A Space for the Subject: Tracing Garden Culture in Muslim Russia

Alfrid K. Bustanov | ORCID: 0000-0001-6274-496X
Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
A.Bustanov@uva.nl

Abstract

This article examines the place occupied by garden culture in the mental landscape of Russia's Muslims from the early nineteenth century to the late Socialist era. First taken from the Qur'an as a symbol of eternal salvation, the idea that gardens might embody both aesthetic and metaphysical values was further articulated by traveling missionaries with Sufi affiliations. This idea was afterwards absorbed by the generation of students graduated from Central Asian madrasas who, in the first half of the nineteenth century, brought the fashion for having gardens back to their home villages in European Russia. Gardens built or imagined by Muslims in European Russia had a history of their own, developing from the classical vision of heavenly gardens in Qur'anic exegesis into what became a central spatial category in Sufi tradition. In post-war Soviet Russia a place of piety was rethought as *dacha*—the entire process reflecting the evolution of Muslim subjectivity over the last few centuries.

Keywords

gardens – subjectivity – Russia's Muslims – Persianate sphere

Introduction: A Spatial Archive of Feelings¹

This article looks at gardens as a defining space for Muslim private life in Russia. Visitors to a garden respond to the ordering of space by reproducing emotions

¹ This article is part of the research project *MIND: The Muslim Individual in Imperial and Soviet Russia*, carried out at the University of Amsterdam and funded by the European Research

and memories associated with the place in question.² This effect often compels individuals to visit the place again and again,³ as the setting reminds them of an object of nostalgia. The ordering of the space itself must necessarily be informed by prevailing social convention; therefore, we must take into account the local concepts of space and specific spatial feelings as well as the sensibilities⁴ of the particular place and time. Inhabitants of and visitors to the garden invest its constitutive spaces with emotional significance, which in turn informs—though can never wholly constrain—the subjective responses of others who visit in their wake.⁵

The goal of this article is to outline a brief history of the garden in Muslim Russia as both a literary symbol and as a physical space, described by both the textual and visual means in the period between the nineteenth century and the Brezhnev Stagnation era. I argue that gardens were crucial spaces for cultivating Muslim individuals in Russia. The garden was never a static concept: various factors contributed to the constant rethinking of the meaning and function of the garden throughout these two centuries. Such ever-shifting ideas are themselves reflective of more fundamental shifts in the culture of personhood from Persianate models to those associated with the Ottoman and Arab cultural settings at the turn of the twentieth century,⁶ and to the emergence of Soviet models over the decades thereafter.⁷ Space affected the way

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- 2 D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008): 7.
- 3 Cf. A. Bursi, "Smelling Sacred Spaces: Pilgrimage Practices and Olfactory Experiences in Early Islam." *Utrecht Religie Forum*. 11/4/2019.
- 4 D. Fairchild Ruggles, "Listening to Islamic Gardens and Landscapes." In M. Frishkopf, & F. Spinetti (eds.), *Music, Sound, and Architecture in Islam* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018): 19–34; M. Pirogovskaia, *Miazmy, simptoms, uliki: Zapakhi mezhdu meditsinoi i moral'iu v russkoi kul'ture vtoroi poloviny 19 veka* (St Petersburg: European University Press, 2018): 10–41.
- 5 L. Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 10–16; *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History*, ed. by St. Downes, S. Holloway and S. Randles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- 6 D. Jung and K. Sinclair, "Multiple Modernities, Modern Subjectivities and Social Order: Unity and Difference in the Rise of Islamic Modernities." *Thesis Eleven* 130/1 (2015): 22–42.
- 7 A. Pinsky (ed.), *Subjectivity after Stalin* [Special issue] *Russian Studies in History* 2–3, 58 (2019); A. Baiburin, *Sovetskii pasport. Istoriia, struktura, praktiki* (St Petersburg: European University Press, 2017); I. Halfin, *Red Autobiographies. Initiating the Bolshevik Self* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); I. Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries,*

those individuals experienced emotions; meanwhile, culturally defined emotional regimes made up the very core of the self.⁸ Space, therefore, both creates and is created by individuals.⁹

It is worth looking at the worldview of individuals by problematizing their subjective judgments of the spatial world that surrounded them, analyzing the language of self-description in this spatial context and examining the evidence of sensory experience of individuals. Practically speaking, the complex data relating to the spatial setting can be regarded as an archive of feeling,¹⁰ to which individuals turn to relive their memories (even those that they did not experience themselves, but learned about from others) and fill those spaces with meaning. In undertaking a close study of this experience, I aim to reconstruct the cultural repertoire of feelings as well as the specific emotional vocabulary¹¹ that was available to the social actors of the past.

This article is organized as follows. Since I derive much information from previously unknown private archives, I start with a brief outline of my sources. From there I move to the description of the ideal garden according to the Qur'an and early Tatar tafsirs, with a particular focus on terminology and practice. Here I also treat the Persianate models of gardens as expressed in early eighteenth-century Sufi writings and the reception of the classics of Persian *adab* literature. Then I turn to the variety of forms and functions of gardens, focusing on a public garden in Istärlibash that is infused with the aura of Sufi belief and practice; a private garden for Sufi rituals that belonged to 'Ali al-Chuqri; and the orchard type of garden practiced by the early twentieth-century writers near Orenburg. In the section thereafter I explore the meanings of gardens elaborated by Soviet-era authors and finally highlight aspects of hybrid subjectivity in the gardens of Jarullah al-Yusufi and 'Abd al-Bari Isaev, where Muslim and Soviet models intersected in one and same spatial setting.

Dreams (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009); J. Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts." *Russian Review* 60/3 (2001): 340–359; idem, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

8 M. Roper, "Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History." *History Workshop Journal* 59 (2005): 57–72.

9 H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991 [1974]): 57.

10 A. Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); C. Langhamer, "An Archive of Feeling? Mass Observation and the Mid-Century Moment." *Insights* 9:4 (2016): 1–15.

11 B. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 6.

1 On Sources

My study of the spatial archive of feelings builds largely on private archival collections, dispersed across the present-day Russian Federation. These archives usually reflect the conscious efforts of several generations to document and give shape to the sense of authorial self embodied in the materials in question. Thus, the creation of personal and familial archives functions as a significant autobiographical act, bearing witness to the worldview of their authors. Life writing, photographs, letters, diaries, and other types of documentation articulate the direct speech of Russia's Muslims and promise to yield much insight upon close reading.

Religious poetry in Tatar forms a prominent body of sources that I use in my research. The poetic culture of Russia's Muslims has a multifaceted history stretching back at least to the Kazan khanate.¹² This grand poetic tradition historically evolved to bear a mix of cosmopolitan and local features. The cosmopolitan character of Muslim poetry in Inner Russia can be discerned from the strict adherence to poetic rules (*'ilm al-'arud*) and melodies (*köy*),¹³ the use of metaphors, and the system of symbols and terminology peculiar to Persian poetry. At the same time, the local context emerges through the use of dialect words, as well as popular language, images and emotional regimes, well-known to students of Tatar folklore. It must be acknowledged, however, that due to the Soviet nation-building efforts, this folkloric layer has received much greater attention than the cosmopolitan poetic heritage, presumably because the former suits the national narrative while the latter is not amenable to the clear-cut models of Soviet national cultures.

There is an impressive textual tradition consisting of a series of Tatar-language autobiographical and polemic theological writings emanating from different corners of the post-war Soviet Union. An encyclopedic compendium titled *The Proof of God's Unity (Burhan-i Tawhid)*,¹⁴ a 1700-page theological treatise, was

12 For a collection of English translations: *Historical Anthology of Kazan Tatar Verse: Voices of Eternity*, ed. and transl. by R. Bukharaev and D. Matthews (London: Routledge, 2000).

13 Kh.R. Kurbatov *Iske tatar poeziäsendä tel, stil', metrika khäm strofika* (Kazan: Tatarstan kitap nashriyaty, 1984). While the Persian classics of ethical and mystical poetry had long been part of the madrasa curriculum in the Russian Empire (next to the evidence on circulation of classics, I have come across some occasional local copies of Persian treatises on *'ilm al-'arud*), it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that Arabic poetry became popular. This, of course, has to do with a shift of educational preferences and the cultural turn from Central Asian/Persianate models towards the Ottoman/Arab cultural repertoire.

14 Fath al-Qadir Babich, *Burhan-i tawhid*. The private library of 'Abbas Bibarsov (Ufa), Ms. 90.

crafted by Fath al-Qadir Babich (1890–1973) near Dushanbe in the Tajik SSR in 1968, as a refutation of the notorious atheist pamphlet *The Secrets of the Qur'an* (*Qur'an serläre*) by Garif Gobäy.¹⁵ In his work, Babich engages in much detail with the metaphors and symbols that had traditionally been in circulation in Tatar religious literature. For the concrete articulation of this symbolic language I turn to the memoirs of 'Abd al-Majid al-Qadiri al-Istärlibashi (1881–1962), a Qur'an specialist who studied in Medina in the 1910s and spent fifteen years of his life in Stalinist labor camps in the 1930s and 1940s. His memoirs,¹⁶ written in 1955–56, clearly demonstrate that despite the political and social turmoil of the Soviet era, the key categories of Muslim culture in Russia remained socially relevant.

