

## **AMUSEMENT PARKS IN BAGHDAD ON THE EXAMPLE OF SELECTED SITES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The authors also discuss the chosen park complexes describing their history, composition and vegetation. Due to the prevailing heat here, an important role in the gardens of the area plays water in: canals, fountains and cascades. Pergolas and trees designed in the parks, give shadow. In the parks there grow colorful and fragrant plants such as cypresses, orange trees, pomegranates, oleanders, myrtles, water lilies, wisteria and palm trees. Equipment and small architecture is varied in the choice of materials, textures and colors. Modern Islamic landscape architecture continues to derive from its heritage, while seeking some new forms.

**Key words:** Iraq, Baghdad, Islamic art, amusement parks, Zawraa Park, Baghdad Island

### **INTRODUCTION**

Almost all the theme parks in the world have a similar shape, similar topics, device and system of organization. Amusement parks located in the Middle East, however, are the least understood. The aim of the study was to present the results of the inventory and the overall presentation of the two largest amusement parks in Baghdad – Zawraa Park and Baghdad Island. In the absence of texts in the Polish or English languages of these objects – the main aim of this article is to describe the idea of Iraqi parks stages of their formation and the functioning of readers.

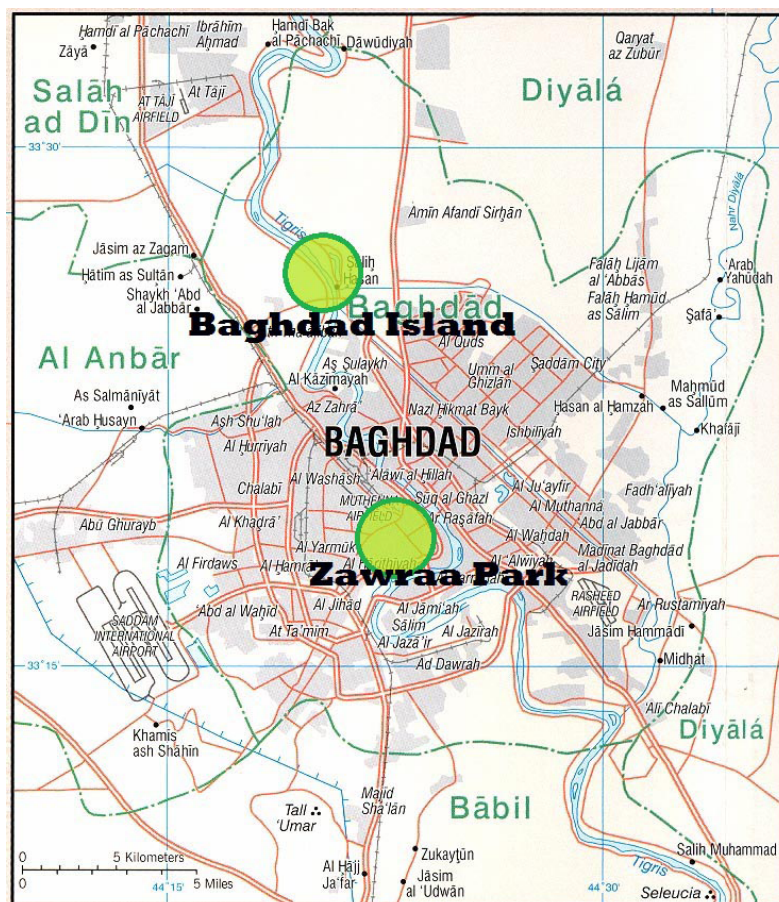
The history of Baghdad begins with the first settlement on the bank of the Tigris River about 3,000 years ago. Apart from its functional and symbolic significance, the river also ensured aesthetics, irrigation, security and transport. Baghdad was regarded as a cultural mediator between the north and the south of Iraq and it was the point at which two great rivers – Euphrates and Tigris are close to each other. Convenient geographical location allowed Baghdad to become an important trade centre, port, administrative seat of the empire, as well as a major centre of theological studies and science (Al-Attar, 2011). Today, its population is more than 7 million people, and the area is more than 2,260 square km. In terms of temperature it is one of the hottest cities in the world. The year is clearly divided into two seasons with short transition periods. Summer is the longest season, which lasts from May to October with a maximum temperature of 50.2°C. High temperature is accompanied by the decrease in the relative humidity to the lowest level in May 7%, and the highest level of humidity is achieved in January 96,6%. 90% of rainfall is in winter (Jasim, 2015). In terms of terrain Iraq is divided into three main physiogeographical regions: the top (north of the country), Mesopotamia (highlands and lowlands of the Tigris and

