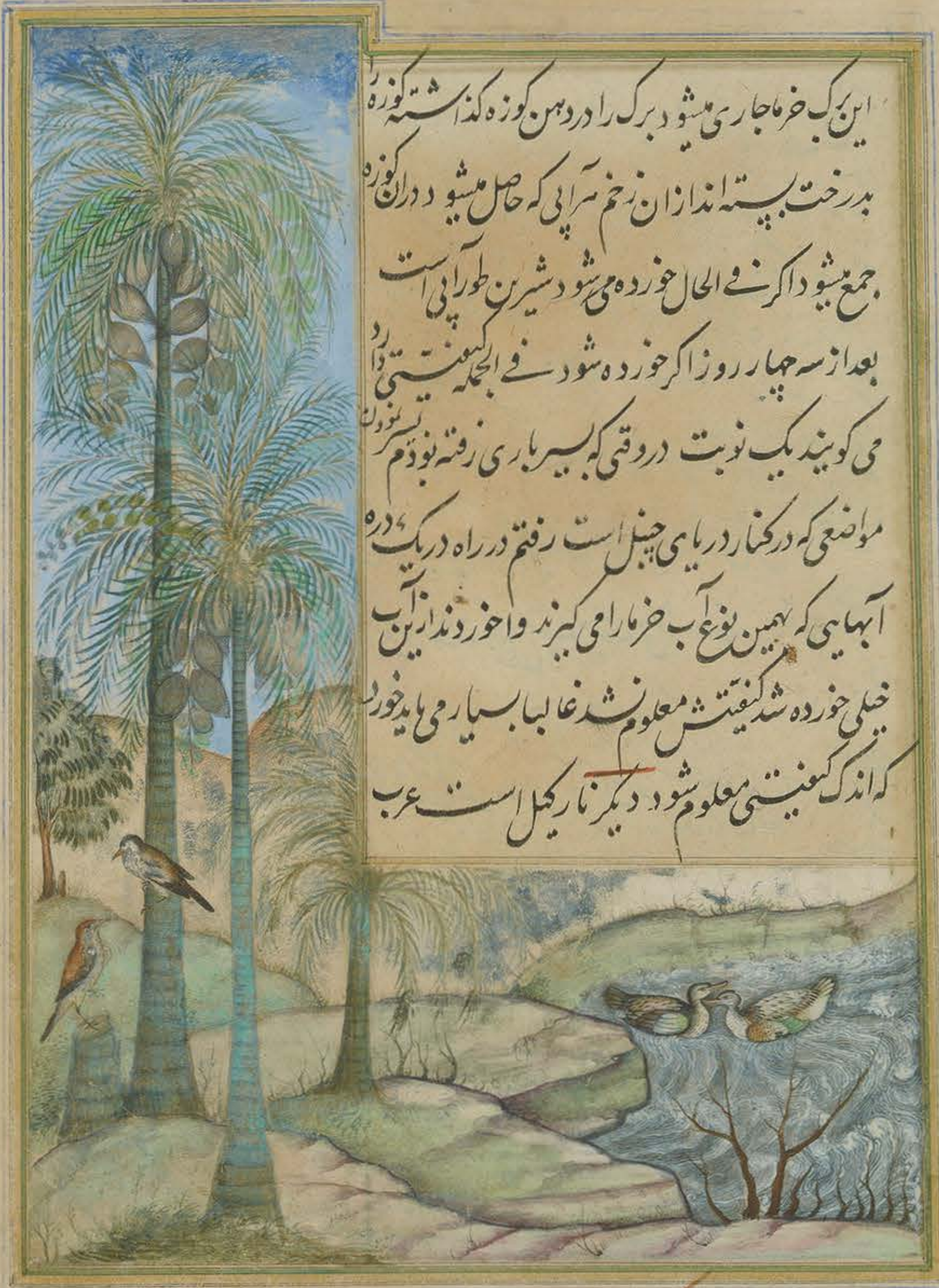


IN THE
FOOTSTEPS
OF EMPEROR
BABUR

ELIZABETH MOYNIHAN AND
THE ART OF FINDING LOST
MUGHAL GARDENS





این یک خرما جاری می شود بر ک را در دهن کوزه گذاشته کوزه
 بد رخت بسته اند از آن زخم سرپی که حاصل می شود در آن کوزه
 جمع می شود اگر نه الحال خورده می شود شیرین طوری است
 بعد از سه چهار روز اگر خورده شود نه بکسبیت می دانند
 می گویند یک نوبت در وقتی که بسیار می رفته بودم
 مواضعی که در کنار دریای چین است رفتم در راه در یک دره
 آبهای که همین نوع آب خرمای می گیرند و خورند از این آب
 خیلی خورده شد کیفیتش معلوم شد غایب بسیار می باید خورد
 که اندک کسبیت معلوم شود دیگر نار کحل است عرب

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طرح مسکینا عمل بهوره

"THE FRUIT OF THE COCONUT IS CALLED JAWZ-I-HINDI FROM WHICH LADLES ARE MADE. ROPES FOR ALL BOATS AND SHIPS ARE MADE FROM THIS COCONUT FIBER. AS IS CORD FOR SEAMING BOATS. WHEN THE COCONUT FIBER IS STRIPPED, THERE ARE REVEALED THREE HOLES ARRANGED IN A TRIANGLE ON THE NUT, TWO HARD AND ONE SOFT. ONE CAN PIERCE THE HOLE AND DRINK THE LIQUID, WHICH DOES NOT HAVE A BAD TASTE - RATHER LIKE LIQUEFIED DATE CHEESE." - BABUR

"IT'S ALL RIGHT IF YOUR WIFE IS IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER MAN IF HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS," Daniel Patrick Moynihan slyly remarked as he toasted a small group of friends. They had gathered at Ram Bagh, a garden in Agra, to celebrate the 500th birthday of the Emperor Babur, who had become the obsession of his wife, Elizabeth. A scholar of landscape architecture, Elizabeth organized the party in honor of Babur, who'd laid out the very garden in which they were standing. A decade before, Elizabeth had set out to find those of his gardens that had been lost to time; the emperor had described them in his memoir, *The Baburnama*, considered by many to be the first autobiography written in the Islamic world. "I actually have worn out two copies of *The Baburnama*," she says today.

