

Palaces

Islamic Architecture

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Introduction

- Unfortunately there are many gaps in the history of Islamic palaces.
- The architecture of Islamic palaces represents the symbolic and romantic side of the Islamic architecture.
- The idea of building eternal palaces (for dynasties) was not aided by religion or society. This is why every ruler would erect his own palace.
- Because of their little numbers, and wide spread, it is difficult to give generalizations about the Islamic palatial architecture.

Types of Palaces

- Islamic palaces ranged between two extremes.
- They were very large, sometimes a mile long. They included the private residence for the monarch, his family and court members. They also included the barracks, arsenals, offices for different diwans, the audience hall (diwan al-a'amm) and the private one (diwan al-khass), gardens, mosques, cemetery and other functions. It was a mini city, aimed to survive without the rest of the city.
- They were very small, sometimes a single building. They were made of two stories, the ground floor open for the public and the upper one was a private residence. These depended on the surrounding city for other facilities, and were buried in thick gardens and fountains.

Types of Palaces

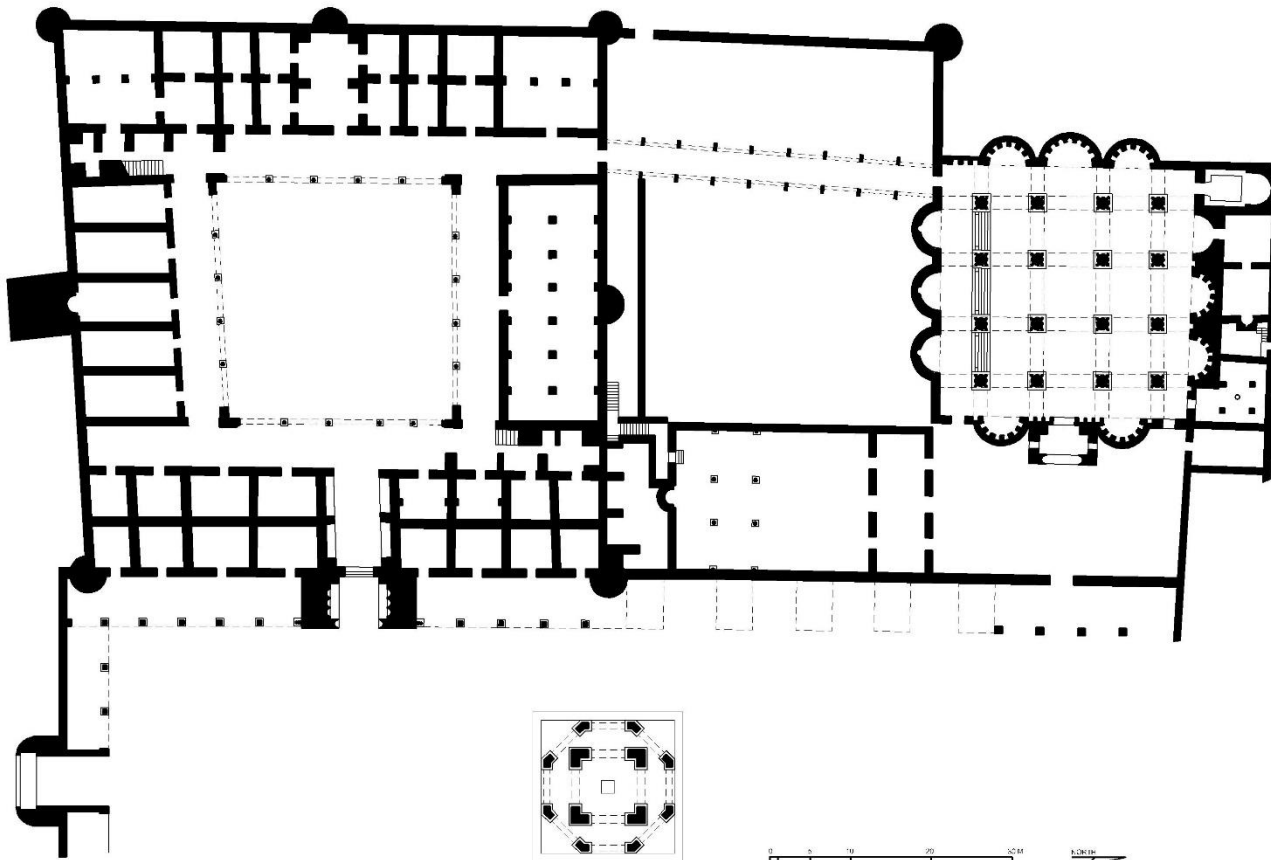
- According to the previous two extremes we can find four types of palaces:
- 1- The palace as a country villa.
- 2- The palace as a combined administrative center and a machine for living.
- 3- The palace as a royal residence with little emphasis on other functions (usually fortified).
- 4- The palace as a modest temporary retreat.
- These palaces were very exotic buildings. The Tulunid palace had silver columns. A Abbasid palace had a lake of tin measuring 20*30 with boats covered with gold. Some also contained foreign animals in their gardens.

Umayyad Palaces

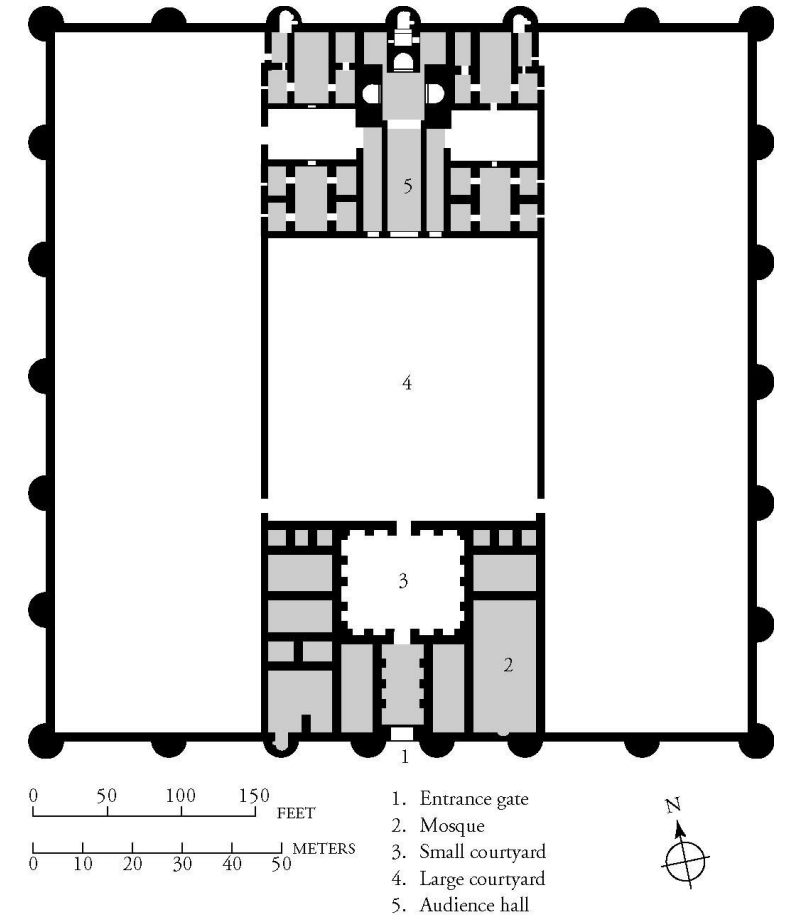
- Most of the Umayyad princely palaces in Syria were built in the desert, and for various reasons. They were available in large numbers.
- Even though the name given to them is a palace (qasr) they had a castle-like character to offer protection.
- Mostly these palaces had a courtyard with small rooms surrounding it. The walls were strengthened by towers and buttresses. They included an audience hall. They did not have water supply for rooms, or decent windows, and they were equipped with a poor quality furniture.
- The Roman impact was obvious in using the courtyard to bring air and light, giving the building a military sense through the external fortification and the use of a modular system (using the Roman foot).