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Euphrates) and deserts (south of the country). These lands are arranged in parallel stripes running from north-west to south-east. Iraq vegetation forms mainly deserts and semi-deserts. Moreover, in Mesopotamia there are sedge steppes and in the mountains there are rare forests with oak, alpine pine and juniper. The river valleys are covered with groves of date palms and marshy meadows that make up the willows, acacias and eucalyptus. Backwaters are overgrown with rushes, reeds and papyrus. Iraq population is about 37,5 million people – Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and Turkmens. The dominant religion for more than 95% of the population is Islam. The basis of the economy of Iraq, until recently, was the exploitation and export of crude oil. Based on the income earned from the sale of oil, in the twentieth century the country systematically adopted new technologies developing its infrastructure and creating the basis for new industries.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The authors conducted a detailed inventory of dendrochronology and general architectural inventories in the two largest, modern parks in Baghdad – Park Zawraa and Baghdad Island (Fig. 1). These objects were chosen because of the most interesting, according to the authors, use of space compared to other green places in Baghdad. This work includes also a short review of the literature of historic gardens of Islam, the city of Baghdad and modern amusement parks. Studies have been conducted in 2015–2016.



**Fig. 1.** Location of objects on the map Baghdad (authors)

## **GARDENS OF ISLAM – HISTORY AND NOW**

Over the centuries, the garden art has reflected the cultural, historical and religious values of societies in the countries around the world. Leading philosophical trends of individual periods marked the direction of the gardens development (Połucha, Marks & Młynarczyk, 2000; Kenawy, 2011). Garden and paradise have strong connotations in the Islamic, Judaic and Christian culture. The idea of a four-part garden and Eden garden belongs to Persian culture, which was continued by Islamic garden art. Islamic garden, based on Koran, is a symbol of paradise with its trees, shadow and water. It is typically divided into four parts (*chahar bagh*) which means a characteristic system of paths and canals imagining four main rivers of paradise: Pison, Gehon, Tigris and Euphrates (Mitkowska & Siewniak, 1995). Water as a source of life plays an important role in Islamic gardens. Flowing water symbolises the passage of time, absolution and purification, and a long straight canal means infinity (Zachariasz, 2013). Canal systems, bowls and fountains were introduced in various ways in the space of the garden and placed mostly in the central part of the whole complex. Unavailability of water and the need to save it, resulted in a very large development of irrigation art (Boguszewska, 2015). Due to the favourable climate and the use in many different ways of irrigation equipment, gardens located in the basin of the Euphrates and Tigris could boast a huge variety of plants. They were created using not only local seedlings of forest trees but also exotic ones. In addition to the aesthetic value, they also constituted windbreaks system of the city and reduced dust (Mahmoud, 2005). Islamic gardens fulfilled the functions of a relaxation place and an entertainment area. Therefore, one can find a number of small architecture elements such as gazebos, kiosks and benches. In Islamic gardens sculpture did not exist, and the decorations were limited to canals, swimming pools, benches and planters with plants. The bottom of water canals were decorated with marble, of pools – with glazed faience tiles, and the edges – with square ceramic tiles dyed blue, called azulejos. Instead of figural representations, in the Arabic art, there developed abstract ornamentation eg. arches carved with delicate openwork lace or decorative calligraphic words. Colourful flower parterres and topiary formed of trees and shrubs were the pride of alleys and summer holiday destinations. The plants in the Arab gardens were often planted in intricate patterns, drawings and inscriptions (arabesque) – Kubala (2014).

In the last century clearly outlined programmes of the previous epochs gardens intermingle with each other, creating a wide range of diverse complexes. Garden art was far from mysticism and began to be seen as more utilitarian. Urban parks and green areas are just a few examples of contemporary garden art, the evidence of its rich diversity. Contemporary gardens are fully specialised with a clearly defined purpose. Garden art becomes a scientific discipline and is increasingly identified with garden planning, landscape architecture, landscape ecology or geocology (Myga-Piątek, 2012).

