The Muslim West | Seats of Power: Palaces

The palace complex, a walled enclosure.

Having gained independence from the Eastern caliphate, the concentration of political and religious power vested in the new sovereigns brought with it the desire to emulate their Eastern counterparts by building luxurious palace complexes. Almost all rulers made use of this exclusive attribute and built centres of power for themselves or for their governors. Palatial complexes were traditionally located outside the city as spectacular walled 'palace cities', or at the highest point within the city itself, separated from it by a wall. These 'palace citadels' were used to control the town's population and to defend the vital mechanisms of power.



Name:
Sitting lion

Dynasty:
Hegira 406–547 / AD 1015–1152 Hammadid

Details:
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:
The walls both defended and isolated the sovereign; their monumental gateways sometimes decorated with welcoming symbols or alluding to the ruling power.



Name:
Alhambra

Dynasty:
From Hegira 636 / AD 1238 to the reign of Muhammad V (AH 754–94 / AD 1354–91) Nasrid

Details:
Granada, Spain

Justification:
The walls both defended and isolated the sovereign; their monumental gateways sometimes decorated with welcoming symbols or alluding to the ruling power.



Name:
Alhambra

Dynasty:
From Hegira 636 / AD 1238 to the reign of Muhammad V (AH 754–94 / AD 1354–91) Nasrid

Details:
Granada, Spain

Justification:
The walls both defended and isolated the sovereign; their monumental gateways sometimes decorated with welcoming symbols or alluding to the ruling power.



Name:
Palace of the Kasbah

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th–6th centuries / AD 11th–12th centuries; completed AH 1122 / AD 1711
'Alawid

Details:
Tangier, Morocco

Justification:
The walls both defended and isolated the sovereign; their monumental gateways sometimes decorated with welcoming symbols or alluding to the ruling power.