

# The Islamic City

Islamic Architecture

No'man Bayaty

# Introduction

- Islam is an urban religion.
- Many scholars believe that the strength of Islamic architecture is in its urban effect not the architectural one.
- The strongest Islamic architectural theories claim that Islamic architecture is an Urban architecture not an individual monumental movement.
- Very different factors affected the massive geography controlled by the Muslims, but still most Islamic cities have the same character.

# Classification

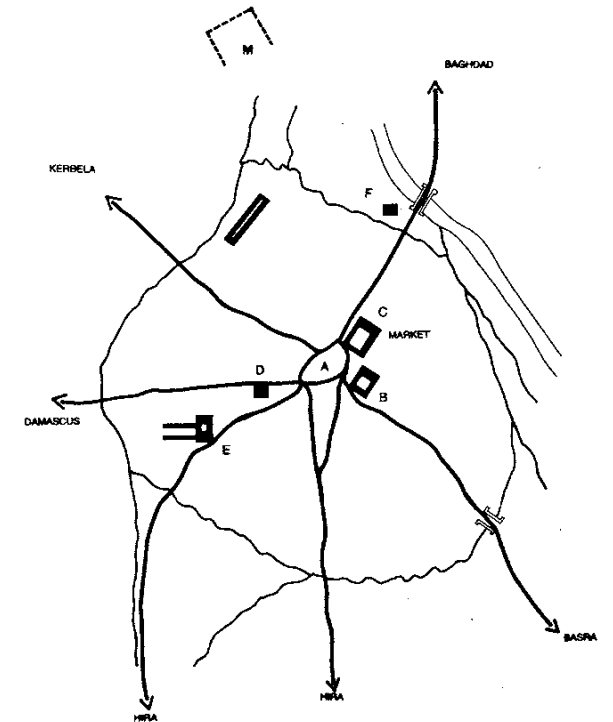
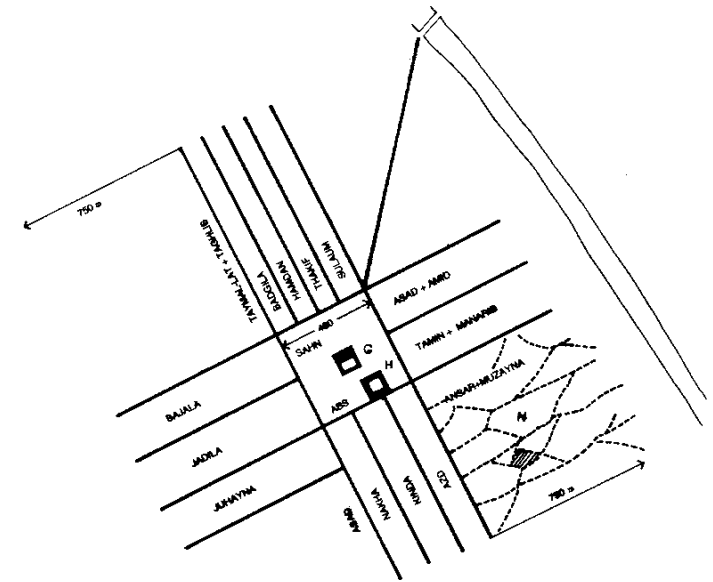
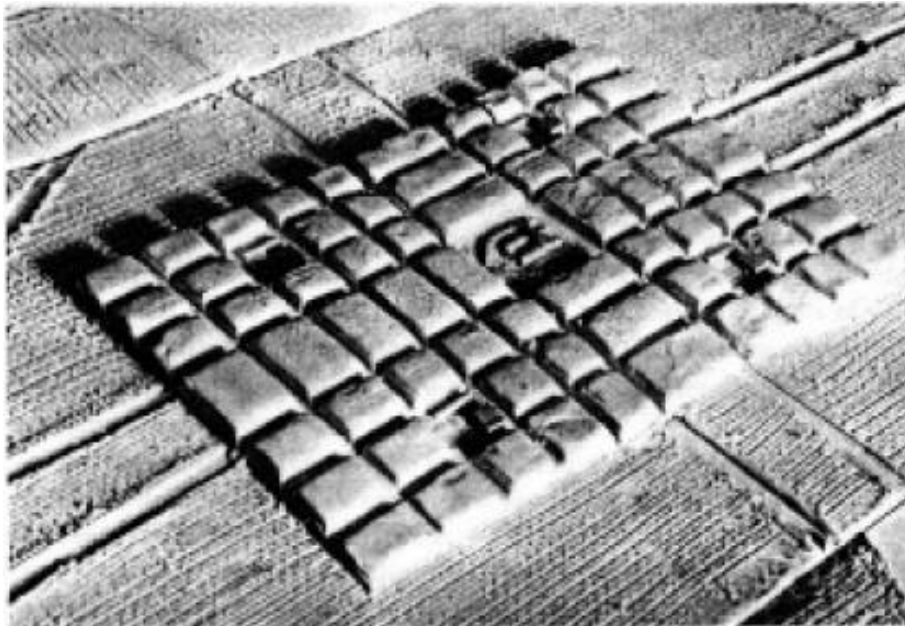
- Muslims started the urbanization process quickly after entering the new lands. This urbanization took place in two types of cities:
- 1- The inherited cities: These are cities which were built before Islam, and the Muslims occupied them and started altering them. Examples: Damascus, Alexandria, Samarkand.
- 2- The designed cities: These are the cities which were built completely by the Muslims, with a primitive or a complex masterplan. Examples: Kufa, Baghdad, Cairo.
- The designed cities were also of a few types: they were either defending cities, administration capitals or religious centers.