Among the friends who gathered that Valentine's Day in 1983 were Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, celebrated writer of *Heat and Dust*, and her husband, C. S. H. Jhabvala, the dean of the Delhi School of Architecture, who became Moynihan's "guru" in the field of Mughal architecture. Film producer Ismail Merchant traveled from Bombay to Agra and brought *nautch* girls who danced in what was imagined to be the style of dance in Babur's day, to music that may have been played at the time. "It was a fabulous party" Elizabeth says, "we sat on large pillows that had been sprinkled with rose petals, and everything was covered in marigolds."

About ten years earlier, President Richard Nixon had appointed Daniel P. Moynihan, the head of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University, ambassador to India. At the time, Elizabeth was studying architectural history at Harvard and was a member of the landscape architecture program at the Radcliffe Institute. "When we were going to India, I thought, 'What can I do to continue my studies?' I had been thinking about writing on the Oriental use of water in old palaces, but instead decided to do a survey of surviving Mughal gardens. I feel very lucky to have been grabbed by such an interest." At that time in the United States, the area of Mughal studies was fairly new. "Milo Beach, former head of the Freer and Sackler Galleries, actually made it a field of study," Moynihan says. "I had seen references to



BABUR'S GARDEN IN DHOLPUR: "BABUR WITH ATTENDANTS IN A GARDEN PAVILION" IN THE COLLECTION OF THE FREER AND SACKLER; ELIZABETH AND FRIEND IN DOHLPUR; ONE OF BABUR'S GARDENS IN KABUL; AND A SECOND IMAGE OF THE EMPEROR BABUR FROM THE MUSEUM.