Umayyad Palaces

- Khirbat al-Mafjar, Palestine



Qasr al-Mshatta, Jordan

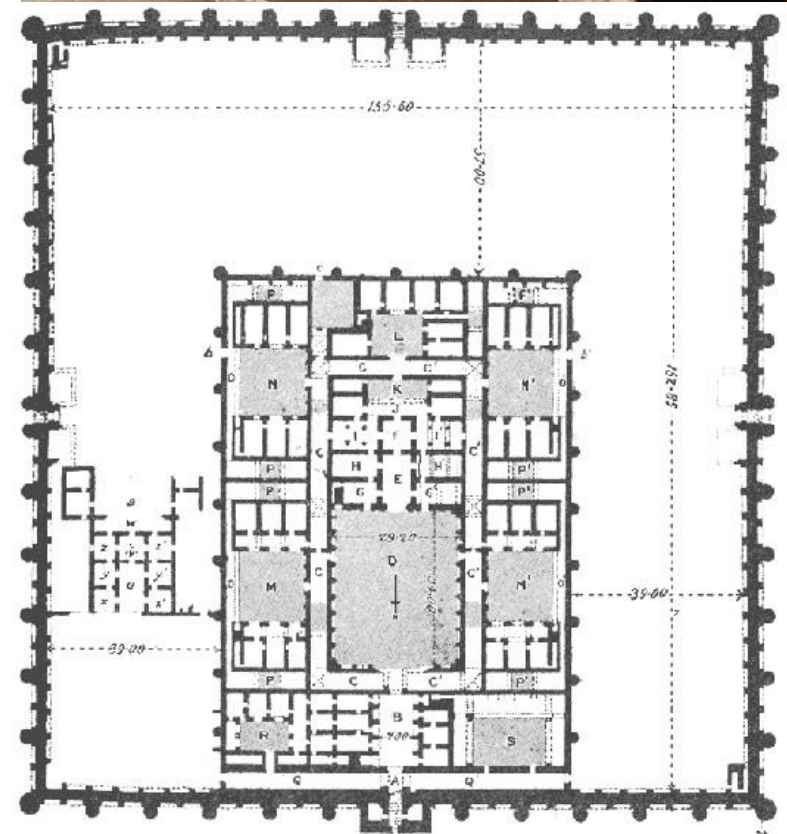
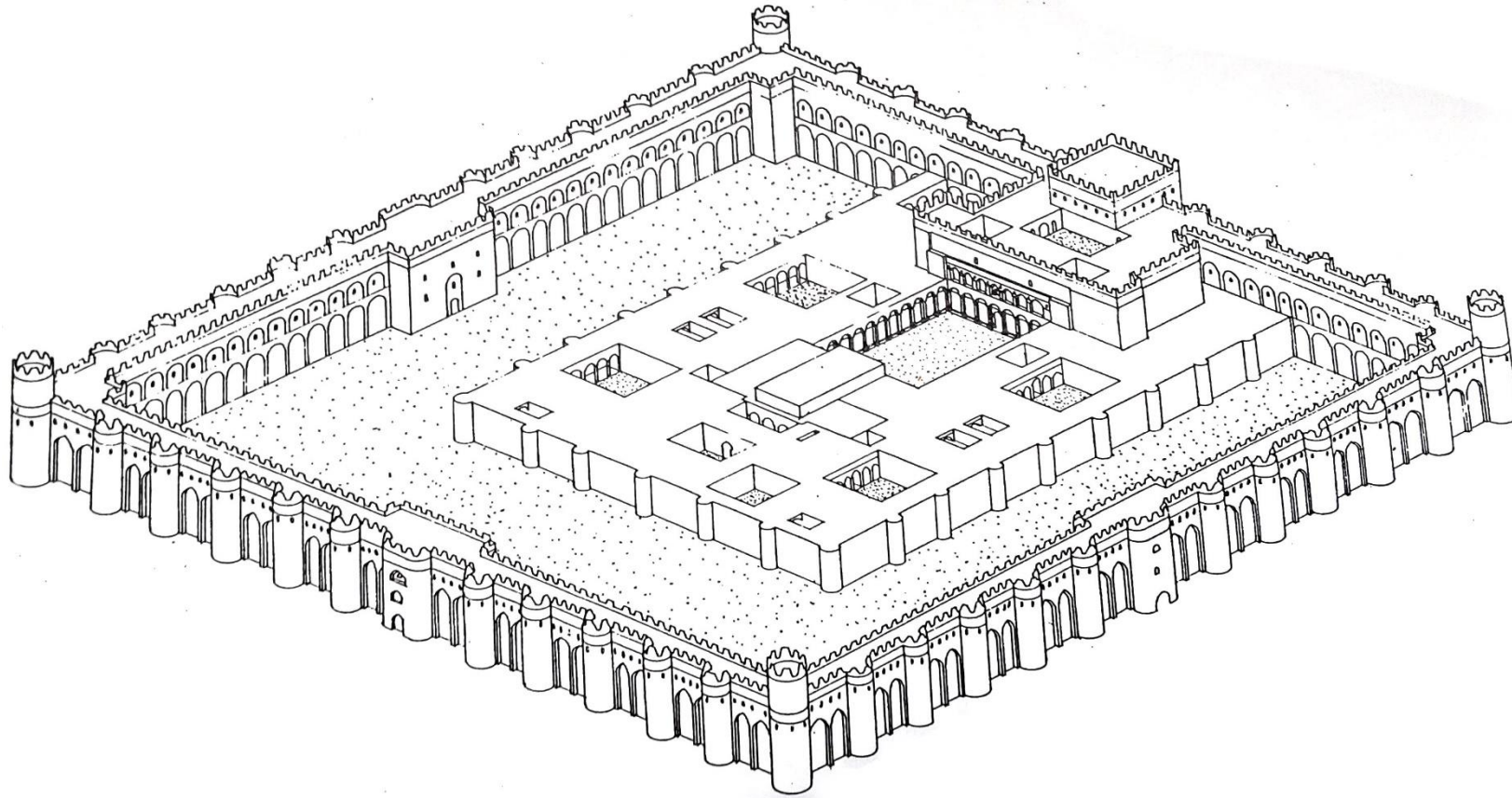


Abbasid Palaces

- The first change from the Umayyad palaces to the Abbasid is in size.
- The Abbasid palaces were surrounded by the Persian Sassanian grand palaces, like the Arch of Khasrau in Ctesiphon's palace, challenging the Muslim architects.
- The gap appeared clearly between people and the ruler.
- After building the new capitals (Baghdad and Samarra), palaces became massive and extremely luxurious facilities.
- They started to have a complex functional solution and space distribution, all respecting a precise hierarchy of spaces.

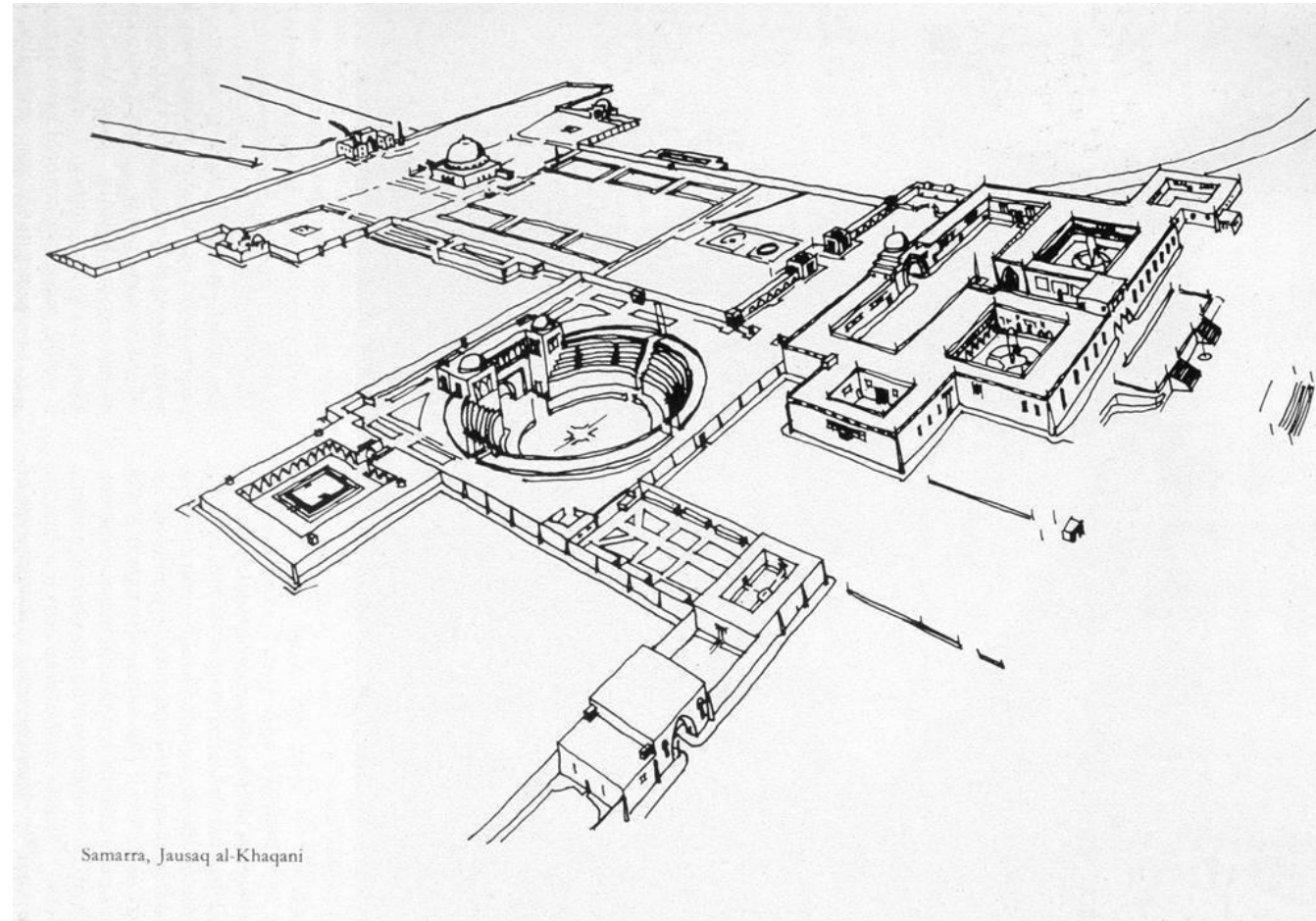
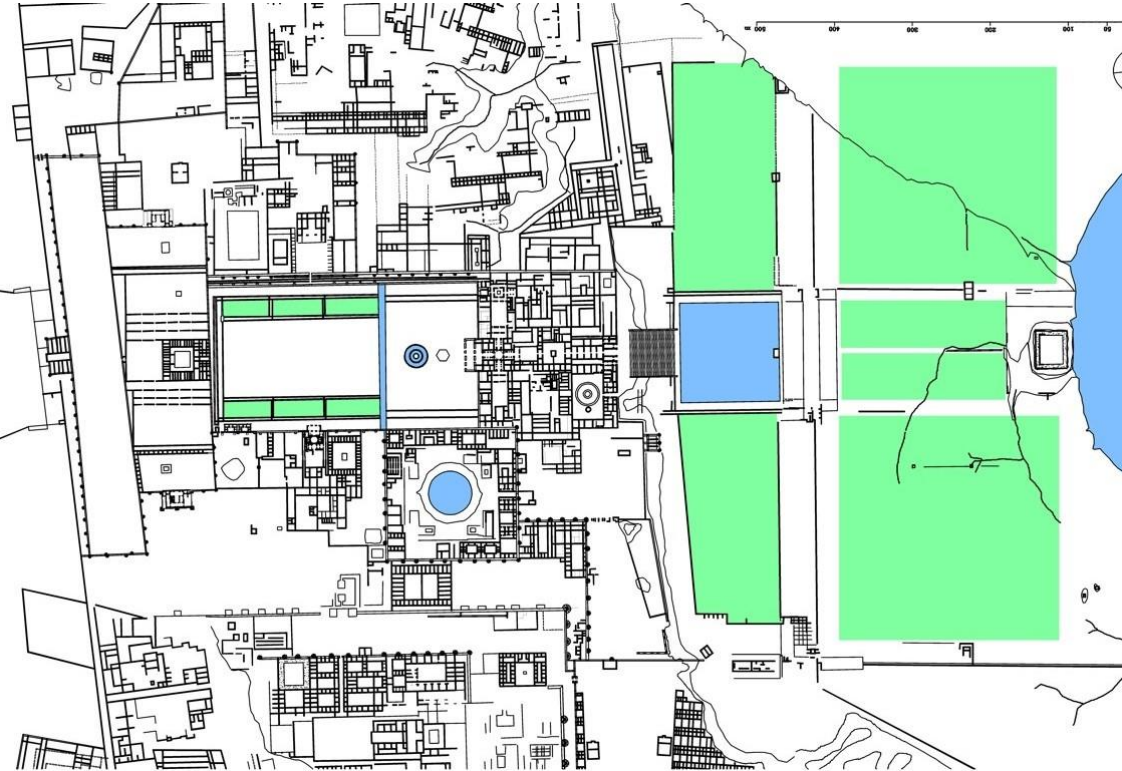
Abbasid Palaces