# Military Cities

- Civilization in Islam is connected to the city, and a city is not a city without the congregation mosque. This is why the mosque was the first element of any city planning.
- In all the cities, the first step was to decide the location. This was done after a long study of the environmental and geographical characteristics of the region.
- After deciding the location, the site of the mosque was chosen, and the building was planned. Then main streets were laid parallel and perpendicular to the mosque's walls, defining a grid.
- The city was then divided among the people. Each part was called (khitta) and given to a specific tribe. Finally a protection wall was built around it.
- This was the case for all the cities except the administrative capitals.

# Military Cities

- Many cities followed this planning system, especially the ones that were aimed to situate the armies and their families, like Fustat in Egypt, Kufa and Basrah in Iraq, Qairawan in Tunis.
- Plan of Kufa, Iraq.

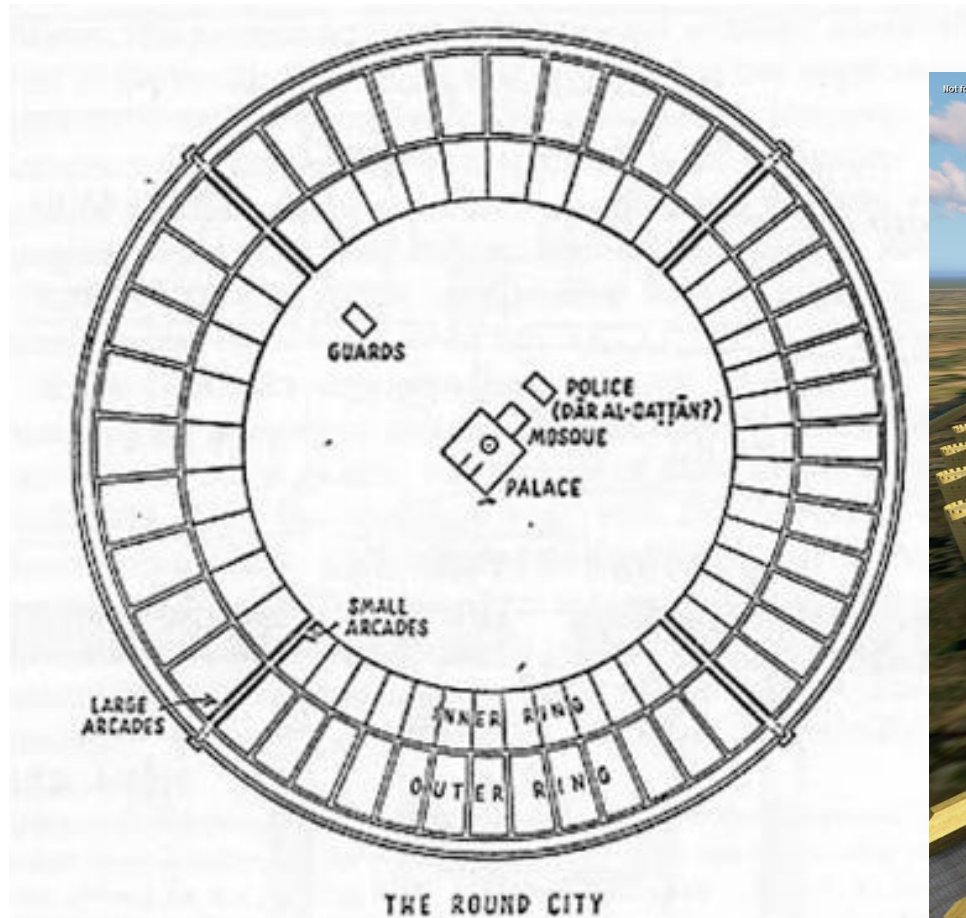


# Administrative Cities

- Some cities were built as capitals of the different nations and states. And the Emirs or Sultans wanted to show their power through these cities.
- Here the planning principles were altered a little, to give place for the large buildings and functions, and open way for monumental planning.
- Many cities were built as capitals such as: Baghdad and Samarra in Iraq, Cairo in Egypt, Marakesh in Morocco, etc.
- These cities represented the personal choice in planning, like mathematical relationships and astronomical and cosmologic symbolism through the location of its different parts.

