

HISTORIC GARDENS AND PARKS IN AND AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN. AN INTRODUCTION

AKDENİZ VE ÇEVRESİNDE TARİHİ BAHÇE VE PARKLAR. GİRİŞ

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ABSTRACT

As introduction to the Symposium, the text explores the character of the Mediterranean landscape, its parks and gardens, their common historical roots, and some of the main influential factors such as the climate, the botanic elements and the hydraulic techniques that have had as a result the prototypical Mediterranean pleasure parks and gardens.

ÖZET

Sempozyuma bir giriş olarak yazı, Akdeniz peyzajı, parkları ve bahçelerinin karakterini, ortak tarihi köklerini, sonuç olarak prototipik Akdeniz keyif park ve bahçelerini ortaya çıkaran iklim, botanik unsurlar ve hidrolik teknikler gibi bazı ana etkileyici faktörleri araştırmaktadır.

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lication of the Symposium papers and hope that this publication will contribute to continue the research of a cultural heritage as important as our historic parks, gardens and all types of cultural landscapes.

My colleagues will present scholarly research and detailed studies on different parks and gardens, but I was asked to introduce the question: what do we mean by **Mediterranean**?

Are there common features for these landscapes, parks and gardens? Do they have a common denominator, factors that make explicit their Mediterranean character? Are these factors the plants, the hydraulic techniques or the design? or is it intangible values that they share? It is indeed a fascinating subject that has been studied by scholars, historians, scientists, etc. who have wondered since early times about it (Fig. 1).

“The Mediterranean landscape is a compelling theme in Western culture, and might be considered more than a reality, an abstraction [...]: a privileged landscape, natural and spontaneously beautiful. This is the heritage of a romantic vision, especially from Northern Europe who admires it less for what it is than for what it represents: a place for poetry, for dreams, a melting pot of civilizations and previously, the land of a mythical golden age, a place untouched that the gods have given to men who would partly “tame” it by spreading their brilliant civilization.” (Benzi and Berliocchi 1999: 7). Other authors, such as Luginbühl, agree on the Mediterranean landscape as paradise: “The peoples inhabiting the Mediterranean basin were able to invent an idealized place, a landscape of delight and harmony, inspired by the landscape they cultivated and from where they obtained their aliments, it was the *paradeisos* of ancient Greece, “a mythical dream of a fertile nature in which man lives in harmony with other natural, where everything is perfume, softness and sensuality ... The idealized part of the Mediterranean landscape illustrates the urgent need for dreams, one of its inventions, the garden, is undoubtedly the most representative of its materialization.” (Luginbühl 1992: 25). The Mediterranean landscape is a quintessential scenery, beautiful and powerful, an ancestral landscape inhabited by gods and men, a wonderful combination of nature and culture.

Indeed the classics already wondered about this mysterious sea and have an essential role in the way that the Mediterranean has been conceived. Socrates said: “We inhabit a small portion of the earth... living round the sea like ants and frogs round a pond”. Both Greek and Romans claimed the sea as its own and “from the time of Plato and Aristotle, the Greeks referred to the Mediterranean as the “Sea over by Us” ; the Romans more simply came to regard it as *Mare Nostrum*, “Our Sea”. The claim of the Romans to “their” sea was part of a political and cultural process by which they progressively defined the place of Rome at the heart of an Inhabited World with the Mediterranean at its centre.” (Horden and Purcell 2000: 11-12).

Saint Isidore of Sevilla, who may be considered as the last of the classical scholars, living in that glamorous 6th century Sevilla, used in his *Etymologies* the term referred to the Mediterranean and thus it continued in many historical, cultural or geographical texts becoming more and more synonymous to a distinct and refined character, a continuity linked to the classic civilisations and to an environment that was a result of the interaction of nature and human factors. The Arab geographers also considered it as a unity, and deep into the Early Middle Ages there was still the idea of a distinct character of its own, an understanding of the whole, that became a common concept in different and well-known literary works.

An increasing concept of “the Mediterranean” as a whole region with a particular character arose as time passed and historical and geographical, social, economic and cultural factors were studied and taken into account. Art played also an important role in the mystification of the Mediterranean landscape, reflection of a lost Arcadia as depicted in the paintings of Salvator Rosa or Claude Le Lorrain (just to name some of the best known examples) that were to become the source of inspiration for the “natural” English landscape garden that swept throughout Europe in the 18th century (Fig.2).

