



**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ISLAMIC
GARDEN IN RESPONSE TO LANDSCAPE
DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic garden rose to prominence during the peak of the Muslim civilisation. The garden is regarded as one of the important legacies for Muslims in Islamic history. The Islamic garden gained the attention of European culture in the 18th century, and the values of the garden are respected as a valuable part of Muslim heritage. However, acknowledgement of the garden is gradually starting to be overlooked and undervalued. One of the factors contributing to this issue is the occurrence of a huge gap to connect the current and historical values of the Islamic garden as the earliest evidence of the Persian garden is initiated in the seventh century. In short, this study seeks to identify the physical characteristics of the Islamic garden and adapt its values to garden design in Malaysia. Three prominent gardens are brought to the fore as gardens of reference in developing an understanding of the Islamic garden, namely the Persian, Andalusian and Mughal gardens. Another primary focus of the study is to highlight the relevance of implementing the Islamic garden in an Asian country, notably Malaysia. In view of this, three objectives are outlined to achieve the aim: to identify a list of the physical characteristics of the Islamic garden, evaluate the level of importance of the physical characteristics and evaluate the level of adaptation of the Islamic garden in Malaysia. The study is based on qualitative methods of data collection. However, a quantitative method of analysis is also integrated into the data analysis to measure the level of adaptation of the Islamic garden. Three methods of data collection were employed: document analysis, semi-structured interviews with participants from the National Landscape Department and the Landscape Department at the Putrajaya Corporation, as well as multiple case studies. The multiple case studies were conducted at three gardens in Andalusia, Spain. As for the local context, two categories of gardens, both with and without an Islamic garden influence, were selected as the case study areas in Malaysia. These case studies are located in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, respectively. The findings obtained in the study are categorised into three sections. The first section explains the current state of the landscape development in Malaysia with regard to the Islamic garden. A model is developed to show the underlying concerns occurring within the landscape development. The second section identifies the physical characteristics of the Islamic garden and evaluates the level of importance of the list based on four categories of a weightage system; highly recommended, recommended, advisory and non-compulsory. The third section evaluates the level of adaptation of the Islamic garden concept in Malaysia. The result of the assessment is evaluated according to the marking system, percentage, ranking system and the average percentage. Based on the results shown, a discussion of the intervening factors contributing to the outcomes is addressed from both the theoretical and empirical findings. In general, the findings of the study progress around developing a concise checklist of the physical characteristics that are flexible to accommodate the potential and the limits of implementing the Islamic garden in Malaysia. A flexible and practical utilisation of the checklist based on the priority of its importance as well as potential association supported with statistical justification are viewed as an alternative for the landscape development. The findings contribute to broadening and strengthening the idea of the Islamic garden both in research as well as landscape development. The underlying key findings in achieving the aim and objectives are restated as the final remarks of the study.