Drawings and private photography form another, distinct type of sources. Private collections of twentieth-century photographs¹⁷ testify that, in one way or another, garden culture served as a prominent element of the visual self-representation of Soviet Muslims. Especially rich archives of private Muslim photography with thousands of items are stored today by the families of Jarullah al-Yusufi (1881–1975) in Kazan and Penza, 'Abd al-Bari Isaev (1907–1983) in St Petersburg, and 'Abbas Bibarsov (1937–2012) in Ufa. In this article I will demonstrate how the main tools of self-reflection, i.e. textuality and visuality, work together in constructing the space of Muslim individuals in Russia.

2 Garden Imagery

Garden culture of Russia's Muslims was based on creative engagement with available cultural models, standard texts and societal expectations, shared by the members of the community; these often did not require a direct treatment, unless challenged by alternative interpretations or rival categories.

The Qur'an was the main source of symbolic imagery of gardens in Muslim societies. The process of the formation of Qur'anic culture among Russia's Muslims is attested by manuscripts produced between the eighteenth and

15 G. Gobäy, *Kor'an serläre*, 2nd edition (Kazan: Tatarstan kitap năshriyatı, 1969).

16 The manuscript autograph survived in a single copy within the private archive of Zuhra Valiullova, the author's granddaughter, in Ufa. An annotated translation of this autobiographical source is forthcoming.

17 My approach to Muslim photography in the Soviet Union is inspired by the works of A. Oberländer: "Working Faces, Facing Work: Portraying Workers at Work and the Search for the Soviet Individual." *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 48 (2021): 211–234 and K.M.H. Reischl, *Photographic Literacy: Cameras in the Hands of Russian Authors* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2018).

twentieth centuries. This textual evidence includes direct copies of the Qur'an,¹⁸ Turkic commentaries, and the fully-fledged translations that appeared in the course of the twentieth century.¹⁹ Qur'anic culture included the knowledge and articulation of symbols and categories of the Qur'an, often through citations without any translation.²⁰ A number of verses of the Qur'an describe gardens (*al-janna*) as part of paradise, where fruits, trees and springs are found in abundance. Symbolically, the gardens in the afterlife serve as a promised reward for pious believers and are thus juxtaposed with the eternal punishment in hell. Emotional aspects prove to be significant, especially in those Qur'anic verses (Q 55: 46–78) that, in refrain, link the mercy of God with a detailed description of paradisiacal gardens. The Qur'an repeatedly states that the promise of eternal happiness in paradise is nothing but the great mercy of God. Notably, the Qur'anic imagery of those gardens is rich in material details, with an abundance of water and greenery representing the key features of Qur'anic gardens: the text mentions the presence of a pool of water, active springs, flowing streams, growing fruits of every sort and quantity; meanwhile, inhabitants of the gardens sit on sofas, cushions and carpets in the shade of trees (Q 88: 8–16).

These descriptions formed the foundation for garden culture of the Islamicate world. The classical form of gardens is the Persian *chahar bagh*, a four-part geometric model that found some adoption in medieval Muslim architecture.²¹ However, depending on the location and climate garden culture varied greatly throughout the Islamicate world, developing various forms,

18 The only overview of Qur'anic manuscript production is S. Giliuztdinov, *Opisanie rukopisei Korana iz khranilishcha tsentra pis'mennogo i muzykal'nogo nasledia IIALI im. G. Ibragimova Akademii nauk RT* (Kazan: AN RT, 2013). Cf.: N. Garaeva, "Stareishii spisok Korana v sobranii Nauchnoi biblioteki im. N.I. Lobachevskogo Kazanskogo (Privolzhskogo) Federal'nogo Universiteta." In *Vostochnye rukopisi: sovremennoe sostoianie i perspektivy izucheniia*, ed. by R.F. Islamov, S.F. Galimov (Kazan: AN RT, 2011): 93–105.

19 A. Bustanov, "The Qur'an for Soviet Citizens: The Rhetoric of Progress in the Theological Works of 'Abd al-Bari Isaev." *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* 14 (2018): 169–184.

20 In particular, this is the case in the memoirs of 'Abd al-Majid al-Qadiri, where the author systematically illustrates life situations with citations from the Qur'an and the hadith without providing any commentary or translation.

21 E.B. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India* (New York: George Braziller, 1979): 48–52; F.D. Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2000); idem, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); idem, "The Rang Vilas Garden: An Unusual Rajput Chaharbagh at Bundi," *Bundi Fort: A Rajput World*, ed. by M. Beach (Bombay: Marg Foundation, 2016): 130–143.

uses and imaginaries.²² One anonymous early nineteenth-century Tatar commentary on the Qur'an translated the gardens of paradise (*jannat*) simply as *chahar bagh*.²³ Overall, however, *bagh* and *baghcha/baqcha* became the main terms used to denote gardens symbolizing the promised mercy of God in the afterlife. These terms referred to metaphorical as well as real, physical gardens and remained in circulation among the Muslims in Russia for a long period of time.

The Qur'anic symbolism of gardens as places of abundant water and trees was developed in Persian traditions of garden building. Given clear evidence of the spread of Persian culture in the Golden Horde,²⁴ it is likely that Persian traditions of garden building were also adopted by Muslims in the Volga-Urals. It should also be noted that this complex of cultural models and metaphors remained available to Russia's Muslims also after the fall of the Golden Horde and the Russian conquest of Kazan in 1552.

Between the seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, several generations of Russia's Muslims pursued travel to Central Asian educational centers, above all to Bukhara, with the aim of excelling in religious sciences. This systematic involvement in educational and cultural practices resulted in the cultivation of Persianate cultural norms back home, in villages and Muslim suburbs in European Russia and Western Siberia. In some cases, the proliferation of Persianate norms of conduct (*adab*) in Russia had been initiated by Central Asian migrants.²⁵ While aspects of these mutual migration processes have been highlighted in scholarship, especially with respect to the

22 G. Necipoğlu, "The Suburban Landscape of Sixteenth-Century Istanbul as a Mirror of Classical Ottoman Garden Culture." In *Gardens in the Time of the Great Muslim Empires*, ed. by A. Petruccioli (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997): 32–71; M. Subtelny, "A Medieval Persian Agricultural Manual in Context: the Irshad al-Zira'a, Late Timurid and Early Safavid Khurasan." *Studia Iranica* 22/2 (1993): 167–217; eadem, "Mirak-i Sayyid Ghiyas & the Timurid Traditions of Landscape Architecture." *Studia Iranica* 24/1 (1995): 19–60.

23 [Tafsir], Ms. Kazan University 6877 T, fol. 59a.

24 *Gorod Bolgar: kul'tura, iskusstvo, trgovlia*, ed. by P.N. Starostin (Moscow: Nauka, 2008); E. Zivlinskaja, *Usad'by zolotoordynskikh gorodov* (Astrakhan: AGU, 2008): 109. In December 1980, archaeologist German Fedorov-Davydov (1931–2000) in his private communication with 'Abd al-Rahman Tagirdjanov (1907–1983), a Leningrad-based scholar of classical Persian literature, claimed that Persian dominated the urban landscape of the Golden Horde capitals." Institute of Language, Literature, and Arts of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan. Collection 115 (the archive of 'Abd al-Rahman Tagirdjanov), op. 4, d. 70, fol. 1a.

25 Multiple examples of Central Asian cultural influence in Siberia can be found in E. Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

establishment of Bukharan settlements in Russia and the experience of Tatar students in Central Asia, the cultivation of Persianate models in the cultural context of the Russian Empire has largely escaped scholarly attention.²⁶ It is my hypothesis that systematic engagement with Persianate literature and education impacted the culture of individuality practiced by the middle and upper classes of Muslim literati in the Russian Empire. In particular, given the widely acknowledged significance of space in self-perception²⁷ and its frequent prominence in life writing, it is interesting to explore which elements of the Persianate organization of space were assimilated and brought home by the generations of graduates from Central Asian madrasas.

Persianate cultural models were fairly popular in Russia between the seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries. This popularity is attested not only by the abundance of Persian texts in circulation,²⁸ but also in the spread of the associated literary genres, fashion, food and symbols.

The early eighteenth century has left us very few literary sources on the religious history of Muslims in the Muscovite state. Still, the relatively early texts that have survived reveal engagement with the theme of gardens. A traveling Sufi shaykh Dawlat Shah b. Shah ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Ispijabi (d. 1714)²⁹ spent a few years in Tobolsk, where he was surrounded by local students. His Persian-language writings from this period make use of the cultural models briefly outlined above:

When [my] thoughts traveled to gardens,
Aromas of flowers and plants drove me wild.

