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Doctoral Dissertation 2023



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A Sensorial Glimpse at the Islamic Aljafería: Through the Lenses of Architecture and Culture

Haneen Domyati

Dissertation Director:
Eduardo Carrero Santamaría, PhD



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Departament d'Art i de Musicologia

2023

*To my father,
who has always believed in the importance of education.*

Abstract

This research study delves into the captivating correlation between the architectural design of palaces and courtyards of Islamic Iberia and the cultural ceremonial activities of their royal court life. The Aljafería palace of the Taifa of Banu Hud, which stands as the best preserved among the small group of Taifa palaces that survived, was chosen as the center of the study. The Aljafería offers an exceptional opportunity to investigate the role of architectural space in a Taifa state. Drawing on a fundamental realization starts from the initial idea of viewing architecture as a reflection of the Andalusian historical and cultural reality. The dissertation aims to explore the relationship between the palatial architecture of the Islamic Aljafería and the court life practices assumed by its rulers, the Banu Hud Taifa kings, and how this relationship shaped the perceptual experience of the palace. To achieve this aim, a comprehensive analysis of the Islamic Aljafería was conducted through three approaches, namely architectural, cultural, and sensorial, with each approach uncovering an exciting layer of the complex rich history of the palace. Arabic literature was utilized as a core instrument to comprehend the cultural and religious ideologies imbued in the palace. By analyzing the architecture of the Taifa palace in relation to the cultural beliefs and practices of the time, the dissertation has assumed a multisensorial journey of the perceptual experience of the eleventh-century beholder throughout the Taifa palace of the Aljafería.

Keywords: The Aljafería, architecture, court life, multisensory

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Notes on Writing Style and Translations

The challenge in working across linguistic boundaries lies in the various transliteration systems used for the same language. As this dissertation is written in English about Islamic architecture and culture in Islamic Iberia, now Spain, it contains numerous Arabic and Spanish words.

For clarification while reading the dissertation, the Arabic names are written as the closest pronunciation of the Arabic tongue, which in some cases doesn't follow the commonly known version. However, many names that were popularly Latinized are indicated in the footnotes, while the actual paper shows the structured Arabic name. At the same time, the names of cities such as Zaragoza and Córdoba are written in the Spanish format following the geographical region they belong to. Words in Arabic or Spanish that begin with Al are treated as parts of the word and preceded by an article, such as the Aljafería and the Almohad.

Those Arabic terms and words not typically used in English are italicized to enable them to be easily identified. As for translated literature, unless noted otherwise, all translations from the original Arabic form are my individual effort.

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Introduction



Chapter 1

Introduction

Scope of the Study

At the beginning of the eighth century, Islam arrived in Iberia, where an Islamic territory was created under the name of *Al-Andalus*. During the Islamic rule, the Iberian land adopted a new change where cities, mosques, and palaces appeared in which new architectural, artistic, and design styles emerged (Inskip, 2013). The expansion of the Islamic religion outside the border of the Arabian Peninsula familiarized Muslims with the architectural methodologies of different cultures of the occupied nations, which led to the inspiration to create their own masterpieces. Reproducing some of the earlier architectural elements embedded with Islamic philosophies influenced the shaping of the Islamic architecture (Petruccioli & Pirani, 2013).

The Islamic dynasty flourished not only in the physical extent of their realms but also politically and intellectually in many aspects (Hoyland, 2015). In the scope of *Al-Andalus*, the political changes from the united rule of the Umayyads Emirate and Caliphate to the political fragmentations of the Taifa kings, and later on the control of the Almoravids, and the Almohads, to the Nasrids of the Emirate of Granada created a significant era that affected the land and its culture, which provoked extensive studies by architectural historians. Emirs, Caliphs, and Kings over the centuries displayed their dominance in the west through their splendid palaces and court life practices, competing in terms of authority with the power of eastern Muslim dynasties such as the Abbasid in Iraq and the Fatimid in North Africa (Almagro, 2010).

This research study explores the relationship between the architectural design of palaces and courtyards of Islamic Iberia and the cultural ceremonial activities of their royal court life. It investigates how royal Andalusian palaces were designed to convey the experience of authority and cultural activities of court life through architecture. Since the power shifted during the eleventh century from a central Caliphate under one Caliph to several separate Taifas (Calvo Capilla, 2011), it is worth studying how Muslim rulers of the Taifa period translated their royal influence into their court life through palatial monuments. The paper

focuses on the Islamic era of the Aljafería palace of the Taifa of Banu Hud as the center of the study as it is the best preserved of the small group of Taifa palaces that survived (Vidal, 2008), which offers an exceptional opportunity to investigate the role of architectural space in a Taifa state¹.

On the other hand, Islamic architecture is an architecture entangled with philosophy and beliefs, as well as being conceived from the pleasure of the senses (Rubiera, 1988). Muslims demonstrate through Islamic architecture a defined method for building a place in which occupying other lands does not lead to losing reference to their origins. Through palatial architecture, with various modes of materialization, they illustrate certain aspects that are integral to their culture, way of life, and strong religious ideologies. The creation of Islamic palaces is a sensorial conception where the physical elements serve as an environment for a multisensory stimulation that forms and defines the built space. Therefore, conceptualizing a historical perceptual experience would deepen the understanding of the relationship between the palatial architecture of the Islamic palace and the court life practices held within.

The Aljafería, a Focal Point

Since the dissertation investigates how royal Andalusian palaces were designed to convey the experience of the court life through architecture, the Islamic Aljafería was selected as the center of the study for numerous reasons.