Even relating to science, in the late 18th century, Edward Forbes said: “Who that has ever visited the borders of this classic sea, has not felt at the first sight of its waters a glow of reverent rapture akin to devotion, and an instinctive sensation of thanksgiv-

ing at being permitted to stand before these hallowed waves? All that concerns the Mediterranean is of the deepest interest to civilized man, for the history of its progress is the history of the development of the world; the memory of the great men who have lived and died around its banks; the recollection of the undying works that have come thence to delight us for ever; the story of patient research and brilliant discoveries connected with every physical phenomenon presented by its waves and currents, and with every order of creatures dwelling in and around its waters. The science of the Mediterranean is the epitome of the science of the world." (Wilson and Geikei 1861: 279).

But as refers to modern historians, the notion and deeper studies had to wait until Jakob Burckhardt who said in 1959: "The continuum is magnificent. The peoples around the Mediterranean and over to the gulf of Persia are really one animate being" (Burckhardt 1959: 23). However it was Fernand Braudel, the great historian of the Mediterranean, who in his first and influential work *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, explained: "Two major truths have remain unchallenged. The first is the unity and coherence of the Mediterranean region. I retain the firm conviction that the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, that the whole sea shares a common destiny... And the second is the greatness of the Mediterranean,..." (Braudel 1972:14). He insists on the distinct character and the continuity in later works, and says: "But what is the Mediterranean? A thousand things at once. Not a landscape but innumerable landscapes. Not a sea, but a succession of seas. Not one civilization, but civilizations piled on one another Everything, because the Mediterranean is an ancient crossroads. For thousands of years everything has merged on him, tangling, adding to its history: humans, animals, vehicles, goods, craft, ideas, religions, lifestyles. Even plants." (Braudel 1989: 8).

Other major studies like the more recent work of Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*, have emphasized the history of the relationship between people and their environment in the Mediterranean region over some 3,000 years, considering in the regional study a long time scale and many diverse components some as

obvious as its history or geography but others less frequent such as the environmental and technological changes, the religious characteristics, social anthropology, scientific reports, etc. that explain the distinctiveness of the Mediterranean region.

There is a whole series of physical features common to the lands around the Mediterranean basin: the climate, characterized by abundant sunshine and warm to hot, dry summers and mild rainy winters, on which the sea has a climatic effect; its physical geographical features, that divide into two main basins, with shores chiefly mountainous, with little variation in tides. Strong local winds, such as the hot and dry sirocco from the south and the cold, dry mistral from the north; it is a region that supports characteristic Mediterranean forests, woodlands, and scrub vegetation. It has been well known as the area for the natural distribution of the olive groves and covers portions of three continents, Europe, to the North, Asia to the East and Africa to the south. Currently the Mediterranean-rim countries hold around 400 million people, and 135 million of them live on the Mediterranean coast.

But there is something more than these physical peculiarities and that is more difficult to define, that is the relationship of man to environment, and again Braudel seems to have the answer: "Both in its landscape physical and human landscape, the Mediterranean is a crossroads, the extravagant Mediterranean appears, however, in our memories as a coherent image, as a system where everything is mixed and reorganized in an original unit. How to explain this apparent unity, this deep being of the Mediterranean? We will have to try and try again. Explanation is not only that nature has worked well in this regard, it is not only the man who has united everything stubbornly; it is simultaneously both the gifts, or curses, of nature [...] and yesterday, as today, the many efforts of men. That is, an endless amount of chances, accidents, and continuous successes." (Braudel 1989: 10).