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- 26 One prominent exception is the work of A. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 64–75.
- 27 M. Benussi, “Public Spaces and Inner Worlds: Emplaced Askesis and Architectures of the Soul Among Tatarstani Muslims.” In *Normative Orders and the Remaking of Muslim Spaces and Selves in Contemporary Russia*, ed. L. Di Pupo and J. Schmoller (ed.) [Special issue], *Ethnicities* (2020): 1–23.
- 28 S. Giliuztdinov, *Persidsko-tatarskie literaturnye sviazi (X–nachalo XX vv.)* (Kazan: AN RT, 2011); D. DeWeese, “Persian and Turkic from Kazan to Tobolsk: Literary Frontiers in Muslim Inner Asia.” In *The Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. by Nile Green (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019): 131–155.
- 29 On the author: D. DeWeese, “The Yasawi Presence in the Dasht-i Qipchaq from the 16th to 18th Century,” *Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe (18th–early 20th Centuries)*, ed. by N. Pianciola & P. Sartori (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013): 59–60.

At times the cry of the nightingale could be heard, at times the rose would tear off its clothes.

[But] I have reminded myself of You and have forgotten them.³⁰

The pathos of this poetry portrays gardens not just as a metaphor for God's mercy in heaven, but as a space of pious remembrance of God amid a rose garden inhabited by birds, whose singing is often associated with Sufi rites. Later in the text, the author directly links gardens with the vocal *dhikr* (acts of remembrance) by citing the Prophet, who supposedly said: "Heavenly gardens serve as the circles of remembrance of God, in which the servants of God and members of my community come together and praise God, appealing to Him and crying. [...] Remembrance and praise of God should be pronounced openly and clearly so that Muslims hear it and can join the rite by collecting the fruits of heavenly gardens."³¹ Al-Ispijabi continued to engage with the theme of gardens in his longer book tellingly entitled *Abwab al-Jinan* (*Gates to Paradise*), which he composed in Yarkand in 1709 and then sent off to his "Sufi brothers near Bulghar".³² In fact, the Sufi reading of the metaphorical heavenly garden has a strong grounding in the spread of Persianate culture in the Muscovite state and subsequently in the Russian Empire.

Among other works on ethics, the two major books of Sa'di, *Bustan* and *Gulistan*, clearly mark the gradual process of reception of classical Persian literature in Russia.³³ Initially, this *adab* literature was consumed directly in the original. The earliest known copies of those works produced in the Volga-Urals date back to the very beginning of the eighteenth century,³⁴ thus paralleling the works of al-Ispijabi cited above. Later copies include sporadic interlinear translations of individual words into Turki, a practice known from the early

30 Dawlat Shah b. Shah 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Ispijabi, *Burhan al-dhakirin*. Kazan University Library, 429F, fol. 3b. A Russian translation of this work has been published recently: *Burkhan az-zakirin. Dokazatel'stvo dlia pominaiushikh*, ed. by A. Bustanov and E. Nikitenko (Moscow: Sadra, 2020).

31 Dawlat Shah b. Shah 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Ispijabi, *Burhan al-dhakirin*: fols. 4b–5b.

32 Idem, *Abwab al-jinan*, Kazan University Library, 6764 T.

33 My overview here was inspired by the work of M. Kia, "Adab as Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistan in Late Mughal India." In *'No Tapping Around Philology': A Festschrift in Celebration and Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday*, ed. by A. Korangy and D.J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014): 281–308.

34 Sa'di, *Gulistan*, Kazan University Library, Mss. 813F (written on Dutch paper and bearing the date of 1121/1709–1710) and 880F (early eighteenth century, copied in Bärängä village). Both copies were acquired by the manuscript expedition from Mänfusä Gaynetdinova in Mazarbashi village of the Mari El Republic back in 1984.

Persian translations of the Qur'an.³⁵ Later on, starting from the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the *Bustan* started to circulate in a sentence-by-sentence Turkic translation, full of Persian phrasings.³⁶ Interestingly, the form and style of these translations have clear parallels in the contemporaneous translations of the Qur'an in which the Turkic texts come after their Arabic originals and include rich Persian vocabulary.³⁷ While *Bustan* also made its way into print, the complete Tatar translation of *Gulistan* was accomplished in 1915, but remained unpublished.³⁸ A detailed philological analysis of these translations in the light of the broader process of reception of *adab* literature in the Russian Empire in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries requires a separate treatment, and is therefore beyond the scope of the present article.³⁹ Suffice it to say, however, that these examples give credence to the notion that Persianate cultural models entered the world of Tatar madrasa training, and had from quite early on been articulated by Persophone authors traveling in Russia.

Already the first Tatar commentaries of the Qur'an engaged with the garden imaginary. In his tafsir composed in the early nineteenth century, Taj al-Din b. Yalchighol (1768–1838) repeatedly evokes gardens, always translating the word *al-janna* as *baqcha*. Two aspects of his treatment of gardens should interest us here: the constitution of heavenly gardens and the symbolic meaning of orchards in the mortal world. In his explanations of verses featuring the garden theme, Taj al-Din b. Yalchighol repeatedly refers to apple and other fruit-giving trees that inhabit the heavenly gardens.⁴⁰ The first private gardens near Orenburg that reflected the Qur'anic imaginary started to appear already

35 T. Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 253–301.

36 *Tarjama-yi Bustan-i Sa'di*, Kazan University Library, Mss. 889F, 6346T (both lack beginning and end) and 6352T (bears watermarks of 1803 and lacks only the incipit). The Institute of Language, Literature and Arts hosts another copy of this translation (Ms. 3923).

37 For example, Taj al-Din b. Yalchighol al-Bulghari, *Sidrat al-muntaha*. Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (St Petersburg), Ms. B3060 (copied from the autograph for publication in 1846).

38 Institute of Language, Literature and Arts (Kazan), Ms. 5553.

39 A. von Kügelgen, "Moral Education in Central Asia, 19th–21st Centuries: The Foundations for Sufi, Jadid, Soviet, National, and Islamist Ethics." In *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. by M. Kemper and R. Elger (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017): 76–102; S.A. Dudoignon, "A Surrogate Aristocracy? Sufi Adab, Modernity, Rurality, and Civilization in Ex-Soviet Central Asia." In *Adab and Modernity: A Civilising Process? (Sixteenth–Twenty-First Centuries)*, ed. by C. Mayeur-Jaouen (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 527–551.

40 Taj al-Din b. Yalchighol al-Bulghari, *Sidrat al-muntaha*: fols. 18b, 87b, 171b. The author refers to *Ma'alim al-tanzil* by Abu Muhammad al-Husayn b. Mas'ud al-Baghawi to support his claim. This *tafsir* was widely copied in the Volga-Urals at that time.

in the early nineteenth century, parallel to composition of the first Tatar tafsirs. Around 1828 Yahya Qarghali bought a house with a rich garden on the banks of the Saqmar River. A poet has left us a brief description of the orchard:

His gardens are full of various flowers and red apples.
His daughters wandered inside of his garden like houris.⁴¹

Further, in his commentary to 68:17 Taj al-Din b. Yalchighol tells a short story of Zervan from Yemen, “who lived at the time of Musa” and “was a pious and god-fearing individual.” Zervan possessed a huge orchard (*olugh baqcha*), full of fruits partially meant for dissemination among the poor as part of the annual almsgiving (*‘ushr*).⁴² This story reinforces the idea that earthly gardens embody the values of moral subjects. The term *baqcha* continued to be prominent in Tatar tafsirs also in the twentieth century: ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev’s translation of the Qur’an from the 1970s includes endless references to heavenly gardens.⁴³

3 Forms and Functions

Taking into account the context of circulation of classical Persian texts, Sufi treatises and Qur’an commentaries, it is not surprising to find evidence on garden culture in the biography and writings of a Sufi shaykh, namely Muhammad ‘Ali al-Chuqri (1826–1889). His father, ‘Abd al-Salih, received training in Sufism from the famous Faydkhan al-Kabuli (d. 1802) and then became an imam of Chuqir village in Bashkiria. Al-Chuqri himself studied with multiple teachers, including Muhammad Murad al-Badakhshani, whose spiritual line of succession could be traced back to Shah Ghulam al-Dihlawi (d. 1824).⁴⁴ Like Dawlat

41 “Baghlarında törle räykan, qizil alma danälär // yürür aning baghi üzrā qizları hurlar kebi.” The National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, Ms. 18369-332 (the private collection of Zainap Maksudova). Sib’atullah hajji Apikov, *Marthiya* devoted to Ahmad b. Mahmud (d. 1828).

42 Taj al-Din b. Yalchighol al-Bulghari, *Sidrat al-muntaha*, fol. 127b–128a. Variations of the same story appear in commentaries by al-Qursawi and Nu‘man b. Thabit, two Tatar tafsirs from the first half of the nineteenth century.

43 ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev, *Kor’ān Kārim tärjemäse*, ed. by A. Bustanov (Kazan: KN, 2018): 34, 235, 236, 354, *passim*.

44 M. Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, 1789–1889: Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998): 371.

