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Ministry of Culture
of the Republic of Azerbaijan



Heritage Committee in the Islamic World

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**Green Heritage in the Islamic World:
Potentials, Challenges and Future**



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CULTURE CAPITAL IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD



تراث العالم الإسلامي
Heritage of the Islamic World
Patrimoine du monde islamique



Introduction

The Islamic world has witnessed natural, climatic and environmental changes that have had a profound impact on its geographical extension, morphology and demography. Now, as climate change is accelerating alongside urban development, destroying everything, and threatening the total loss of green spaces and vegetation worldwide, it is high time to start taking effective measures to counter the impact of these changes, which are increasing steadily, to preserve the green heritage that has been a pillar and a distinctive feature of Islamic civilization in all countries of the Islamic world since the spread of Islam. It is an integral part of the civilizational identity of the Islamic world that clearly highlights the relationship between humans and the environment and nature in Islam. Islam calls for the preservation of the environment and nature and the beautification of Earth until the Day of Resurrection. This is illustrated by the Prophet Muhammad's hadith: "If the Final Hour comes while you have a shoot of a plant in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it."

Islamic architecture, decoration, and art have been inspired by Islamic values and Islamic religious rulings that paid great attention to natural and environmental elements, so these vegetal decorations and the color green were the greatest common theme in Islamic architecture and decoration, and gardens occupied a large part of city planning in all Muslim countries.

At present, the green heritage is still part of the history of Islamic civilization, despite the great damage it suffers as a result of natural and human factors.

In this document, we learn about the concept of green heritage, its importance and types, the challenges it faces, ways to preserve it, the role of the Islamic world in spreading environmental awareness and sustainability, and the role it can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. Concept of Green Heritage

The term green heritage emerged in the 1990s, but has become widely used in the last three decades as cultural and environmental organizations have begun to highlight the importance of preserving the environment, including natural sites, historic gardens and traditional farming systems, as part of the natural world heritage, with growing interest in environmental issues, cultural heritage and sustainable development.

The term refers to the ancient environment and traditional and cultural practices related to nature and the environment, including historic gardens, orchards, forests, irrigation systems and traditional agriculture. It also includes sustainable practices adopted by humans to preserve the natural environment and biodiversity and architectural design that is compatible with the environment.

In short, green heritage is a term that describes natural heritage sites that are

characterized by natural wilderness or by human intervention such as cultivated environments, including forests, natural green or non-natural green spaces and other environments containing natural wildlife, which directly contribute to the preservation of the natural ecosystem and biodiversity.

2. Types of Green Heritage

Green heritage in the Islamic world constitutes a rich fabric of knowledge, traditional practices, and natural resources that highlight how humans deal with the environment. These practices relate to different aspects of civilization such as architecture, agriculture, water management, biodiversity, and biology. These types of green heritage can be a cornerstone in providing sustainable solutions to contemporary environmental challenges. By understanding, reviving, preserving and rehabilitating this heritage, humanity as a whole can benefit from it in building a future that overcomes increasing human and environmental risks and contributes significantly to creating more sustainable societies and civilizations.

Green heritage in the Islamic world encompasses a wide range of practices and concepts related to the environment and sustainability. This heritage can be categorized into several main types :

1. Traditional Irrigation and Water Systems

Traditional water management systems have been crucial in sustainable water provision, especially in arid regions, including the Aflaj system, waterways, canals, cisterns, and public watering canals such as “asbala”.

2. Sustainable agriculture

Agriculture is the main component of the green heritage concept. Islamic societies relied on it as a natural source of food, a shield to preserve the environment and a guarantor of resource sustainability, by using agricultural rotation techniques to improve soil fertility, maintain land productivity without depleting it, and maintain the diversity of agricultural crops, which helped to enhance food security and adapt to climate change.

3. Forests and natural resources

Conserving forests and natural pastures is part of the green heritage, with laws and traditions governing how to use natural resources in a responsible manner, including reserves. In some Islamic countries, land known as “Hima” was left to allow plants to grow naturally and protected them from overuse. This system reflects the ancient awareness of the need to maintain ecological balance.

4. Biodiversity and Wildlife

Green heritage also includes the preservation of biodiversity, where traditional systems have been put in place to protect rare animals and plants..

5. Green architectural heritage (eco-friendly architecture)

Architectural heritage is one of the most important aspects of green heritage; it involves the use of traditional building techniques that contribute to energy conservation and minimize environmental impact. In the Islamic civilization, traditional Islamic buildings followed designs based on nature, such as internal courtyards that promote natural ventilation, and air towers ('badghir') that were used to cool the houses. Local and eco-friendly building materials such as clay and stone were also used, reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation and manufacturing.