- Qasr al-Ukhaidhir, Iraq



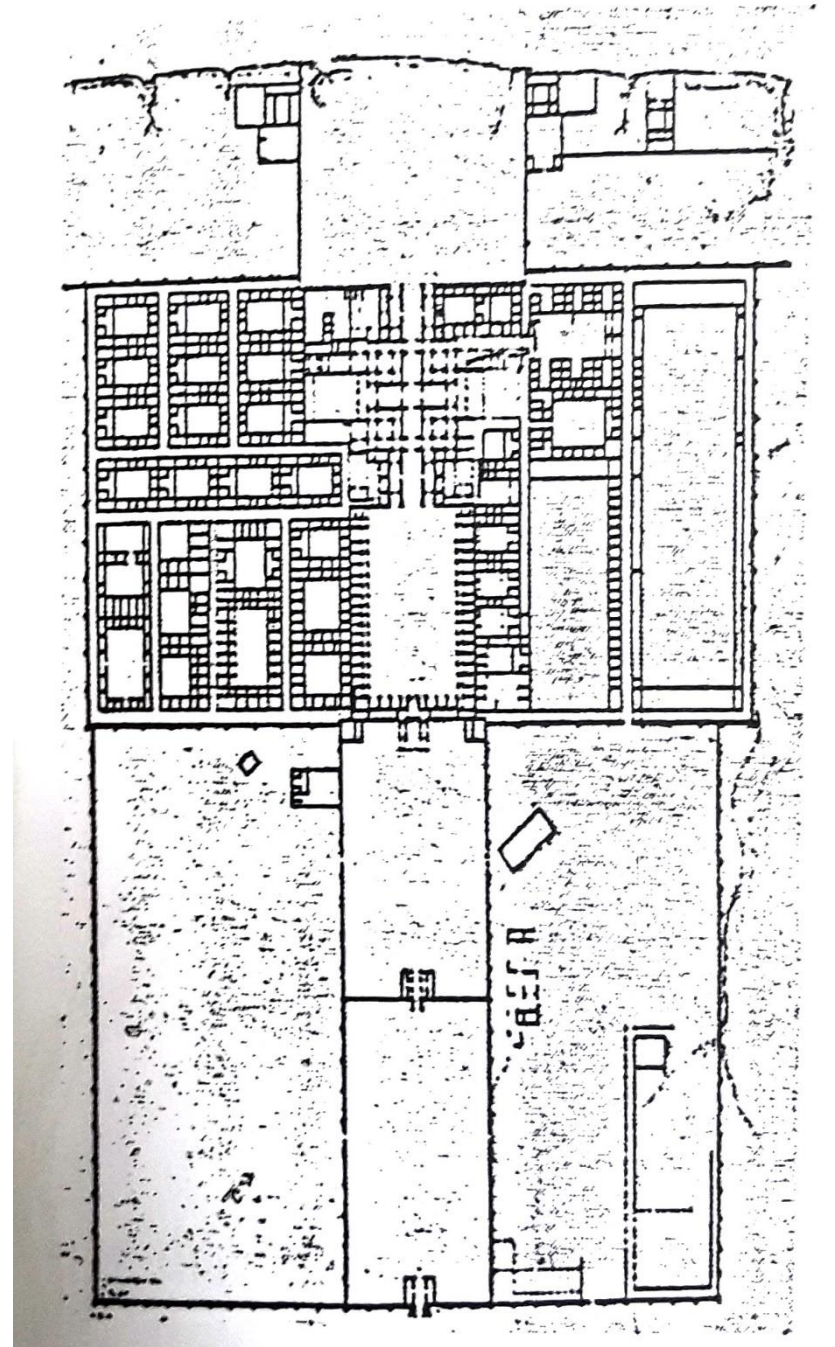
Abbasid Palaces

- Al-Jausaq Al-Khaqani, Iraq



Abbasid Palaces

- Balkwara, Iraq

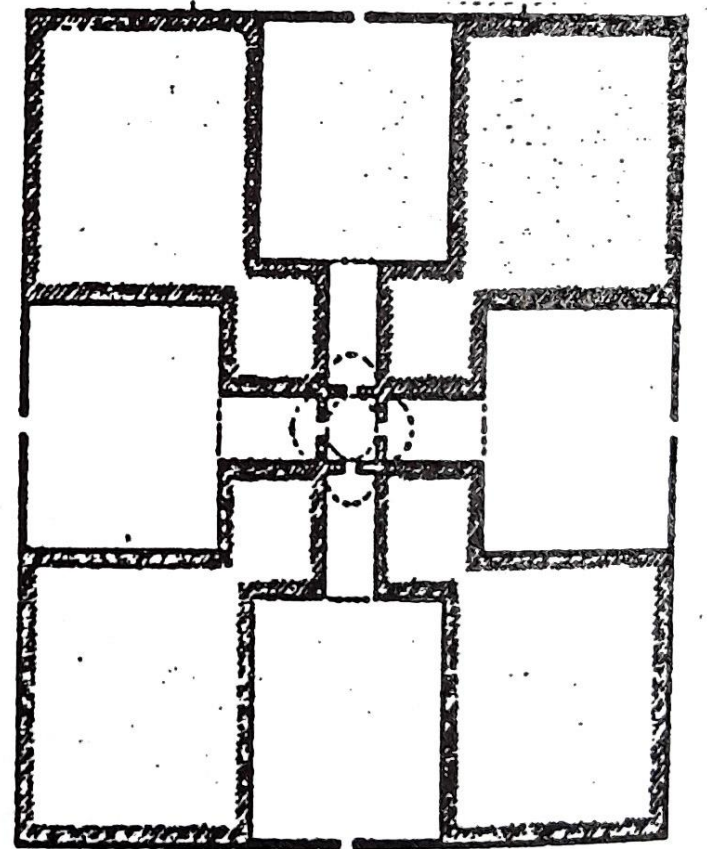


Iranian Early Palaces

- Very little number of palaces survive from the early medieval period in Iran.
- The architecture of palaces, like in other building types was affected by the Persian building traditions.
- The early palaces were small in size, having central shape, affected by the pre-Islamic symbolism and thus divided to four parts and ruled by the central dome and the 4 iwans.
- Though other buildings tried to imitate the Abbasid grand palaces, the description presented above was the main theme of the Seljuk palaces of Iran and Khorasan.

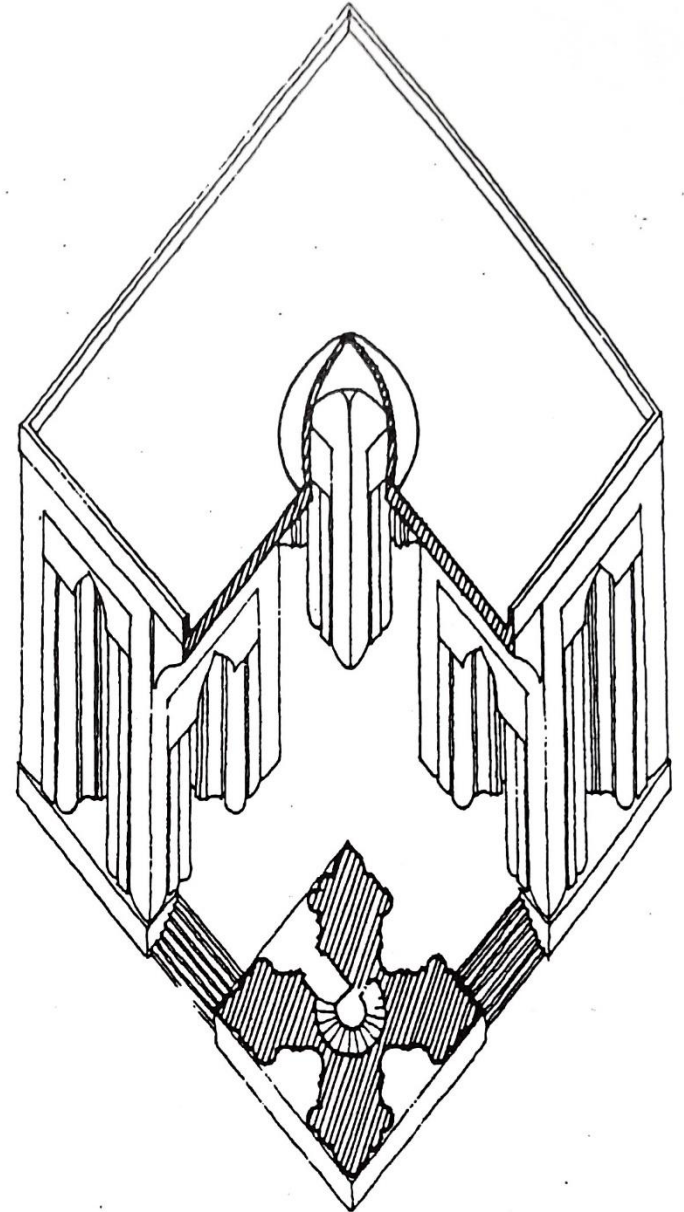
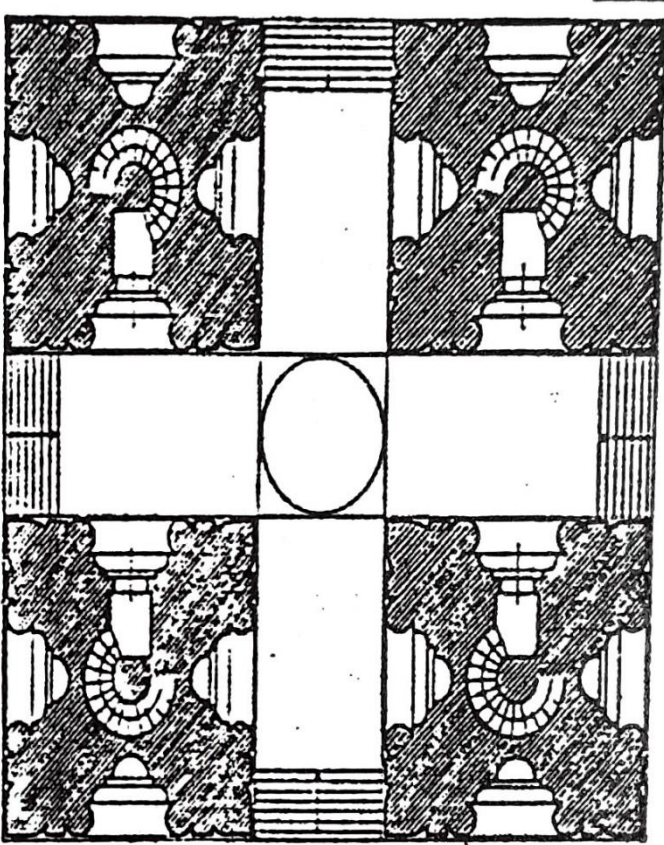
Iranian Early Palaces