Shah al-Ispijabi, al-Chuqri was a proponent of the vocal *dhikr*.⁴⁵ In 1849 al-Chuqri came to study in Istärlibash, a prominent center of Sufi learning in the south Urals. There he entered the Sufi line associated with a former Bukharan student Ni‘matullah al-Istärlibashi (1772–1844), whom al-Chuqri praised posthumously for the construction of a rich garden (*bagh*).⁴⁶ According to ‘Abd al-Majid al-Qadiri, his teacher Habibullah b. Harith (d. 1896), the grandson of Ni‘matullah, similarly engaged in horticulture: “He studied in Bukhara and upon his return he erected a mosque, madrasa, and washroom, and put all the madrasas of Istärlibash on the right path. He planted chestnut trees between the madrasas and put up street lights. In spring, he planted many birch trees behind the madrasa and turned it into a garden (*baqcha*).”⁴⁷ The Bukharan link in the origin and development of orchards in Istärlibash is thus evident from multiple sources. The gardens of Sufi masters in Istärlibash were public and related to the sacred aura of their family, proud of their Central Asian connections.⁴⁸

Another type of gardens was rather semi-public and served the devotional purposes. Around 1852, al-Chuqri returned to his home village to replace his father as imam. Reportedly, he lived in great need and besides his teaching he worked as a forester.⁴⁹ Work discipline was part of al-Chuqri’s Sufi training. Al-Chuqri worked together with his students in the bee garden (*umartaliq baqcha*). This place was located in a kilometer from the village and is portrayed in sources as a holy place (*maqam-i karim*), where al-Chuqri gathered his followers and practiced his Sufi rites. A holy spring (*chishmä*)⁵⁰ was also part of this place, as well as a tree, venerated by pilgrims. This garden thus functioned as a

45 For a detailed discussion of vocal *dhikr* in Central Asia, see B.M. Babadzhanov, S.A. Mukhammadaminov, ed. *Sobranie fetv po obosnovaniü zikra dzhakhr i sama’* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2008).

46 Muhammad ‘Ali al-Chuqri, *Tadhkirat al-shaykh al-marhum mulla Ni‘matullah al-Istärlibashi*. The private archive of ‘Abbas Bibarsov (Ufa) Ms. 1: fols. 3ab (a draft autograph).

47 ‘Abd al-Majid al-Qadiri, *Memoirs*: fols. 155a, 169a. The private archive of Zuhra Valiullova (Ufa).

48 Some of the Sufi masters in Istärlibash were the disciples of the Tatar Naqshbandis in Khorezm, see A. Bustanov, “The Bulghar Region as a ‘Land of Ignorance’: Anti-Colonial Discourse in Khvārazmian Connectivity.” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9 (2016): 183–204.

49 ‘Arifullah al-Chuqri, *‘Ayn al-rida kitabī*. Kazan University Library, 680 Ar.: fol. 2b.

50 Holy springs (*chishmä* or *kizläü*) feature prominently in the landscape of sacred places and are often associated with the blessing of a saint. Veneration of Sufi shrines included the visits to such holy springs with water said to work miracles. Interestingly, in his treatment of the Qur’anic imaginary of heavenly gardens, Taj al-Din b. Yalchiǧhol cautioned his readers that the term *al-‘ayun* translated throughout the text as *chishmä* needs to be understood as referring to rivers and not the springs, Taj al-Din b. Yalchiǧhol al-Bulghari, *Sidrat al-muntaha*: fol. 18b.

setting of major religious rites and the recital of poetry, which al-Chuqri composed tirelessly.⁵¹ It is therefore unsurprising that his expertly-written verses are full of natural metaphors and allegories.⁵²

In the early twentieth century in the south Urals we encounter examples of the third type of gardens—commercial orchards. Writing the life story of his father ‘Ilman (1841–1902), the journalist Fatih Kärimi (1870–1937) emphasized the role that their orchard played in his self-understanding. For seven years in his youth, ‘Ilman Kärimi had studied with a prominent Khalidi shaykh Muhammad Dhakir al-Chistawi (1804–1893)⁵³ before serving as a regional authority (*akhund*) of Bugulma district of Kazan governorate. Upon retirement in 1900, ‘Ilman *akhund* agreed with the merchant Ahmad Khusainov (1837–1906) to construct an apple garden (*alma baqchasi*) on a plot of some thirty hectares between Orenburg and its suburb Qargali near the Saqmar River. The goal was both commercial and social: to demonstrate to the locals how one can make money from the land. Fatih Kärimi relates that his father loved (*söyar*) working in the garden and spent most of his time there. ‘Ilman *akhund*’s attachment to the place was so deep that he “was buried under a tree in the garden for which he had sacrificed himself.”⁵⁴ Fatih Kärimi somewhat romantically describes his father as “a person of the past” (*iske zaman keshese*) who was a devoted Naqshbandi Sufi and placed much emphasis on ethics and individual piety.⁵⁵

In reality, of course, various types and functions of gardens merged depending on situation and the kind of individuals inhabiting the place. More details on the possible ways of engagement with garden as a space can be found in the archive of Mir Khaydar Fayzi (1891–1928), a poet and writer, born and raised in Orenburg governorate. He left us extensive diaries and autobiographical poetry, where the garden theme features prominently, but plays out differently in different genres. In diaries we see multiple orchards as part of everyday life and related emotional experiences. The place where he was born—Kükshel farmstead near Orsk—Fayzi associated chiefly with beautiful nature, the rich orchards being an indispensable part of the landscape (Fig. 1). The farmstead

51 For more detail on the garden of ‘Ali al-Chuqri, see Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*: 377–379.

52 There is only one study specifically devoted to al-Chuqri, see I. Gumerov, *Mägrifüt zhyrchysy* (Kazan: Mäktäp, 2006).

53 Sh. Shikhaliev and M. Kemper, “Sayfullah-Qadi Bashlarov: Sufi Networks between the North Caucasus and the Volga-Urals.” In *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. by M. Kemper and R. Elger (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017): 175–177.

54 *Fatyikh Kärimi. Fänni-biografik zhyentyk*, ed. by R. Märdanov, R. Mingnullin, S. Räkhimov (Kazan: Rukhiyat, 2000): 24.

55 *Ibid.*: 21–29.

FIGURE 1 The photograph of Kükshel farmstead, Mir Haydar Fayzi's birthplace
 Note: Inscription below the picture reads: "An image of Kükshel, Haydar Fayzi's birthplace (an estate belonging to the Husainovs' family)." Kazan University Library, Oriental Section, F. 1 (Mir Khaydar Fayzi), D. 215

was so emotionally close to his sense of the self and his childhood memories that in his poetry he came up with a few related metaphors, such as 'the garden of youth' (*yäshlek baghi*) and 'the garden of my soul' (*küngelem baghi*).⁵⁶ From his diaries it becomes apparent that he liked staying in gardens for long periods of time, would converse there with friends and relatives, sing songs and often drink tea. From his description gardens appear as the space of leisure, relaxation and dialog with beautiful nature.⁵⁷ Fayzi writes about activities and emotions experienced in various gardens that he visited over his life in a mundane, one even would dare to say secular, way. However, in his poems Fayzi made clear that the Qur'anic imagery still played a huge role:

I have no words to describe our garden (*baqchabizni*),
 Let us compare it to heavenly gardens (*jännät*).
 This comparison does no harm

56 Ibid, D. 25: fols. 128 [verses dated by 1916], 159, 160 [April 1919], 168 [April 1920].

57 Ibid., D. 41, fol. 7a (tea); D. 45 (singing); D. 56, fols. 10a, 14b (tea); D. 57, fols. 5a (tea), 10b (lunch); D. 61, fol. 2a (tea); D. 62, fol. 9a (playing music), *passim*.

FIGURE 2 A drawing of a farmstead in Shoda

Note: Ibid., D. 45, fols. 70b–71a

To the holy status of heavenly gardens.
 To God alone do we sincerely (*ikhlas küngel belän*)
 Pray [our bodies] purified.
 In our unique and pleasant garden
 We live in joy and harmony.⁵⁸

To illustrate one such large orchard full of apple trees Fayzi made a drawing (Fig. 2) showing a farmstead in Shoda, near Malmyzh, where his uncle Said Garay resided with his family.

In this detailed plan of the settlement we can see the main house in the center, which has a huge orchard (*alma jiläk baqchasi*) in front of it, occupying almost half the entire territory, and a smaller garden (*baqcha*) behind. The garden at the front played the public role, since it was close to the street. The smaller garden, securely hidden from foreign eyes, was evidently meant for private purposes and the multiple leisure activities that Fayzi describes in abundance in his diaries. Away from others' eyes one could listen to music and consume drinks.⁵⁹ The garden theme, richly embroidered with personal recollections, reoccurs in Fayzi's writings as a poetical metaphor and the

⁵⁸ Ibid., D. 25, fols. 23–24 [verses dated by 1912].

⁵⁹ Fayzi evokes drinking of alcohol throughout his diaries even before the Revolution.

actual physical space that both nurtured an individual and was itself subject to change. With much sorrow Fayzi wrote an elegy to the Kükshel farmstead that had fallen into disrepair already by 1912. At the ruins of his childhood he was crying, recollecting in his memory the time spent at the garden.⁶⁰ The gardens of al-Chuqri and Kärimi have similarly not survived to this day; not only because the following generations did not share the romantic feelings associated with such spaces, but also because of the collectivization of the 1930s, when private gardens were subsumed by collective farms.