Mughal gardens in texts but no books on the subject, aside from Constance Villiers-Stuart's 1923 book, *Gardens of the Great Mughals*. I had that book as a guide and that was quite wonderful to have as a companion."

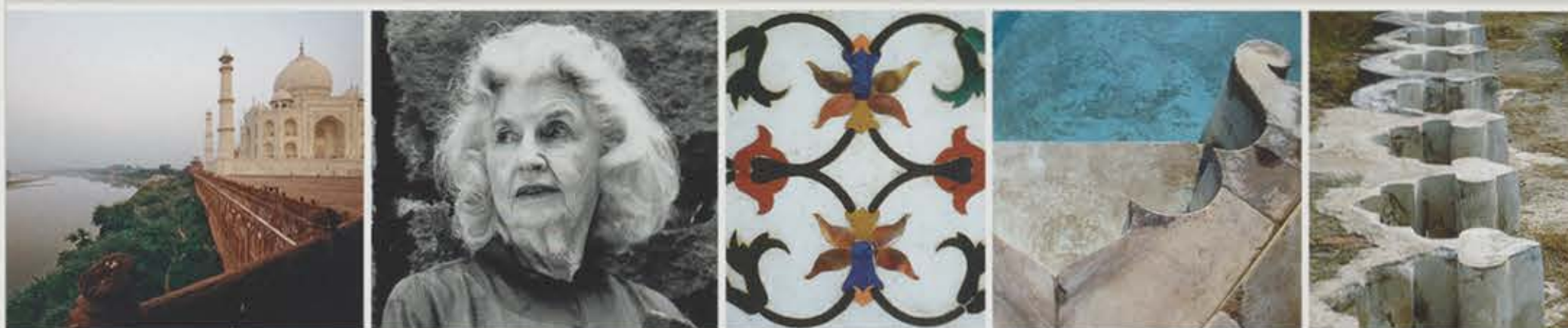
And so she dug in, literally. Armed with aerial maps, guides in Indian-made Ambassador cars (appropriately enough) and knowledge of landscape architecture, she began looking for Babur's lost gardens. Over the course of her more than thirty years in India, from the 1970s to the present time, she has discovered five of them. "When I was working on the survey," Elizabeth says, "I felt I had to go back to Persia and Uzbekistan. I wanted to go to every place where he built something. I followed his route from Kabul to India, and I found his Lotus Garden."

Her greatest finding, however, was the Moonlight Garden, or Mehtab Bagh, behind the Taj Mahal, a project undertaken some years later with the Freer and Sackler Galleries. This extraordinary discovery unlocked one of the Taj's last remaining secrets. "I knew there was something there," Elizabeth adds buoyantly, "The Taj just couldn't have stopped at the river."

Back in Delhi, the diplomatic scene didn't really interest her, and she refrained from attending most diplomatic events. "You couldn't attend selectively. You had to go to all or none. Pat went to the parties, and I spent my time studying Mughal architecture and working on a survey of surviving Mughal gardens." This would become her book, *Paradise as a Garden*, the first to be published in George Braziller's World Landscape Art and Architecture series.

Shortly before the Moynihans left India, Elizabeth and her children attended a Christmas celebration for ambassadors' families at the home of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (and in the garden where she would later be assassinated). Mrs. Gandhi came up to her and said, "You know, it doesn't matter that they don't like you." "Who doesn't like me?" asked Elizabeth, a bit surprised. "All of them," the prime minister shot back, referring to the other embassy wives milling around. "You don't go to the parties, but you did the right thing because you learned something about India."

The Elizabeth B. Moynihan Fund generously supports acquisitions and scholarship related to the Emperor Babur.



THE TAJ MAHAL IN AGRA ON THE BANKS OF THE YAMUNA RIVER; ELIZABETH MOYNIHAN IN 2009 BY HER GRANDSON, MICHAEL AVEDON. A DETAIL FROM THE TAJ MAHAL AND TWO GARDEN FRAGMENTS FROM THE REMAINS OF THE MEHTAB BAGH, OR MOONLIGHT GARDEN.