- Dar al-Imara of Abu Muslim, Iran



Iranian Early Palaces

- Qal'ayi Dukhtar, Azerbaijan

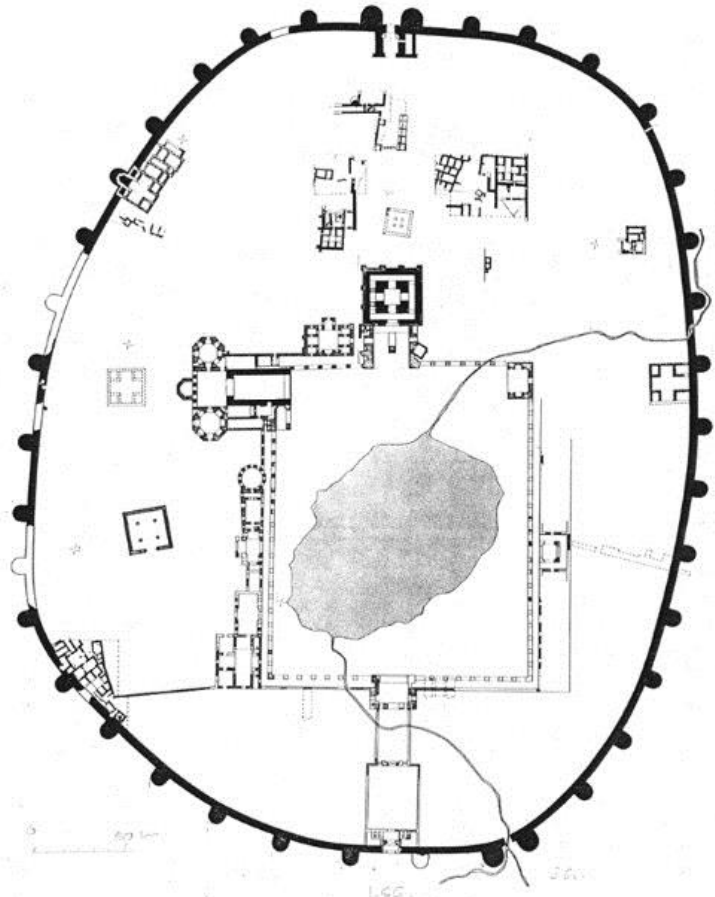


Royal Residences

- The idea of the central palace-city lost its appeal in the palaces of the 13th – 15th century.
- The emirs of Anatolia and Jazeera were not caliphs, this is why they did not need to show the strength of their power in their palaces.
- These palaces became smaller, still multi functional, with a high sense of informality and aimed to provide a pleasant life style.
- The lifestyle changed from nomadic to settled down, from imperial to domestic.
- The Anatolian palaces were very small, sometimes only one building and they had a specific name, the kiosks.

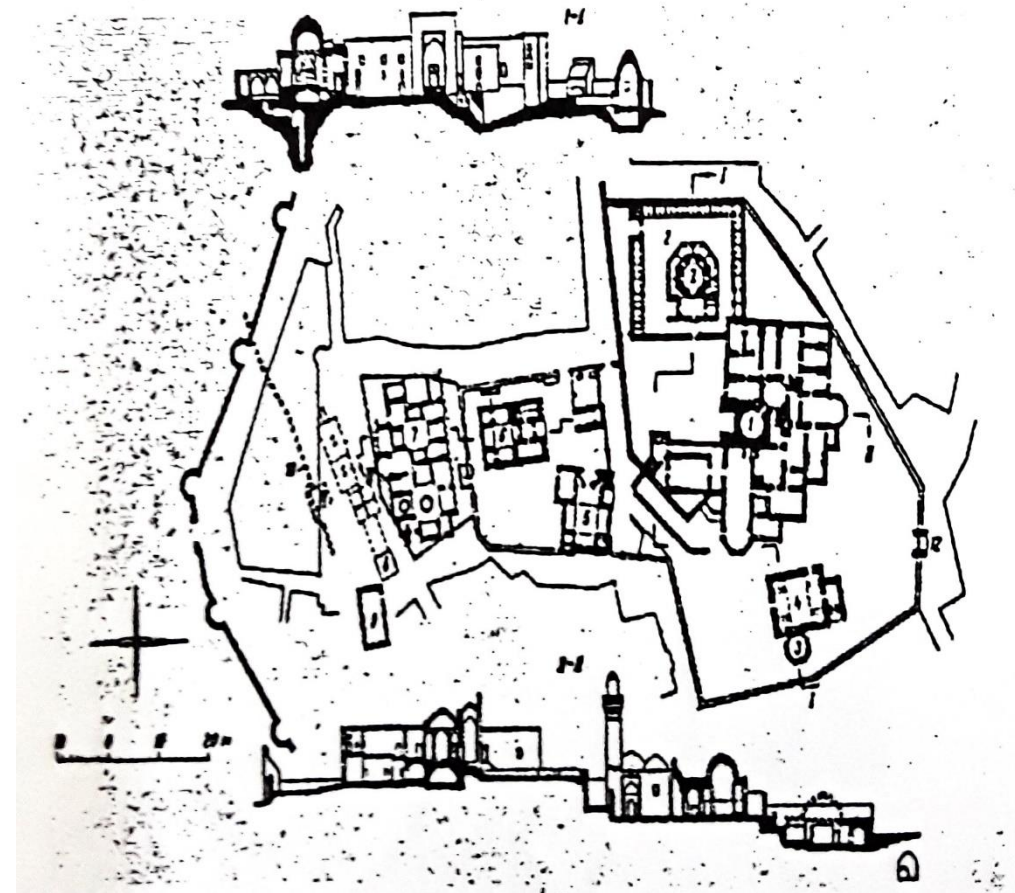
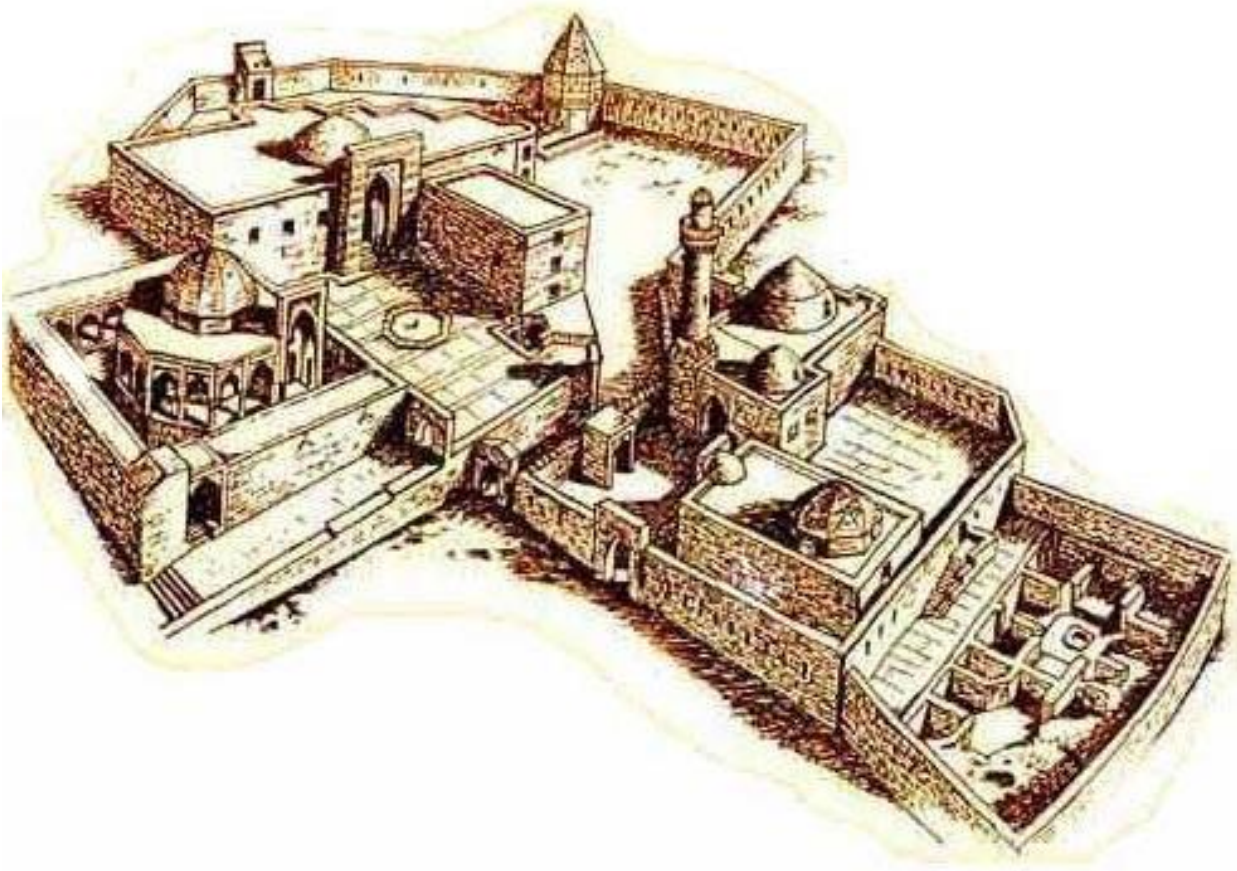
Royal Residences

