoint-driven significance of this place (Coste, 2011). Apart from being a royal symbol and urban landmark, *Āli-Qāpu* was an exclusively tall viewpoint for observing the city and events in the square. Its placement in front of the main city square while having a view towards the people was the distinctive feature of this palace compared to other palaces. Its open balcony was a desirable spot from which the king could view the ever-changing shows in the square (Hillenbrand, 2006, 433). The addition of the columned balcony to *Āli-Qāpu*, which increased its height during the reign of *Shāh Abbās II*, enhanced its significance both in terms of scenic and viewpoint-driven aspects. In general, all ceremonies, celebrations, and polo matches were watched from the *Āli-Qāpu* viewpoint by the king and nobles, especially a showcase of Safavid authority to foreign guests. Della Valle mentioned that the hall had a vast view of the entire square; hence, *Shāh Abbās II* could display his power from there and also held annual mourning ceremonies, locally known as *Ta'zieh*. The guest hall could contain more than 200 nobles and provided a panoramic urban landscape of the entire city, mosques, domes, minarets, and especially the ongoing events in the square. The spacious halls of this palace could respond to the presence of many people in cultural and religious ceremonies, leading to the containment of social and religious expressions within the circle of their power (Della Valle, 2011 [1390 HS] 59-60). Based on the semi-open and having an extensive connection with the



Fig. 12. Part of the surrounding built space in Naqsh-e Jahān Square. Source: Flandin, 1851.

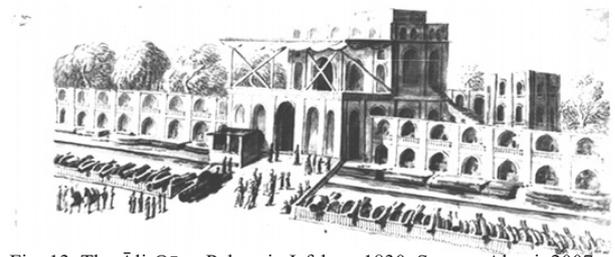


Fig. 13. The Āli-Qāpu Palace in Isfahan, 1830. Source: Alemi, 2007.

surrounding landscapes (at the sides and on the front, *Āli-Qāpu* was a political and ceremonial viewpoint for seeing and being seen. In other words, by projecting the palace forth into the square environment and designing a wooden balcony with tall wooden columns, a royal and high viewpoint was created at the highest altitude, dominating the square's open space. This viewpoint allowed a three-sided view of the farthest landscapes. On the opposite side of the square, tree rows, water runnels, pools, and fountains, along with a large copper basin in the middle of *Āli-Qāpu* balcony, to which water was transported at such high elevations, speaks for the significance of three fundamental components in the cityscape.

## Summary

The use of concepts, such as *Manzar*, *Nazar*, *Nezāreh*, and *Nazargāh* (respectively, landscape, seeing and observation, sightseeing and viewing, and viewpoint) have had a long-standing history in Iranian architecture and culture. In the cultural manifestations, *Nazargāh* has been created in the architecture of nomadic settlements, castles, and cities mainly for protective reasons. This has been established by the use of natural or human-built capacities, which have been so important that even for the

settlement on the flatlands, lacking a desirable topography, all the costs and difficulties were endured to build a proper viewpoint.

As such, gardens were the initial architectural achievements that incorporated the idea of viewpoint-driven locations that faced the landscape, setting the stage for sightseeing and enjoyment. As previously mentioned, the essential origin of viewpoints was to create an elevated location with a suitable view toward the opposite landscape. This attention was given not only to the garden pavilions, but also to most mansions. A building would be built on an elevated platform to have an adequate and appropriate view of the landscape. Urban viewpoints were also landmarks whose dominance over the surrounding landscapes played a leading role in their function as urban symbols and significantly influenced the viewers' perceptions.