ملخص البحث

ازدهرت الحقائق الإسلامية في أوج الحضارة الإسلامية. حيث تُعدُّ الحديقة واحدةً من الموروثات المهمة بالنسبة للمسلمين في التاريخ الإسلامي. وقد استحوذت الحديقة الإسلامية على اهتمام الثقافة الأوروبية في القرن الثامن عشر، واعتبرت القيم المطبقة في الحديقة بوصفها جزءاً من التراث الإسلامي القيم. ومع ذلك، فإن الاعتراف بالحديقة بدأ تدريجياً يُهان ويقلل من قيمتها. أحد العوامل التي تسهم في هذه القضية هو حدوث فجوة كبرى لربط القيم الحالية والتاريخية للحديقة الإسلامية بوصفها أول دليل على الحديقة الفارسية التي بدأت في القرن السابع الميلادي. وباختصار، فإن هذه الدراسة تسعى إلى التعرف على الخصائص الفيزيائية للحديقة الإسلامية، وتكييف قيمها لتصميم الحدائق في ماليزيا. يتم عرض ثلاث حدائق بارزة بوصفها حدائق مرجعية في تطوير فهم الحديقة الإسلامية، وهي الحدائق الفارسية، والأندلسية، والمغولية. وترتكز الدراسة بشكل أساسي على تسليط الضوء على أهمية تنفيذ الحديقة الإسلامية في بلد آسيوي، وخاصةً في ماليزيا. وفي ضوء ذلك، تم تحديد ثلاثة أهداف لتحقيق الهدف، وهي تحديد قائمة بالخصائص الفيزيائية للحديقة الإسلامية، وتقييم مستوى أهمية الخصائص الفيزيائية، وتقييم مستوى تكيف الحديقة الإسلامية في ماليزيا. وتستند الدراسة إلى الأساليب النوعية لجمع البيانات، وفي ذلك يتم دمج أسلوب التحليل الكمي أيضاً في تحليل البيانات لقياس مستوى التكيف مع الحديقة الإسلامية. وقد استخدمت ثلاث طرق لجمع البيانات: تحليل الوثائق، والمقابلات شبه المنظمة مع المشاركين من إدارة المناظر الطبيعية الوطنية، وإدارة المناظر الطبيعية في شركة بوتراجايا فضلاً عن دراسات الحالة المتعددة. أُجريت دراسات الحالة المتعددة على ثلاث حدائق في الأندلس وإسبانيا. أمّا بالنسبة للسياق المحلي، فقد تم اختيار فئتين من الحدائق، سواء مع أو بدون تأثير الحديقة الإسلامية، بوصفها مناطق لدراسة الحالة في ماليزيا. وتقع دراسات الحالة هذه في ولايتي: كوالالمبور (بيرسيكوتوان)، وبوتراجايا على التوالي. وتُصنّف النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها في الدراسة إلى ثلاثة أقسام. يوضح القسم الأول الحالة الراهنة لتطوير المناظر الطبيعية في ماليزيا فيما يتعلق بالحديقة الإسلامية. تم تطوير نموذج لإظهار المخاوف الكامنة التي تحدث خلال تطوير المناظر الطبيعية. أمّا القسم الثاني فيحدد الخصائص

الفيزيائية للحديقة الإسلامية، وقيّم مستوى أهميّة القائمة تبعًا لأربع فئاتٍ من نظام الوزن، وهي التي يوجّه النُصح بها بشدّة للشركات الاستشاريّة وغير الإلزاميّة، ويوصيها بذلك. القسم الثالث يُقيّم مستوى التّكيف مع مفهوم الحديقة الإسلاميّة في ماليزيا. ويتمّ تقييم نتيجة التّقييم وفقًا لنظام الوسم، والنّسبة المئويّة، ونظام التّصنيف، ومتوسّط النّسبة المئويّة. واستنادًا إلى النّاتج المبيّنة؛ فإنّه يتمّ تناول مناقشة العوامل المتداخلة والمساهمة في النّاتج النّظريّة والتّجريبية. وبصفةٍ عامّةٍ؛ تتقدّم نتائج هذه الدّراسة بوضع قائمةٍ مرجعيّةٍ موجزةٍ من الخصائص الفيزيائية التي تتّسم بالمرونة لاستيعاب إمكانيّات وحدود تنفيذ الحديقة الإسلاميّة في ماليزيا. ويُعدّ الاستخدام المرن والعملي للقائمة المرجعيّة على أساس أولوية أهمّيّتها، وكذلك الارتباط المحتمل المدعوم بمبرراتٍ إحصائيّةٍ بديلاً لتطوير المناظر الطّبيعيّة. وتساهم النّاتج في توسيع وتعزيز فكرة الحديقة الإسلاميّة سواء في مجال البحث، أو في تطوير المناظر الطّبيعيّة. وقد أعيد بيان النّاتج الرئيسيّة الكامنة في تحقيق الهدف والغايات بوصفها ملاحظات نهائيّة للدّراسة.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This study seeks to explore the values of the Islamic garden in response to the landscape development in Malaysia. The main keywords featured are ‘values’, ‘Islamic garden’ and the ‘local context of Malaysia’. In detail, the study sought to identify the physical characteristics of the Islamic garden as part of an attempt to adapt the values in a garden design in Malaysia. The three keywords are further discussed throughout the study.

The term values is defined by Rundell (2002) in the Macmillan Dictionary as ‘the principles and beliefs that influence the behaviour and way of life of a particular group or community’. However, the terminology suggests a relatively different understanding depending on how the term is applied in the research field. Since the term values is featured as a keyword in this study, an operational term is drafted to define the term in relation to the context of the study. The operational term of values is evaluated in line with the viewpoints of seven research fields. The reviews involve an understanding of the term based on historical study, Islamic study, sociology, behavioural science, human geography, architecture and landscape architecture. The study situates the term around the standpoint of landscape architecture, specifically with regard to the Islamic garden. A series of assessments is conducted to develop the operational term, with the outcome becoming the operating definition to be addressed in the study.