# Administrative Cities

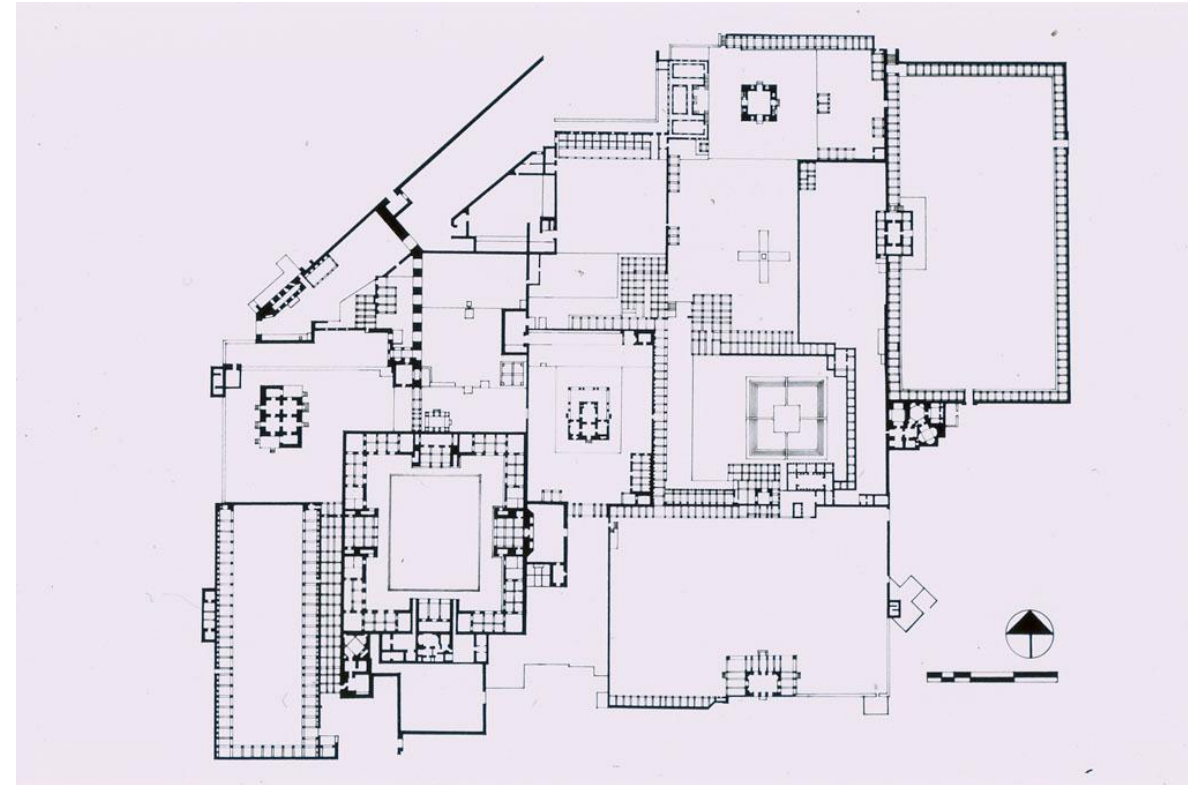
- Baghdad, Iraq (Abbasid)





# Administrative Cities

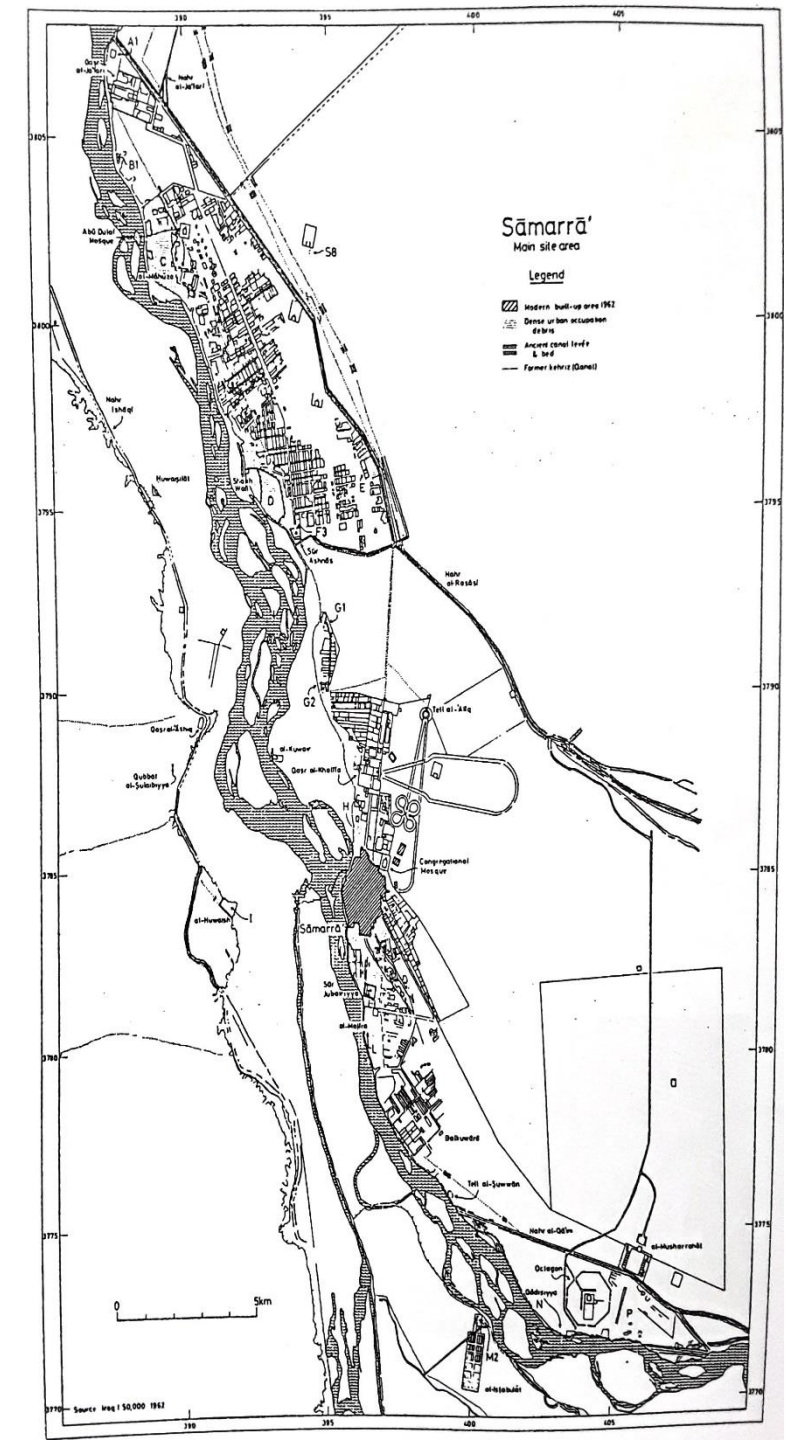
- Fatehpur Sikri, India (Mughal)
- Established as the new capital of the Mughal empire.