- Takht-i-Sulaiman, Iran



Royal Residences

- Palace of Shirvanshah, Azerbaijan

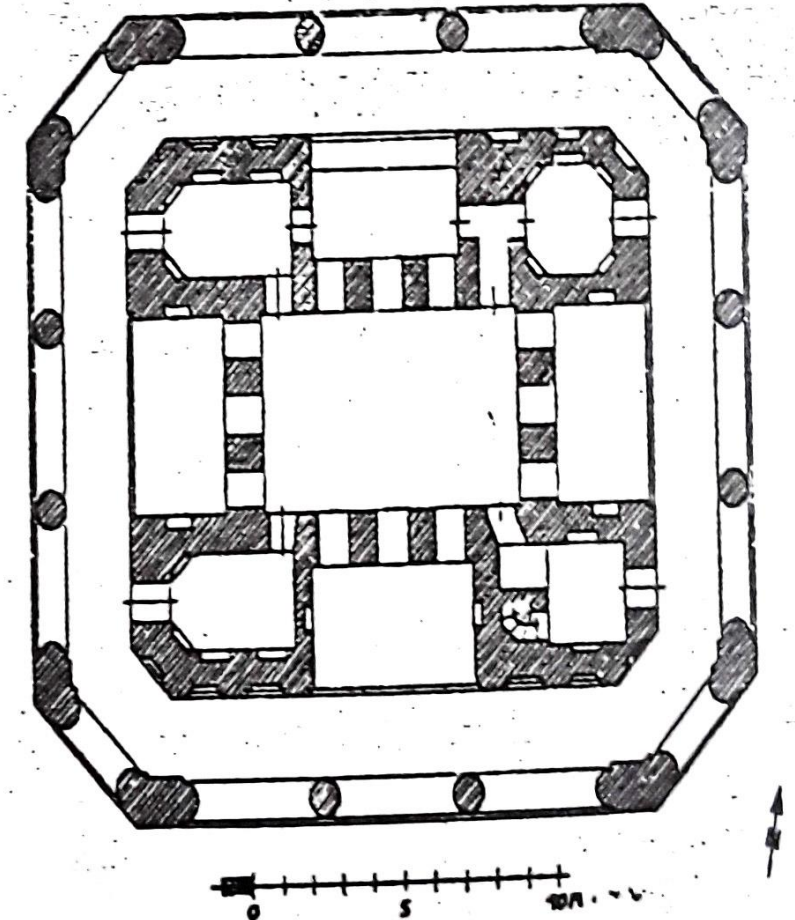
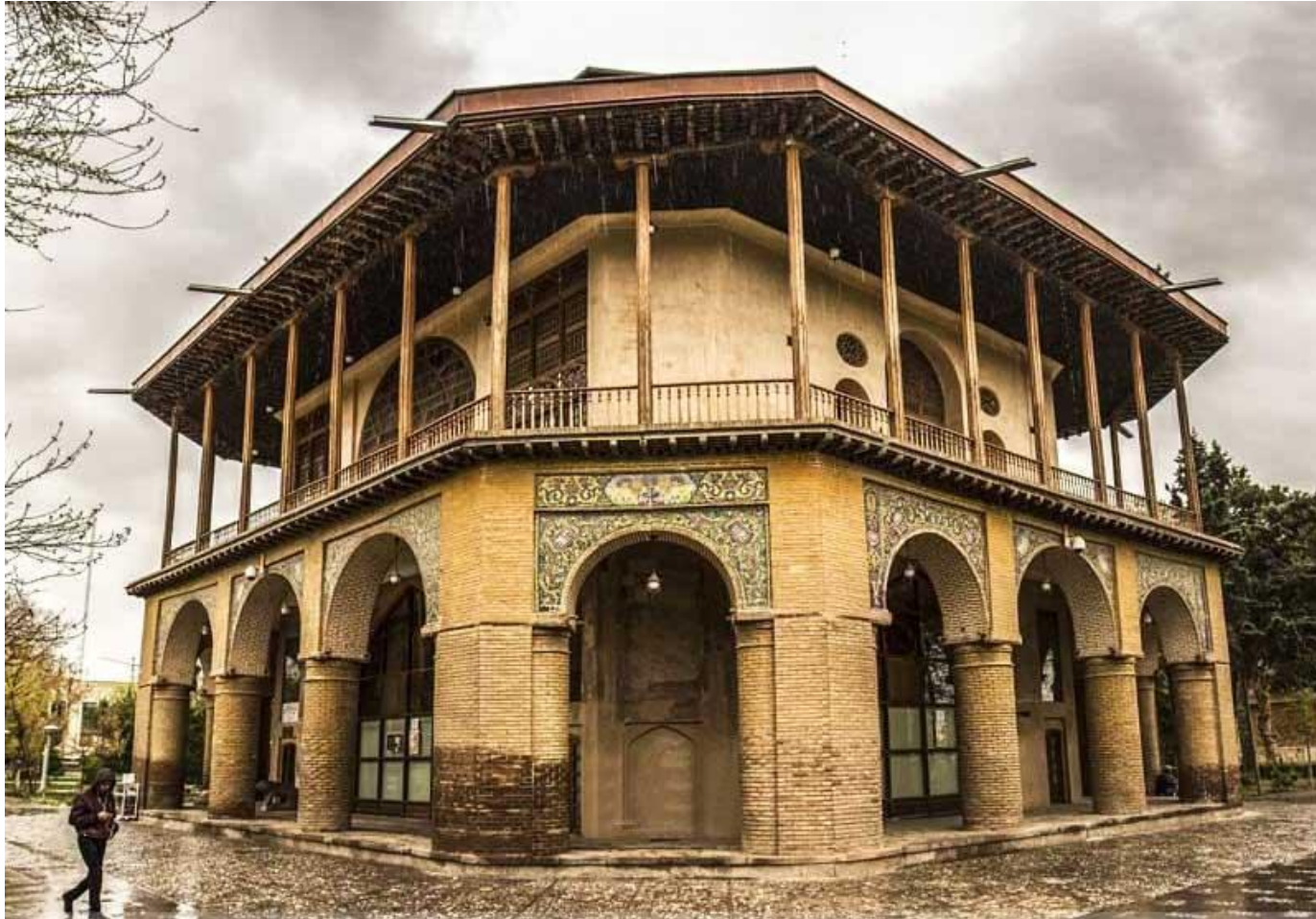


Safavid Palaces

- Though Safavid palaces were made of small structure, their decorative quality was high. They were erected quickly and cheaply.
- They are represented in the open plan system and a strong solid-void contrast in the elevation. They did not include complex functions.
- The palaces did not have courtyards, and the Iranian elements of Iwans and domes were used on a smaller scale.
- Because of the open plan, the buildings were not situated near crowded streets. Being inside the city and unable to sustain themselves alone, these buildings were surrounded by dense gardens. The gardens were very important, and not just an addition. Along with the palace they formed a strong unified image of the heavens.
- They also used wood as a structural material.

