

THE GARDENS OF EGYPT

REPORT BY MR. MOHAMMED HAMMAD

The problem of planting gardens and creating conditions favourable to human aims and needs is as old as man himself. We find so many stories dealing with the ideal gardens of this life and of the next because the garden played such an important rôle in man's life... especially in hot countries like Egypt and many other parts of the Arab world.

Man always thought of what is after this life and endowed it with the best image he could think of, that is, everlasting green where he could see running water and green plants with fruit near to hand which he could pick whenever he wanted. This is the paradise, or, in Arabic, "ganna", which means the garden where our first grandfather (Adam) came from.

It seems that every nation in every epoch had had its own philosophy of garden design, and this is often well documented in the remains of the past. It can clearly be seen on the monuments of ancient Egypt.

The ancient Egyptians did not plant gardens merely for the pleasure of surrounding their houses with trees; it was also in order to provide generous shade from the burning midday sun at the hot season of the year. They had many other reasons, such as the need to provide wind-breaks, to secure privacy for their harems and to reduce the unpleasant effect of the sun's glare. A further important point is that the climate is distinctly improved by the trees of the garden, since the viscous surface of their leaves catches the dust and filters the air. The surface of green leaves also absorbs radiation, and their evaporation processes can regulate humidity and cool the air temperature to a certain extent.

The Egyptians show in some of their drawings that their close-packed houses had a form of roof-ventilation (Fig. 1) which is called "Malkafhawa" or "air-receiver", to catch the air currents from the small patio garden in which the moving palm-trees help to move the air at times, regulate humidity and cool the air for the house (Fig. 2).

Ancient Egyptian stories and drawings give us a clear idea of the garden and how it was planted. A good example is seen in the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir-el-Bahari, where it is shown how trees were imported from Somalia (Punt) to be planted in the garden of the new temple of the Queen (Fig. 3). The trees were placed in rows in front of the building.

One of the most interesting designs of an Egyptian garden is the one I discovered in the temple of Karnak beside the second pylon in 1954, and which was published jointly with my colleague Dr. Werkmeister (in "Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde", 80 Band, zweites Heft, Berlin, 1955, pp. 104-108). In this drawing we can see a

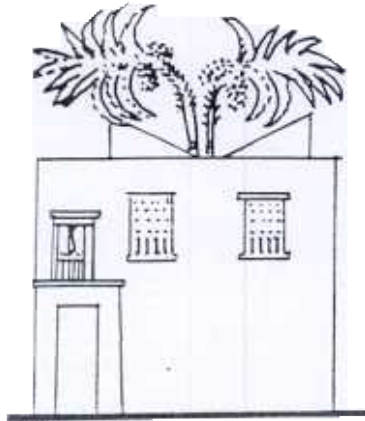


Fig. 1 Maison Egyptienne antique, on aperçoit des palmiers
derrière le système de ventilation