In recent years, Iraq has been experiencing a boom in theme parks and amusement parks. In Dream City park in Duhok there is a giant Ferris wheel, the attraction of Chavi Land in Sulaymaniyah is a rollercoaster with the impressive lighting system seen after dark. Other well-known places are Hawler Land and Family Fun in Erbil or Resort Park in Rawandiz. The fascination with the achievements of science and technology and the consumer attitude to the garden art is not conducive to the cultivation of religious attitudes. At the same time the dynamic urban development and the dizzying pace of life often lead to the narrowing or distortion of the meaning of garden art (Połucha et al., 2000). Baghdad is recovering, although until recently was a place of war and violence. Iraqis build among other amusement parks – objects very necessary for the creation of peace and a new hope. Amusement park is a combination of different kinds of activities that can be grouped in several categories: roller coasters, water attractions or rides carriages. These objects have large surface area, equipped with specialized equipment for entertainment combined with education and (or) active recreation. Amusements parks are an example of the progressive globalization of the entertainment industry, they have a similar shape, similar topics, device and system of organization (Kruczek, 2013; Kapera, 2014).

## REVIEW OF OBJECTS

### Zawraa Park

Zawraa importance lies not in the park as a green space located in the heart of Baghdad, but beyond that in being has increased the strength of the attractions of the city, plus the promise of a resort to cultural, historical and religious resorts that are characterized by the city of Baghdad. It consists of a number of smaller thematic gardens: Arabic garden, Japanese garden, a zoo and an observation tower, restaurants and others. Tourists can stroll in the garden built on the model of ancient Babylon with fountains, hanging gardens and stone lions (Hove, 1979). Composition of the park is free, and a network of alleys leads around several ponds to the most important buildings and attractions (Fig. 2). There is a system of several naturalistic lakes and water channels (Fig. 3 and 4). On the waters of the lake, you can sail on small boats or a ferry. The water supply lake is pumped from the river Tigris, and its quality in the lake can be considered good. Surrounded by palm trees and flower beds there are spaced sculptures,



**Fig. 2.** View 3D Zawraa Park. Pobrano z lokalizacji: <https://www.google.pl/maps/@33.2787384,44.3821725,4316a,20y,40.8t/data=!3m1!1e3>



**Fig. 3.** Lakes and canals where lilies bloom and where you can go boating and pedalos (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)



**Fig. 4.** Along the alleys near the seats there are moisturizers and air cascade canals (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)



**Fig. 5.** Arabian horse (Flying Horse) surrounded by fountains (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)

especially in the eastern part of the park, made in different styles, eg. classical sculpture of a physician and scholar (Farabi) near the Natural History Museum, an Arabian horse (Flying Horse) surrounded by fountains near a popular meeting place (Fig. 5), contemporary art (Fig. 6) and vertical flowerbed depicting the butterfly (Fig. 7). In addition, the space of the park is decorated with some objects characteristic of a given season: Pergola with hearts for Valentine's Day or the enormous Christmas tree to celebrate Christmas. The air surrounded by benches is moisturized by water cascade. Tall trees cast a shadow on the walking paths and seating places. Along them there are also water canals with the fountains. One avenue runs under the pergola formed out of the bushes (Fig. 8).



**Fig. 6.** Contemporary art in a park setting (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)



**Fig. 7.** Vertical flowerbed depicting the butterfly (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)



**Fig. 8.** Pergola with molded bushes on a walking alley (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)



**Fig. 9.** In the park there are numerous cafes and restaurants (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)

Surrounded by gardens Zaawara Tower with a height of 60 m, has two restaurants and cafes, and can accommodate 170 people. The top of the tower offers a view of the park and the city. One of the most important objects is Planetarium – performing the research and educational functions. It is also a museum and amateur radio. In the park there are plenty of eateries, cafés and shops (Fig. 9). From modest kiosks to the most sophisticated restaurants, eg. Al Lulua (‘a pearl’) which roof is topped with a dome similar to a pearl. There is also an open-air cinema, mini golf, a playground (Fig. 10), the amusement park (Fig. 11) and the zoo. Good selection and proper placement of utilitarian components in the park improves the aesthetics of the place and it serves both tourists and the service personnel. The