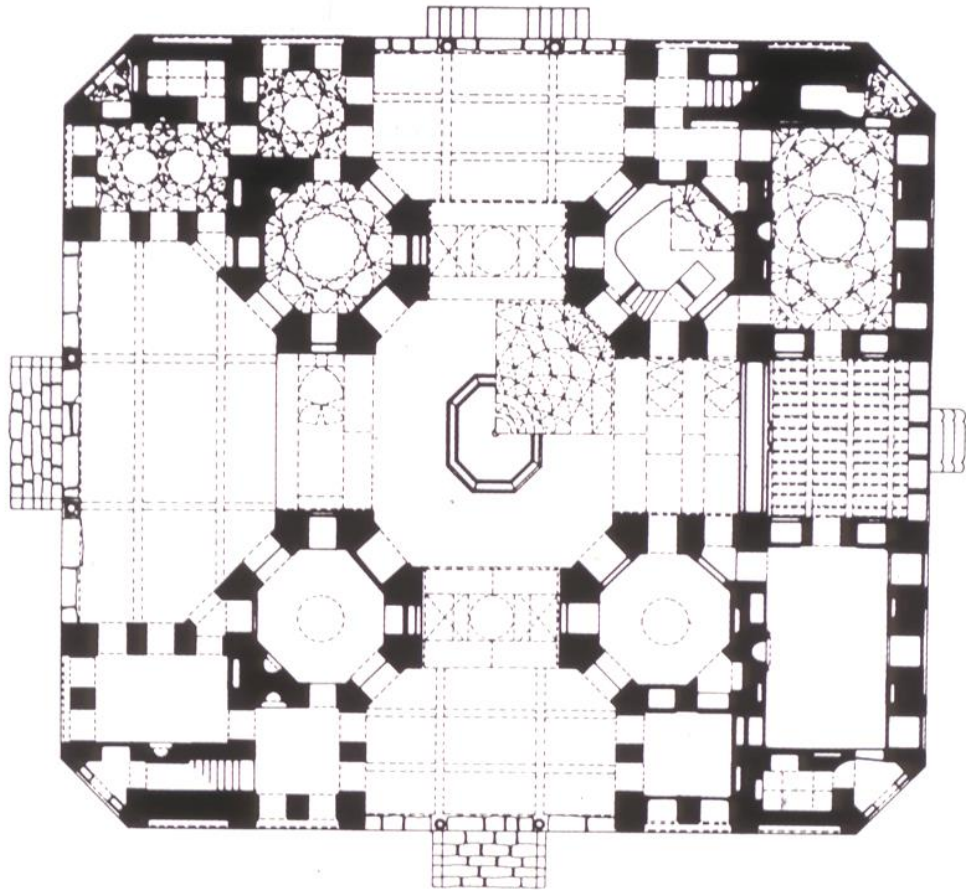
Safavid Palaces

- Safavid Royal Pavilion, Qazvin



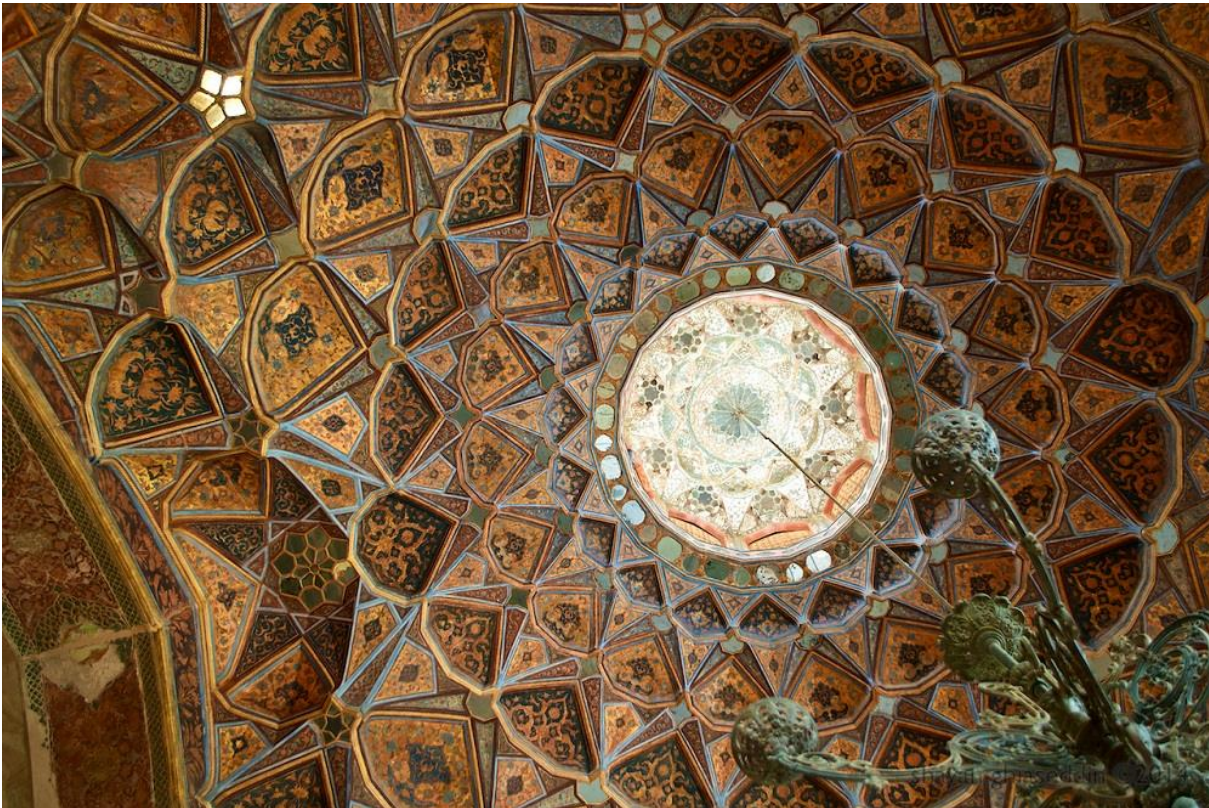
Safavid Palaces

- Hasht Bihisht, Isfahan



Safavid Palaces

- Hasht Bihisht, Isfahan

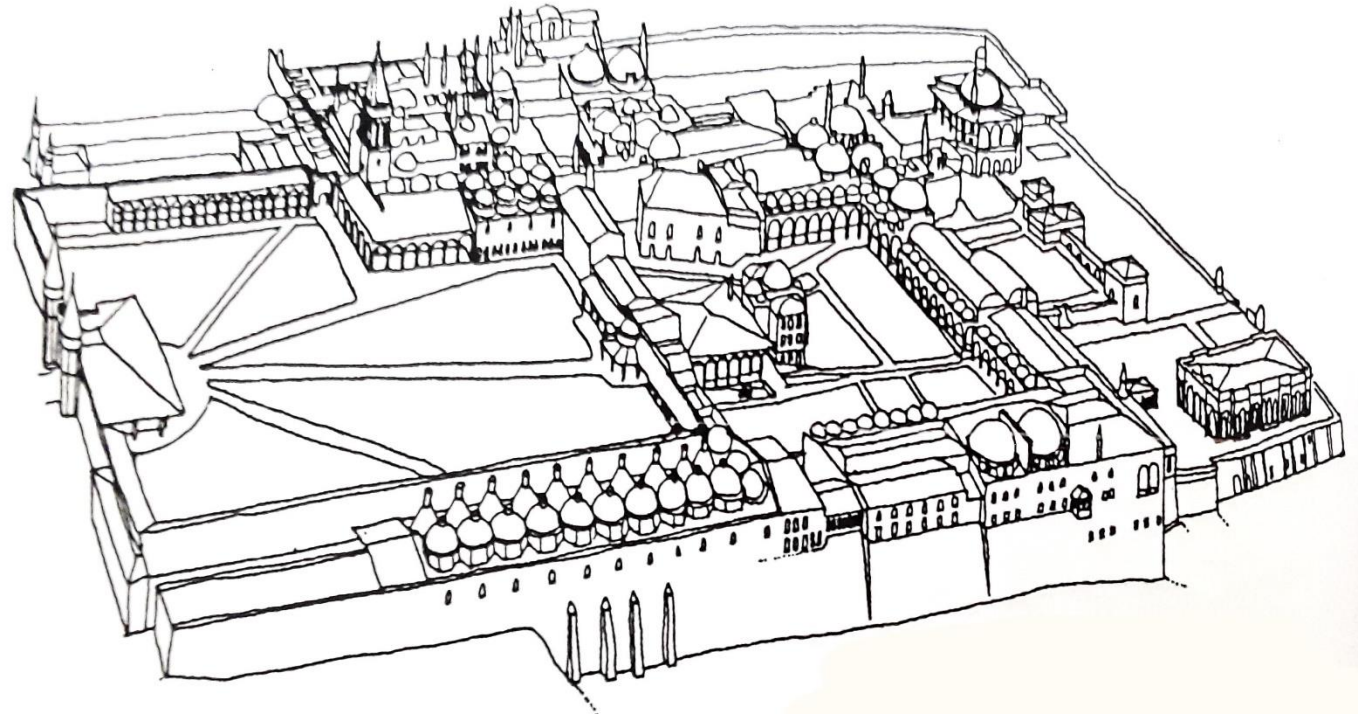
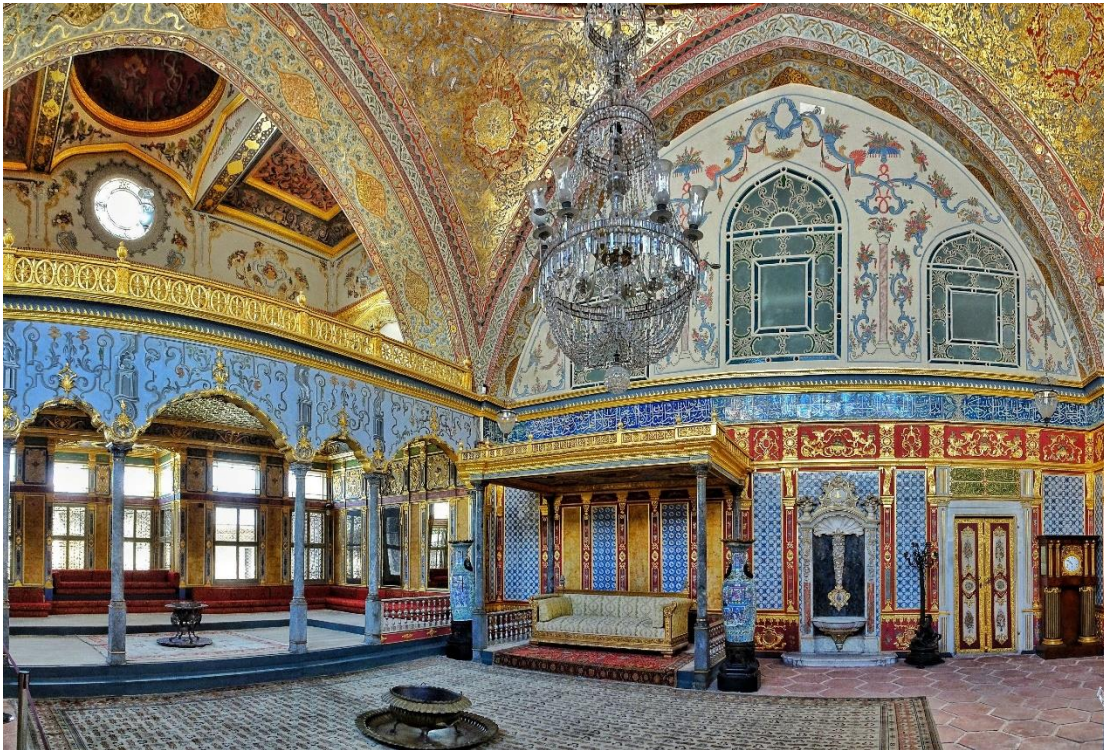


Ottoman Palaces

- Ottoman mature palaces were large in scale.
- They carried the Ottoman architectural characteristics, symbolized in the dome architecture.
- The effect of the Roman and Byzantine architecture was obvious.
- The Topkapi Saray for example was a mini city.