What is related to the Safavid architectural products and urban architecture, which could be referred to as the Isfahan School of Art and Architecture, has had executive urban guidelines and architectural principles concerning neighborhoods, squares, gardens, palaces, mansions, and other types of buildings, also in other cities during the Safavid period. However, the abundant number of architectural products and extant urban developments to such extents in the city of Isfahan has made this city a unique reference in this study. According to designers, engineers, philosophers, astronomers, and last but not least, the king (as an epitome of good, authority, and grandeur of the Safavid dynasty) considered the capital a utopian city. Among the prominent characteristics of Safavid architecture, expansiveness, and height elevation, allow for the creation of various viewpoints and joyfulness, which present captivating and heart-warming landscapes. To meet the requirements of the intended landscapes, the Safavid planners used spacious arrangements and height elevation, through which they created distinctive urban symbols and created special viewpoints with appropriate views for seeing and being seen or remaining unseen in some cases. The viewpoint-driven aspects could also be traced in other remaining architectural products of the Safavid period. Consequently, these viewpoints could be categorized with respect to the gardens, streets, palaces, bridges, and squares. *Chāhār-Bāgh* presents various scales of functional layers

as important connecting/separating urban elements. This was the most beautiful street and was transformed into a public space with diverse viewpoints and sceneries, and most importantly, a place for a promenade. This street was transformed into a *Nazargāh* as a result of employing the three prototypical patterns (water, vegetation, and viewpoint-driven aspects of a place).

The newly built bridges on *Zayandehrud* differed from the previous ones in terms of design, structure, form, decorations, and function in such a way that they were used for shaping the continuity of *Chāhār-Bāgh* and the Safavid urban landscape. Therefore, they become viewpoint-driven places with a social function for sightseeing (riversides and their surrounding environment). Accordingly, the viewpoint offered, by *Khāwju* Bridge, for instance, both private and public functions were considered to create a place of seeing and being seen. As a design feature, this was a location that could overlook the river and ongoing activities in relation to the bridge. In addition to the structural function, bridges seem to be designed to provide specific viewpoints with a three-sided view to better enjoy the river's landscape and nature.

Another multidimensional viewpoint, the *Naqsh-e Jahān* Square, catering to social, economic, political, and cultural functions, was meant to be used for seeing and being seen. A perpendicular geometry was used at the corners of the square to provide the necessary conditions for all these functions. The water runnels, pools, fountains, tree rows surrounding the rectangular square, curved volumes protruding the skyline, and colors all add softness and delicacy to this garden-like setting. In addition, this square could be perceived as a window toward the sky and a repository of stars. To control the adverse effects of light pollution, the high façades around the square acted as shields. Overall, this viewpoint probably provided a unique frame to explore and identify the status of constellations in the night sky for the Safavid astronomers and stargazers.

Finally, *Āli-Qāpu* was the pinnacle of political and ceremonial viewpoint aspects, designed to see and be seen. Its semi-open space on the balcony provided extensive connections with the adjacent landscapes, as well as the front and side views. In other words, by integrating this

palace (with a wooden balcony and tall columns) into the square, a royal viewpoint was built in the highest elevation code, which dominated the square. Moreover, its three-sided panoramic view was a great spot to observe even the farthest vistas. Tree rows and watercourses, pools, and fountains inside the square and a large copper basin in the middle of the *Āli-Qāpu* balcony, to which water was directly transported and stored at such height level, indicate the importance of the three fundamental elements we mentioned regarding the Isfahan's urban landscape. In the following Tables, a summary of the evaluation criteria for viewpoints and their indices are provided (Table 1-2).

## Conclusion

Continuous usage of the word “*Nazar*,” which infers seeing and sight, has been of special importance in Iranian culture and its cultural manifestations. For seeing to occur, there must be a place or viewpoint (*Nazargāh*). As previously mentioned, the principal feature in all Persian Gardens relies upon three systems: vegetation style, water, and viewpoint. Based on surveying the architectural products in the Safavid urban context, it can be concluded that seeing and being seen has been an underlying intention that inspired the planners' design decisions in the Safavid capital. Therefore, the use of geometry, proportions, volume, color, openness, spontaneity, and façade protrusion, resulted in visual frame layouts. Moreover, since the city of Isfahan was the capital, it became a model for architectural products and urban guidelines in other cities.

The Safavid rulers were aware of the environmental capabilities in Isfahan, and they could combine artistic and architectural subjects; thus, they set the ground for building multifunctional complexes – spectral landscapes – and intelligible viewpoints using two common methods: first, by creating a viewpoint relative to the landscape and secondly, by elevating the building height level to design higher structures. Although the design of the urban viewpoints in Isfahan pursued different functional goals, where in some cases, the scenes featured landscapes other than that of a garden, nature always remained as the common three-fold pattern in the garden architecture that was embodied in the setting of urban spaces. Surveying

the urban architectural products in Isfahan shows that Safavid designers had a strong determination to integrate urban spaces with nature; therefore, through the usage of rectangular geometry, water runnels, and tree rows in all urban spaces, they aimed to emphasize the construction of places that resembled gardens. Following the Persian Garden's prototypical elements, they incorporated its basic components, water, tree, and viewpoint (*Nazargāh*) to design different spaces in the city. Be it in the very innermost spaces or within the city's most elevated areas, these components are recurring. As a result, Isfahan was designed as a vast garden with semi-open or semi-closed architectural elements that portrayed viewpoints.