4 The Landscape of Meanings

Structurally speaking, flowers, birds, apple trees, and bees play a central role in the landscape of garden culture as it was practiced in Russia. The presence of apple trees was motivated not only on agricultural and economic grounds, but also by theological arguments. In his work entitled *Burhan-i tawhid*, Fath al-Qadir Babich goes into detail in explaining the spiritual value of apples, starting with a commentary on a verse from Rumi's *Mathnawi*:

The ancient Turkish [sic] philosopher Jalal al-Din Rumi says *آسمانها و زمین یک سیب دان** از درخت قدرة حق شد عیان,⁶¹ i.e. 'Know that the sky and earth are an apple. The one that mellowed on the tree of the Almighty.' By this poetic comparison he [Rumi] describes in his verse the unbounded Might and Knowledge of the Creator and of bees that live in the orchard. A brief explanation can be given as follows: a solitary apple tree lives in a huge garden with countless fruit trees. Among the many apples on this tree, one apple hosts a few worms. Since there are many apples, they live in prosperity and comfort. One day, a debate takes place among the worms on the issue of the presence of a gardener. Endless discussions begin to take place. Most of the worms claim that there must be a gardener (*baghban*),⁶² there must be a watcher over this huge garden who

60 Kazan University Library, Oriental Section, F. 1, D. 25, *Kükshel utarina*: fols. 16–20 [dated by 1912].

61 Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Mathnawi-yi ma'nawi*. Fourth daftar, bayts 1868–1869 (in Khurramshahi edition). Rumi's classical work was quite popular in Russia and has survived in multiple copies: Kazan University Library, Mss. 402F, 505F, 528F, 733F, 775F, 856F; Institute of Language, Literature and Arts, Ms. 1954; National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, Ms. 18369–67. All the Tatar copies were produced in the nineteenth century.

62 Interestingly, this is the exact word used by Rumi in the verse next to the one cited by Babich. The more colloquial Tatar word for gardener would be *baqchachi*.

is almighty, with physical and intellectual primacy. He must have enough force to take care of these trees as well as to destroy them all. Even if we cannot see him, we have to judge [his presence] by the state of the garden, respect the greatness of the gardener and be thankful for this life of comfort. One worm among them takes the opposite philosophy, rejecting the gardener. The rest tell him: 'You are too young, it is because you have not seen the world and behave as a child. If you manage to survive, then you will see. One day you will get into the hands of the gardener.' This is in spring. Days and months pass. In the fall, the days become colder and apples start to fall down. Girls under the lead of the gardener come to collect apples and start to shake down the fruits. When they approach the tree that hosts our worms, the apples fall down and the worms too find themselves on the earth. The worm that rejected the gardener ends up under the gardener's foot. He loses his life in pain. 'The poor worm witnessed the gardener, but perished because of insisting on rejecting him,' claimed the other worms.⁶³

One probably would not expect a theological engagement with classical Persian poetry as a response to Soviet atheist policies of the 1960s, but for Babich, who had studied at the same madrasa in Ufa as 'Abd al-Bari Isaev, this was still a powerful tool in his intellectual counter-attack. This wonderful fragment gives a metaphorical explanation for much of the symbolic meaning of garden culture as practiced by Russia's Muslims. According to Babich, the garden symbolizes the entire world created by God. Apple trees, planted by generations of educated Muslims, were not just part of the regular agricultural assortment, but bore great religious significance. There is just one significant element missing in Babich's anecdote: the role of bees. He writes about them in another place in the same treatise:

The Qur'anic verse [Q 16: 68] talks about the message of God to bees. It says that bees build their houses in mountains, on trees, and in beehives constructed by man. Thanks to God's inspiration (*ilham*) they collect honey from different flowers and bring healing from many diseases. Books on beekeeping help to explain the greatness of knowledge entrusted to bees, but they fail to acknowledge the nature (*fitra*) of bees. More and more secrets and previously unknown aspects of bees are being discovered.⁶⁴

63 Fath al-Qadir Babich, *Burhan-i tawhid*: fols. 301–303 (original pagination). The private library of 'Abbas Bibarsov in Urta Eluzan village of Penza region.

64 Ibid.: fols. 323–324.

Babich refers directly to the Qur'an to argue for the high status of bees as recipients of God's message. As will become evident below, beekeeping was doubtlessly regarded as a pious occupation at least from the times of al-Chuqri, and was strongly tied to the imagery of heavenly gardens.

The memoirs of 'Abd al-Majid al-Qadiri bring together Muslim piety, beekeeping, and private space. Although he resided in Istärlibash in the south-west Urals, his close relatives lived in Qaramali village in Tatarstan. Al-Qadiri recalls the visit that he paid in his childhood together with his father to 'Abd al-'Alim (d. 1896), the brother of his grandfather and a mu'adhdhin of the local mosque. 'Abd al-'Alim was a wealthy person who owned a house with a good garden in front of it, full of beehives, which must have resembled the orchard in Shoda discussed above, (Fig. 2). Another huge garden was located behind the house and besides that, 'Abd al-'Alim possessed beehives situated on the outskirts of the village. It was with much pleasure that al-Qadiri recalled the taste of honey that 'Abd al-'Alim spread on a piece of bread and gave to him.⁶⁵ Here, memories of gardens, sensory experiences, bees and houses come together to create an unforgettable, almost Nabokovian, emotional aura that still persisted even after the fifteen years that al-Qadiri spent in Stalinist camps.

As part of his rich descriptions of various individuals, al-Qadiri provides details on the more practical side of engagement with gardens. For example:

'Abd al-Rahim khalfa *tabib* Sha'manov came to study in Istärlibash from Mu'min (Tamyän) village in Buguruslan district, then instructed students for many years and trained many imams. He was a master of medicine. During our time, he cured many diseases and was the reason for survival for many poor people. He owned many books on medicine. He was reading constantly, and every spring he collected various flowers and herbs in the fields to prepare medicines. He did not socialize much, was always occupied by his job, caring about his rose garden and beautiful flowers. He produced perfumes from aromatic thyme flowers that grew on our mountain. Around 1905, he returned to his home village to be an imam and teacher and was buried there.⁶⁶

Ingredients for tea as well as tobacco for snuff, consumed largely within female circles (especially among the Bukharans in Siberia), were also planted in those gardens. Medical treatises containing numerous references to flowers

65 'Abd al-Majid al-Qadiri, *Memoirs*: fols. 72b–73a. The private archive of Zukhra Valiullova (Ufa).

66 *Ibid.*: fols. 161b–162a.

have survived in abundance,⁶⁷ but remain almost completely neglected in scholarship,⁶⁸ chiefly because of the connotations of backwardness that surround Muslim magic and esotericism.⁶⁹ According to the oral reminiscences of their relatives, some Muslim poets from late Socialist villages of Western Siberia used flowers from their gardens to produce colorful ink for manuscripts.⁷⁰ This association with manuscript production found some reflection in occasional illustrations of locally produced nineteenth-century manuscripts (Fig. 3).

In Tatar Muslim poetry the garden was portrayed not only as a living space, but also as a place of eternal rest. For example, in 1843 'Ali al-Chuqri wrote an elegy (*marthiyya*)⁷¹ devoted to his mother with the following lines:

Thus the grave of my mother turned into a heavenly garden,
Her [deceased] grandchildren became roses and the grave turned into a
flower garden.
My mother is like a martyr, accompanied by her grandchildren.
A nightingale promises paradise and the flower garden joins him.⁷²

This poem is interesting in many respects and particularly unusual in its undemonstrative reticence towards the death of someone so close. More pertinent to our discussion here is the articulation of categories that the author employs to describe the grave of his mother and small children. Trees planted on graves⁷³

67 For example: Kazan University Library, Mss. 53T: fols. 59a–87b; 134T; 1715T.

68 M. Akhmetzianov, *Tatar khalkınyng boryngy yrym-araulary khäm törle fahnamäläre* (Kazan: AN RT, 2012): 153–161.

69 A. El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics. How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020): 41–54. For a debunking of this narrative that delegitimizes the entire clusters of non-European epistemological traditions, see *Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives*, ed. by M. Melvin-Koushki and N. Gardiner, special double issue of *Arabica*, 64/3–4 (2017): 287–693.

70 A. Bustanov, "Against Leviathan: On the Ethics of Islamic Poetry in Soviet Russia." *The Piety of Learning: Islamic Studies in Honor of Stefan Reichmuth*, ed. by M. Kemper and R. Elger (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 211.

71 On the genre of *marthiyyas* in Russia: D. Ross, "The Promiscuous Life of a Genre for the Dead: The Marthiyya as an Instrument of Community Construction in Muslim Russia." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 64 (2021): 343–376.

72 "Bäs anamning qabere anda buldı jännät räwzası, // äwläde häm göllär uldı, gölzar uldı ul mazar. // Häm anamiz ber shähitter häm yanında äwläde. Bulbul jännät buluın sayrayor häm idär gölbähar." Muhammad 'Ali al-Chuqri, *Fi marthiyya walida al-jaliyya*. Kazan University Library, Ms. 690T: fol. 21b.

