

The Muslim West | Settlements and Domestic Life

Muslim towns: a labyrinth of streets.

In the Muslim West settlements were constructed either as fortified villages or towns, with both types of habitat sharing specific features derived from the clever adaptation of building materials and techniques to hot, dry environments. The Town had a complex structure consisting of the town centre indicated by the great mosque, a citadel or governor's residence, a suq or market along the main street from which side streets would run, public baths (hammam), inns (funduq) and small workshops. The residential area was located within the town walls, while the suburbs lay outside the walls where farms were situated, where livestock markets were held and from where some craftsmen operated.



Name:
Fortified villages

Dynasty:
Hegira 2nd/3rd–7th centuries / AD 8th/9th–13th centuries Umayyad, early Taifa kingdoms, Almoravid, Almohad

Details:
Mértola region, Beja, Portugal

Justification:
In the fortified villages, houses opened out onto areas shared by a population bound by strong family ties. The cultivated land was found beside the houses or interspersed amongst them.



Name:
Bani Isguen

Dynasty:
Hegira 441 / AD 1050 Ibadid / Rustamid

Details:
Ghardaïa, Algeria

Justification:
The use of adobe walls, bricks, stones, mud and lime is well established in Muslim knowledge as it is part of the cultural heritage.



Name:
Kasbah of the Udayas

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th / AD 12th century; beginning of Hegira 11th / end of AD 17th century Almohad; 'Alawid; Moorish refugees from Spain

Details:
Rabat, Morocco

Justification:
The residential part of the town, which would have been closed at night, was arranged into private districts. The narrow streets would lead to smaller, twisting alleyways, which in turn often led to a dead end.



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