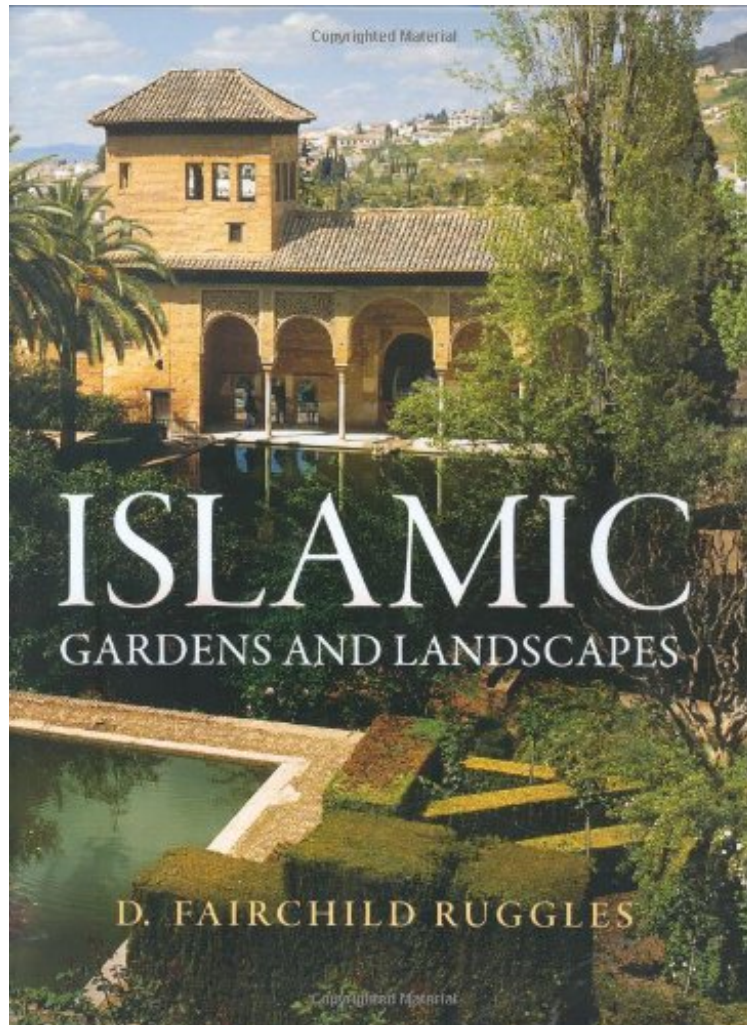


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D. Fairchild Ruggles

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D. Fairchild Ruggles : Islamic Gardens and Landscapes (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islamic Gardens and Landscapes (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting background book about the Islamic Gardens in Medieval Southern Spain By Joan de Neve Very interesting if you want to know more about the meaning of the landscape in Medieval Islamic Spain and about the way gardens were perceived. It includes a lot of information about the palace gardens in Al-Andalus and the revolution in agriculture, botany and architecture that were fundamental in shaping the beautiful gardens of that area. The writer is a scholar, but manages to write in a way that is inviting to the

layman. I thoroughly enjoyed the book. By the way: the book is obviously not targeted at practical tips for your garden but inspiring nevertheless on a more background-level. 19 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Fine study. By Toronto This is a quite fine book on its topic, with some new things to say about a (dare I say it?) under-cultivated scholarly garden. The author rightly points out that most books on Islamic art and architecture basically stop when they hit the garden. This book could be interestingly matched up with one of the various histories of art and architecture (like the Yale volumes), as their complement. It is also interesting that the author challenges the standard view of the quadrature garden as being essentially the only pattern out there -- multiple patterns emerge. I particularly liked the discussion of the evolution of tombs and gardens together. The second half of the book is an invaluable selection of sites and site plans throughout the Islamic world. The book unavoidably carries with it the sadness evoked by the miserable fact that hardly any of the gardens he talks about survive in any fashion at all -- neglected, ignored, built over, redesigned. But we are talking gardens here, after all, so ephemeral comes with the terrain. But it is pretty grim, page after page of destruction. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars. By David Mills Excellent book and excellent service