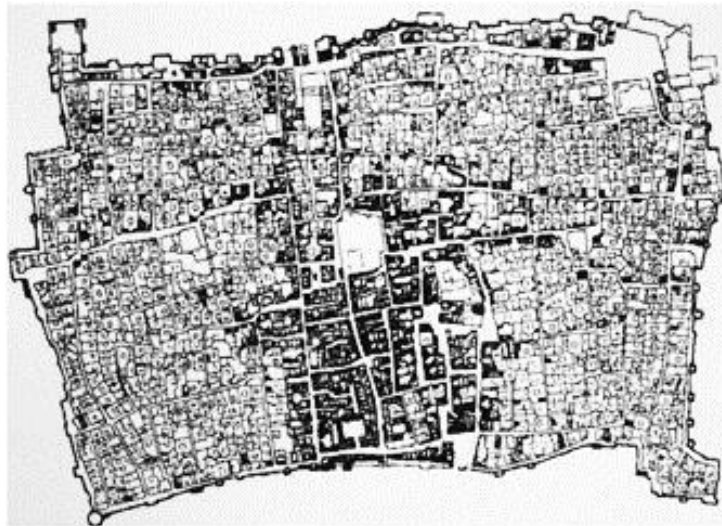
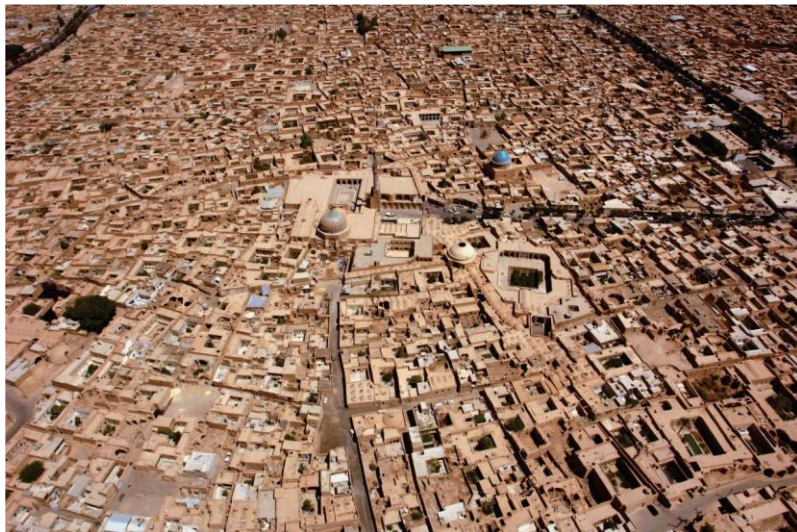
# Administrative Cities

- Samarra, Iraq (Abbasid)
- The city was the second capital of the Abbasids.
- It is mainly a congregation of palaces.



# Islamic Cities

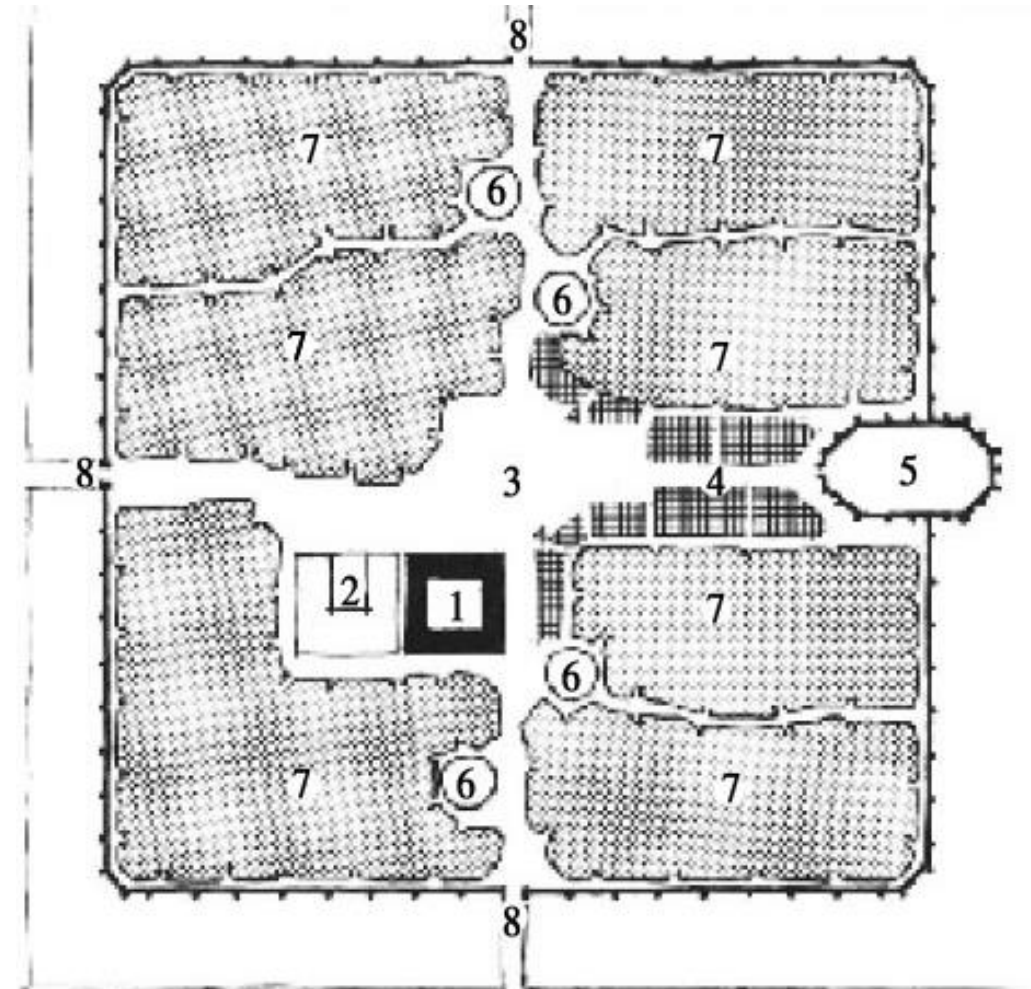
- Regardless of what the city started as, an inherited or designed, a military city or an administrative or religious, in the end all the Islamic cities started to have a similar, unique urban pattern.
- This might have many reasons, environmental, political or social, but many theorists attract attention to the religious effect of Islam in forming this society and then forming these cities.