Meanwhile, the keyword Islamic garden is emphasised as part of an important enquiry to be assessed during the study. In general, Nasrine Faghieh and Amin Sadegby (2012) regard the Islamic garden as a garden that came to prominence during the peak

of the Muslim civilisation. Thus, the ideology of the Islamic garden is highly associated with Islamic influences (Brookes, 1987; Smith, 1991; Haaga, 2005; Haenraets et al., 2013). Nazia Ansari (2011) mention that the establishment of the first Islamic garden was inspired by the image of a garden in paradise as portrayed in Al-Quran (Maulawi Sher Ali, 2004; Talal Itani, 2012). Leila Mahmoudi Farahani et al. (2016) state that the expression of a garden as described in Al-Quran encouraged Muslim designers to create similar gardens as an analogue for paradise. The results of this creation can be observed with the establishment of the Persian garden, in addition to another two prominent Islamic gardens, namely the Andalusian and Mughal gardens (Ruggles, 2003; Clark, 2004).

The study of the Islamic garden covers a wide range of research explorations; for example, through the historical understanding of the Islamic garden (Muhammad, 2010; Hunt, 2011; Ruggles, 2012; Kermani, 2013; Rogozen-Soltar, 2013; Sara Mahdizadeh, 2015), the establishment of the prominent Islamic garden as a garden of reference (Shahidi, 2010; Stino & Stino, 2011; Wescoat, 2012; Mahdavinejad et al., 2013; Rostami et al., 2014; Rezakolai et al., 2015; Joni et al., 2016) and future advancement in regards to the development of the Islamic garden (Yeganeh & Ghoshouni, 2009; Tabriz & A'zami, 2009; Ruggles, 2009; Pour at al., 2012; Kazemi & Darskhan, 2014; Faezah Ashtiani, 2015; Rostami et al., 2015). As can be seen, the research exploration covers the historical aspects and the current condition of the remaining evidence, as well as the future advancement of the Islamic garden. Throughout the reviews, a few concerns are raised in the research development relating to the topic of the Islamic garden.

A study carried out by Wescoat (1986) highlights issues related to the Islamic garden from the viewpoint of landscape research. The primary concern is the confusion

in the terminology used in relation to the Islamic garden, as well as the lack of understanding with regard to appreciating the creation of the garden (Wescoat, 1999; Gilliat-Ray & Bryant, 2010). The argument stresses the importance of strengthening the basic understanding of the study of the Islamic garden. Another concern discovered in the reviews is that of the limited surviving evidence that can be used as reference and guidance for the purpose of learning about the Islamic garden (Wescoat, 2006, 2007; Gilliat-Ray & Bryant, 2010; Ruggles, 2009, 2012; Ali Assari et al., 2012). Besides, Silverman and Ruggles (2007) point out that the surviving evidence is seen as a set of tangible indications about the Islamic garden that serves to trace the legacy of the Muslim civilisation. Such deficiency in maintaining the physical proof is seen as contributing to a loss of the original identity of the Islamic garden. In view of this, this study embarks on discussing the appropriate method for addressing these concerns.

Another keyword highlight derives from the viewpoint of a local context, with the study's emphasis being concentrated in Malaysia. According to Germeraad (1993), study of the establishment of the prominent Islamic garden is usually focused on Middle Eastern countries (Farzaneh Elyasi Gorji et al., 2014; Halsted, 2014; Iravani et al., 2015). For that reason, this study is conducted with a view to examining the relevance of adapting the values of the Islamic garden from the standpoint of Asian perspectives, mainly those found in Malaysia. As mentioned by Snodgrass (1995), Malaysia is a decent exemplary of a multicultural society (Mohd Anuar Ramli & Mohammad Aizat Jamaludin, 2012). The country comprises three main races – Malays, Chinese and Indian (Economic Planning Unit, 2004). In addition, Ataul Huq Pramanik (2002) further describes Malaysia as a successful example of a multicultural society under the influence of a Muslim governance system (Mahathir Mohamad, 1999; Norliza Mohd Isa, 2011).