The Aljafería is a fundamental monument for understanding the development of architecture in Al-Andalus, and its importance can be recognized through several aspects. First, the Aljafería is considered the best-preserved palace, where remnants of its original configuration can currently be seen compared to other Taifa palaces. Also, studies demonstrate that the palatial architecture of the Aljafería substantially influences the

¹ In 2021, Víctor Rabasco's thesis on the palaces of the Taifa period was defended at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, which cannot be consulted until 2025: <https://eprints.ucm.es/id/eprint/65182/>.

Almoravid, Almohad, and Nasrid architecture later on. Moreover, the Aljafería has been considered an intermediate bridge between the Caliphate art of the tenth century and the Mudéjar Art of the Christian monarchs (Galiay Sarañana et al., 2002), as it was included in the Mudéjar Architecture of Aragón as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2011².

It is interesting to study the Aljafería as it articulates many stimulating angles. Primarily, it is worth examining the Islamic Aljafería since the authority shifted during the eleventh century from a unified Caliphate into several separate kingdoms, which allows us to analyze how the new Taifa rulers interpreted the royal influence of their court life through their palaces and monuments. Also, the remoteness of the location of Zaragoza from Córdoba allowed their rulers to assume and embrace more independence and freedom from the influence of the previous capital and granted them a unique relationship with their Christian neighbors. Additionally, the Islamic Aljafería was mainly referred to as a Taifa palace not only because it was built under the Hudid Taifa rule but also because it was only occupied briefly by Almoravids³ before it became the property of the Aragonese kings, which makes it free of the influence of other Islamic periods. Furthermore, the refined splendid court life was a fundamental aspect of the palaces of Andalusian rulers. As the period of the Caliphate is seen as the golden age of Al-Andalus, under the Hudid rule, the culture of Zaragoza reached its maximum development. As a result, it was appointed as one of the essential periods intellectually of not only the Islamic but also the medieval culture (Fuentes, 1987). And lastly, the Aljafería witnessed a complex surrounding history over the centuries, which caused different modifications and alterations, yet its standing position made it a center of interest for many historians.

On the other hand, despite the large number of publications existing today, it is still possible to make new inputs and address different investigations of this remarkable monument. There are limited Arabic sources about the Taifa palaces, especially the Aljafería, compared

² Despite the value of the Islamic palace, it was due to the period of Mudejar architecture that the Aljafería received the recognition of being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in December 2011.

³ The Taifa of Zaragoza was the only Taifa that remained an independent province during the Almoravid rule, in which the Almoravid only occupied the Aljafería from 1110 to 1118.

to the proud, influential period of the Caliphate and the Nasrid dynasty later on since until recently, scholars have mainly interpreted the history of Taifa kings as an age of collapse and decline. Also, the medieval sources that allow us to know the exact appearance of the construction in the eleventh century are inadequate; for centuries, the chroniclers have provided us with vague specifics about it. However, studies on the history and architecture of the palace began to emerge in the nineteenth century, which attracted more interest in the mid-twentieth century due to the restoration of the building carried out, yet there are possibilities for additional contributions.

For all these reasons, it can be concluded that studying the Islamic Aljafería is a fundamental step in understanding Andalusian architecture and the remarkable royal court life.

Research Question

The dissertation addresses the exploration of the following question:

How does the palatial architecture of the Islamic Aljafería articulate the perception and experience of the court life practices assumed by its rulers, the Banu Hud Taifa kings?

It does so through an in-depth analysis of:

- architectural components including spatial plans, fortified walls, construction techniques, entrances, arches, columns and capitals, and courtyards, among other elements;
- ornamentations including materials, inscriptions, epigraphs, carvings, plantations, and their signification;
- the cultural practices and traditions of the court life of Banu Hud rulers held within the palace, with a focused study on the practice of *majalis*;
- the perception of atmosphere and the multisensory experience of the eleventh-century Taifa beholders.

Approaching the Aljafería: Methodological Framework



Approaching the Aljafería: Methodological Framework

Although it underwent several changes and assumed many functions, the Taifa Palace, the main focus of this dissertation, is certainly one of the most remarkable artistic sections of the Aljafería (Gracia & Sebastián, 1993). Over the centuries, the Taifa palace has made up the shape and unique character of the Aljafería and provoked extensive studies by architectural historians. A large number of researches and studies on the architecture of the Hudid palace of the Aljafería have been conducted, with the contributions made by Francisco Íñiguez Almech, Christian Ewert, Bernabé Cabañero Subiza, José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, and Susana Calvo Capilla being essential sources for many. Any study that currently tries to approach some aspect related to the architecture of the Aljafería palace has relied on these solid references (Borrás Gualis, 2007b). On the other hand, a symposium was held in 2004 devoted exclusively to the history of the Aljafería, in which several of the aforementioned specialists took part. The proceedings, published in 2012 under the direction of Gonzalo Borrás and Bernabé Cabañero, are a fundamental work for our approach and knowledge of the Aljafería.

The approaches of these different architectural-historical studies can be classified into two main categories: the formal architectural approach and the functional cultural approach. The formal architectural approach examines the creation of the Aljafería as a tangible space through architectural components such as layouts, building techniques, fabrications, and physical transformation, among other elements. The other approach interprets the function of the Aljafería by examining the cultural customs, traditions, practices, and beliefs that affect the purposes, ornamentations, and metaphorical narrations of the Aljafería as a space. Additionally, in this dissertation, along with both these approaches, the Aljafería is examined through an additional approach, namely the sensorial approach. The sensorial approach looks into the Aljafería through the combined studied outcome of the architectural and cultural approach with an atmospheric and sensorial stimulus that shapes the experience of the palace.

