



**Gardens of Damascus:
Landscape and the Culture of Recreation in the Early Modern
Period (Return)**

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Thesis Abstract

This is a study of the urban and cultural history of Ottoman Damascus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its main concern is the socio-cultural changes that took place in the early modern period, which gardens played a role in facilitating and enabling. The thesis does not cover all social changes; it covers only those which are associated with gardens and their uses. With reference to recent studies of the Ottoman capital, Istanbul, which revealed dynamic developments in social practices in the public domain, this study explores whether similar changes occurred in the provincial centre of Damascus. These changes include the emergence of new social habits, such as coffee drinking, smoking, and entertaining in public, which were associated with the emergence of new urban institutions and facilities, such as coffee houses, restaurants, and leisure gardens. The study argues that during the early modern period, and in resonance with what was happening in Istanbul, the public spaces, urban fabric, and the leisure gardens in Damascus did play a role in stimulating a new vibrant culture of public recreation.

The study discusses the urban development of the city and especially the different types of Damascene gardens, their urban furniture and amenities, social gatherings, and the cultural life that flourished within the gardens and public spaces. The examination is based on primary Arabic sources, which include historical accounts, anthologies of poetry, biographical dictionaries, chronicles, and law-court records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The thesis is divided into two sections: analytical and documentary. The first section includes the first three chapters, offering a fresh examination of the different garden typologies in Damascus and the urban development of the city in the early modern period. This section analyses how the urban facilities found in Damascene gardens contributed to a culture of recreation, which subsequently changed the physical and social fabric of Damascus and contributed to the emergence of the public sphere. The second section comprises one chapter which provides comprehensive new documentation of Damascene gardens traced from a wide range of primary historical sources, and the production of a map of Ottoman Damascus in the early modern period, showing the names and locations of the known gardens and other natural places of recreation.

Thesis Declaration

NAME: GEORGINA HAFTEH

PROGRAM: MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Note to the Reader

All translations of Arabic sources mentioned in the thesis are mine except for the translated texts by others as identified in the footnotes.

In transliteration, I have followed the *IJMES* (the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*). All dates are of the Common Era (CE), except when there are two dates between brackets. In the case of (H/CE), H refers to Hijrī and CE refers to Common Era.

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