

The Muslim West | Seats of Power: Palaces

Palaces, the real seats of power.

As a whole, palaces were the real place of representation where power was exercised, with the sovereign publicly imparting justice or receiving administrators or ambassadors according to strict protocol. They consisted of sumptuous monumental spaces where state business was carried out in large, richly appointed rooms around garden courtyards. These spaces were accessed via long and complex routes, not just to improve security, but also to symbolise the inaccessibility of power.



Name:

Capital

Dynasty:

Hegira 4th century / AD 10th century Umayyad of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

Details:

Silves Municipal Archaeology Museum
Silves, Faro, Portugal

Justification:

While the sumptuous decoration of the palaces symbolised the sovereign's power, the beauty of the courtyards, gardens, fountains and pools created a harmonious and elegant environment that resembled paradise.



Name:

Arch

Dynasty:

Hegira 437–73 / AD 1064–81 Taifa kingdoms; Banu Hud dynasty, Abu Yafar Ahmad al-Muqtadir (r. AH 437–73 / AD 1064–81)

Details:

National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

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Name:

Fountain spout

Dynasty:

Hegira 339–90 / AD 950–1000 Umayyads of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

Details:

National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:

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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:
Partial Gardens, Alhambra, Granada.



Name:
Batha Palace

Dynasty:
Hegira 13th / AD 19th century 'Alawid

Details:
Fez (Old Town / Medina), Morocco

Justification:
Batha Palace, Fez.

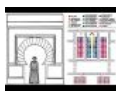


Name:
Madinat al-Zahra

Dynasty:
Hegira 324–65 / AD 936–76 Umayyad of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

Details:
Córdoba, Spain

Justification:
Each room had a specific use, the protocol dictating that one room should be used to receive ambassadors and ministers, while another would be used to impart justice before a public audience.



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Site of Qal'at Bani Hammad

Dynasty:
Hegira 397-398 / AD 1007-1008 Hammadid

Details:
Qal'at Bani Hammad, Msila, Algeria

Justification:

The palace and the palace mosque symbolised the sovereign's political and religious power. The sovereign would have presided over prayers from a reserved area in front of the mosque's mihrab.

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