The Formal Architectural Approach

The first approach is the formal architectural approach. This approach mainly examines the physical structure of the space by relying on documentation and archaeological evidence (Ehteshami, 2018). In the case of the Aljafería, historians who followed this approach studied the creation of the palace as a tangible space through architectural components such as, but not limited to, the spatial layouts, construction techniques, materials specification, and the physical transformations over the years. In addition, it analyzes the palatial aspect of the Aljafería through the archaeological remains to enrich the understanding of the form and fabrication of the built space. It is impossible to approach the Aljafería architecturally without relying on the work of Francisco Íñiguez Almech and the documentation by Christian Ewert, since the current appearance of the complex is mainly due to the work carried out by Francisco Íñiguez. The first complete restoration work on the palace was led by Íñiguez with the main objective of recovering the damaged appearance of the Islamic and Mudéjar palaces, through excavating the elements masked by the successive modifications, and the reconstruction works, while Christian Ewert documented most of the preserved architectural elements of the palace's restoration.

Moreover, several studies by Íñiguez and Ewert along with Juan A. Souto, Manuel Expósito Sebastián, Manuel Gómez Moreno, and many other architectural historians approached the Aljafería in depth by explaining the palace's layout, the placements of architectural features, the types of material used in each section, and the geographical site, while also linking each aspect to artistic precedents that influenced it. An example of this approach is the study done by Bernabé Cabañero Subiza (2008) on the similarities of the semicircular towers on the north side of the wall to the ones in the Umayyads Syrian Qasr Al-Hayr, and the Jordanian Qasr Al-Mushatta and Qasr Al-Qastal. Another example is the analysis of the spatial layout of the opposite faced halls in the Taifa palace, which is reminiscent of the layout of the House of the Water Basin, La Vivienda de la Alberca, in Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Arnold, 2017).

In addition, the architectural approach also examines the function of the space to understand the structure's architectural objectives. For instance, the researchers

objectified the use of stonemasonry in the massive surrounding walls of the Aljafería for fortification purposes (Íñiguez Almech, 1977) and the use of plaster carvings and alabaster socles in the columns' capitals for ornamentations (Cabañero Subiza, 2000). In other words, this research approach answers the "what" question by identifying the structural and ornamental form, style, space, materials, and production type, as well as the tangible alterations that reformed the monument. This approach not only describes the physical architectural aspect but also explains the archeological excavation process and justifies renovation and restoration works.

The Functional Cultural Approach

The other approach that historians use is the functional cultural approach, which in this dissertation will be referred to as the cultural approach, which explains the architecture's components based on the cultural-historical aspect (Ehteshami, 2018). This approach interprets the function of the Aljafería by analyzing the cultural customs, traditions, practices, and beliefs that affect the purposes, ornamentations, and metaphorical narrations of the Aljafería as a space. The cultural approach focuses on the experience of space at the Aljafería through a cultural lens. However, while the architectural approach examines the function of the space in order to understand the architectural objectives of the structure, the cultural approach examines the function of the space with a view to understanding the culture and practices that shaped the usage of that space. As an example of this approach, studying religions and religious instructions are among the factors that have direct and indirect effects on architecture (Ehteshami, 2018), which justifies the absence of figurative decoration in the private mosque of the Aljafería since the Islamic religion prohibits the presence of figures in religious buildings.

Furthermore, another essential component of culture is traditions that affect individuals' ideologies and lifestyles, such as the refined court life, which was a significant traditional part of the Taifa period (Robinson, 1995), which will be analyzed in depth later on. For example, historians who followed the cultural approach used the architecture of the Aljafería as a visual guide to enrich the understanding of the royal court life that shaped the practices of the palace. It was common for Taifa kings to use their palaces and their court

members of scholars and poets as theatrical stages to enrich their authority and legitimacy as rulers (Calvo Capilla, 2011), especially the Hudid kings. The court of Banu Hud was known for being the finest court circle, where they hosted a highly scientific environment based on art, philosophy, and mathematics (Fuentes, 1989). The ornamentation in the Aljafería was not only an integral part of the architectural elements but also exhibited a metalanguage where metaphors were used through design in the palatial court for their highly educated audience (Robinson, 1997; Puerta Vílchez, 2012). Historians studied the palace through the cultural approach to analyze the Taifa court life and their customary regulations, which led to understanding the meaning of the ornamentations and the hidden metaphors. At the same time, the functional cultural approach mostly answers the "why" aspect in identifying the reason for the function of the space by analyzing the culture, religion, customs, and traditions.

The Sensorial Approach

Another approach considered in this dissertation is the sensorial approach, which analyzes the perceptual experiences of a built space. This approach mainly examines the architecture of the space through the perception of beholders while taking into consideration the atmosphere of the space and the sensorial perception, based on the theory that the atmosphere in architecture is a form of physical perception recognized through emotional sensibility (Gandy, 2017). In the case of Islamic architecture, it is important to recognize that it relies heavily on philosophical concepts in the architectural and ornamental aspect of the built space, in which the experiences created in the palaces and courtyards derived from the pleasure gained through the senses (Rubiera, 1988). This approach, when applied to the Aljafería, examines it through a sensorial analysis of a perceptual experience of the architectural elements of the palace in relation to cultural practices conducted within. Approaching a space through an atmospheric perspective entails analyzing the architecture to an extent beyond form and function by studying the space through the nourishment of multisensory experiences.

