Developing Malaysia environmental Islamic Garden based on the Islamic foundation of the beauty and moderation element following the Quranic paradise imagery

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ABSTRACT

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An Islamic garden is a complex of various layers of time and essences compacted together, which gives the idea of unity in diversity, multilayered over centuries of apparently insignificant changes. The design of the Islamic garden is influenced by specific meanings in mind, applying certain ideological rooted in Islamic faith and Muslim culture using distinct design elements. Quranic paradise imagery provides a foundation for understanding Islamic Gardens as clearly shared by established Islamic Gardens such as the gardens of Persia, Mughal India and Moorish Spain. This paper presents Islamic philosophy of the beauty and moderation elements in the context of a Quranic illustrated paradise that mentioned in the verse of some Surah. The aim of this paper is to emphasis the Islamic principle of the beauty and moderation elements in response to the environmental Islamic Garden in Malaysia. A qualitative research which involves content analysis and descriptive is employed to conduct the research. It is expected that the paper can relate to the impression of Islamic garden value as an inspiring landscape design in creating an environmental Islamic Garden in Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic garden was the earthly symbol of Paradise. It derived from the pre-Islamic Persian gardens which attempted to recreate the whole world within an enclosed space. After the conquest of Persia by the Arabs in the 7th century [1], not only was the Persian garden itself influenced by Muslim philosophy, but this sophisticated form of garden spread throughout the Islamic world. It became the basis of the Moghul gardens in Kashmir and India as well as the fabled Moorish gardens in Southern Spain the Generalife Alhambra. Through these Spanish gardens the idea of the Islamic garden spread to the New World where its influence can still be traced in the Spanish colonial gardens of the South West, the Revival gardens of the early 20th century, especially in California, and even in the spare modern style of the Mexican landscape architect Luis Baragan [2]. The simplicity of form and the appeal to the senses of the Islamic garden is well adapted to the creation of peaceful and restorative outdoor spaces in the modern world.

The period of Islamic garden was first acknowledged during the establishment of the Persian garden in the seventh century. The inspiration for the Islamic garden, first catch the attention of the European culture during the 17th century [3]. The Islamic garden is perceived as one of the seductive symbols of a new exotic world, describes as a place where the novel taste for space and decoration was freely expressed. The influences of the Islamic garden continue throughout the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, before it slowly disappears due to the modern movement.

2.0 Garden Of Islam and Its Interpretation:

Gardens have been described as a metaphor of Paradise or Al-Jannah. In fact the Arabic word, jannah, means "garden". The most significant description of heaven is as a beautiful garden, filled with greenery and flowing water. Every time heaven is mentioned in the holy book of Quran, there is an explanation of flowing water and fruit bearing trees, signifying their prominence to man. The reward for good deeds according to the
Quran is a place of shaded trees, flowing water, gardens with sweet fruits and fragrant flower. As the religion evolved in a desert climate, water became the main resources to conserve and utilize in the most optimum way possible. Also the process of water evaporation from the earth’s surface and then coming down in the form of rains has been given great significance, as it marks the arrival of greenery in the most generous manner [4].

In this context, Al-Quran plays a very special role that is cited over again and again. The description of the Paradise which those who have Taqwa have been promised:

"Underneath it rivers flow, its provision is eternal and so is its shade; this is the end (final destination) of those who have Taqwa, and the end (final destination) of the disbelievers is Fire."

Surah Ar-Ra’d [13: 35] Translation by Tafsir Ibn Kathir

Further Quran paradise imagery has prevailing descriptions of the appearance of the paradise that awaits the faithful, what it contains, and the delights. It not only promises springs that burst forth from the earth, but also shady groves, trees, and bushes, whose fruits are within easy reach and are just waiting to be enjoyed.

"Verily, We have prepared for the disbelievers iron chains, iron collars, and Sa`ir [5]. Verily, the Abrar (righteous believers) shall drink of a cup mixed with Kafur. A spring wherefrom the servants of Allah will drink, causing it to gush forth abundantly."

Surah Al-Insaan [76: 4-6] Translation by Tafsir Ibn Kathir

From the translation above, it is not surprising that the region's ornamental gardens belonging to sovereigns from Morocco in the West to the Mughal Empire in the East are often described as earthly paradies, a metaphor for the heavenly paradise and an promising ancestor of a future life after death.

However, there are no appraisals of the garden culture of the Islamic view, which is a major part of the material and spiritual culture of this region would be complete without a reference to the pre Islamic roots of this phenomenon. Not only legendary Hanging Gardens in Babylonian Baghdad, but also the magnificent gardens of the Achaemenids in Pasargadae in Persia and the other sovereign's residences socializing from the fourth and fifth centuries BC anticipate all the elements of what would later become Islamic garden culture (5). The Greeks and above all the Romans lived their urban lives in villas with water features and lush gardens, or in country houses outside the gates of the cities.