"In the course of my research," writes D. Fairchild Ruggles, "I devoured Arabic agricultural manuals from the tenth through the fourteenth centuries. I love gardening, and in these texts I was able to enter the minds of agriculturalists and botanists of a thousand years ago who likewise believed it was important and interesting to record all the known ways of propagating olive trees, the various uses of rosemary, and how best to fertilize a garden bed." Western admirers have long seen the Islamic garden as an earthly reflection of the paradise said to await the faithful. However, such simplification, Ruggles contends, denies the sophistication and diversity of the art form. *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* immerses the reader in the world of the architects of the great gardens of the Islamic world, from medieval Morocco to contemporary India. Just as Islamic culture is historically dense, sophisticated, and complex, so too is the history of its built landscapes. Islamic gardens began from the practical need to organize the surrounding space of human civilization, tame nature, enhance the earth's yield, and create a legible map on which to distribute natural resources. Ruggles follows the evolution of these early farming efforts to their aristocratic apex in famous formal gardens of the Alhambra in Spain and the Taj Mahal in Agra. Whether in a humble city home or a royal courtyard, the garden has several defining characteristics, which Ruggles discusses. Most notable is an enclosed space divided into four equal parts surrounding a central design element. The traditional Islamic garden is inwardly focused, usually surrounded by buildings or in the form of a courtyard. Water provides a counterpoint to the portioned green sections. Ranging across poetry, court documents, agronomy manuals, and early garden representations, and richly illustrated with pictures and site plans, *Islamic Gardens and Landscapes* is a book of impressive scope sure to interest scholars and enthusiasts alike.

About the Author D. Fairchild Ruggles is Associate Professor of Landscape History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the author of *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in the Palaces of Islamic Spain*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Preface Gardens are at once highly meaningful, expressing the position of humankind with respect to the earth and cosmos, and utterly ordinary, reflecting the need to produce a food crop in order to survive the fallow season and plant anew another year. Moreover, the urge to garden, to domesticate the wild landscape by clearing it of all but selected plants, watering them, and tending them until they flower and bear fruit, is a basic human endeavor that requires few resources and no grand conceptual scheme. Although gardens and landscape works requiring complex irrigation or drainage systems may occur on a large scale and reflect either the ambition of kings or the ability of a community to organize itself, others are quite humble and occur spontaneously. This book looks thematically at Islamic gardens and cultivated landscapes, placing them on a continuous spectrum with the city and architecture at one end and nature and wilderness at the other. The Islamic garden is a popular theme among architects and enthusiasts, and every year a new volume is produced with handsome illustrations of stunning gardens. However, a great many of these focus entirely on elite formal gardens, defining them as enclosed spaces that are geometrically laid out and interpreting their symbolic meaning narrowly as "paradise on earth." The removal of the garden from the broader context of landscape, agriculture, and water supply results in a limited and superficial view, giving extraordinary emphasis to religion and dynastic politics while ignoring other factors that contributed equally to garden form and meaning. This is not a book about the origins of the Islamic garden or its formal properties. Unlike Islamic architecture where we can observe highly recognizable forms in mosque, palace, and tomb design in Islamic history there is really only one formal garden plan, with a few variations on it. This is the so-called *chahar bagh*, or the four-part garden laid out with axial walkways that intersect in the garden center, discussed in Chapter 4, and the various stepped terrace variations of it that proliferated in the Safavid and Mughal realms, discussed in Chapter 10 and throughout. Gardens begin as secular endeavors, stemming from the practical need to organize the surrounding space, tame nature, enhance the earth's yield, and create a legible map on which to distribute natural resources. Three early chapters address these practical issues. Symbolic interpretations of the meaning of such domestication and fertility came later in the history of garden making, so that the good garden became a sign of human success, and a productive