In this approach, philosophers, architects, art historians, urban planners, and designers tend to use the concept of atmosphere to illustrate the fact that space and architecture are

designed and built for people not only to use but also to interact with and experience. With the rising interest in atmospheres, an extended conception has appeared in parallel with new theoretical reflections on subjects and space, where the atmospheric features have become more frequent in numerous fields such as architectural theory, urban planning, and cultural geography (Griffero, 2014). When analyzing atmospheres in architecture, it is impossible to ignore the contribution of the pioneers in the field, whose work affects our knowledge of atmospheric theories, from Peter Zumthor, Gernot Böhme, and Juhani Pallasmaa to Martin Heidegger, Olafur Eliasson, and Jens Soentgen (Prieto González, 2014). Through their work, essential arguments are constructed about the experience of atmospheres, which illustrate that architecture not only offers a visual aspect, as commonly assumed, but a multisensory platform. The architecture of the eye controls the visual narrative while the sensorial architecture occupies and unites a complete experience (Pallasmaa, 2012); therefore, a multisensory approach is necessary to comprehend the atmosphere of a space.

In the scope of the architecture of Islamic Iberia, approaching spaces through the sensorial aspects of historical architecture entails taking into consideration the work of the pioneers María Jesús Rubiera (1988) and José Miguel Puerta (2011a, 2011b, 2012), who laid the groundwork for understanding the distinctive elements of these spaces. The Islamic architecture of Al-Andalus demonstrates multilayers of complexity, interlaced with philosophy, beliefs, and cultural aspects, while conceived from the indulgence of the senses. The works of Rubiera and Puerta both emphasized that analyzing the Islamic Iberian architecture demands an understanding of the Arabic language as an essential instrument. Considering knowledge of the Arabic language as a means to analyze Islamic architecture and its intended atmosphere advances the understanding of the perception and the meaning of the inscriptions and metaphorical ornamentations in the palatial architecture; thus, it clarifies the purpose behind them.

As architectural historians started to do, it is essential to take into consideration the literature as an important tool while analyzing Iberian Islamic architecture and its atmospheres. Islamic culture relies profoundly on literature not only to convey its conceptualized ideas and intellectuality but also as a tool for constructing social ceremonies

and hierarchy through the practice of *Adab*, both in written and verbal forms. Historians, previously, have been accustomed to relying on the technical approach to writing while offering an absence of literary resources (Zanón, 1993). The literature in relation to the Islamic art and architecture mode is an approach where both María Jesús Rubiera and José Miguel Puerta overlaid the path for other historians to follow. Their work demonstrates that the accuracy of analyzing Islamic architectural spaces through scientific disciplines is not sufficiently thorough without the literature aspect.

The Approach to the Aljafería

The dissertation approaches the palace of the Aljafería architecturally, culturally, and sensorially. Each approach examines the Aljafería through a different lens to fulfill a specific purpose of the study.

Sigfried Giedion (1967) stated that the most crucial subject in architectural history is indeed the creation of space and following the transformations. However, it is also essential to understand the culture to fully comprehend the architecture and achieve the spatial values for each different era since space has also arisen from the human mind and the human being is also a creature shaped by culture (Ehteshami, 2018). As a form of human construction, architecture identifies as a physical structure with tangible elements that cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, an essential aspect of architecture is its relationship with human life and the effects achieved from it. Therefore, a research approach to historical architectural monuments should require the connection of historical backgrounds to architectural elements within the basis of the cultural aspect, reflecting the area's social, intellectual, political, and religious evolutions (Gharibpour & Toutounchi, 2016). As in the case of the Aljafería, a monument that historically anticipated different functions, either palatine or military, and enormous transformations, needs to be approached by considering different layers of complexity, along with formal architectural, functional cultural, and sensorial methods.

The Islamic architecture of Al-Andalus displays multilayers of complexity that need to be approached through various methods. Therefore, the dissertation studies the palace of the

Aljafería through a combined method of architectural, cultural, and sensorial approaches, in which each serves a specific purpose of the study. First, the paper examines the architecture of the palace and its physical elements ranging from the planned built space and architectural elements to the inscriptions and ornamental details of surfaces at the Aljafería. In addition, through the architectural approach, the paper not only justifies the tangible elements of the Islamic palace but also builds a critical analysis of the architectural changes through all the historical periods the palace witnessed to navigate tracing the initial format of the Taifa palace. Second, it examines the cultural practices of the court of Banu Hud within the built space. In doing that, a study of the intellectuality of the courts and the purpose of the Aljafería as a built space will draw a clear map for the cultural and ceremonial practices conducted within the palace. It also explores the physical component of the palatial architecture in relation to the cultural aspect of the court life of its royal builders, the Banu Hud Taifa kings, and how they shaped these courtly practices of royal *majalis* and ceremonies.

It comprehensively analyzes the Hudid court practice of the literature *majalis* since it was a significant cultural custom held during the Islamic the Aljafería. Examining the exercise of these *majalis* within the spatial architecture of the Taifa palace intensifies the understanding of the cultural practices and conceptualized ideologies of the space, in which it will help to navigate the experience of the Aljafería. Finally, adopting an approach to the Aljafería through the methodology of atmospheres in architecture with a perspective from the history of the senses is essential to assimilate the understanding and perception of the palace. Drawing on the studied relationship between the architecture and cultural practices and ideologies, a studied assumption was explored of the perception of the eleventh-century visitor to the Taifa palace. The experience of the eleventh-century beholder was categorized by each sense, to highlight all aspects of each individual sense, followed by an accompanied multisensorial experience to enhance the understanding of the sensorial perspective of the Taifa palace. The multisensorial analysis of the experience of space through the perspective of visitors of the original Taifa palace while recognizing and discovering the sequence of atmospheric environments of the spaces of the palace supports the assimilation of the Aljafería as a rich multilayered complex, architecturally, culturally, and sensorially.