## Endnote

1. These terms in the original manuscript are Farsi words respectively: *Nazar* (نظر: sight, seeing, insight, discernment and consideration), *Nazargāh* (نظرگاه: perspective, viewpoint [Nazargāhi: viewpoint-driven, perspectival]), *Nezāreh* (منظره: inspection, seeing, sightseeing, spectacle, supervision), *Manzar* (منظر: view, place of seeing, scenery, panorama, outlook, urban landscape), and *Manzareh* (منظره: landscape, outlook, perspective, picture, scene, scenery, sight, spectacle, view, vision). These words are different derivatives from an Arabic root “نظر.” Although these words have a variety of meanings that are at times similar or overlap each other, sometimes they are used interchangeably. Notably, although some of these words could be synonymous with “landscape,” whenever possible, the terms are translated homogeneously throughout the text according to the common etymological root.
2. Tchādor (چادر).
3. Siyāh-tchādor (سیاه چادر).
4. Literally “act of seers”, “open-mindedness in perception,” or even “seers' game” (Written in Farsi as نظر بازی).
5. Shey' (شیء) in Farsi and Arabic.
6. A process which is known as *Mokāshfeh* and *Kashf al-Mahjub* (مکاشفه و کشف المحجوب).
7. Surat (صورت) in Farsi and Arabic.
8. Zāher/Dhāhir and Bāten/Bātin (ظاهر و باطن) in Farsi and Arabic.
9. A transliterated form for the Farsi word meaning spectacle (تماشاگاه), which means the place of sightseeing and observation (Tamāshā, تماشا).
10. Tamāshā'ei (تماشایی) meaning spectacular is synonymous with *Nezāregi* (نظارگی) in Farsi. Tamāshākonande (تماشاکننده), Tamāshāgar and Tamāshāchi (تماشاچی) are synonymous with *Nezāregiān* (نظارگیان) meaning audiences, spectators, and viewers.
11. In this historical text, the term was *Nezāregiān* (نظارگیان).
12. Today in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan.
13. Seyrgāh (سیرگاه), which is a nominal Farsi word that according to Nazim Al-Atibba is synonymous with Tamāshāgāh (تماشاگاه).
14. Bāgh-e Nazar (باغ نظر).
15. Locally, a unit meaning acre: Jerib (جریب).
16. Kooh-e Nezāreh (کوه نظر).
17. Khāneh-Bāgh (خانه باغ).
18. Bālā-Khāneh (بالاخانه).
19. Āstāneh (استانه).
20. Four Gardens.
21. Sābāt (ساباط).
22. Khiyābān (خیابان).
23. Otherwise known as Si-o-Se-Pol (سی و سه پل), literally a bridge of thirty-three arcades.
24. In ancient astronomy specific days had names, Jam-Rooz (جم روز).

Table 1. The evaluation criteria for viewpoints. Source: author.

No.	Name of Case-Study	Name (Fa)	Topography	Plan shape	Contextual domination	Objectives of viewpoint	Location	Prominence
1	Chāhār-Bāgh Street	چهارباغ خیابان	Flat	Limited rectangle	Aligned on topography	Seeing & being seen	Use of the interior space	Urban symbol
2	Chehel-Sotoon Palace	باغ چهلستون	"	Extended rectangle	Elevated above the landscapes	"	Simultaneous use of both interior & exterior spaces	"
3	Hasht-Behesht Garden	باغ هشت‌بهشت	"	"	"	"	"	"
4	Naqsh-e Jahān Square	میدان نقش جهان	"	"	Aligned on topography	"	Use of the interior space	"
5	Qeysarieh Gate	سردر قیصریه	"	"	"	"	Use of the exterior space	"
6	Sharbat-Khāneh	شریختانه	"	Limited rectangle	Elevated above the square's open space	Seeing & not being seen	Simultaneous use of both interior & exterior spaces	-
7	The square's open space	صفحه میدان	Almost flat (limited slope)	Extended rectangle	Aligned on topography	Seeing & being seen	Use of the interior space	Urban symbol
8	The porches of the second storey	ایوانچه‌های طبقه دوم	Flat	Limited rectangle	Elevated above the landscapes	"	Simultaneous use of both interior & exterior spaces	"
9	Āli-Qāpu Palace	کاخ عالی‌قاپو	"	"	"	"	"	"
10	Jahān-Nemā Palace	کاخ جهان‌نما	"	"	"	Seeing & not being seen	"	"
11	Hezār-Jerib Mansion	عمارت هزارجریب	Sloped	Extended rectangle	Aligned on topography	"	"	"
12	Allāhverdi Khān Bridge	پل الله‌وردیخان	Flat	Limited rectangle	"	"	"	"
13	Khāwju Bridge	پل خواجو	"	"	"	"	"	"