Egyptian house, with palm trees beside roof ventilation

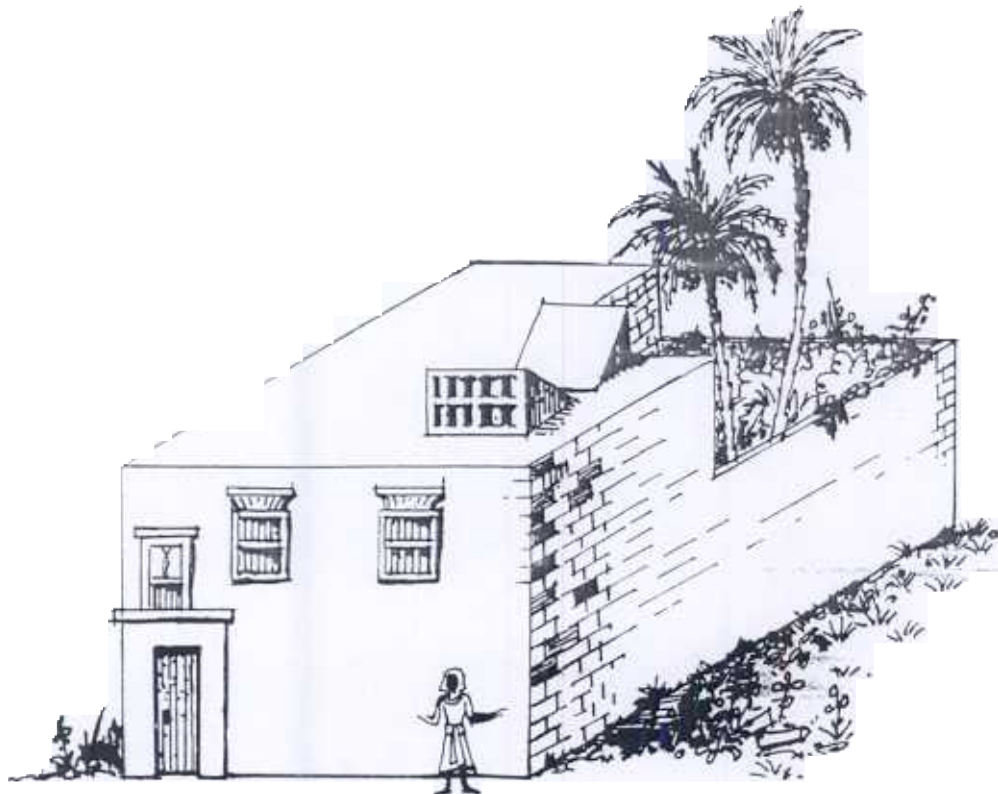


Fig. 2 Isometric drawing showing ancient egyptian house
Dessin isométrique d'une maison de l'Egypte antique

Fig. 3
 Transport d'arbres
 pour le temple de
 la reine Hatshepsout
 à Deir-El-Bahari

Imported trees in the
 Temple of Hatshepsout
 at Deir-El- Bahari

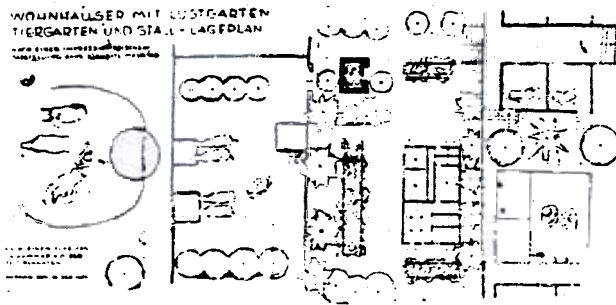
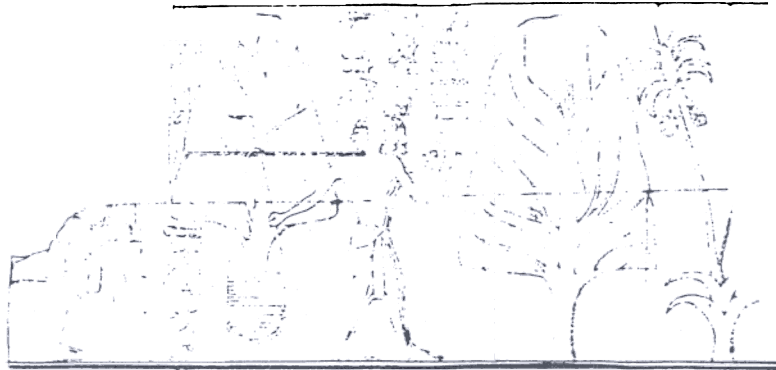


Fig 4 . Fig 5
 Dessin d'une maison et d'un jardin
 sur un bas relief du temps d'Akhnaton
 restitution du plan