Therefore, to better answer the research study question, comprehensive research is centered around the history of Al-Andalus. The research resources mainly encompassed English, Arabic, and Spanish resources in the field of history, Islamic art, architecture, philosophy, literature, and archeology. In addition, the investigative work was conducted in the framework of art, architecture, and court life, with an in-depth focus on the Taifa period, especially the Taifa of Zaragoza. Also, for the purpose of enriching and strengthening the paper, several field studies were conducted to the palace of the Aljafería not only for the architectural examination and analysis but also for experiencing the palace sensorially. In addition, a trip to Balaguer was held to visit Castell Fromós, since the stucco and plasterwork of the castle were made in the same workshops that made the ornamentation at Aljafería, where both monuments were mostly studied in unison. A visit to the Museu de la Noguera to examine the preserved archeological pieces of the Castell Fromós and a visit to the archive of the museum provided an insightful perspective. Other visits were made to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid to examine the original preserved architectural fragments of the Aljafería, and the documentation related to it, as well as the Archivo General de la Administración de Alcalá de Henares to investigate the reports, documentation, and architectural plans on the restoration of the Aljafería preserved in the General Archive.

Additionally, in order to obtain an understanding of this rich, layered historical monument, a more in-depth analysis of the architecture, royal culture, and sensorial experience was carried out through Arabic literature and poetry written by the historians and intellectuals of the Andalusian period of Iberia. The paper explores the work of many Arab medieval historians, in which the work of Al-Maqqari portrayed valuable collections of poems written by intellectuals and *majlis* attendees, about whom many analyses are made throughout the paper. Poetry and anecdotes by poets, historians, travelers such as Al-Fath ibn Khaqan, Ibn Al-Sid Al-Batalyawsi, Abu Al-Mutriq ibn Abdul-Aziz, Al-Idrisi, and the poet of the Aljafería Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti were closely analyzed to understand the state of the architecture of the palace during medieval times along with the cultural practices performed within, and the perception of the marvelous palace of the Aljafería. The literature and poetry written by the Andalusian historians and intellectuals illustrate the connection of historical backgrounds

of architectural elements within the practices and ceremonies and intellectuality of the court members.

Moreover, as stated previously, understanding the Islamic Iberian architecture demands recognition of the Arabic language as an essential instrument. It is fundamental to view Islamic culture from the perspective of its literature and texts, which consequently means giving a greater emphasis to the Qur'an, as it is the manuscript that guides and shapes Muslim beliefs and ideologies in many aspects of their lives. Throughout the dissertation, the Qur'an is referenced to navigate the reasoning behind the metaphorical elements in the palace of the Aljafería, along with the conceptualized ideas behind these elements. The Qur'an and Arabic medieval literature were examined to understand the components that define Islamic architecture such as the elements of water, gardens, and light along with the concept of paradise and the ceremonial practices of *majalis*.

Ultimately, combining the architectural, cultural, and multisensorial approaches with taking into consideration Arabic literature as an instrument would assimilate a complete vision to understand and envision the Taifa palace of the rich layered historical monument of the Aljafería.

Umayyads to Taifa:
An Architectural and Cultural
Nostalgia



Umayyads to Taifa: An Architectural and Cultural Nostalgia

It is not the intention of this paper to present a comprehensive analysis of the architectural and political history of Al-Andalus. Nonetheless, a discussion of Andalusian rulership, architecture, and court life leading up to the eleventh century delivers a relative lineage to the Aljafería palace.

As the focus of the paper is centered on the eleventh century's Aljafería Taifa palace, this chapter will focus on tracing the timeline of Islamic Iberian architecture and ceremonial activities of their royal court life through the political changes from the period of forming Al-Andalus up to the Taifa period.

In order to start the journey through the eleventh-century Aljafería palace, a trace to the early Umayyads' art language is essential, as the Taifa kingdoms were the heirs of the Umayyads' artistic perceptive. It is absolutely vital to study the Umayyads' courtly palaces and briefly analyze their building types and purposes since the impact of the Taifa period on art, culture, and architecture derives directly from the previous period of the Umayyads Emirate and Caliphate, in which all the Taifa kingdoms had a profound visual culture consumed for centuries. Consequently, it will help place the Aljafería palace within a comparative narration to strengthen our analytical understanding of the palace.

Formation of Al-Andalus

During the seventh century, Muslims started to expand their territory from the Arabian Peninsula with the goal of spreading Islam. As a result, the Islamic forces created an empire of unparalleled size. Armies led by Muslim rulers reached as far as India and China in the east and North Africa in the west (Franco-Sánchez, 2004). By the eighth century, Muslims extended their rulership into western Europe by reaching the Iberian Peninsula (Collins, 1989).

In 711, under the rule of the Umayyad Caliph, Al-Walid ibn Abd Al-Malik, troops led by a general of Berber descent, Tariq ibn Ziyad, who was later joined by Musa ibn Nusayr, Ifriqya

governor, invaded the Visigothic land of Hispania (Nagy & Siddiqui, 2008). By 716, most of the Iberian Peninsula land was under Muslim control (Kennedy, 2015). Muslims used the term *Al-Andalus* to define their territory and assigned Córdoba as their capital. However, the term *Al-Andalus* had a geographical application that was subject to variation. Although it first referred to as a significant part of the Iberian Peninsula, by the fifteenth century, it was restricted to just the small Kingdom of Granada (**Fig.1**) (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). The conquerors of Al-Andalus belonged to two main Muslim ethnic groups, the Arabs and the Berbers, each of which branched into many tribes (Makki, 1992). The period of Al-Andalus was hailed as a period of tolerance and acceptance of different ethnic and religious communities, which had an important impact on the political and cultural aspects of the Andalusian period. The society of Al-Andalus was made up of three main religious communities, namely Muslims, Christians, and Jews, whereas Muslim Arabs were at the top of the social scale (Fletcher, 2006).