73 An anonymous early nineteenth-century collection of Tatar fatwas includes a short entry disapproving (*makruh*) of the cutting of trees in Muslim cemeteries, because they defend the grave from damage. For this reason the cutting of trees is allowed on the graves of unbelievers (*al-kufar*): *Majmu'a*, Kazan University Library, Ms. 6147Ar.: fol. 142b

FIGURE 3 A colorful manuscript illustration with horticultural elements
 Note: Kazan University Library, Ms. 6504 T, fol. 11b (a collection of ethical texts dated by 1855, collected from Zākīia Islamova in Churash village of Sarman district)

FIGURE 4 Isaev at the grave of Riza Fakhreddinov. Ufa, 1949

Note: The private archive of 'Abd al-Bari Isaev (St Petersburg)

symbolize a flower garden (*bustan*, *gölbähar*) where the nightingale praises God. Since al-Chuqri himself composed poetry in the garden, did he not perhaps see himself in that role of the nightingale? In any case, the orchard at home was a reminder of the heavenly garden to be attained via the grave. It is therefore unsurprising that Muslim cemeteries in Russia are located in gardens and forests, because almost every grave was accompanied by a planted tree. This custom can be recognized in Soviet-era photographs showing commemoration practices, for instance in the photo above (Fig. 4), taken in 1949 when 'Abd al-Bari Isaev, at that time an imam of the second mosque in Ufa, visited the grave of his teacher Riza Fakhreddinov (1859–1936).

(the manuscript was brought by the manuscript expedition from the Baltach region of Tatarstan in 1970). This opinion is said to be based on *al-Fatawa al-Bazzaziya* of Hafiz al-Din al-Kerderi (d. 1414), an author from the late Golden Horde whose work on Hanafi jurisprudence was printed in Kazan in 1308/1890–91: C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, vol. 2 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012): 291. Nowadays, this culture has started to change: at many of Muslim cemeteries in rural Volga-Urals one can see warnings to the local people precluding them from planting the trees on the graves. The old woods in many graveyards, in turn, have been cut.

Descriptions of graves as gardens included the same vocabulary as the metaphor of heavenly gardens. In deeply pessimistic poetry mourning his deceased wife Fatima (d. 1916), Kamal Muzaffarov (1855–ca. 1937)⁷⁴ wrote the following:

When the sun rises, spreading red light, water flows in grief.
 When the nightingale starts to sing, the grieving elders only laugh.
 When it is windy, the apples in garden fall down.
 When I think of the deceased, it becomes heavy in my soul.
 Birds in the air are singing: “The fruit garden is on the top of the tree.”
 When I see [my wife’s] clothing, they say: “Do not part from an old friend.”⁷⁵

Mir Haydar Fayzi was part of this family: his father was Fatima’s brother. Therefore the young Fayzi often visited Malmyzh in his childhood. He noted down in his diary that Muzaffarov’s house was immersed into a huge orchard: “On 14th I sat a lot in the garden. In fact, not only today. I spend there a lot of time every day. I collect fallen apples and cherry, sing at the pavilion, count apples on tress and so on.”⁷⁶ Thanks to Fayzi we have a plan of Muzaffarov’s house surrounded by an orchard (Fig. 5). Unlike the farmstead in Shoda here the garden was located on the left side from the main house with a bathhouse on the opposite side from the street. From Fayzi’s drawings and photographs it becomes clear that in the early twentieth century orchards occupied a stable and meaningful position in the living space of Muslims in the Volga-Urals. The presence of a physical garden in the everyday life was bound firmly with the imaginary of gardens in the afterlife, as can be understood from Kamal Muzaffarov’s elegy.

The cultural bond existing between the beauty of nature (with recurring tropes of flowers, roses, trees, and singing birds) and gratitude to Allah was as clear to Fath al-Qadir Babich⁷⁷ as to his present-day counterparts. During my visit to the house of Nail Sakhibzianov (b. 1957), the former *mukhtasib* of

74 The author is briefly mentioned in D. Ross, *Tatar Empire: Kazan’s Muslims and the Making of Imperial Russia* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2020): 151–152.

75 “Yaqtı qoyash qızarıp çıqqanda cheltärep sular aga mongaep. // Sandugachlar sayrap yibärgändä, monglı qartlar kölä yelmaep. // Baqchalarda üskän almalar, jil-dawıllar bulsa, qoeladı. // Wäyran bulgan irlär iskä töhsä, äjällärdäy awır toeladı // Hawalarda ochqan qoshlar äytä: ‘Agach bashlarında—bostan,’ dip. // Kiemnärne kürsäm, shular äytä: ‘Aerılma iske dustıngnan,’ dip.” Kamal Muzaffarov, *I hälälem, Bibi Fatima...*, Kazan University Library, 338T: fol. 1a.

76 Kazan University Library, Oriental Section, F. 1 (Mir Khaydar Fayzi), D. 41: fol. 3b [notes dated by 1901]; D. 45, passim [dated by 1916].

77 Fath al-Qadir Babich, *Burhan-i tawhid*: fols. 249–250.

space influenced the subjects, who also transformed the space they inhabited. For Jarullah al-Yusufi, the orchard was a place of honor and self-reflection (Fig. 6). Al-Yusufi spent his entire life in his home village of Yalgash, in the Penza region.⁷⁹ His father was, unsurprisingly, a Sufi shaykh, with a rather unusual linkage to a Qadiri tradition, obtained from a teacher in Samarkand. In contrast to his father, al-Yusufi studied in the Ottoman Empire and never expressed any interest in Sufism. From 1914 until his death in 1975, al-Yusufi occupied the position of village imam and was a permanent member of the Muftiate in Ufa. His contemporaries called him 'history on legs', because he witnessed so much of the history of Islam in twentieth-century Russia. It seems that nothing would drive him out of his village: from his father he inherited a stone house with a separate building for his library⁸⁰ and a huge garden behind (Fig. 7). Since al-Yusufi's father was a Sufi shaykh, it is likely that the garden had been created during his lifetime. I suspect that this place was also a gathering spot, similarly to al-Chuqri's garden described above. His coolness towards Sufism notwithstanding, Jarullah al-Yusufi valued this garden greatly; in the 1920s, during the state attack on religion, he organized an open-air madrasa there.⁸¹

On most of his photographs, al-Yusufi appears in the garden. He liked to be photographed in his traditional Tatar dress in a variety of contexts, resembling much of the symbolism evoked above in literary sources. For him the garden was certainly a spiritual space. There are several family pictures that have religious connotations. The earliest of them was taken in April 1960, portraying al-Yusufi in turban and his wife Farida completely covered standing in the garden, returning from the Friday prayer (Fig. 8). They did a family photo in the garden in June 1960, at the celebration of 'Id al-Adha (Fig. 9). Here al-Yusufi and Farida are sitting in the pose of prayer with their hands on knees. Further religious connotations can be discerned from literary practices: at least one photograph shows us al-Yusufi reading or writing in the garden (Fig. 10), much like many of his predecessors would have done. Finally, yet another link to the literary symbols analyzed above can be found on two pictures displaying al-Yusufi and his relatives with apples in their hands (Fig. 11–12). If I recall

79 This village was home to a madrasa from at least 1253/1837–1838: Kazan University Library, 6005 Ar. (colophon).

80 According to Raif Mardanov, an experienced specialist in Tatar manuscripts, the habit of keeping the library in a separate building without heating was common among the large collections of old books that he had inspected in the 1980s (interview with the author, May 2020). During his long life al-Yusufi must have collected a huge archive, but regretfully almost nothing has survived.

81 Interview with Shamil Iusupov (Kazan, summer 2018).

FIGURE 6
Jarullah al-Yusufi in his garden, 1950s

FIGURE 7 A complex of house buildings belonging to al-Yusufi, 1970s

FIGURE 8 Al-Yusufi and Farida returning from the Friday prayer, 1960

FIGURE 9 The family of al-Yusufi celebrating 'Id al-Adha, 1960

FIGURE 10 Al-Yusufi reading or writing in the garden, 1960s

FIGURES 11–12 Al-Yusufi and his family members with apples in their hands, 1970s

Mir Haydar Fayzi's habit of drinking tea in the open, then the al-Yusufi's garden has an important detail to add to this picture: he had an outdoor sitting platform (*topchan*) for tea ceremonies (Fig. 13–14). Given that such sitting platforms are very uncommon in Inner Russia, I suspect this object was inspired by its Central Asian or Caucasian prototypes. Thanks to its leisure potential, the orchard often served a place of communication, be that the closest family,

FIGURES 13–14 Tea ceremonies in the garden, 1970s

FIGURE 15 Mufti Shakir Khiiialetdinov in al-Yusufi's garden, 1960s

or al-Yusufi's fellow Muslim scholars (Fig. 15). On the back of the photograph taken "in our garden under the apple trees" in July 1940 al-Yusufi penned a dedication to his son Anwar "as an enduring [object of] memory to look in times of longing" (Fig. 16–17). The habit of doing photography in the garden continued down to al-Yusufi's children. In fact, while al-Yusufi created his own imaginary of the garden, full of piety and traditional symbolism, this space was open to various versions of subjectivity, be that the figure of his first wife Farida (Fig. 18) or the multiple children and relatives (Fig. 19–20), who would continue picturing themselves in the garden without their grandfather and thus forging a new Soviet subjectivity, alien to Muslim symbolism of previous epochs.