It has been the focus of prolonged attention from many different angles such as the mentioned characteristics of the Mediterranean landscape and environment, or its political, cultural, economic and historical past. The first ones, since early times, have been signalled in the descriptive tradition and since

Homeric epics the agriculture of olive and vine is very present; in addition to its unique climate, the Mediterranean has the characteristic of presenting a space fragmented into plains, plateaus and hill and mountain reliefs separated by rivers with irregular flow, in many islands with a harsh relief. In the Mediterranean, the fragmentation of space and terrain cause a variety of unique landscape situations related to botanic types and plant associations, conditioned by the microclimate of the site, the topography and soil, thus geology... an astonishing richness and originality as a result of the diversity of landforms, soils and microclimates. But the Mediterranean has not always been a paradise; man has struggled and constructed the landscape in a never-ending story. This difficult conquest began long ago and there are testimonies in clever hydraulic systems that have left their footprint and can still be seen in all regions around the lands that surround this mythic sea (Fig.3).

But above all, the hegemony of Rome, and its imposition of the values and ideology of a Graeco-Roman elite, has given rise to perhaps the most resonant of Mediterranean images –that of the region as the homeland of classical culture. Polybius, the Greek historian, describes the beginnings of that process of unification, and says: “as a result of Rome’s conquests, it is as if history has come to acquire an organic unity and the doings of Italy and Libya are woven together with those of Asia and Greece, and the outcome of them all tends towards one end.” And from then on there is a common conviction that the Mediterranean region exhibit a certain Mediterranean character, set apart from that of northern Europe, that, “results from the paradoxical coexistence of a milieu of relatively easy seaborne communications with a quite unusually fragmented topography of microregions in the sea’s coastlands and islands” (Horden and Purcell 2000:xix).

The Mediterranean can be considered as huge complex of sea paths and sea lines that provided communication, a whole circulation system that becomes, as defined by Braudel a “space-movement” (Braudel 1989), that enables different regions to grow and develop thanks to the exchange of products throughout all the different civilisations that grew around its shores, from Mesopotamia to Venice or from the Cairo to Seville in more than its ten millennia history.

Many clichés have arisen around this sea that has seen for centuries the same occupation of the land. Ruskin was very eloquent: “for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of gold pavement into the sea-blue” or Goethe, “Do you know the land where the lemon trees blossom.. a soft wind blows from the blue sky...”.

This particular atmosphere may be seen in the Mediterranean rural landscapes that can be distinguished and divided thanks to the terrain, type of management, irrigation and terracing earthwork in four main groups (Albertini 2009:17-18):

- landscape of open plains, fields of small extent, as in Provence
- the landscape of enclosures designed to prevent unauthorized livestock on the plains, such as annual crops, and orchards in Anatolia
- the landscape of terraces that are most typical of the Mediterranean, as in Cinque Terre
- the huertas, irrigated plains frequently divided into small farms run on highly intensive models, as in Valencia.

Bratina explains that “the Mediterranean landscape heritage is typologically diverse and the influence of different cultures can be seen through history...” (Bratina 2010: 21) and points out as its characteristics the sea, the climate, the flora and fauna -considering the Mediterranean basin as a biodiversity hotspot- the activities that were carried out -especially the maritime navigation and agriculture- and the Mediterranean cultural elements such as the vernacular architecture, and the practices and customs. All these factors converged in the formation of its landscapes.

These landscapes were the source for most of the parks and gardens that were imagined and built around this inspirational sea, together with the clever use of water. The Mediterranean farmer was an engineer and an architect who learnt through the ages how to use the scarce resource of water. In the Mediterranean climate, the single most vital resource for man, the producer, as well as the most

capricious, is water. And water has been managed in a bewildering variety of ways throughout the different periods. The most important way of responding to the constraints of the Mediterranean environment is not to attempt to overcome them, but to adjust to their full intricacy, suiting the means of production to the subtlest complexities of the ecology. From ancient farming techniques, enriched with the contribution of people passed through this crossroads of the world, the Mediterranean gardens reflect both the conditions of nature, and the social, artistic, scientific and technical history, as well as the particular genius of some creators.

“One may wonder why the Mediterranean basin is one of the rare regions where the art of gardening has been part of all civilizations which have succeeded for millennia? For two main reasons: because the maintenance of vegetation, nurturing, protective or decorative, is an art [...] and because here converge, plants from the North and those of Africa and the East conveyed by the great migrations millennia. But also thanks to the miracle of water, that is both a miracle of nature and of human wisdom”(Georges 1981: 5).