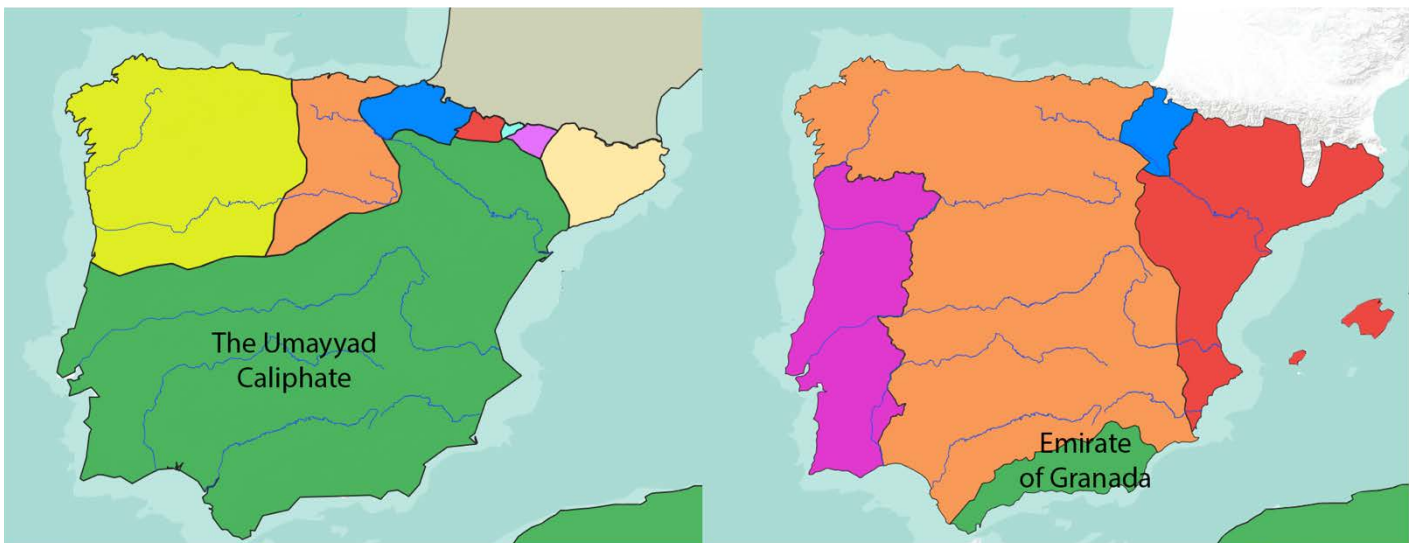


Figure 1. Geography of the Umayyad Caliphate in the 10th century vs. The Nasrid Emirate in the 15th Century

The Umayyads

The Umayyad Emirate Period

Al-Andalus was a province under the power of the Umayyad Caliph in Syria for half a century until the rise of the Abbasid dynasty in the east (Franco-Sánchez, 2004). With nearly all Umayyad representatives exterminated by the Abbasid, the Umayyad prince Abd Al-Rahman I fled to Al-Andalus, where he managed to win the support of the Arabs to establish himself as the Emir of Córdoba in 756 (Kennedy, 2014). Abd Al-Rahman I, who was known as *Al-Dakhil*⁴, and his descendants ruled Al-Andalus as an independent Umayyad Emirate for the next century and a half, thereby denying any authority to the dominant Abbasid Caliphate in Iraq (Collins, 1989).

The Architecture of the Umayyad Emirate Period

During the Umayyad Emirate period, Al-Andalus witnessed great power and flourished in many aspects, including architecture. The city walls of Córdoba were improved, and several smaller mosques were erected. Nonetheless, Abd Al-Rahman I maintained a lifelong attachment to his Syrian homeland, though neither he nor any of his successors tried to reconquer it (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). Abd Al-Rahman I saw Córdoba as a substitute for his Umayyad ancestors' residence in Syria. As was the custom, the Syrian Caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty had been moving around the land, taking their thrones in several country estates. Therefore, he ordered the concept of Syrian country states to be replicated in the Iberian Peninsula. Abd Al-Rahman I constructed many palaces at Córdoba, such as Qasr Al-Dimashq, Qasr Al-Hayr, and, in 777, Qasr Al-Rusafa, which was named after Damascus, Qasr Al-Hayr, and Al-Rusafa (Sack, 2008). All three palaces were built according to Syrian prototypes.

The palaces were rich in ornamentation such as marble columns and multicolored mosaics. They also included gardens that encompassed fruit trees, water channels, and flowers planted in the image of Eastern precedents. Abd Al-Rahman I coveted the memory of home

⁴ *Al-Dakhil* means the one who enters a space, which meant here as the immigrant since he moved from Syria to Al-Andalus.

so profoundly that he introduced the Syrian Umayyad custom of rulers residing in suburban country estates, where he introduced the name *munya* as a new term for these suburban estates (Arjona Castro et al., 1995). The country states, or *munyas*, commonly included a residential area like a *Qasr*, surrounded by lavish watered gardens and orchards. Unlike the city palace, which was the main administrative center for the ruler, the primary purpose of the country estate was the leisure of the ruler as it was separated from public life (Arnold, 2017). Al-Maqqari (1968), based on earlier medieval Arabic manuscripts, stated that the luxurious *munya* of Al-Rusafa and its lavish gardens served Abd Al-Rahman I as a place of retreat and relaxation, social gatherings, and hunting parties (Anderson, 2013).