**Fig. 10.** Playground with modern, colourful playground equipment (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)



**Fig. 11.** Attraction at the amusement park is a rollercoaster. There are also Christmas installations (photo B. S. Ismael 2016)

area is illuminated by, among others, lamps powered by solar energy and equipped with electronic information boards. Distributed high light poles on the sides of the main streets and lanes, parks and green spaces within the well. Turn signals at crossroads and other signs are in white and blue colours. Benches are placed along the roads around the lake and in themed gardens. Many of them are covered. In the park there are also buildings where you can cool off in the air-conditioned room. Vegetation of the park includes trees and shrubs (Table 1 and 2), palms (Table 3) and water plans (Table 4).

Although the park seems to be a very interesting and well-kept place, it is easily noticeable that a lot of fountains and canals are in need of modernisation. Some additional automatic irrigation systems, which allow in this arid environment for growing of flowering plants and maintaining lawns in a better condition than it is today, should be also installed.

**Table 1.** Species of trees growing in Zawraa Park, 2016 (ed. authors)

Latin name	Some of the qualities and uses
<i>Albizzia lebbek</i> Benth.	A tree with a dense crown creating shade, fast growing with long blooming red flowers. Recommended for poor soils and limestone, resistant to diseases and pests.
<i>Bombax ceiba</i> syn. <i>Bombax malabaricum</i> , <i>Salmalia malabarica</i> Schott & Endl.	Planted particularly in order to shade. Trunk covered with thick thorns, bright red flowers, very large up to 15 cm in diameter. Fruit elongated bags to 15 cm, filled with white fluff.
<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> (Poir.) Nutt.	Fast growing, plays the role of windbreakers. It is suitable for growing in a wide alley.
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i> var. <i>horizontalis</i> (Mill.) Loudon	Tall tree with a narrow crown, planted in low hedges to protect against the effects of wind. Resistant to high temperatures.
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i> Dehnh.	Fast growing. Resistant to long periods of drought, wind and high temperatures.
<i>Ficus religiosa</i> L.	Slow-growing, creating shady alleys.
<i>Pinus halepensis</i> Mill.	Plays the role of a pioneer among plants. It grows rapidly even in sandy soil. It has small habitat requirements and is insensitive to drought. The crown of adult specimens is irregularly pyramidal in shape. It's used to create wide tree rows.

**Table 2.** Bushes and low trees growing in Zawraa Park, 2016 (ed. authors)

Latin name	Some of the qualities and uses
<i>Acacia cyanophylla</i> (Labill.) H.L.Wendl.	It tolerates high temperatures and bright light. Shallow-rooted in the ground. Resistant to diseases and pests. Especially decorative leaves and flowers.
<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i> L.	Species resistant to frost and wind. Flowers very large, dark purple, in the shape of orchids.
<i>Callistemon lanceolatus</i> DC.	Planted on the banks of rivers and lakes. Resistant to high temperature, frost and pests. It tolerates calcareous soils. Fast branching. Flowers mostly red with numerous long stamens, gathered in dense cylindrical inflorescence on the tops of the stems. Flowers contain nectar and they are a source of food for birds.
<i>Citrus</i> sp.	Aromatic flowers and edible fruit. They attract bees. Sometimes used as thorny hedges.
<i>Cordia alliodora</i> (Ruiz & Pav.) Oken	Irregular shady crown.
<i>Eugenia caryophyllus</i> (Spreng.) Bullock & S.G. Harrison	Rapid growth, it creates hedgerows planted as windbreaks. Resistant to environmental and soil conditions.
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> L.	Its horizontal branches change into vertical shoots that grow into the ground and root in it. Trunks of a single individual can reach up to the diameter of 500 m.
<i>Ficus nitida</i> Thunb.	The plant is often found in Baghdad. Planted in hedges. Sometimes sensitive to frost.
<i>Melia azedarach</i> L.	Used for shading streets. Resistant to industrial pollution and dust. Growing rapidly, often used as an accompanying species of other plants.
<i>Morus</i> sp.	Rapid growth, edible fruit.
<i>Olea europaea</i> L.	Subjected to cutting and forming. A popular plant found in cities in a desert. It has many religious meanings. It can be found in shallow, calcareous soil. Resistant to high and low temperatures and strong sunlight.