The Mediterranean basin has generated its own landscaped archetype, a model exported abroad, immortalized by artists, writers or photographers, as we can read in the poetry of Fray Luis de León, in his poem *The Life Removed*, where he follows the *beatus ille* theme introduced by Horace:

“Upon the bare hillside
An orchard I have made with my own hand,
That in the sweet Springtide
All in fair flower doth stand
And promise sure of fruit shows through the land.

And, as though swift it strove
To see and to increase that loveliness,
From the clear ridge above
A stream pure, weariless
Hurrying to reach that ground doth onward press;

And straightway in repose
Its course it winds there tree and tree between,
And ever as it goes
The earth decks with new green
And with gay wealth of flowers spreads the scene.”

The first projects to capture water took place along the shores of the great rivers of the Middle East: the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Nile. In this desert environment, both the dramatic swelling of the rivers and extended droughts made the liquid element a defining factor of daily life for the inhabitants of these regions. There is evidence that some 7,000 years ago the water stored in the wells of Jericho was distributed by simple canals dug in the sand and rock. Canals would later be replaced by hollow tubes made of ceramic, wood, metal, or even plants.

The popular myths revolved around water. The Garden of Eden was described in several different religions. Mystical texts such as the Bible and the Koran present the idea of a paradise garden, the Eden planted by God, as can be read in the Genesis:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.... By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man... Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food... A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters... The name of the first is the Pison... The name of the second river is the Gihon;... The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.”

The Greeks and the Hebrews also showed a love of gardens in their mythology, as we can see in the description of the Garden of Hesperides where golden flowers are glowing, or the lesbian garden of the Nymphs described by Sapho, with a clear cool fountain. Many descriptions of gardens can be read in all ancient literature and poetry, and found in a multiple variety of authors such as Hermogenes, Libanios, Homer, Athenaeus of Naucratis, Xenophon, Quintus Curtius, Apollonius of Rodas, Aristotle, etc. (Martínez 2008).

The great hydraulic enterprise of antiquity took place in Egypt, along the banks of the Nile. The entire valley around the Great River was defined by the flood calendar. Water was retained in large artificial lakes and then distributed by an extensive network of canals that were carefully guarded and meticulously maintained. The *shaduf*, a hydraulic ingenuity brought from Mesopotamia, extracted water from the canals and pools allowed easy irrigation of gardens (Fig.4).

The Romans revolutionized hydraulics with the construction of aqueducts, the paradigmatic monument of imperial Roman power. Hellenic cities had already supplied themselves with water by means of constructions that were precursors to the aqueducts. Multiple texts and abundant archaeological remains give us precise knowledge of the elements that composed the hydraulic engineering network that fed the cities and gardens of the Roman Empire. The predominance of water illustrated Roman dominance over a known world. Political power and territorial organization were strengthened and ensured by power over water, the source of life, and by ensuring its supply to cities even in times of drought. This was possible thanks to the aqueducts that carried water in from far off sources and springs.

“Water for pleasure” was as important as its utilitarian aspect. Aqueducts provided water to kitchens and baths, as well as to pools, fountains, *nymphaeas* and gardens. Water became superfluous and refined, a sign of progress. It was used for adorning palaces and villas and inspired the creation of gardens and *viridarium*, which were irrigated by pipe works that can be seen in archaeological excavations today. One such example is the small *viridarium* of the Vetti house in Pompeii.

Gardens extended from the heart of the *domus* to the country villas and were equipped with hydraulic devices including spouts, automata and water clocks. All this technical perfection enriched the world of gardens, giving wings to fantasy that overflowed in a display of sophistication and delicacy, as in the Tuscan villa of Pliny. But the villa among villas, the “queen of imperial villas”, was Hadrian’s imperial palace at Tivoli, with its Maritime Theatre. It had a circular pavilion located on a small island in the pool.

Overlaid with precious marble, water ran down over its dome forming a fine curtain that isolated the Emperor and provided refreshment on warm summer days (Fig. 5).

In his magnificent work, *Les maîtres de l'eau. Histoire de l'hydraulique arabe*, Mohammed El Faiz explains the Mesopotamian origins of the hydraulic techniques that gave the Arab world mastery and dominion over water systems. Their ingenuity transformed the most arid land into paradisiacal oases throughout the Mediterranean Basin. These water supply systems were decisive in the establishment and organization of cities such as Marrakesh, Elche, Bam, or the *aflaj* in Oman. Their specialized technique overcame climatic conditions and took civilization to a golden age in the use of water as the quintessential element of pleasure and ornamentation.