Ottoman Palaces

- Topkapi Saray, Istanbul

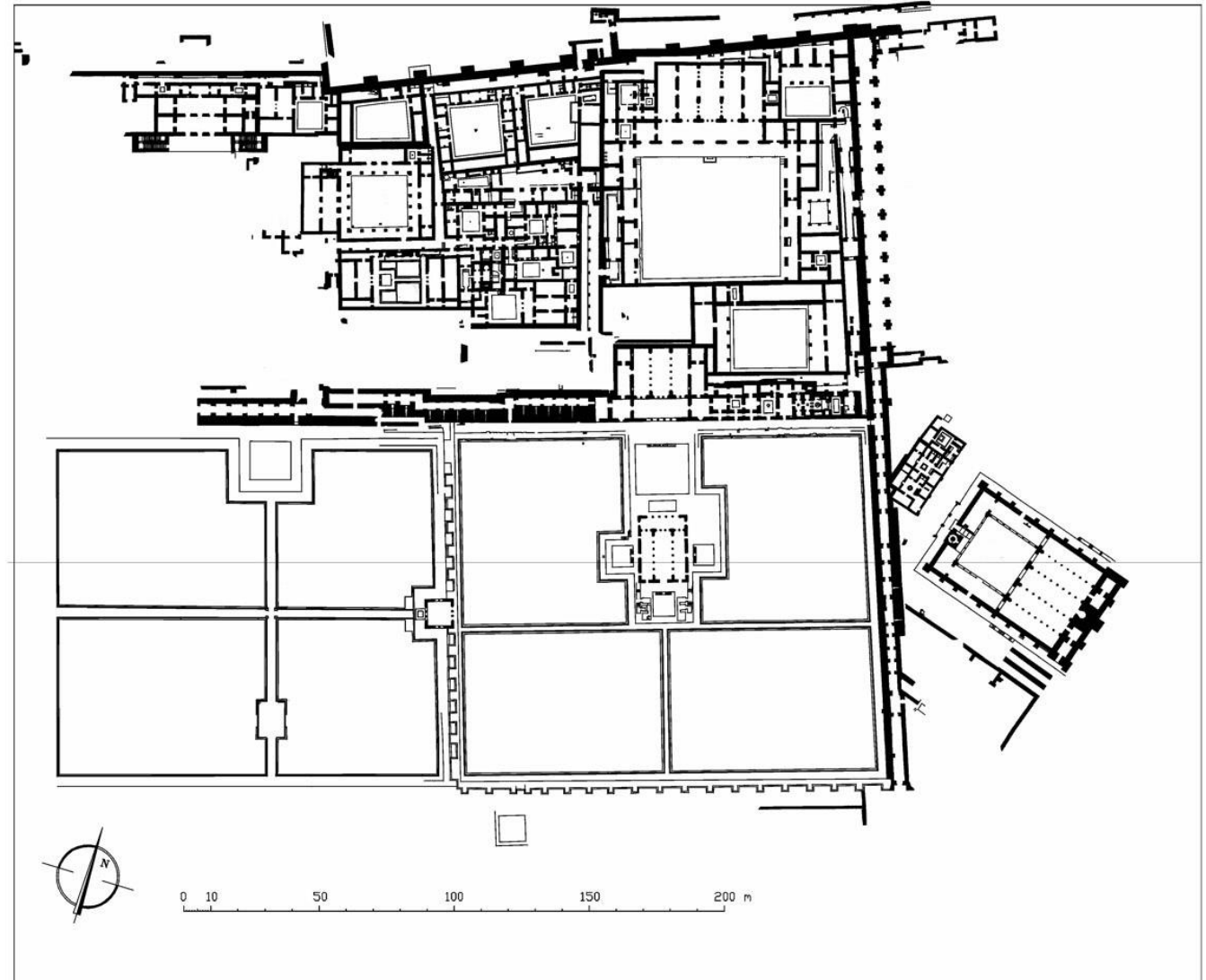


Maghrebi Palaces

- The early palace in Maghreb were a copying of the Umayyad palaces.
- Spain had a special character of palatial architecture.
- Many of them were altered under the Christian rule, but they kept the Islamic structure and some of the decoration.
- They tried to imitate the Syrian architecture. They even named some of these palaces to Syrian cities, and planted Syrian trees.
- These palaces ranged from country villas to Samarra-like administration centers. The country villas are characterized in the human scale, lavish Moorish decoration, high quality and the utilization of courtyards and water surfaces.

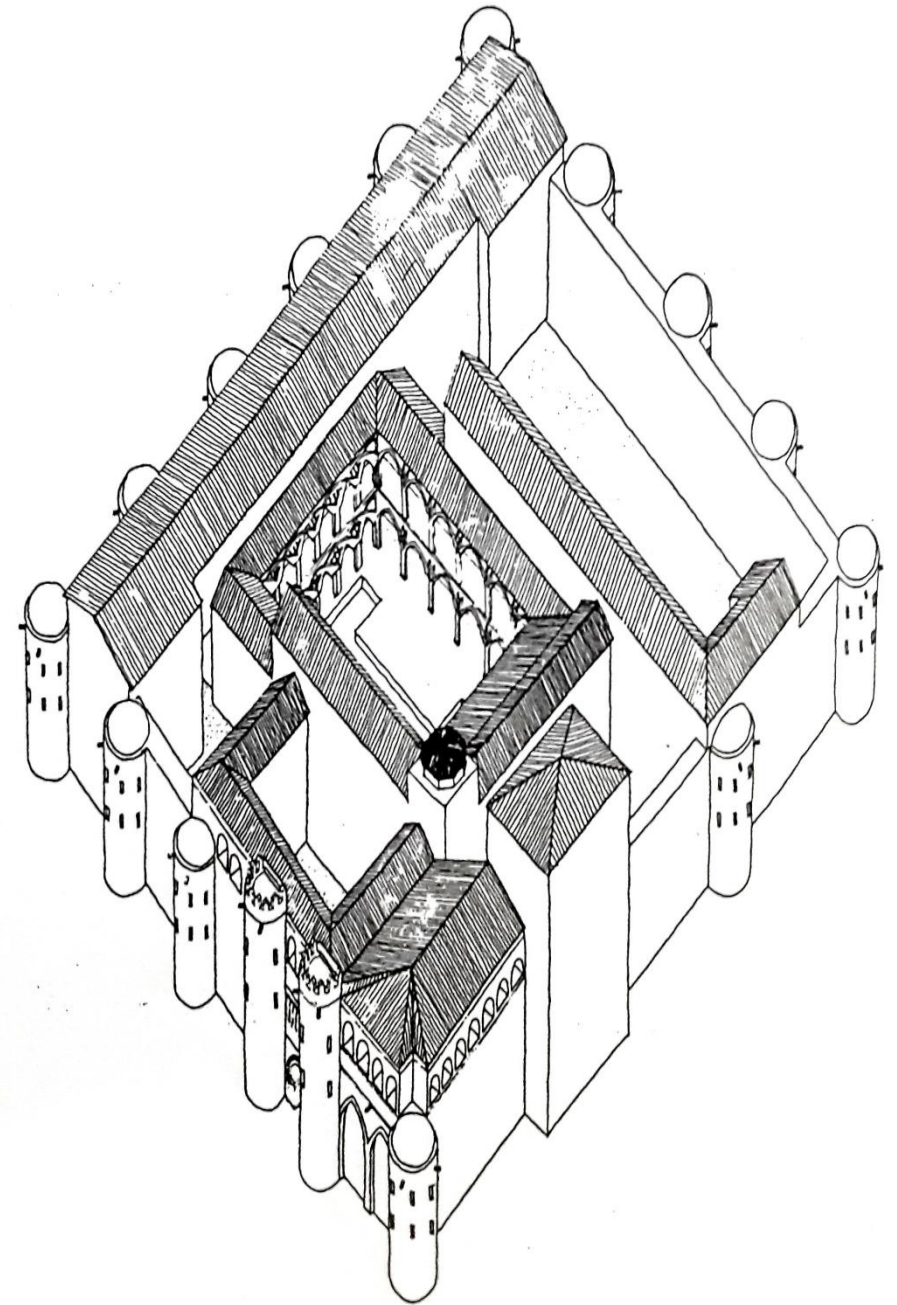
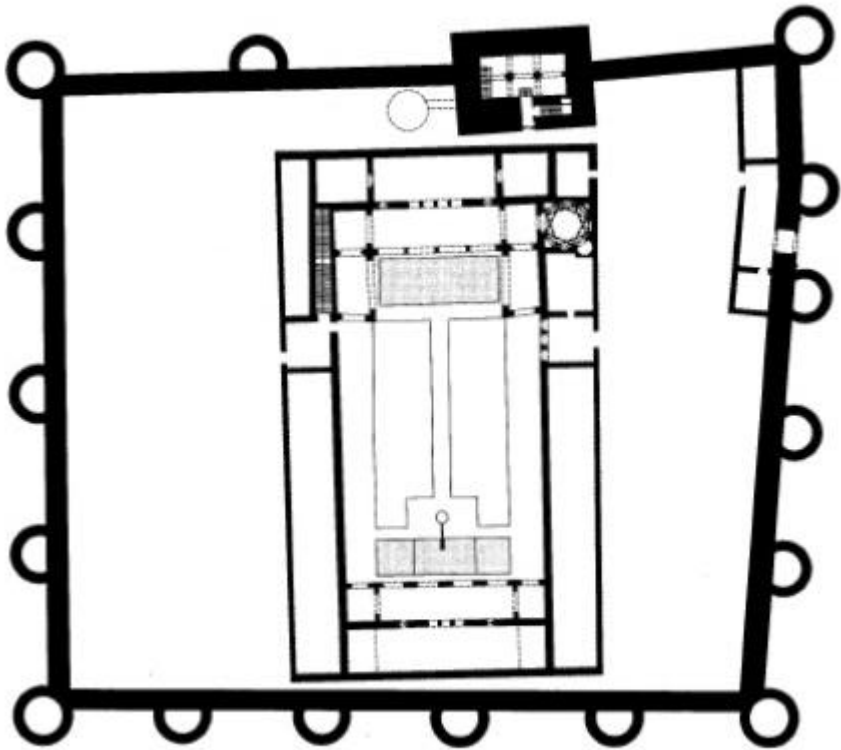
Maghrebi Palaces