**Table 2 – cont.**

Latin name	Some of the qualities and uses
<i>Populus euphratica</i> Olivier	Fast growing, it tolerates high temperatures and strong sunlight. It can be grown in industrial areas.
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i> Decne.	In spring it is abundant in flowers, in autumn it has red leaves.
<i>Salix babylonica</i> L.	Planted on wetlands and on the banks of reservoirs. Shady crown and decorative, curved stems.
<i>Schinus molle</i> L.	Plant suitable for wide avenues, planted to give shade, resistant to high temperatures and strong sunlight. It tolerates poor soils, frost-resistant, average wind resistance, fast growing
<i>Schinus terebinthifolia</i> Raddi	It can be molded. It has aromatic leaves and red decorative fruit.
<i>Sterculia diversifolia</i> Seem.	Planted in rows along the streets, where it forms the windbreaks screens. Produces brown pods with orange fruit.
<i>Tamarix articulata</i> Vahl.	Planted from the side of a desert as a screen against wind and dust. Resistant to strong sunlight, pests and diseases.
<i>Thevetia peruviana</i> (Pers.) K. Schum.	Shrub fast growing, resistant to high temperatures and pests.
<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i> (L.) Willd.	Used for hedges and tree rows.

**Table 3.** Palm trees growing in Zawraa Park, 2016 (ed. authors)

Latin name	Some of the qualities and uses
<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> L.	Palm tree reaches a height of about 20 metres, the crown is a panicle of long feathery leaves at the base of which grow seed heads with dates. Considered to be a symbol of freedom. Cultivated for fruit and ornamental purposes. It tolerates sandy and alkaline ground, can be grown in industrial areas, resistant to dust and fumes. Resistant to wind and frost. It is planted close to the streets giving shade. Easy propagation from seeds and seedlings.
<i>Washingtonia filifera</i> (Linden ex André) H.Wendl. ex de Bary	A tall palm tree, reaching a standard height up to 15 m. Palm trunk below the leaf crown is covered with old, dry leaves. Planted to shade streets and buildings. Tolerant, also grows on calcareous soils, resistant to wind, frost and drought.

**Table 4.** Other important species of plants in Zawraa Park, 2016 (ed. authors)

Latin name	Some of the qualities and uses
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers.	The most important species of grassland parks in Iraq. The grass reaches up to 30 cm in height. Drought resistant, grows well on sandy soils. Weaker growing in the shade.
<i>Ceratophyllum demersum</i> L.	Water plant, an important producer of oxygen in the lake water. Creates a layer of plants submerged in a tank together with plants of floating leaves, among others with a yellow water lily.
<i>Nuphar lutea</i> L.	It is used for greening of the water surface. Yellow, large (4–6 cm) flowers, strongly fragrant.



### Baghdad Island

Baghdad Island is a small cape located in northern Baghdad, bordered on one side with the Tigris River, and on three others with the lake. The construction took place from 1980 to 1982 and was carried out by two Finnish construction companies YIT and Vesi-Pekka. The construction work involved forming, from the side of the river, two-kilometre long embankment, the construction of 6 bridges, internal roads, water, sewage and electricity supplies, water intakes and sewage treatment plants. In its heyday it was the object as popular as Disney parks. During the war in 2003, the park was ransacked. Again, it has been open since 2009, but its renovation work has been continued. The composition of the park is based on a symmetric stellar system (Fig. 12). Alleys go out radially from a central island with a TV tower (Fig. 13 and 14). The tower offers a distant view of the park and



**Fig. 12.** 3D view on Baghdad Island. Pobrano z lokalizacji: <https://www.google.pl/maps/@33.4084148,44.3416998,4308a,20y,40.8t/data=!3m1!1e3>