One of the examples cited by El Faiz was the water supply to the city of Toledo in Spain. The hydraulic experts of al-Andalus conceived a water wheel capable of elevating water more than forty meters above the Tagus River. Thanks to this hydraulic engineering, Toledo also boasted the King’s Garden, located along the River, with a pond and in the middle of it was a pavilion with a glass dome from which the water flowed as a liquid veil. Both Hadrian and Al-Ma’mun, thousands of miles and millennia apart, enjoyed a very similar feature in their garden, both protected from the scorching sun and surrounded by water...

The extremely complex world of Islamic gardens has produced some of the most beautiful examples of aesthetic, artistic or sensorial water use, which brought the Arab back to the oasis, to paradise. The Koran says: “those who believe and do good works, we shall make to enter into gardens, below which rivers will flow, eternally for them”. Arab engineers created hydraulic marvels for gardens, such as that described by Maqrizi in the palace of the city of al-Qatai. There, “the trunks of the palm trees [were covered] with a beautiful golden copper, while between the layers of copper and the palm tree trunks were lead tubes through which water flowed from the tops of the palm trees to a basin that would overflow to irrigate the rest of the garden...”

The Muslims have always prided themselves in the science of irrigation. The Muslim garden is in fact determined by the irrigation system. "Since planted areas must be methodically flooded in rotation, they are laid out in squares of identical size, with the trees lined up in a regular fashion. Between the cultivated plants elevated paths have been laid in straight lines in order to allow dry passage on foot and at the same time limit and guide the flooding. The water distribution mechanism always performs in them an important role" (Galleotti 1926) (Fig. 6).

The water was handled in countless ways, conducted, emerging in jets, collected in fishponds, flowing in grottoes or leaping into a basin, thanks to clever hydraulic techniques. Like the Persian prototype, the Mediterranean gardens were for the most part formal and architectural in style, no place for winding paths or pools with sinuous outlines or natural shores. The Egyptian garden never lost the marks of its origin in conformity to the requirements of irrigation and there is an ample evidence of a highly developed garden technique in Greece, which beautified the temple groves with flower beds and fountains and converted prosaic orchard into recreation parks.

Man in the Mediterranean produced settlements of every type and size. *Rus in urbe* – the countryside within the city – was, possibly to a greater degree than in adjacent regions, prominent within major settlements right across the ancient and medieval Mediterranean, even during times of relatively high population density. The coastland began to humanise thanks to the communication systems and all kinds of villages, towns and cities sprung in the lands surrounding the sea. In the cities there were large open spaces uncultivated, agricultural land, or orchards, - in even the largest and apparently most crowded of Mediterranean cities: Pompeii, Rome, Barcelona, Milan, Cairo, etc. This description of the sanctuary of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, includes this agricultural and productive character: "The land which lies about the Church is not only fitted for the growing of plants, and for the sowing of seed, but you may see it in trees growing to a great height and laden with fruit and with the vines which climb up on them, and crops growing under the trees,; for all the land around this Church is full of strength and rich in wheat". And the description of an oasis in Tunisia contains the same feature: "There is a city of Africa in the middle of the sand ... advan-

taged in its soil beyond all wonder. A spring provides abundant water for a space of some three miles in each direction; it is generous,... Beneath a great palm tree here there grows an olive, beneath that a fig, under that a pomegranate, then a vine; below the vine wheat is sown, with legumes in between and here and there leaf vegetables, all in the same season, all reared beneath the shadow of another cultivated plant..." Quite extensive belts of horticultural properties surrounded ancient cities such as Rome or Alexandria, or Islamic ones such as Córdoba or Granada. These were the precedents of our historic parks.