The following colorful photograph (Fig. 21) was taken by Shamil Iusupov (d. 2018), the grandson of al-Yusufi. The subjectivity of al-Yusufi was bound up with the orchard and found expression through relations with his close relatives: al-Yusufi's wife, his son and the latter's wife, who appear in the photograph, and his grandson Shamil, who is behind the camera. The colorful shots from Iusupov's personal archive reveal structural details. The garden formed a gallery, with a path leading from the house to a pavilion (just discernible in the picture in Fig. 21). A small bench was located on the left, directly under a large tree. The garden as a space of specific feelings was meant to be reproduced

FIGURES 16–17 Al-Yusufi's family in the garden, 5 July 1940

visually. Long after the unfortunate destruction of the garden and household of al-Yusufi in the 1990s, his grandson Shamil created a wall display in his house, where the vision of the garden plays a central role (Fig. 22).

In terms of style and content, the private photos of Jarullah al-Yusufi closely resemble the materials from the collection of his contemporary, 'Abd al-Bari Isaev (1907–1983), a native of Yugari Atash village in south-west Bashkiria. He

FIGURE 18 Farida al-Yusufi in the garden, early 1960s

FIGURES 19–20 The young Soviet generation in al-Yusufi's garden

FIGURE 21 The family of al-Yusufi in their garden. Early 1970s

FIGURE 22 A wall exhibition at the house of Shamil Iusupov

PHOTO TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR IN 2018

obtained his education in local madrasas and memorized the entire Qur'an already in his youth, after which he continued his studies with Ziya' Kamali (1873–1943), an alumnus of al-Azhar and a reformist thinker directly influenced by Muhammad 'Abduh.⁸² This link ensured that Isaev belonged to a reformist intellectual lineage without even traveling abroad. Most of the practices of Persianate culture (especially those of Naqshbandi Sufism) were alien to Isaev, except for garden culture and the composition of poetry. Throughout his life, Isaev wrote autobiographical poetry that facilitated the expression of his feelings. The garden remained the main setting of this creative oeuvre.

From the 1920s the Isaev family resided in Ufa. 'Abd al-Bari Isaev built his own house in the Archbishop quarter, located at walking distance from the Aq Idel River. The Isaevs stayed there until 1956, when Isaev was appointed to the Leningrad mosque. There they lived for a while in the imam's office itself,

82 On the intellectual exchanges of Egyptian and Tatar reformists just before the Revolution, see S.A. Dudoignon, "Echoes to al-Manar Among Muslims of the Russian Empire: A Preliminary Research Note on Riza al-Din b. Fakhr al-Din and the Shura (1908–1918)." In *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, Transformation, Communication*, ed. by S.A. Dudoignon, K. Hisao, and K. Yasushi (New York: Routledge, 2006): 85–116; R.B. Sadeh, "Between Cairo and the Volga-Urals: *Al-Manar* and Islamic Modernism, 1905–17." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 21/3 (2020): 525–553.

opposite the mosque, but then were given a very small apartment nearby. Surprisingly, the attractive urban environment of the city center, with its huge parks and historical monuments, did not satisfy Isaev. In 1960, following the advice of local Tatars, he bought a dacha in Vsevolozhsk, a suburb of Leningrad. The difference between the notion of *baqcha* in Ufa and that of dacha in Vsevolozhsk was tremendous. While the former constituted an integral part of the house, the latter was physically removed from the city dwelling. Judging by the available photographs, the two spaces also made significantly different visual impressions.

The photographic archive of ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev allows us to visually trace the organization of private space, as created by Isaev first in Ufa and then in Vsevolozhsk. On two pictures from 1954/1955 we see a small house with access to a water source and a private garden that included fruit trees (Fig. 23–24). ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev certainly had strong personal feelings about these trees and he liked to be photographed with them (Fig. 25–26). In this way, gardens entered the new forms of visuality by providing a setting for the self-fashioning of their owners.

The following portrait (Fig. 27) bears the date 2 June 1952 and a brief note in Arabic-script Tatar: “a picture (*räsem*) taken in my garden (*üzemneng baqchada*).”⁸³ The use of the possessive pronoun in Tatar carries particular weight as a signifier of proximity and of emotional belonging: the subject and his setting appear to be visually and textually intertwined. The same series of photos found its way into a family album, where Isaev added a few lines of poetry:

Look at my fate lately,
Where did it take me:
After having passed so many difficulties,⁸⁴
It has brought me here,
In my garden that I have raised myself.
Amongst the apple trees
You’ll find out what I’m doing,
If you look at the picture.

BARI⁸⁵

83 All photographs and manuscripts of ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev have been preserved by his son ‘Ali (b. 1953), who still resides in St Petersburg.

84 In the 1930s, like many of his contemporaries, ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev was repressed and then forced to move to Central Asia.

85 “Menä kür songı tormışnı, // nindi hälgä kiterde: // törle hällärne uzdırgach, // shushı zhırgä zhitkärde. // Üzem üstergän baqchamda // almalar arasında // nishläp torgannı

FIGURES 23–24 The house and garden of the Isaev family in Ufa, 1954/1955

FIGURES 25–26 'Abd al-Bari Isaev in his garden, 1951

FIGURE 27 A portrait of 'Abd al-Bari Isaev with a note on the back

This dialog of the poetic photo album, with its abstract audience, reveals an emphasis on a sense of belonging ("my garden") that repeats itself in refrain in other verses by Isaev. This link provides an interesting case of how individuality takes shape in a symbolic spatial setting. Subjects created gardens, and those gardens fostered the subjectivity of their creators.

In many photographs taken in his garden, Isaev does not appear as an imam, preferring a more secular outlook. Only the regular presence of a hat or skull-cap (Fig. 28–29) reminds us of the religious setting, but there is an absence of reflection on the legitimacy of photography in Islamic terms. Isaev's orchard served him as a place of solitude, creativity and the expression of his individuality. Photos taken there are full of romanticism, often expressed in poetry:

My farm, my house, my garden
Are all before my eyes.
"I did it,"
I say to myself,

belersen // räsengä qararsıng da. // Bari." The private archive of 'Abd al-Bari Isaev kept by his son 'Ali in St Petersburg. Bari is a pen-name usually used by Isaev in his poetry.

FIGURES 28–29 ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev in his garden, early 1950s

Without looking away from the apple tree.
 On the dry soil of the mountain
 I have planted a dense forest.
 Inspired by Michurin,⁸⁶
 I've raised apple trees.

BARI⁸⁷

These verses that accompany the visual representation of the garden display no trace of religious vocabulary. Considered through the lens of patterns of Soviet visuality and the history of the dacha,⁸⁸ one might even say there is a complete absence of Islamic tradition. Indeed, whether located in the city itself (Ufa) or in a suburb (Vsevolozhsk), Isaev's garden could not escape the influence of new meanings attached to the post-war dacha culture. Still, the Muslim context did remain crucial, as 'Abd al-Bari Isaev was a religious scholar and theologian (*'alim*), a bearer of the Qur'anic text (*qari*) who performed recitation on a daily basis. Isaev was a very prolific writer who left an impressive legacy of writings on many subjects of Islamic knowledge, including Qur'an commentary, the Muslim creed, jurisprudence, Friday sermons, and—his magnum opus—a full Tatar translation of the Qur'an. In fact, the garden that we see in the pictures was the main setting where he produced his many writings.

This garden was definitely part of Isaev's self-conception, which found articulation both in visual and written form. Accordingly, most of the time Isaev appears in the pictures alone. While in general the garden context was male-dominated, in some rare instances we see Isaev accompanied by his wife Musawwama (Fig. 30) and his children. In these cases, the garden appears as a place of intimate relations and expressions of love. Love poetry from the early twentieth century lends support to this metaphor, with references to roses and birds in the garden.⁸⁹ The following photograph (Fig. 31), taken in Ufa in 1952, bears the poetic commentary:

86 Academician Ivan Michurin (1855–1935) was indeed a famous practitioner of selection. His name became emblematic of Soviet agriculture.

87 "Khujaligim, yortim, baqcham // baya küzem aldında. // "Wät buldirdim," - // dip toram, // almaga küz saldim da. // Taw Buena qori jirga // qara urman üsterdem. // Michurin'ning fikere belän // almaları jiterdem. // Bari."

88 St. Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710–2000* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003): Chapter 6.