As a multicultural society, the intention to adapt the values of the Islamic garden is viewed as a challenging approach considering the cultural sensitivity of the country. In addressing this concern, the study attained a reference from the successful establishment of the Medina Charter. As described by Yusri Mohamad Ramli and Ghani Jusoh (2012), the Medina Charter is an ideal example, learnt from the history of the Muslim civilisation, of an appropriate method with which to unite Muslims and non-Muslims under the guidance of Islamic laws. History of the Medina Charter shows the probability of the Islamic laws, principles and values to be accepted by both Muslim and the Non-Muslim (Ismail Albayrak, 2010). The key success of the Medina Charter is identified in the study as a form of guidance to highlight the relevance and possibility of the values of the Islamic garden being embedded in the local garden approach in Malaysia.

Moreover, in the context of Malaysia as the case study area, the study seeks to discover the current state of the level of adaptation of the Islamic garden approach in the design of gardens. An understanding of the present scenario assists in creating a method to measure the current needs of the country, specifically from the perspective of the landscape development. The step is observed as necessary in underlining the practicality of adapting the values of the Islamic garden in Malaysia. In highlighting the ideology of the Islamic garden, an understanding of the initial intentions as well as of the garden principles is perceived as compulsory. Furthermore, study on the development of prominent Islamic gardens contributes to the development of an understanding of the importance of the establishment of the garden as well as its significant affiliation to the Muslim civilisation.

Consequently, the study proceeds with the development of an appropriate means with which to address these concerns through its literature and contextual

reviews. In addition, the problem statement and underlying gaps are discussed as the basic outline with which to emphasise the importance as well as the relevance of conducting the study. The elaborations that contribute to the development of the overall framework of the study are the research question, aim and objectives to be further investigated throughout the assessments.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Based on the reviews, several issues in relation to understanding of the Islamic garden are identified in the literature. The main key issues discovered highlight the lack of comprehension and appreciation of the valuable historical heritage of the Islamic garden. This situation arises due to the fact that there are huge gaps in terms of time and generation in connecting the current and historical values of the Islamic garden. A number of factors were discovered from the literature as well as from the contextual reviews that have contributed to these issues. These contributing factors are discussed in the following sections.

1.2.1 Literature Reviews

Research conducted by Wescoat (1999) highlights concern on the issues regarding the terminology of the Islamic garden. Parallel to this, Gilliat-Ray and Bryant (2010) set out a similar opinion whereby there are difficulties in establishing the appropriate terms to be used when defining the Islamic garden. The term Quranic garden was previously used in relation to the Islamic garden (Adiloglu, 2011; Mahdi Jamalinezhad et al., 2012; Maryam Ahmadi, 2014; Raheleh Akbari Joni et al. 2016). This reflected the fact that the establishment of the Islamic garden was inspired by the ideology of a Quranic garden in paradise (Nafisi et al., 2016). As a result, the term Quranic garden is

frequently confused with the term Islamic garden. In reality, however, the two terms relate to a similar garden concept. Due to this confusion, one concern addressed is the appropriate term for use in relation to the garden. This complexity serves to highlight the argument of how well others will recognise the unfamiliar terminology.

1. Substantial concern relates to the restriction associated with the term Quranic garden.

The Quranic garden is perceived to have a limitation if the term is narrowly interpreted (Wescoat, 1999; Gilliat-Ray & Bryant, 2010). Although the definition emphasises a garden in the Muslim civilisation, the terminology is nevertheless perceived as being highly associated with a particular religion. Therefore, to maximise the utilisation of the garden concept would be challenging.

2. The majority of the terminology mentioned in the literature.

An initial search of the literature revealed the absence of any concrete writing in relation to the Quranic garden. This was in contrast to an abundance of research that explained the idea of an Islamic garden (Clark, 2004; Fadaie & Seyed Majid Moidi, 2015; Nayeem Asif et al., 2015; Shaghayegh Moalemzadeh Ansari, 2015). In addition, due to the restriction on the term Quranic garden, researchers preferred to use a familiar and less controversial term, that of Islamic garden. Therefore, the majority of studies have used the term Islamic garden rather than Quranic garden.

Thus, the establishment of the definition is resolved, and as such the term to be used is that of Islamic garden. Aside from the issue of the terminology, another contributing factor giving rise to the issues is the lack of physical characteristics as evidence that can be used to explore the Islamic garden.