These country estates, or *munyas*, served not only as an occasional recreational residence but also as the setting for official receptions and hosting prominent visitors in order to show off the extravagant economic wealth and power of the ruler (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). Emirs and governors continued the practice of building country estates throughout the Al-Andalus reign.

Abd Al-Rahman wrote for his Munyat Al-Rusafa, demonstrating his great nostalgia:

تبدت لنا وسط الرصافة نخلة ... تناءت بأرض الغرب عن بلد النخل
فقلت شبيهي في التغرب والنوى ... وطول التناي عن بني وعن أهلي
نشأت بأرض أنت فيها غريبة ... فمثلك في الإقصاء والمنتأى مثلي
سقتك غواصي المزن من صوبها الذي ... يسح ويستمر السماكين بالوبل
A palm tree I beheld in Al-Rusafa
Far in the west
You, like myself, are far away, in a strange land
How long have I been far away from my people!
You grew up in a land where you are a stranger
And like myself, are living in the farthest corner of the earth
May the morning clouds refresh you at this distance
And may abundant rains comfort you forever! (Irwin, 1999)⁵

⁵ The poem translation from Arabic was provided by the indicated source

Despite the many *munyas*, the Alcázar was the primary resident and ruling city estate for Abd Al-Rahman I and his successors (Arnold, 2017), which is a practice that would be continued by the many rulers of the later period of Islamic Iberia. The Alcázar was known as either *Al-Qasr* or *Qasr Al-Khilafa*, Arabic for the ruling palace (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). Since the Alcázar was a city estate, it encompassed different architectural elements than the *munyas*. The Alcázar was in the center of the city and surrounded by a high wall connected to a bridge for the Emir to reach the congregational mosque safely (Pizarro Berengena, 2013). The palace had several gates; the main entrance gave access to the terrace and the main hall where the Emir conducted audiences for his court officials and the general public. However, other gates had different functions, such as the gate of the gardens, which gave access to the residential part of the palace (Arjona Castro, 1982). The spatial design of the Alcázar was planned to serve the administrative need of the city estate (Arnold, 2017). It is worth noting that the term *Qasr*, Arabic for a palace, which also means Alcázar in Spanish, was applied to fortified palaces. The term included palaces from the small buildings in *munyas*, such as Qasr Al-Rusafa, to large palatine complexes, such as the Alcázar of Córdoba. In any case, all the *Qasr* had in common was that they were either owned by a sovereign or were a residence of a provincial governor. Thus, they always had court connotations compared to other constructions designated with different terms. However, not all the sovereign's palaces were called *Qasr* since, in some cases, other names were preferred to highlight other aspects or functions of the building (Juarros & Higuera, 2000).

Moreover, the period of the Umayyad Emirate witnessed significant architectural advancement, such as the Great Mosque of Córdoba, which was built in 784 by order of Abd Al-Rahman I. The Great Mosque of Córdoba was considerably expanded by later Muslim rulers and is one of the most representative buildings that testify to the magnificence of Muslim architecture in Spain (Lapunzina, 2005). Although the Great Mosque of Córdoba was adapted into a cathedral in 1236, its original appearance, despite a number of significant modifications, has mostly been preserved (Nickson, 2015). As a building type, a mosque has unique architectural characteristics. The Great Mosque of Córdoba consisted of an enclosed

courtyard and a rectangular prayer hall of 11 aisles perpendicular to the qibla wall. The central broader aisle led to the mihrab and a spectacular niche in the qibla wall indicated the direction toward Mecca (Menocal et al., 2006). The prayer hall was a large airy space with a wooden ceiling supported by double-tiered horseshoe arches connected to the Corinthian and composite white marble capital of the previous Visigoth columns (**Fig.2**). The horseshoe arches are a feature that became associated with Islamic architecture but were already familiar to Spain's Visigothic builders (Gómez-Moreno, 1906, 1919; Lapunzina, 2005). The magnificence of the Great Mosque of Córdoba inspired an abundance of written documentation on the monument, especially during the Caliphate period. Al-Idrisi (1949) demonstrated the glory of the mosque in the twelfth century, stating that it had no equal amongst all Muslim mosques due to its grand size, architecture, and ornamentations. The many replications of the Great Mosque in both Muslim and Christian architecture proved the famed appreciation for its lavish architectural decoration, in both periods, before and after its conversion to a cathedral (Nickson, 2015)⁶.



Figure 2. The Prayer Hall of Abd Al-Rahman I, The Great Mosque of Córdoba

⁶ The bibliography on the mosque of Córdoba is vast. I refer here to the record and references contained in the monumental study by Calvo Capilla (2014).

It is interesting to note that in Islamic territories, religious structures tend to be treasured by successive generations, who continue to preserve and maintain them over time. These religious monuments attract more studies by historians, while other palaces and states receive less attention. The Great Mosque of Córdoba is acknowledged as one of the most significant accomplishments of Islamic architecture and was the center of focus of expansions and embellishments by several successors of the Umayyads. Nonetheless, it is remarkable to note that Abd Al-Rahman I created two architectural monuments in Córdoba, representing his ambitions as the new ruler of Al-Andalus, yet the first one was, in fact, a *munya*. The Great Mosque of Córdoba was constructed much later in his reign. In fact, the Umayyad Emirate was a flourishing period in many aspects that reflected power and authority; nevertheless, it had to fight continuous battles against Christian forces and even among the different Muslim troops (Manzano Moreno, 2019).

The Umayyad Caliphate Period

In 929, Abd Al-Rahman III named himself a Caliph, elevating the power of the Al-Andalus Emirate to a Caliphate, thereby competing in authority with the power of the Abbasid in Iraq and the Fatimid in North Africa (Almagro, 2010). The period of the Caliphate of Córdoba is seen as the golden age of Al-Andalus. The city of Córdoba became one of the prominent cultural and commercial centers in the Islamic lands, which enabled Al-Andalus to become an essential channel of educational, cultural, and scientific exchanges between the Muslim and Christian worlds (Covington, 2007).