89 For example: Burhan al-Din Nizamutdinov, *Ruba'i*: fols. 7a–53a. Kazan University Library, 2450T.

FIGURE 30 'Abd al-Bari and Musawwama drinking tea in their garden

Note: The dress of 'Abd al-Bari Isaev in this picture is noteworthy. The jacket (*choba*) worn here was an archaic element of casual dress widespread in the early twentieth century, but rather unexpected for the 1950s. Since Isaev was still relatively young this could not simply be his old dress, and it must have been produced domestically from fabric. The question remains whether this was a spontaneously-captured practice of everyday dress, or a purposeful archaization of the picture to create an aura of authenticity. Ultimately, both explanations are possible. A brief mention of *choba* is to be found in S. Suslova, *Tatarskii kostium: Istoriko-etnologicheskoe issledovanie* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2018): 78–79, 80–83 (a few examples from museums).

I sat down to rest in the orchard.

To take a beautiful [picture] I invited the children.⁹⁰

The subjectivity of 'Abd al-Bari Isaev is realized through his feelings towards his family who shared with him the romantic space of the orchard. All the photographs of Isaev in his garden reproduce a private space that differs drastically from the official pictures taken at mosques in the city.

Despite the seemingly secular character of the photographs taken in the 1950s, the garden space in those pictures hints at continuities with practices known from the time of 'Ali al-Chuqri, who similarly regarded the garden as a

90 "Alma baqchası echendä yal itärgä utırdım, // bigräk matur bulsın öchen balalarnı qıchqırdım."

FIGURE 31 Isaev with his children, 1952

space of prayer (Fig. 32) and literary creativity. All the photos featuring Isaev's garden were certainly staged, but this actually reinforces the effect of subjectivity: we can see exactly how individuals wanted to appear in photos meant for private consumption. After moving to Leningrad, 'Abd al-Bari Isaev loved to spend time at his dacha in Vsevolozhsk, especially after his forced removal from office in 1968, and upon returning from his appointment as a mufti in Ufa (1975–1980) until his death in 1983.

The next generation of Muslim religious figures did not share this fascination with gardens. 'Abbas Bibarsov (1937–2012), an avid book collector and a graduate of Bukharan Mir-i 'Arab madrasa,⁹¹ built a two-story house for him-

91 These three individuals were connected to each other. 'Abbas Bibarsov was born in a village that was under the religious jurisdiction of Jarullah al-Yusufi and it was the latter who produced a letter of recommendation for Bibarsov to enter the Mir-i 'Arab madrasa. 'Abd al-Bari Isaev, in the capacity of mufti, was Bibarsov's first employer in Ufa when he returned from his studies.

FIGURE 32 Isaev praying on a carpet in his robe and turban. Ufa, early 1950s

self in his home village, Urta Eluzan, in the Penza region; however, he did not plant any trees. Moreover, despite the fact that Bibarsov liked photography, produced hundreds of pictures and was otherwise quite positive about practices of self-Orientalization (as evident in Fig. 33), not a single photo from his huge personal archive features a garden. Both the aesthetics of garden culture and the art of crafting poetry were alien to Bibarsov, but for Jarullah al-Yusufi and ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev it would have been unthinkable to abandon these two practices inherited from the past.

Transformations took place gradually from generation to generation: on the one hand, the nineteenth-century Tatar students in Central Asia brought Persianate spatial imaginary back home with them and planted trees to create a setting for their Sufi gatherings; on the other hand, the generation of ‘Abd al-Bari Isaev and Jarullah al-Yusufi dispensed with the Sufi aura surrounding orchards, while still continuing to value gardens as a space of intimate feelings, as well as appreciating refined poetry. For them, the metaphorical world and physical setting of gardens were familiar and served as a platform for self-reflection. The new generation of Muslim functionaries after the Second World War, however, rejected Sufism together with its gardens and poetry.

Conclusion: The Lasting Memory of Gardens

Gardens played an essential role as a key metaphor in arts of poetry at least from the seventeenth century, transforming into a model for refined literature. Following the mainstream of Islamic symbolism, gardens in Tatar poetry were strongly incorporated into the death culture, referring to the graves of pious Muslims.⁹² Next to that botanical imaginary naturally included the discourses on paradise as well as love. This triangle of meanings created a discursive space for authors to express their emotions most creatively and use approximately the same set of vocabulary. Muslim poets, many of them being madrasa graduates who learned to express their thoughts in a rhymed form on the daily basis, creatively engaged with metaphors, terminology and conventions available to them from the classical Arabic and Persian poetry. For a period between the early eighteenth and early twentieth century the Persianate culture was the main source of inspiration for Tatar poetry and served as a provider of

92 The term *riyad* (sg. *rawdā*) was used in relation to graves since the twelfth century and by the fourteenth century in Iran the term meant any tomb “with no particular sense of garden.” Ch. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 257.

FIGURE 33 A portrait of 'Abbas Bibarsov during his studies at the Mir-i 'Arab madrasa in Bukhara, 1960s

Note: The private archive of 'Abbas Bibarsov in Urta Eluzan village of Penza region

cultural models for the construction of one's self. Sources at our disposal allow us to reconstruct the history of gardens as both a poetic metaphor and the actual space which Muslim individuals embodied in their intimate selves. In the course of the twentieth century, while some elements of the traditional Persianate culture continued their existence (i.e. magical practices, veneration of shrines), the new Soviet models of organizing the space became available, and garden culture experienced transformation at the intersection of these two standards.

Isma'il Rameev (1895–1969), a journalist from Kazan, described in his memoirs, published in the early Brezhnev era, the leisure culture of writers in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Those who wanted to rest in the city would opt for the scented gardens (*khush isle baqchasi*) near the Kaban lake. Notably, his description of the interior and associated activities is completely secular with no references to the terminology and symbols of paradise gardens that one would expect. *Baqcha* in Rameev's narrative clearly conveys the meaning of a Soviet dacha, a garden space without fruit trees, but populated instead by rowan, cherry, lilac, and button trees. A wooden table would be placed under shadow, to drink tea in the open, read and write. "Who knows,—Rameev continues,—maybe some of the cornerstones of our literature have been crafted there."⁹³ Since Rameev was writing retrospectively, it is also possible that his description reflected not much of the historical situation as the late Socialist practices of intelligentsia.⁹⁴ Even though the garden could be the same spatial setting materially, a secularized space for creativity of the Communist writers had little in common with gardens of the past, except the term *baqcha* which usage was now aimed to assimilate the new Soviet meanings for Tatar culture.

There is no doubt that by generalizing about the experience of 'Russia's Muslims' in a *longue durée* perspective, one risks overlooking local particularities in the handling of spatial categories over time. Is it possible to extrapolate from the engagement with gardens in Sufi poetry found in İstārlibash (south Bashkiria) in the mid-nineteenth century to the situation in contemporary St Petersburg and even Kazan? Regardless of these concerns, we are not yet in a position to write a detailed Begriffsgeschichte of Muslim cultures in imperial and Soviet Russia. There is no database of Muslim ego-documents, and the data collected so far has limitations in terms of chronological and geographical representativeness, mainly deriving from the availability of sources

93 I. Rämiev, *Istäleklär. Tatarcha basma süz* (Kazan: Tatarstan kitap nāshriiaty, 1965): 56–57.

94 D. Crowley, S.E. Reid, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (London: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

and the relative novelty of the topic. Keeping these limitations in mind, I have attempted to draw a preliminary picture of the domestication and rethinking of Persianate gardens in the Russian Muslim context. On the assumption of the historical existence of emotional communities on the synchronic level,⁹⁵ there are undeniable commonalities among Russia's Muslims in terms of conceptual apparatus dealing with subjectivity, at least for the period of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. In other words, a close reading of ego-documents allows us to see the commonalities and differences in the emotional experience of individuals across various spatial and chronological contexts.⁹⁶ It is my hope that this attempt to do so will prove useful for future work on the study of Muslim spatial settings, as well as their impact on cultures of personhood.

In this article I set out to demonstrate that the evolution of garden culture, in both its physical manifestation and metaphorical form, went hand in hand with the transformation of the culture of personhood among the Muslims of imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. The roots of this cultural phenomenon stem from the Qur'anic tradition as well as from Persianate poetry. Imaginary and material gardens cultivated a related type of moral subject that valued refined poetry and Sufi practices. The generation of students that preferred the Near Eastern madrasas to the Bukharan ones still loved gardens, but dispensed with their Sufi connotations. The gradual decline of Muslim culture in Russia in the course of the twentieth century saw the disappearance of Sufi ethics and practice, but garden imagery continued to be accompanied by poetic expression and the same set of vocabulary familiar from classical texts of earlier periods (*bagh* and *bagcha* being the central terms).

Gardens in Muslim Russia were places of worship, solitude and introspection. These were places of creativity and observation of nature, with the pious aim to deepen one's faith in God. Gardens could also be places of socialization and intimate experiences with close friends and relatives, where poetry was composed, recited and appreciated. Structurally, gardens included fruit trees (apple trees being symbolic of the universe) and flowers that attracted bees, the Qur'anic carriers of God's message. Some gardens had a complex structure with a path, a gallery and a pavilion for receiving visitors or resting in privacy. Birds would join humans in their praise of God, recalling the deep metaphorical meanings of the garden that have evolved over time.

95 B. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

96 Idem., "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002): 821–845.

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