# Islamic Cities

- A typical Islamic city would have a mosque in the center, surrounded by the market place and then the residential areas.
- Many Islamic cities had two nodes, the mosque and the citadel.
- Public buildings were on the main arteries.



# Hierarchy

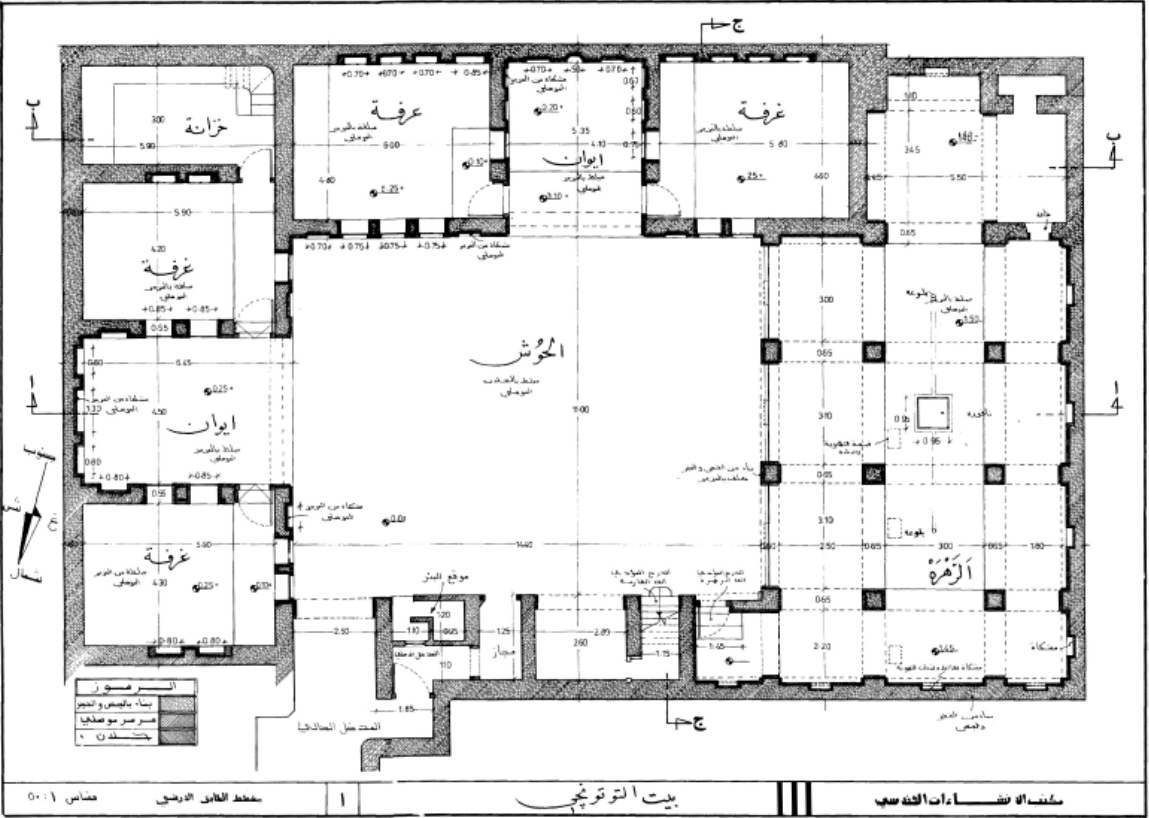
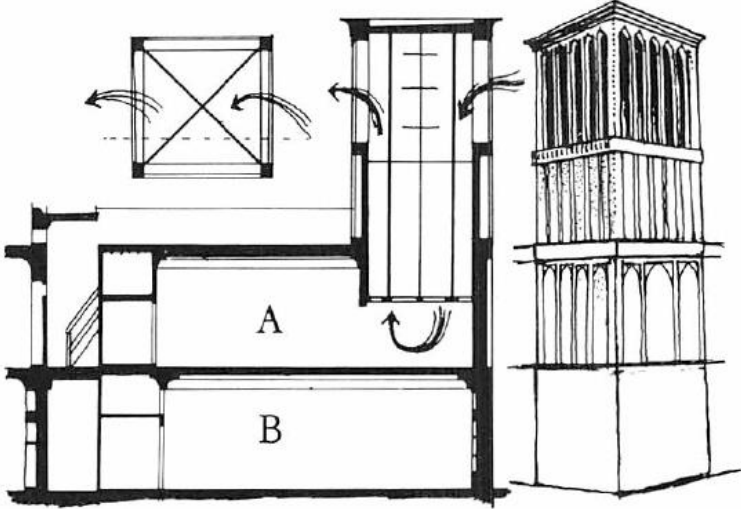
- Hierarchy is one of the most important concepts in Islamic city planning.
- Every activity was planned according to a strong hierarchy between the different parts of the city.
- The functional hierarchy was obvious in the distribution of markets. The location of the mosque in the center was respecting a specific directional hierarchy. The road from the center to the houses and the difference in streets' widths also respected a certain hierarchy.
- Even noise level and the heights of the city elements were planned accordingly.
- This is why the Islamic cities do not have a clear formal logic, but have a clear system.