The Mediterranean production relied on diversification between wild and cultivated animal and plant resources, intensive and extensive production; on quality of care in production, multiples varieties of animals or plants, and even weeds may be cultivated. The Mediterranean garden collects all this production in pleasure but always productive gardens, and we know that in Babylon cardamom, barley, dates and sesame grew in the gardens. Another of the characteristics of our Mediterranean landscape is that man has profoundly shaped and transformed it, especially in relation to plants. As Braudel says, "We think they are Mediterranean. But with the exception of olive trees, vines and wheat – the three of them native that appeared early in the place- all of them were born far away from the sea". (Braudel 1989: 8) And quoting Lucien Febvre he remembers that orange and lemon trees came from the Far East; tomatoes, cacti, agaves and aloes from America, eucalyptus from Australia and cypress from Persia (Fig.7)!

All these plants have adapted incredibly well to the Mediterranean landscape to the point of becoming one of the hallmarks of its parks and gardens. Even Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier speaks about the "gardens under the orange tree climate". The introduction of these new species was fundamental to the history of gardens and especially to the western gardens. The first ones in the Mediterranean basin evolved as new plants were introduced because "the very stuff of the history of gardening, from ancient Egypt to the present day, consists largely of plants that have been displaced and transplanted to new situations, that have succeeded in acclimatizing –sometimes with the help of a considerable degree of horticultural skill and care- and that have made their

way into gardens through a variety of channels – often being “improved” in some respect along the way” (Hobhouse 1994: 6).

The conquests of Alexander the Great, the splendour of the Egyptian and Roman Empire, the grandeur of the Arab world, the curiosity of the Renaissance, the discovery of the fascinating American plants, the scientific expeditions of the Age of Enlightenment, ... all contributed decisively to the transformation of parks and gardens in the Mediterranean basin.

Gardens were born in the desert in the valley of the Euphrates. Secluded and enclosed gardens where man could be protected from the outer world: a paradise, that garden which “the Lord planted eastward in Eden” was modelled upon the gardens found in all irrigated lands from Persia to Palestine and it became a prototype of the retreats of Mediterranean from Damascus, Jerusalem, and Antioch in the East to Granada in the West. Churchill points the main traditional features: “the confining wall or hedge, their seclusion and shade, their flower beds and ornamental fruit trees, their fountains and central pool, their sunken path and marble seats and colonnades, their statuary and shrubbery and the vine-grown pergola for the outdoor repast” (Churchill 1929:437).

The mild climate encouraged the maintenance of pleasure parks and gardens, keeping a succession of trees and plants in blossom all year round, but also other factors contributed, like: early concentration of population in cities, expansion of trade and the accumulation of wealth, stimulation of civilization by commerce, growth of a cultured leisure class with its concern for the amenities and luxuries of life. Gardening began at the eastern end of the basin at an early period and advanced westward in the wake of trade and colonization and thanks to the peristyles of Greek and Roman houses, the patio, one of the prototypical typologies of the Mediterranean, extended through all the regions, even transported to far away lands, as we can see all through Latin America.

Romans attained an incredible degree of brilliance in their gardens as we know from the numerous descriptions of their villas such as that described by

Collumela in his *Carmen hortorum* or Pliny the Younger on his Laurentum suburban villa and his country villa in Tuscany.

The art of gardening flourished in the Arab world and since the Islamic conquest in Spain, Cordova became a city surrounded by incredible lavish gardens until it reached the splendour of Moorish Granada (Fig.8). After the conquest, Pedro de Soto, living in Christian Granada describes his garden in a long and beautiful poem, with seven patios, with plants, statues, ponds and topiary that reproduced mythological and religious scenes for which the underlying theme was to form an allegory of Christian paradise and of the construction of the world in Genesis.

During the Renaissance, Italy built fabulous gardens and parks that benefited from trade with the Ottoman Empire with the introduction of exotic species that had been experimented in Constantinople and with the use of hydraulic techniques that had achieved a high degree of sophistication.