- Madinat Al-Zahraa



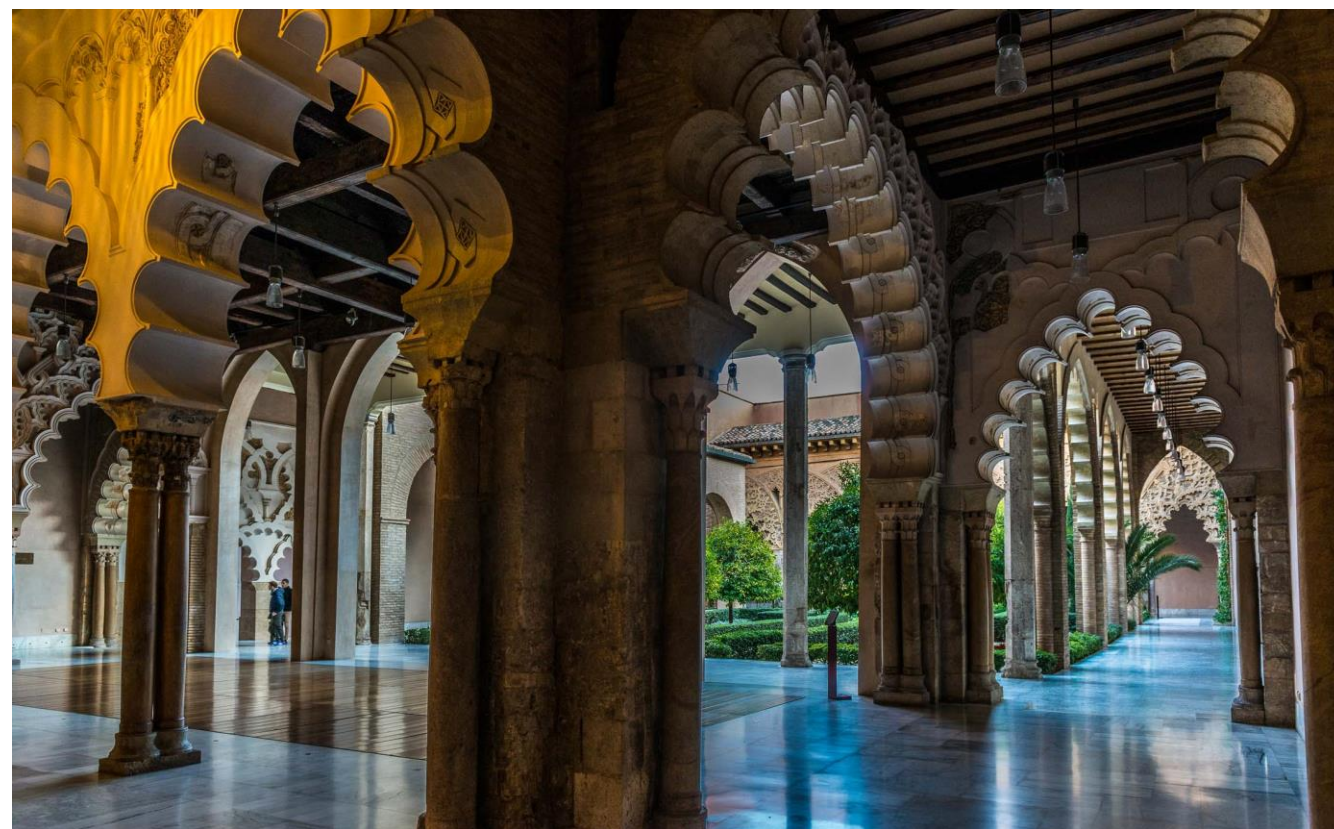
Maghrebi Palaces

- Al-Ja'faria palace, Zaragoza



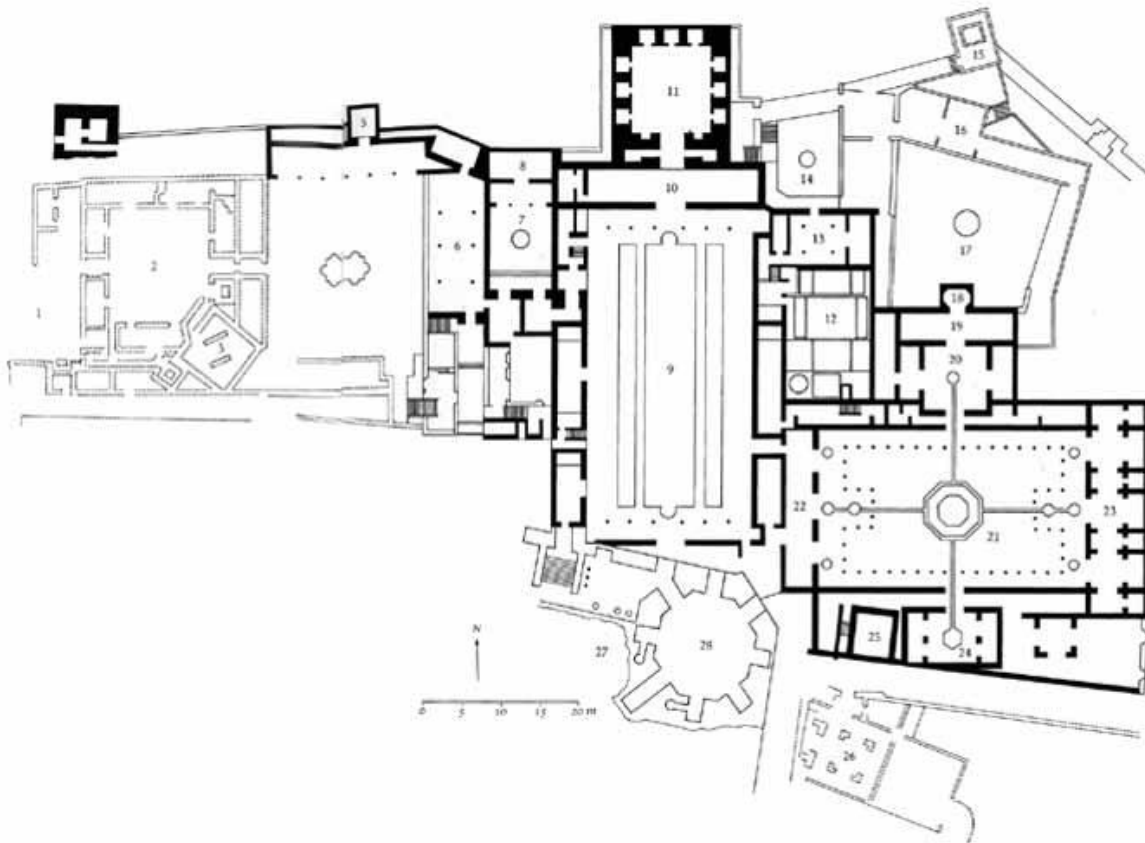
Maghrebi Palaces

- Al-Ja'faria palace, Zaragoza



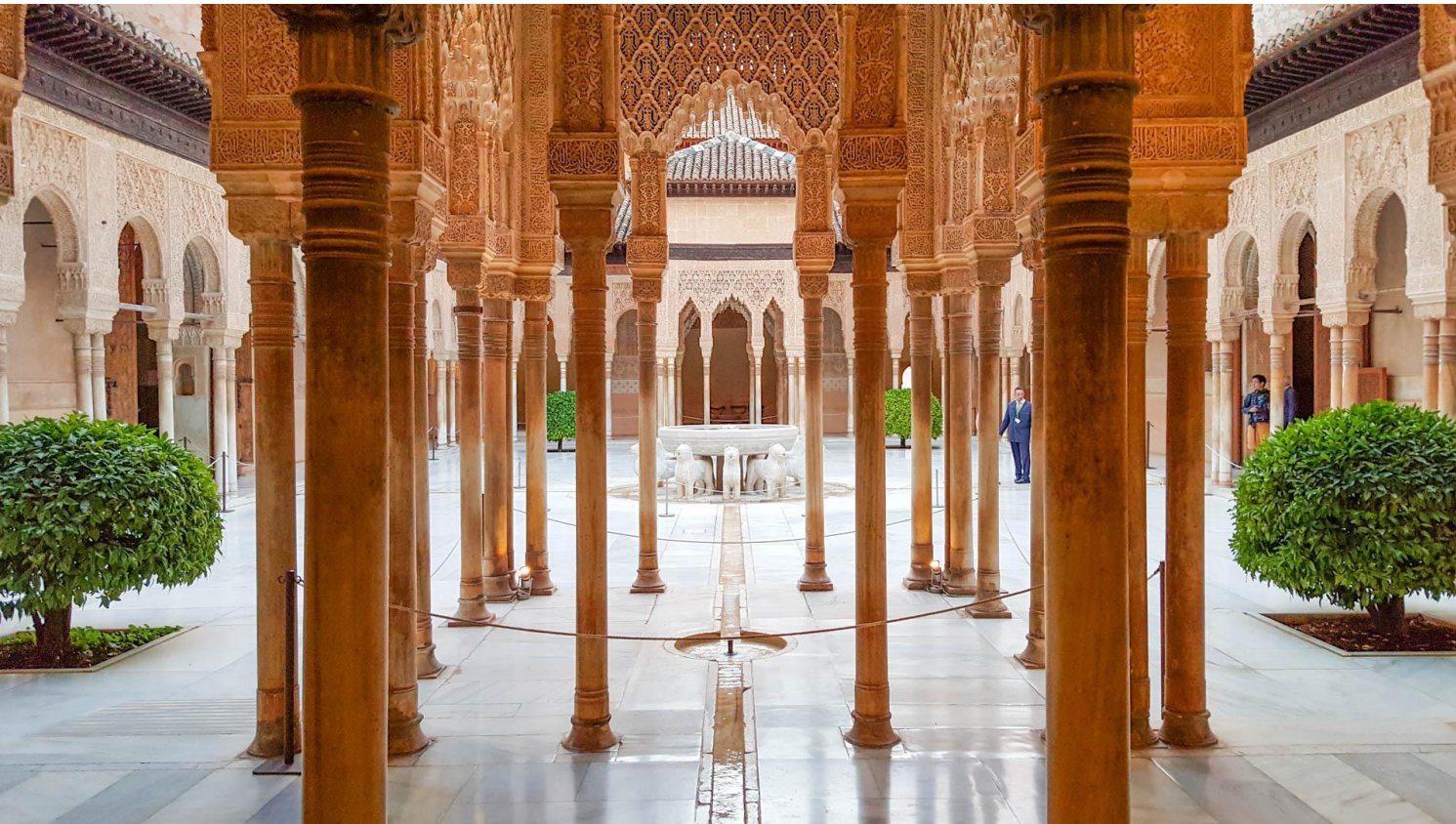
Maghrebi Palaces

- Alhambra, Granada



Maghrebi Palaces

- Alhambra, Granada



Maghrebi Palaces

- Alhambra, Granada



Palaces

- There is no single standard type of palaces in the Islamic world.
- Some theorists claim that the reason the number of surviving palaces in Islamic architecture is very little, is because of the religious nature of this style.
- The majority of these palaces were built quickly and with cheap materials.