# The House

- The house is the building block of the Islamic city.
- The nature of the house represents the nature of the Muslim family.
- The Muslim house is enclosed and inward-oriented, and has all the activities inside the house in the very protected environment.
- In the Islamic culture women are not supposed to be exposed to strangers and the high level of privacy needed for the Muslim family was supported well by the building typology.
- The house, and its internal courtyard also works in unison with the alleys and streets, and all work together as an ecological system.
- Usually each neighborhood had a clear entrance and sometimes a gate.



# The House



# The Markets

- The markets (bazaars) represent the commercial heart of the city.
- Some cities had the shops and khans located on the main arteries of the city surrounding its center, which is usually the mosque.
- Other large cities developed a specific layout for a covered marketplace.
- Cairo is known for its special model which combined the traditional shops with wakalas while Istanbul and Aleppo had the grandest covered markets.
- Markets and shops were usually arranged according to specialty. They were controlled with gates which were closed at night. And at day time, government officials would control the commercial activities.
- Ottoman markets were massive and walled, which makes them fortresses of money and commerce.

# The Markets

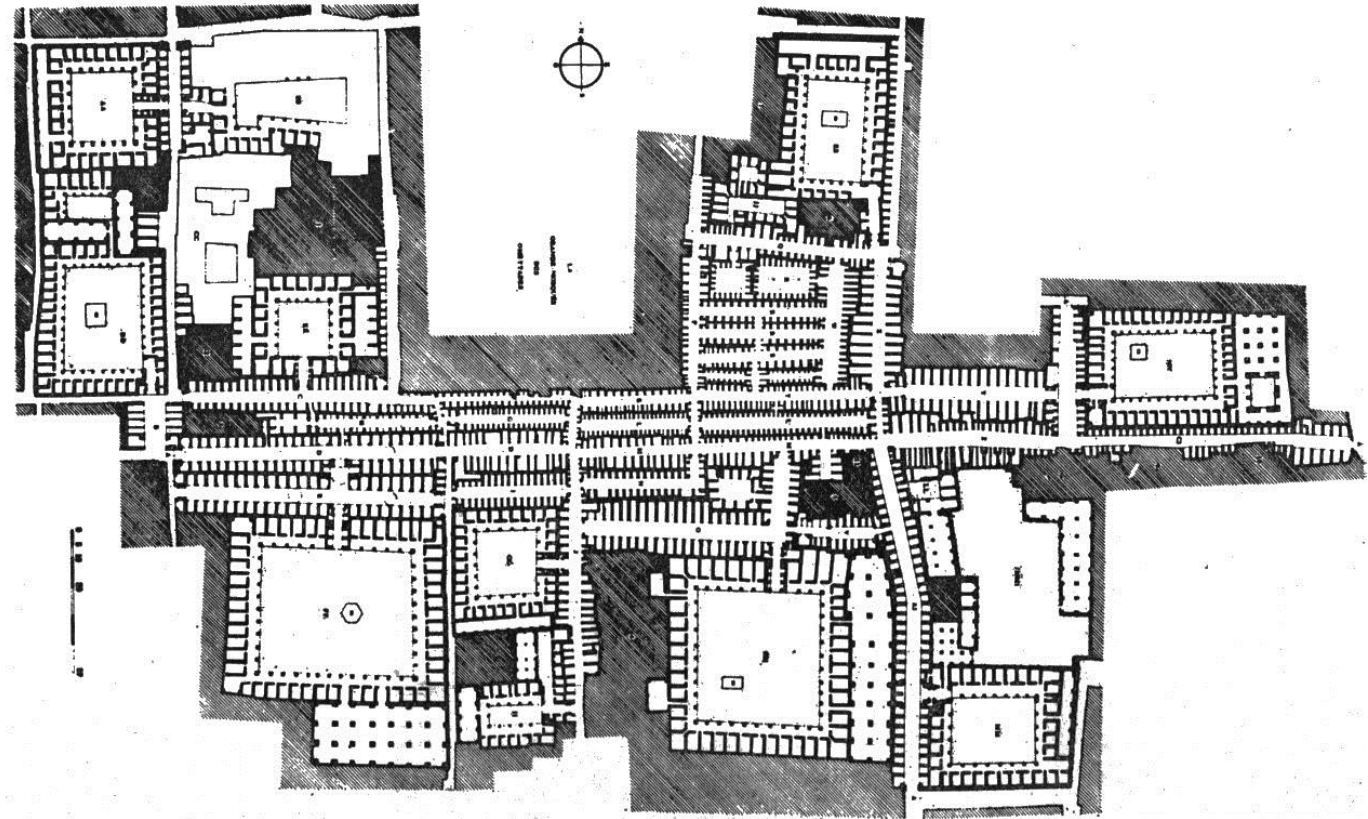
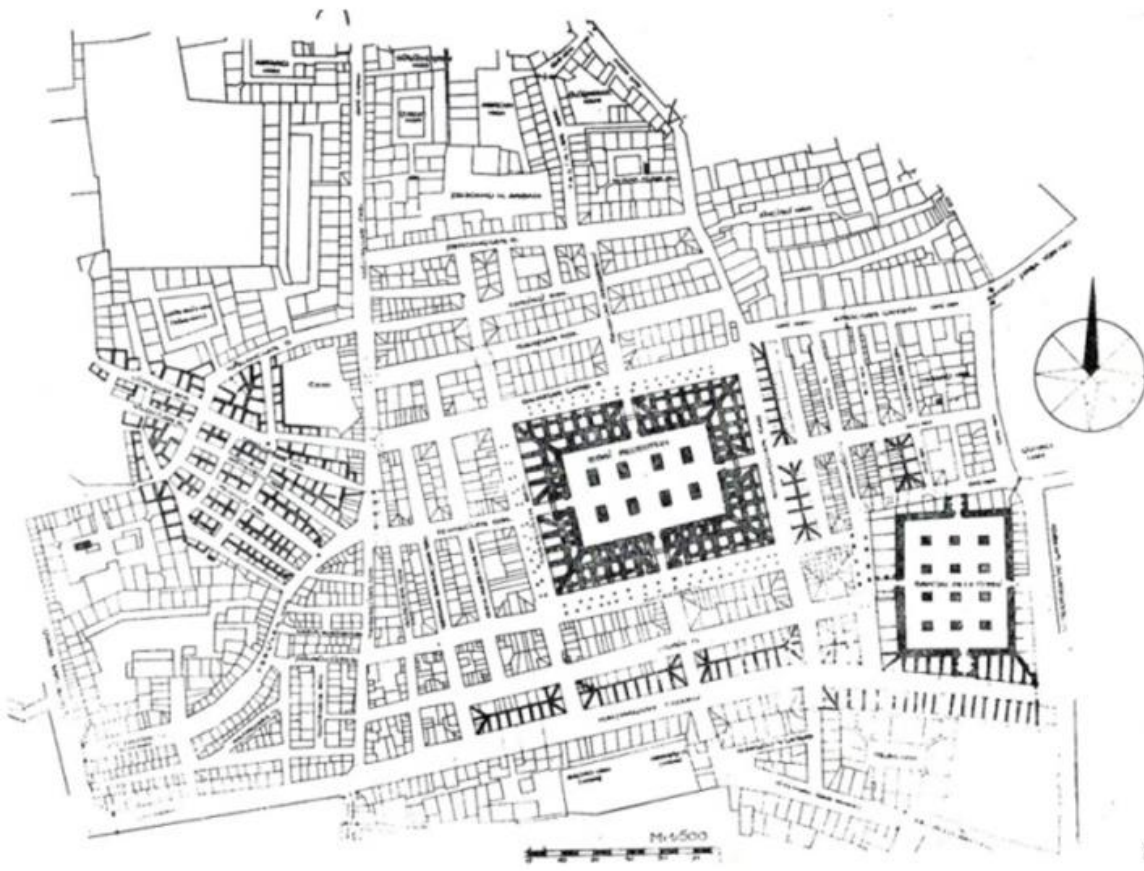
- The silk market in Cairo