Design and modern plan of a house and
 garden of Akhnaton time

(Dr. Werkmeister

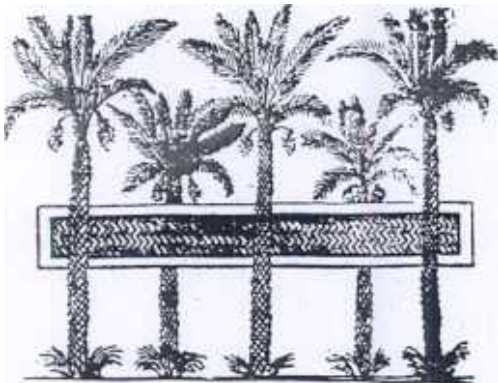
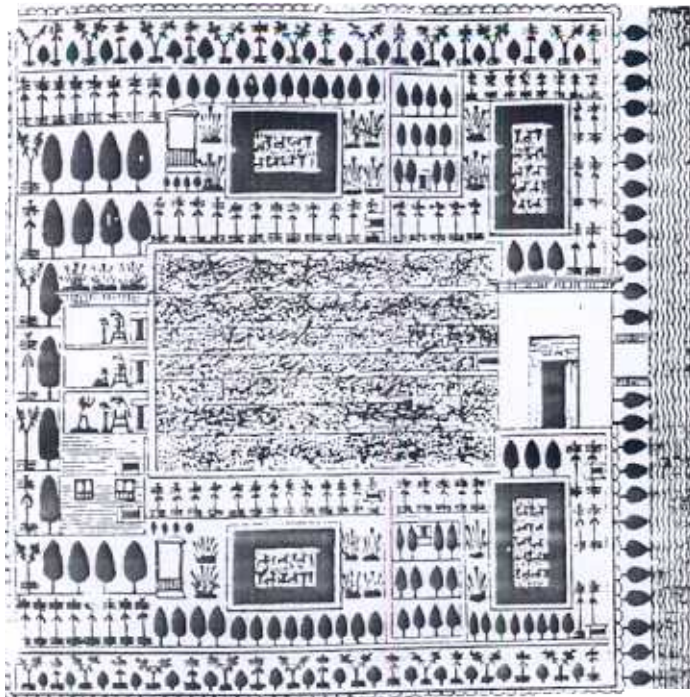


Fig. 9 Bassin réservoir d'eau pour
 l'irrigation

Artificial pool for irrigation



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 An Egyptian garden by the Nile
 Un jardin égyptien le long
 du Nil

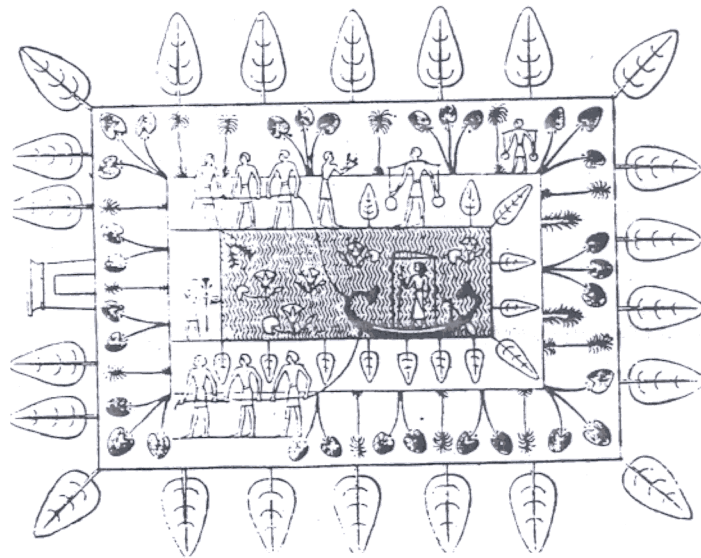


Fig.7 Egyptian pleasure garden
 Jardin d'agrément égyptien

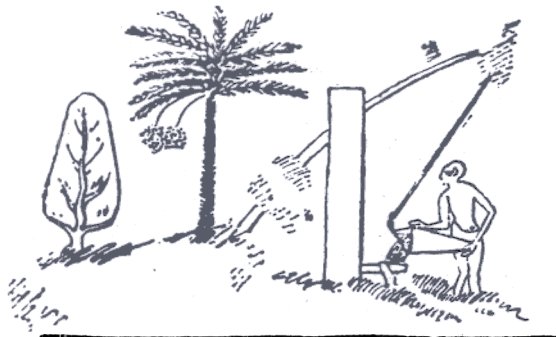
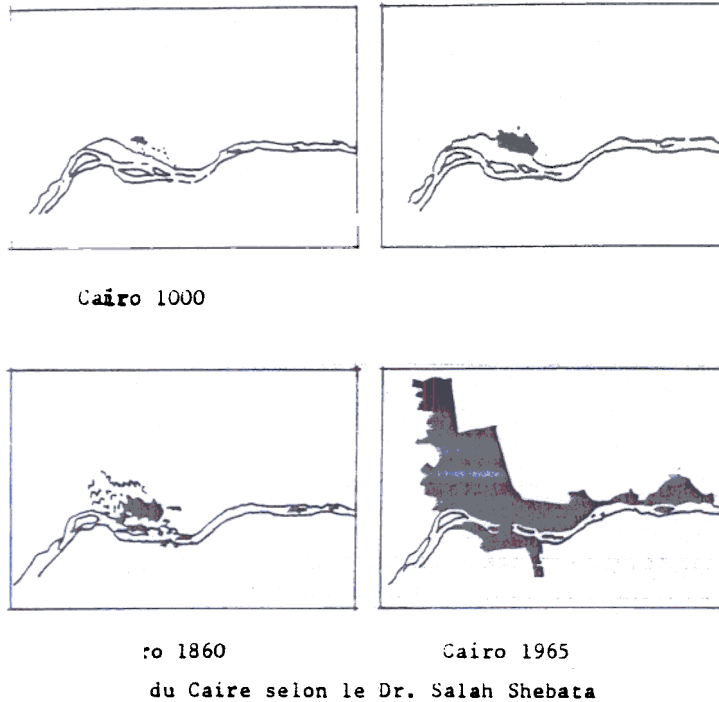