landscape a sign of divine favor. There have been several inspiring theological interpretations of gardens as signs of paradise for Muslims, but the evidence suggests that the actual early gardens were not regarded thus. In this respect, it is important to remember that while theology and history both seek the truth, they ask and answer different questions. With respect to the built environment and the interpretation of it, the questions that I attempt to answer here are purely historical. One of the traps that writers about Islamic gardens often fall into is the emphasis on extant gardens, interpreting the historic past by means of easily visible and attractive gardens that have not been explored archaeologically and whose plantings are historically inaccurate. For instance, the Generalife Palace's Patio de la Acequia in Granada has been celebrated as a living and authentic Islamic garden, when in fact its soil levels and plantings are entirely modern. Among architects, historians, and site conservators there is a regrettable tolerance for botanical inaccuracy at historic sites, despite the fact that we now have an array of archaeological techniques to identify many of the plants and trees that were once grown there. Examples of successful garden archaeology help explain what we can and cannot learn about gardens from such approaches in combination with written texts and painted representations of gardens. Equally problematic are the attempts to interpret the real gardens of this earth through the shimmering veil of Arabic and especially Persian verse; lacking historical reference and archaeological data, these are more successful as studies of poetry than as descriptions of actual gardens. The Taj Mahal has been studied thus: the references to judgment and the Throne of God in its program of inscriptions have prompted scholars to interpret the monument in compelling theological and political terms. But these Qur'anic inscriptions explain neither the unusual position of the tomb in the garden nor the relationship of the Taj complex to the pleasure garden on the river's opposite bank. Finally, the garden form was such a powerful artistic form in many areas of the Islamic world that it was adopted by non-Muslims such as the Rajputs of Mughal India as a way of expressing alliance with Muslim rulers and thereby indicating a shared cultural identity that transcended their more obvious religious differences. The garden was not an exclusively Muslim production; it arose from a specific climate and set of techniques for controlling the landscape and thus reflected regional concerns that were common to all the peoples sharing that landscape. The point here is not that the garden was produced outside of religious and cultural contexts; indeed, the transformation of landscape is one of the most powerful expressions of the human experience, the awe at regarding the cosmos, and the fear and hope at contemplating death. But it is a fundamental argument of this book that neither religion nor culture alone can explain the meaning, mechanics, and productivity of that set of gardens that historians, in retrospect, label "Islamic." Perhaps because the history of Islamic gardens was written, until quite recently, by persons who were outsiders to Islamic religion and culture, the range of scholarship on gardens varies from a kind of historicity to insulting stereotypes. While the worst of such endeavors can be dismissed as outrageous orientalist fantasy, one must wonder whether, in trying to recreate the experience of landscapes and inhabitants that vanished long ago, any historian is liable to project his or her own desires and expectations. For myself, I am aware of the attraction of representing Islamic Spain and Mughal India as successful melting pots of ethnicity and religion, as if the mingling of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism in those cultures could instruct the modern world. Cultural diversity and difference was a signal characteristic of the early Islamic world; yet while gardens reveal the diversity of plant material, their more powerful dimension is continuity. The evidence clearly shows that, while agriculture is deeply affected by political strife, the actual practice more often than not transcends political, religious, and ethnic boundaries. For this reason, it is almost impossible to distinguish between gardens made for Muslim and for Christian patrons in southern Spain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In general, agricultural innovations are quickly adopted when the benefits are recognized, provided the political and cultural climate allows it. The book extends from the seventh through the twentieth centuries. Although the earliest chapters begin with the advent of Islam, they do not follow a strictly historical progression through the various successive dynasties. Instead, thematic grouping of issues in which subjects such as mythic gardens (Chapter 7) and manuscript representations (Chapter 6) are explored without trying to arrange all the sites in question into a neat chronological framework. The book focuses somewhat more on the landscapes of South Asia and Islamic Spain than elsewhere, partly because these areas have outstanding examples of extant gardens that have been well studied by historians and archaeologists, and partly because I am most familiar with these areas of the world. It does not extend into Southeast Asia or beyond Africa's northern coast simply because there is so little information on landscape design in those areas and because what material does exist belongs largely to the recent centuries, an era for which there is a surfeit of sites and gardens. The book ends with a list of Islamic Garden and Sites by geographical region, selected because they are historically important, well preserved, or representative in some way (especially in the case of nineteenth- and twentieth-century residential gardens, which are too numerous to list). Each garden and site in this section is illustrated by a plan or photograph and is followed by a brief bibliography. For this volume I have supplied more than eighty plans, many corrected or redrawn for the first time. The ground plan is a useful tool for spatial analysis, but it reduces landscape to a world of architecture, plotted on flat paper, often with no indication of the topographic contours or ground water systems that may have been the principal determining factors in the garden's layout. Typically the garden is represented as distinct from the rest of the landscape, with only a minimal indication of whether it stands amidst a desert or a forest, on a mountain top or a plain. Other shortcomings are that ground plans tend to show the garden in its original conceptual state, perhaps the only

moment when a plan has any real meaning. Conversely, sections or views may envision the garden in an imaginary future moment when trees have matured and seasonal plants are in bloom. Nevertheless, given the lack of alternatives, I have reluctantly reproduced many such plans in the present volume. Most of the gardens discussed in the book appear in the later Gardens and Sites section, and readers should consult the plans that accompany these descriptions as they read the chapters. The terms "Islamic" and "Muslim" appear throughout but are not interchangeable. The term "Muslim" refers to the believers of Islam, the religion conveyed by God through the Prophet Muhammad. It can also serve as a descriptor for mosques, practices, and concepts that directly reflect the religion. In contradistinction, the term "Islamic" is used broadly to refer to a community of Muslims as well as the set of social practices and material forms their culture that characterized not only these religious adherents but also the non-Muslims living in their midst. Hence, cities such as seventh-century Jerusalem, eighth-century Cordoba, late fifteenth-century Istanbul, and sixteenth-century Agra can be called Islamic, because they were ruled by Muslim governments that ensured the hegemony of Islamic cultural values. However, in each case, there were large numbers of non-Muslims Byzantines and Jews in Jerusalem, and the adherents to the various sects that together are called Hinduism in Agra, for example. These lived in a predominantly Islamic culture and in some cases adopted many of the external signs of that culture, without departing from the beliefs of their own faith or renouncing their identity as Christian, Jew, or Hindu. Thus the religious term "Muslim" is a subset of the larger cultural rubric "Islamic." Common era dates are used throughout, except where cited as hijra dates (H, the Islamic era) in primary sources. For the sake of clarity, especially for Western readers, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish words are pluralized with an "s."