Indeed, the gardens of the Islamic world really only assimilated their spiritual aspect and consequently their unique combination of religion, spirituality, and culture when they were made a metaphor for and used as the image of Paradise. The journalist Camilla Blechen described the role and significance of these earthly paradies as follows in a detailed commentary for a Berlin exhibition on the subject of the 'Gardens of Islam'.

The Prophet Muhammad, the mouthpiece of Allah, mentions this heavenly place around 130 times, a place whose channels are replete with water, wine, milk, and honey, where the shade of high trees promises relief from the searing heat, and seas of flowers fill the air with beguiling scents. As the place where the blessed reside, this Garden of Eden, which is planted with roses and narcissi, date palms and pomegranate trees, promises those who have been swept away to the hereafter after leading a holy life on Earth sublime pleasures of all kinds. This inventory of Paradise, which was easily comprehended by the human mind, helped stabilize the structure of the Muslim faith, which now has 1.2 billion followers worldwide. (5)

2.1 The Garden Of Islam: A Typology of Beauty & Moderation:

Islam has always stressed beauty and aesthetic as aspect of faith itself. Although Islam has serious objections about making a divine image of statuary, Muslims produced numerous arts, ranging from that of interior decoration to music and poetry. These were integrated into life rather than being a separate activity or product [6, 7, 8]. Beauty and other sensory values are not a luxury to the Islamic mind. "God is beautiful and He loves beauty," is a saying of the Prophet Muhammad. This concept is reflected in many design decisions. Beauty without pride is a value rooted in the Islamic culture. Thus, the idea of sophistication interiors of private homes and public buildings, while the exterior walls conventionally were plain, rigid, and simple decorated. This contrast is a physical expression of an important moral teaching of Islam regarding the inner richness of the soul and humble appearance of the body or moderation in Islam [9, 10]

Thereupon, we also review the Islamic doctrine of paradise to realize the main concept and design features of it mentioned in Quran. The elements and environment drawn from the Quranic verses for Islamic garden design are given in Table 1:

3.0 Methodology:

In this paper, descriptive analytical method has been employed to conduct the study with a focus on a few Surah throughout the Tafsir Ibn Kathir. Paradise imagery or typology of beauty of Quranic verses as an effective means of extracting the resource selected in the Surah such as the environment and element in the paradise are explained. The understanding of spatial and design are interpreted and described. The aiming is to introduce the Islamic garden concepts derived from Quranic verses, where the arrangement allow their pureness thought and to achieve a state of calm and spirituality.
The approach of data collection for this study is using three independent sources which are from expert semi-structured interview, site observation and visual documentation. From these inquiry methods the data will be collected, analyzed and reported to achieve the final conclusion. Subsequently, experts will have the discussion by referring to the framework of Islamic garden which is formulated from the suggested conclusion. Any suggestion and recommendation from the expert will be openly debated till a final consensus is achieved.

Table 1: Simulation of Quranic verses from selected Surah of Al-Quran

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verses</th>
<th>Tafsir Ibn Kathir</th>
<th>Simulation of Quranic verses</th>
<th>Element/ Ambient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40: 64</td>
<td>Allah, it is He Who has made for you the earth as a dwelling place and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape and made your shapes good and pure (looking) and has provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord, so Blessed be Allah, the Lord of all that exists.</td>
<td>Sense of place, environment</td>
<td>Pleasant things, facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64: 3</td>
<td>He has created the heavens and the earth with truth, and He shaped you and made good your shapes. And to Him is the return</td>
<td>Good appearance</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: 195</td>
<td>And spend in the cause of Allah and do not throw yourselves into destruction, and do good. Truly, Allah loves Al-Muhsinin (those who do good). And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, that He may requite those who do evil with that which they have done, and reward those who do good, with what is best</td>
<td>Good manner</td>
<td>Conversation, discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53: 31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion And Conclusion:

This paper reviews the theoretical background of elements engaged in the Islamic Garden such as water and environment such beauty and balance. Then the philosophical implications of these elements are explained reference to the selected Surah of the Holy Quran.

From these finding, it is expected that at the end of study a framework of Islamic Garden principles based on applying the ideological principle in Islamic faith and Quranic paradise imagery will be formulated. The outcome will contribute to the body of knowledge by proposing a new framework of Islamic Garden that suitable to the Malaysia context.

As a conclusion, an Islamic garden should be design based on district design elements, its contextual, local culture and ideological principles rooted in Islamic faith to enhance garden space for recreational and restoration function. The general Islamic garden principles and Quranic paradise imagery derived from verse of Quran can help people to establish systems, regulations, views and attitudes in order to comprehend and regulate their worldly life in accordance with their time, region and needs. Moreover, the responsive authority has to come out with a specific guideline that can be applied in improving our Islamic garden design. The ideas of implementing the Islamic garden into the garden in Malaysia is perceived as relevant and encourage effort to support the governance approach in creating an Islamic environment. This study also indicates that as Muslim landscape architects have always tried to derive the landscape architecture and design criteria for their garden design from the verses of the holy Quran.

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