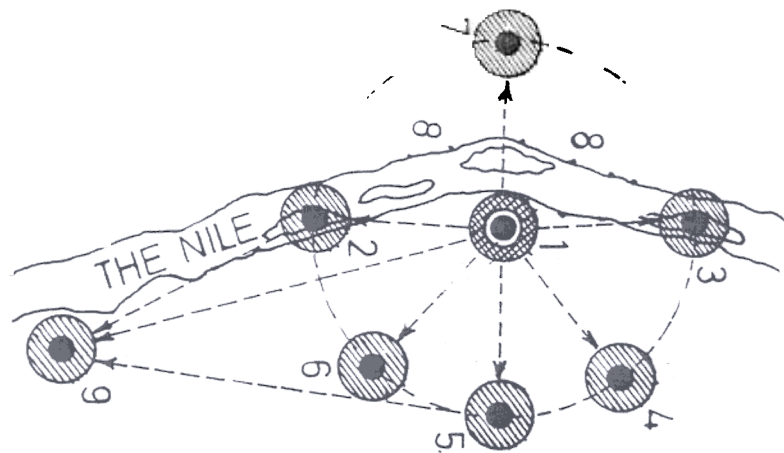
Fig. 8
 An Egyptian irrigating with
 a "Shadouf"
 Un égyptien arrosant avec un
 "Shadouf"

Fig. 10 Growth of Cairo according to Dr. Salah Shebata



Tourist centres and gardens in Cairo after Dr. Sayed Karim

du Caire selon le Dr. Sayed Karim



Centre of Cairo
 El-Warrak Island
 Medinet Nasr
 Khiam (Tent City)
 Helwan

2. Gold Island
 4. Heliopolis
 6. Al-Mokatam
 8. Awkaf City at Embaba

9. The Gezira Palace garden at Zamalek. This is a good example of a garden of one of the palaces built by Kediye Ismael Pasha. The palace has been converted into a new hotel called the "Omar El-Khayam".
10. The Nile Hilton garden on the eastern bank of the Nile at Tahrir ("Liberty") Square. This is a good example of a tourist hotel garden and has some trees more than 100 years old.
11. The Tashrir Square Garden in front of the Egyptian Museum.
12. The garden of the Abdin Palace, which is now a museum.
13. The Kobba Palace botanical garden, which is a new experimental garden for the acclimatization of foreign plants in Egypt.
14. The Meriland Garden at Heliopolis. Its new layout was designed by the Egyptian architect, Dr. Sayed Karim, as a tourist garden in the sunny atmosphere of the old Egyptian city.
15. The Azbakia Garden, the oldest of those in the centre of Cairo, some of whose trees are more than 100 years old.
16. The Manial Palace Garden, founded by Prince Mohamed Aly, who was a good botanist, about sixty years ago. It has the best collection of cacti in Egypt.
17. The Roda Nile Cornice Gardens, which extend along the banks of the Nile by Kasr El-Eini, with green areas containing an open-air theatre and a restaurant for tourists.
18. The Nilometer and Manasterly Palace Gardens at the southern end of Roda Isle. These are more than 100 years old, and the palace is now used for art exhibitions.
19. The Animal Garden in Giza, founded about 100 years ago, which has many important plants and trees.
20. The Orman Botanical Garden at Giza, which is as old as the Animal Garden, and has the most important date -and pine- trees in Egypt. It has also a good collection of cacti and roses.
21. The Agricultural Museum garden of Dokki, containing greenhouses, a museum of ancient agriculture, a library and other sections of the Museum. It contains a good collection of plants and trees.
22. The Mina House Garden at the Pyramids. It has a good golf-course and an area for horse-dancing ("bergas").
23. The Helwan Japanis Garden, laid out about fifty years ago, in the Japanese style.
24. The Mokatam Hills Gardens, consisting of the Bektashia Garden and other tourist gardens, on the Mokatam Hills east of Cairo.
25. The Barrage Gardens, laid out about 130 years ago by Mohamed Aly on an area of about 500 fedans (1 fedan = 4.200 m²), at the junction of the two arms of the Nile. It has many interesting trees and an irrigation museum.