6. Ecotourism and Heritage Tourism

Tourism based on green heritage has become an important aspect in many Islamic countries. Among the most important sites on which ecotourism relies are natural and heritage sites: Such as desert oases that provide examples of sustainable use of water and nature, mountainous areas that reflect the balance between man and the environment, and traditional villages: Villages that maintain an ecological lifestyle balanced with nature, turning them into eco-tourism and educational destinations. Nature reserves, stone forests and unique botanical gardens.

7. Sustainable arts and crafts

Traditional crafts that rely on the use of natural resources in sustainable ways, including green materials from agricultural products and eco-friendly products, are part of green heritage. These crafts include but are not limited to handmade carpets using natural materials and organic dyes, and pottery using clay and water-based techniques that respect the environment by avoiding harmful industrial manufacturing.

3. Importance of Green Heritage in the Islamic World

1. Maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity through the development of sustainable agricultural systems, such as dams and flood irrigation, which contribute to the preservation of biodiversity.
2. Effective contribution to economic development as green heritage is a major source of income through agricultural activities and eco-tourism, which contributes to the development of local communities.
3. Contributing to reducing and minimizing carbon emissions, mitigating the effects of climate change, and enhancing resilience to environmental changes.
4. Contributing to increasing natural resources and providing environmentally friendly sources of food, medicine, and building materials.
5. Contributing to the realization of sustainable development goals.
6. Contributing to the health sector by providing herbs that form the backbone of the pharmaceutical industry and alternative medicine.

4. Examples of green heritage in the Islamic world

- 1. Andalusian gardens :** Andalusia is full of rich gardens where Islamic art reached its peak in the design of green spaces, characterized by a balance between functional and environmental beauty.
- 2. Oasis system :** Oases in desert regions such as the Maghreb, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula are a model of environmental sustainability in harsh conditions, with limited water resources.
- 3. Green architecture :** Islamic civilizations used environmentally friendly building materials and natural ventilation techniques, which confirms the extent of environmental awareness and awareness among architects in different Islamic eras.
- 4. Traditional heritage** crafts based on agricultural products, medicinal and ornamental plants.
- 5. Islamic architecture:** The use of techniques such as wind towers and internal courtyards to enhance natural ventilation and save energy.
- 6. Traditional irrigation systems:** such as the falaj system in Oman, which relies on equitable and sustainable water distribution.
- 7. Sustainable agriculture:** The use of sustainable farming methods that preserve soil fertility and minimize water consumption.

5. Green heritage and its role in supporting the green economy in the Islamic world

The green economy focuses on promoting economic development while preserving the environment. It seeks to reduce carbon emissions, increase resource efficiency, and improve the well-being of individuals.

Principles of green economy :

- 1. Renewable energy :** Adopting clean energy sources such as solar and wind energy.
- 2. Sustainable use of resources :** Ensuring that the use of natural resources to avoid their depletion or the destruction of the environment.
- 3. Social development :** Striking a balance between economic development and protecting the rights of individuals and communities.

Green heritage supports the green economy :

Green heritage can support the green economy in the Islamic world in several ways :

- 1. Encouraging sustainable practices :** By revitalizing traditional practices that preserve the environment, communities can be encouraged to adopt sustainable lifestyles.
- 2. Heritage-based innovation :** Technologies of the past can be leveraged and developed to meet modern-day needs, such as improving traditional irrigation and farming systems using modern technology.
- 3. Promoting ecotourism :** Green heritage relies on unique natural and architectural sites that can attract tourists seeking sustainable environmental and cultural experiences.
- 4. Education and awareness :** Educating future generations about the importance of green heritage and the importance of preserving the environment and developing a sustainable economy.

6. Challenges Facing Green Heritage

1. Unplanned urban growth, which is a main factor behind the disappearance of many heritage green spaces
2. Rapid and severe climate changes such as drought, desertification, and floods that cause the loss of green areas and affect the sustainability of ancient ecosystems
3. Uncontrolled development in which the irresponsible use of natural resources poses a major challenge to the protection of green heritage.
4. **Preserving biodiversity** in the face of accelerated natural and environmental changes.
5. **Globalization:** It may undermine some traditional sustainable practices and replace them with environmentally unfriendly methods.
6. **Financing:** Projects on green heritage revitalization may require significant funding, which may be a challenge in some Muslim countries.