**Fig. 13.** TV Tower and vantage point (photo R. O. Mahmud 2016)

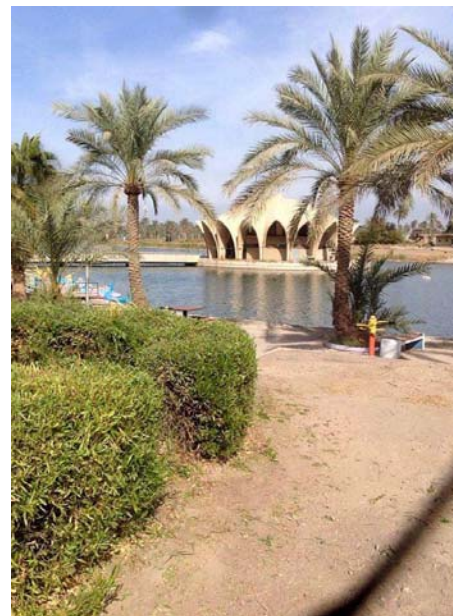


**Fig. 14.** A view of the park and landscape (photo R. O. Mahmud 2016)

eg. amphitheatre (Fig. 15). In the southern part of the lake there is the island of weddings (Fig. 16). Currently, on an area of 125 hectares there is located 50-metre tower Al Jazeera, restaurants, wedding halls, bowling alley, cinema, sports fields, marina, the lake of the area of 2 ha, amphitheatre, hotel, conference rooms, a casino and a planetarium. The property is visited by 5–6 thousand people and by up to 100,000 visitors during summer holidays and public holidays. Baghdad Island is a place dedicated to middle-class families and school trips. In the park you can play football, tennis or go for a swim on a variety of boats. It is located in the vicinity of irrigated fields and palm orchards with nice climate.



**Fig. 15.** A view of the park and amphitheatre from the tower (photo R. O. Mahmud 2016)



**Fig. 16.** Architecture Hall on the Wedding Island and some other buildings which look like tents (photo R. O. Mahmud 2016)

## CONCLUSIONS

Uniqueness of two presented parks in Baghdad is the result of the cultural characteristics of the region, the location and the wealth of the natural background. Due to the prevailing heat here, an important role in the gardens of the area plays water, which with its extensive system of canals, fountains and cascades is an impressive, decorative and utilitarian element. Pergolas and trees designed in the parks, give shadow which is so important in this climate. In the parks there grow colourful and fragrant plants such as cypresses, orange trees, pomegranates, oleanders, myrtles, water lilies, wisteria and palm trees. Equipment and small architecture is varied in the choice of materials, textures and colours.

Presented parks are the objects typical of modern Islamic architecture landscape. Gardens architecture continues to derive from its heritage, while seeking some new forms. A large turnout of visitors demonstrates the demand for this type of attractions. Amusement parks take an increasing part of tourism as an alternative to traditional objects such. museums and monuments. Although Iraq is associated most people with bombs, assassinations and fighting, you should know that there are safe green objects for carefree fun.

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## PARKI ROZRYWKI W BAGDADZIE NA PRZYKŁADZIE WYBRANYCH OBIEKTÓW

### STRESZCZENIE

W niniejszej pracy autorzy prezentują wyniki szczegółowych inwentaryzacji dendrologicznych i ogólnych inwentaryzacji architektonicznych w dwóch największych, współczesnych obiektach zieleni miejskiej w Bagdadzie – Zawraa Park i Bagdad Island. Autorzy omawiają dwa założenia parkowe, opisując ich historię, kompozycję i zastosowaną roślinność. Istotną rolę w tych ogrodach, ze względu na panujące upały, odgrywa woda – w kanałach, fontannach i efektownych kaskadach. Pergole i rozłożyste drzewa dostarczają tak ważnego w tym klimacie cienia. W parkach rosną barwne i pachnące rośliny, takie jak: cyprysy, drzewa pomarańczowe, granaty, oleandry, hibiskusy, jaśmin, mirt, róże, malwy, lilie afrykańskie, lilie wodne, glicynie, palmy, magnolie. Wyposażenie i mała architektura parków jest różnorodna w doborze materiałów, faktur i kolorów. Współczesna islamska architektura krajobrazu nadal czerpie ze swojego dziedzictwa, szukając jednocześnie nowych form.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Irak, Bagdad, sztuka Islamu, parki rozrywki, Zawraa Park, Bagdad Island