Table 2. The evaluation indices for viewpoints. Source: author.

No.	Name of Case-Study	Name (Fa)	Functional category	User type	Functional role	Geometric structure	Viewpoint structure	Landscape features
1	Chāhār-Bāgh Street	خیابان چهارباغ	Urban thoroughfare	Public	Political, economic, social, & cultural	Axial	Confined rectangle with a four-sided view	Street, gardens, water runnels, and basins, as well as trees, as the setting
2	Chehel-Sotoon Palace	باغ چهلستون	Pavilion garden	Ceremonial	Political	"	Semi-open rectangle with a four-sided view	The garden as the setting (water runnels and basins, and trees)
3	Hasht-Behesht Garden	باغ هشت‌بهشت	"	Royal	Solitude	"	"	"
4	Naqsh-e Jahān Square	میدان نقش جهان	Public square	Public	Political, economic, social, & cultural	"	Confined rectangle with a multifaceted view	Architectural sceneries, the square's open space, water runnels, water basins, trees, and the sky
5	Qeysarieh Gate	سردر قیصریه	Main entrance	"	Economic, social, & cultural	"	Rectangle with a one-sided view	Architectural sceneries, water runnels and basins, trees, and the sky
6	Sharbat-Khāneh	شریختانه	Pause space & viewpoint	Ceremonial	Political	"	"	"
7	The square's open space	صفحه میدان	Public square	Public	Political, economic, social, & cultural	"	Confined rectangle with a four-sided view	"
8	The porches of the second storey	ایوانچه‌های طبقه دوم	Viewpoint	Private	Economic	"	Confined rectangle with a one-sided view	"
9	Āli-Qāpu Palace	کاخ عالی‌قاپو	Royal court	Ceremonial	Political	"	Limited rectangle with a three-sided view	Sceneries and roofscapes of the city well into the distant areas, natural sceneries, the square's landscape with its buildings, water runnels and basins, surrounding trees, and an infinite sky.
10	Jahān-Nemā Palace	کاخ جهان‌نما	Solitude	Royal	Shrine viewpoint	"	Confined rectangle with a one-sided view	Chāhār-Bāgh as the setting (gardens, water runnels and basins, as well as trees planted into the other side of Chāhār-Bāgh)
11	Hezār-Jerib Mansion	عمارت هزارجریب	Garden-Building	"	Recreational	"	Rectangle with a one-sided view	Garden as a setting (Surface leveling, water runnels and basins, trees, riverside, and the sceneries of Allāhverdi Khān Bridge and Chāhār-Bāgh)
12	Allāhverdi Khān Bridge	پل الله‌وردیخان	Connectivity	Public	Political & cultural	"	Semi-open rectangle with a four-sided view	From the northern and southern sides of the Chāhār-Bāgh with water runnels and basins, as well as trees; from its eastern and western sides, the sceneries of the Zayandehrud, its surrounding gardens, & the mountain landscape.
13	Khāwju Bridge	پل خواجو	Connectivity	"	"	"	"	?

literally means day of the king.

25. Locally known as Āb-Pāshān (آب پاشان).

26. Another name for Isfahan, Safāhān (صفاهان).

27. A League (lieue) is a unit of distance, whose length varies between 3.268 and 5.849 km.

28. It should be noted that "Zahanderud" means "life-giving river" in Farsi.

29. Gozargāh (گذرگاه) versus Nazargāh (نظرگاه).

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