7. Future Vision for Green Heritage Protection in the Islamic World

In light of the increasing environmental challenges and the growing risks of climate change, which casts a heavy and undesirable shadow on all aspects of life on Earth, preserving green heritage has become more crucial than ever to ensure a sustainable and healthy future for our Earth and the coming generations.

Hence the need to adopt a future strategic vision for the protection of green heritage in the Islamic world that combines efforts to preserve biodiversity and minimize the catastrophic effects of climate change, in which green heritage

is a key player in the implementation of this strategy that involves all relevant international agencies, governments, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and academic and religious institutions.

This future vision consists of several main axes that can be the core of the development of this strategy, as follows :

- 1. The legislative framework** for the preservation of green heritage, including the implementation of the Climate Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and conventions for the protection of cultural and natural heritage.
- 2.** Development and implementation of strict laws to protect the environment and nature reserves.
- 3. Innovation and sustainability :** Encouraging research and innovation in the field of sustainable agriculture and environmental protection, the use of renewable energy, the adoption of green tourism initiatives in the field of clean energy and carbon mitigation, and the adoption of an initiative to monitor climate change and its effects on green heritage sites using remote sensing and artificial intelligence technologies along with traditional knowledge.
- 4. Regional and international cooperation :** Strengthening cooperation with international and regional organizations, Islamic countries and countries of the world in the field of protecting environmental heritage and addressing the challenges of climate change, and exchanging experiences and knowledge among Islamic countries on the best practices for preserving green heritage.
- 5. Education, scientific research and awareness :** Integrating the concept of green heritage into school curricula and raising awareness among the rising generations of the importance of preserving the environment, and establishing research centers specialized in studying ecosystems in the Islamic world and monitoring the impact of climate change on the green cover of the earth.
- 6. Incorporating green heritage into cultural policies:** Encouraging governments and cultural institutions to include green heritage as an essential part of cultural policies and invest in its protection.
- 7. Promote ecotourism :** Developing the ecotourism sector as a means of raising environmental awareness and generating income to support conservation efforts.
- 8.** Expand the establishment of nature reserves and green parks and gardens.
- 9. Religious and cultural role :** capitalizing on Islamic teachings that call for the preservation and protection of the environment.
- 10.** Encouraging local communities to participate in environmental conservation programs, and organizing awareness campaigns for communities to inform them of the importance of preserving green heritage.

Recommendations and proposals for preserving and raising awareness of green heritage :

- Creating a comprehensive database of green heritage in the Islamic world, including historical, cultural and environmental data.
- Establishing research centers to study green heritage in the Islamic world.
- Establishing green heritage museums in the Islamic world.
- Developing educational programs to preserve green heritage in schools and universities and discuss the role of education in spreading awareness about green heritage and its importance in sustainable development.
- Creating a digital platform to showcase green heritage practices in the Islamic world.
- Establishing a virtual museum of green heritage in the Islamic world.
- Establishing an investment fund to finance green heritage preservation and development projects in the Islamic world.
- Conducting a comparative study of green heritage preservation practices among different Islamic countries, identifying the best practices and setting up annual awards for outstanding initiatives in preserving green heritage.
- Developing training and qualification programs for those working in the field of maintenance and management of green heritage sites and practices.
- Using modern technologies to preserve green heritage in the Islamic world.
- Preparing studies on the impact of climate change on green heritage in the Islamic world.
- Preparing studies on analyzing the relationship between green heritage and economic development in Islamic countries
- Renovating green heritage parks in Islamic cities.
- Launching an international competition for the best green heritage city and the best green heritage monument in the Islamic world, and announcing another competition to design environmentally friendly buildings inspired by the Islamic green heritage.
- Organizing artistic and cultural exhibitions, seminars and discussions to raise awareness of green heritage in Islamic cities.
- Launching community initiatives to preserve green heritage and increasing popular participation therein.
- Publicizing pioneering governmental and community projects and initiatives aimed at preserving green heritage in the Islamic world.

Introduction

Green heritage is not only part of the past, it is a key pillar of the future of Muslim societies. It plays a vital role in supporting a green economy in the Islamic world. By revitalizing traditional green practices and adapting them to modern times, we can achieve sustainable development that preserves the environment and boosts the economy. By promoting policies that protect green heritage and relying on sustainable technology, the Islamic world can lead global efforts in preserving the environment and promoting environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, the Islamic World Heritage Committee is invited to adopt and submit this document to the Ministers of Culture and Ministers in charge of heritage in the Islamic world to adopt comprehensive strategies to protect and promote green heritage as an integral part of the Islamic identity and human civilization.



      

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