# The Markets

- The covered bazaar of Istanbul (left) and Aleppo (right).



# The Mosque

- The mosque is usually hidden within the center.
- Most of Islamic architecture is urban. Buildings usually don't stand out in empty plazas, but are within the long continuous walls or buried behind many other common buildings.
- Because important buildings were covered with other ordinary buildings, and because buildings were only experienced from inside, one can say that Islamic architecture is a hidden architecture.
- Usually the shops around the mosque are quiet and with positive effect, like perfume shops and book makers.
- The markets with noise or smell, (animals' market) were outside the city walls.



# The Streets

- Streets are of different types depending on the functionality.
- The urban pattern is organic and irregular.
- Generally the walls are high and the street section is narrow. There is a very small amount of detailing on the exterior walls, which gives the feeling of walking in a trench.





# The Streets

- Direction changes a lot while moving and the views are interrupted with sudden angles and closed vistas.
- Narrow streets give a sense of protection. And the narrow organic planning is useful environmentally by keeping the streets cold and far from sunshine as much as possible.



# Waqf, Huquq and Hisbah

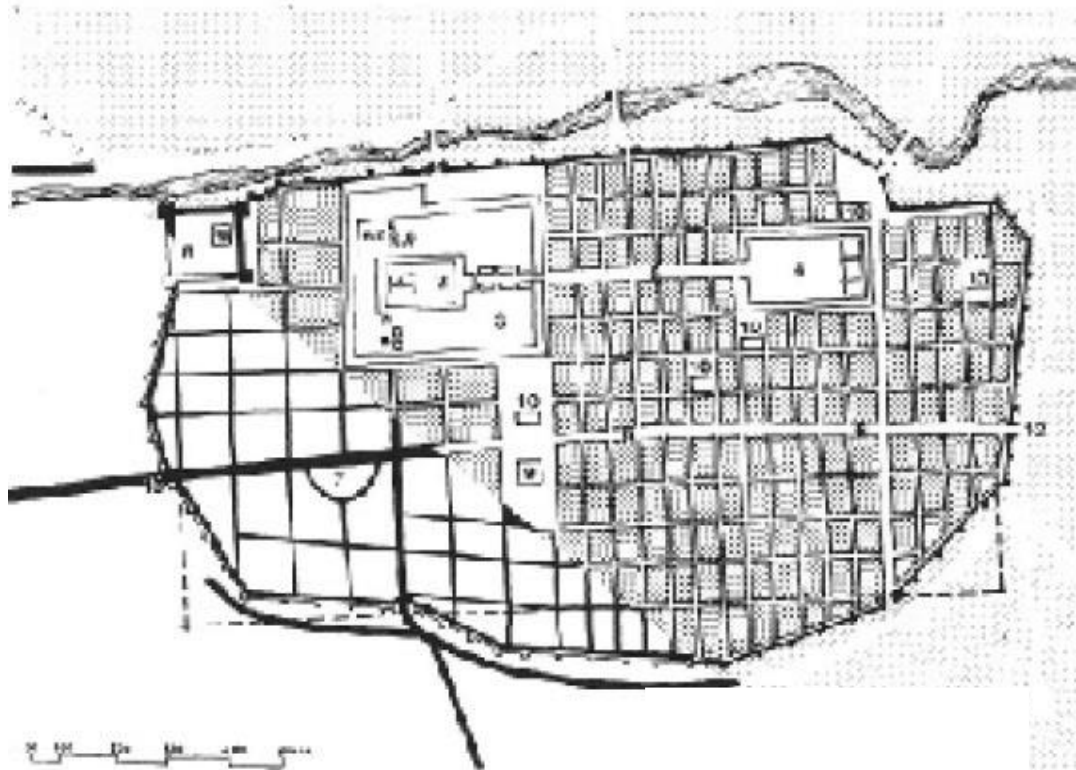
- Waqf is an Islamic concept, by which a certain party is given the right to use a certain property. A property that has been under waqf can't be sold or manipulated by anyone.
- Many rich individuals would establish institutions and services and consider them waqf for the Muslims to use freely.
- Muslim society used this idea to develop a system of sustainable development. For example, many individuals built madrasas, mosques and hospitals, and built a market place with them. The revenues of these markets were waqf for that service building.
- Hisbah are the officials appointed by the government to control the streets. They were like a mobile judicial system, deciding right from wrong (halal and haram)

# Waqf, Huquq and Hisbah

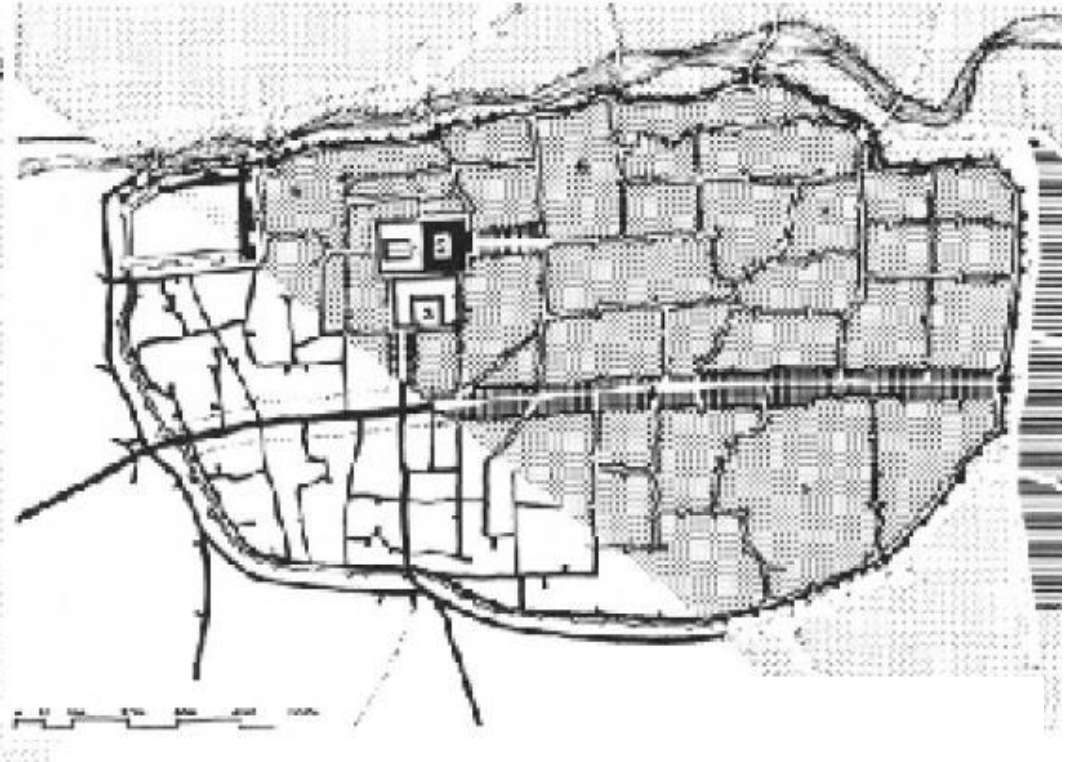
- The members of hisbah would control everything, pricings of goods, the quality of services, the width of the street etc.
- The code they are working according to is the Islamic Shari'a and what is the most beneficial solution.
- Huquq are the rights reserved by Islam for Muslim individuals or as a society. In terms of architecture and urbanism, many rights were given to people and buildings that shaped the Islamic city.
- There are many rights: like the right of water, the right of privacy, the right of height, the right of selling (Shufa'a), the right of service (Irtifaq).
- All the previous points will work together in creating the small decisions that will give the Islamic city its form.

# The Islamic City

- Damascus before Islam



- Damascus after Islam





# The Islamic City

- The city in Islam is an essential element of civilization.
- Building cities, improving them, and providing services was seen as religious actions.
- These cities didn't have public open spaces, and all the open spaces were protected within courtyards.