The City Planning Council of Cairo is now studying a project for the future master plan of the city... but this will take about fifty years to carry out. Dr. Sayed Karim has also drawn up plans for future extensions to Cairo within a circle about 30 km. in diameter, with its centre at Kasr-El-Nil in the middle of the city. (Fig.11). This is an interesting exercise in town-planning and landscaping for Cairo as a whole.

It is pleasant to see these new projects... but we must not neglect the old, so we must look after the old gardens and trees which have become part of our history as landmarks and which bear relation to our ancient Egyptian history, as do the remains of the historic trees in front of Hatshepsut's temple at Luxor, or the Tree of the Virgin in Mataria. Unfortunately, the roots and parts of the trunks of the trees at the Hatshepsut temple were destroyed when the place was used for the shooting of the American film, "The Ten Commandments", while

the Virgin's tree in Mataria died for lack of water, though luckily there is another one, grown from a cutting of the old one, in the garden of the church and school next door.

Most of the old trees in Old Cairo were cut down during the Second World War, and many old trees in the old palaces were neglected and exposed to destruction. The last old Ficus Sycomorus tree at the Nile Hilton, which is about one hundred years' old, is nearly dead owing to the fact that the area surrounding it has been paved to be used as a dancing "piste". The garden of the palace of Baron Empain at Heliopolis has not a single tree, for all have died. All of this can be related either to the economic situation or to lack of experience or lack of knowledge of the real value of all these things. That is why I feel that we cannot speak here of restoration for individual cases, but I should like to say in this short speech that the International Council of Monuments and Sites and the International Federation of Landscape-Architects must be represented in Egypt so that there may be an opportunity of studying each case separately and cooperating with the authorities in charge of landscape and gardens in Egypt. This will be the first step.

NOTES

ICOMOS has set up a National Committee in Egypt under the Chairmanship of Dr. Gamal Moktar

RESUME DU RAPPORT DE MONSIEUR MOHAMMED HAMDAN: LES JARDINS DE L'EGYPTE

Dans l'Egypte de l'antiquité, comme dans tous les pays chauds, le rôle du jardin était encore plus important qu'ailleurs; il ne s'agissait pas uniquement de créer un lieu d'agrément, mais de protéger du soleil et du vent et d'améliorer le climat, tout en abritant des regards indiscrets

Les documents anciens nous renseignent assez bien sur les jardins de l'époque pharaonique; ils étaient fréquents le long du Nil et contenaient toujours un verger, parfois un vignoble. Le jardin de plaisance avec pièce d'eau et bateau, de même que les jardins zoologiques, étaient également connus.

Les jardins coptes représentent un prolongement de cette même tradition.

Le rapport donne ensuite une liste des plus beaux jardins publics du Caire, villa islamique fondée en 969.

L'office municipal de la planification étudie actuellement un vaste projet de rénovation urbaine, de mise-en-valeur et d'expansion de la ville, projet dont la réalisation nécessitera une cinquantaine d'années. Mais malheureusement la plupart des arbres de la vieille ville ont été abattus au cours de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale et de nombreux autres arbres dans divers endroits ont été détruits ou sont morts faute de soins. Il est donc nécessaire que, dans une première étape, des représentants locaux de l'ICOMOS et de l'IFLA examinent les différents cas les uns après les autres et collaborent avec les autorités responsables des jardins et du paysage égyptiens.

M. R.