Through history, the Mediterranean garden is a space where nature was rearranged to display a higher artifice and fertility, as reflected in all classical texts. The Alcinous garden in the *Odyssey* ((7.112–32), is the image of this mythological and Mediterranean garden we have been looking for: “Beyond the courtyard, but near the door, stands an enormous orchard, four land measures, with a hedge on either side. Huge and richly laden trees grow there—pomegranates, pears, and apple trees with shining fruit, sweet figs, and fecund olive trees. And in this orchard no fruit gets destroyed or dies in winter time or during summer. It lasts all year long. West Wind, as he blows in, always brings some fruits to life and ripens others—pear growing above pear, apple upon apple, grapes in cluster after cluster, and fig after fig. And inside that orchard, Alcinous has a fertile vineyard planted, too. In part of it, a sunny patch of level ground, grapes are drying in the sun. In another place men are gathering up and treading other grapes. In front the unripe grapes are shedding blossoms, while others change into a purple colour. Beside the final row of vines there are trim beds with every kind of plant growing all year round. There are two springs inside—one sends its water through all the garden, and on the opposite side the other runs below the threshold of the yard,

where people of the town collect their water, towards the high-roofed palace. These glorious things were gifts from the gods to the home of Alcinous.”

Colour, light, shade, in and out, privacy, intimacy, sound, reflections, the murmur of water, the blue of the sky, ... those are some of the characteristics of

the Mediterranean garden, but there is something more, something that cannot be explained, that ensures that all of us who have been born around the Mediterranean, who have shared its light, its landscape, its sun, the sky and the waves and tides of this sea, feel at home in any of these gardens, our small private paradises.

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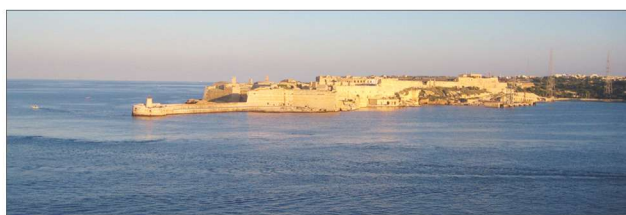


Fig. 1. La Valletta, Malta (photo of the author)



Fig. 3. Ruins of Jerash, Jordania (photo of the author)



Fig. 2. Claude Le Lorrain, *Aeneas at Delos*, 1672. (National Gallery, London)

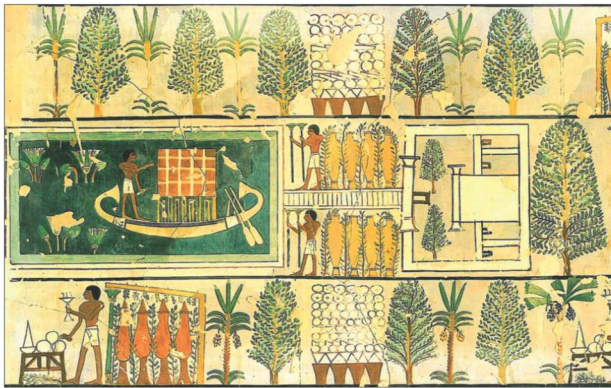


Fig. 4. Wall painting from Tomb of Minnakhte (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)



Fig.5. Peristyle roman garden with jets, Conímbriga, Portugal (photo of the author)



Fig. 6. Generalife, Granada, Spain (photo of the author)

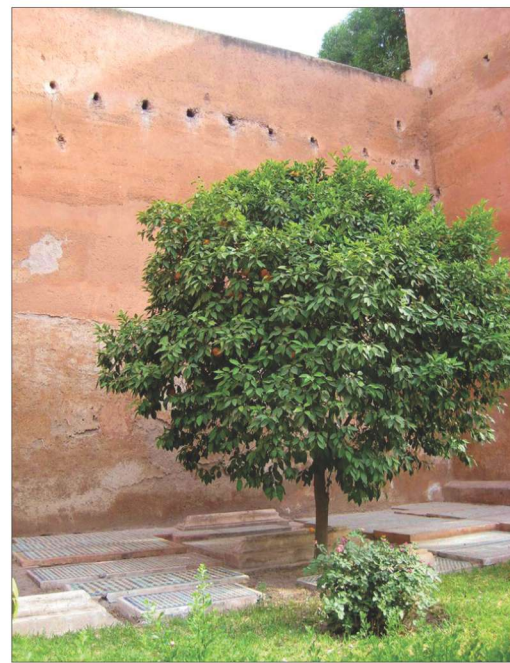


Fig. 7. Orange tree in Marrakesh., Morocco (photo of the author)



Fig. 8. The Alhambra, Granada, Spain (photo of the author)