The Architecture of the Umayyad Caliphate Period

From an architectural perspective, the Caliphate period witnessed significant development in construction and decoration techniques. Córdoba had paved streets and drainage system channels, and most of the houses were constructed to a standardized type (Teresa Casal García et al., 2004). During that period, the minting of gold coins was practiced for the first time since the formation of Al-Andalus, with the coins being referred to as dinar (Collins, 2012).

In his new role as Caliph, Abd Al-Rahman III aimed to establish a new city, Madinat Al-Zahra'a, as a symbol of his influential role as a Caliph and a leader of the Islamic world, imitating the tradition of Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphs. Madinat Al-Zahra'a was called *Madina*, Arabic for a city, in the sense of a palatine city defined as a protected urban lavish space where political power was exercised (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). The palace city was founded around seven kilometers west of Córdoba (O'Callaghan, 1983) between the valley and mountain range. With political intentions, the location was selected carefully to guarantee clear visibility of the new center from afar to demonstrate the power and influence of the city (Rosser-Owen, 2007).

The complex was extended during the reign of Abd Al-Rahman III's son Al-Hakam II (Vallejo Triano, 2007). By 940, the city encompassed a massive rectangular area surrounded by a huge defensive stone wall with sequenced placed buttresses. Madinat Al-Zahra'a was divided into three zones. The army occupied the first in the west, and the second zone was for the urban population, including the congregational mosque, the market, and residential quarters. The third zone was in the middle and was designated for the Caliph and his court, overlooking the city and the surrounding landscape and gardens (Vallejo Triano, 2007). The Caliph's zone encompassed lavishly decorated reception halls and notable luxurious *Qasr*. It also contained gardens and orchards, irrigated and cultivated with rare species of fruit trees (Ruggles, 2000). Madinat Al-Zahra'a demonstrated how the arts and architecture were an integral part of the courtly life of the Umayyads and created a new visual identity on the western frontier (Robinson, 1992). While the earlier royal palaces, such as Abd Al-Rahman I's Muniyat Al-Rusafa, were nostalgic due to the memory of Damascus, Madinat Al-Zahra'a announced the power and independence of the Umayyad Caliphs (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). Many *muniyas* were built during the period of the Umayyad Caliphate as the concept continued, including Muniyat Al-Naura and Muniyat Al-Rummaniya (Arnold, 2017).

During the period of the Caliphate, a new concept in architecture appeared: "framing the view of the beholder." The concept was shown in many palatial architectures, such as Madinat Al-Zahra'a and Muniyat Al-Rummaniya (Arnold, 2017). Replacing the single-axis plan that had been used before with a wide field of view to a single point (the eyes of the

beholder) made all subjects equal. Furthermore, this concept reflected the power of the ruler since the space was built according to the field of view of the Caliph, which showed that all power was placed in his hands and under his eyes. Architects made that possible with the use of mathematics and geometry, which became increasingly important in the Umayyad Caliphs' courts (Ruggles, 2007).

End of the Umayyads

Like the Umayyad of Al-Andalus tradition of securing the throne from father to son, the successors of Abd Al-Rahman III ruled as Caliphs until the end of the tenth century. At the time of the death of the Caliph Al-Hakam II in 976, his son Hisham II was only 11 years old and was considered too much of a minor to rule (Ávila, 1980). Al-Mansur ibn Abi Amir⁷ was assigned as a prime minister *Hajib*⁸ to aid Hisham II. Al-Mansur used his title to assume all the executive authorities and was the de facto ruler of the Caliph, deriving his power from the loyalty of Berber mercenaries (Echevarria, 2011). This political situation continued with Al-Mansur's sons until Abd Al-Rahman Sanchuelo, his second son, announced himself as Caliph, deposing the Umayyad Hisham II from the throne (García Sanjuán, 2008). The Umayyads were offended, and the population of Córdoba revolted, which led to a civil war. The civil war, known as *fitna*⁹, started in 1009 with a revolution that led to the assassination of Abd Al-Rahman Sanchuelo and the rise in power of the Umayyad Mohammed II, called Al-Mahdi, who was also eventually overthrown (Viguera Molíns, 1992). The City of Córdoba was wrecked by conflict, driven mainly by ethnic disputes among its citizens (Collins, 2012). The Hammudids, descendants from the Idrisid dynasty of northern Morocco with strong Berber relations, entered the fray in 1016 but were also unable to restore order (Rosado Llamas, 2008).

⁷ Also known as *Almanzor*.

⁸ The *Hajib* was the chief aide of the Emir or Caliph and the head of the administration of the three main divisions: the royal household, the chancery, and the financial department. The *Hajib* was the highest minister of the state, and the head of his own court (*majlis*), where he received petitioners and messengers (Barthold & Sourdel, 1959).

⁹ *Fitna* means temptation, trial, civil strife, or conflict. It is an Arabic word with important historical implications widely used to describe revolutions or civil wars (Badawi & Haleem, 2008).

The period of the *fitna* lasted between 1009 and 1031, with continuous fights among various members for dominance over Córdoba and the empire, each reinforced with armies of Berber mercenaries and Christian allies, which caused the Caliphate to fall apart (McKitterick et al., 1995). The continuous wars and sieges in Córdoba caused much damage, including the destruction of the palatial architecture, the suburb of Al-Rusafa being burnt, and huge parts of Madinat Al-Zahra'a being ruined and unable to recover its former glory (Collins, 2012). The period of the *fitna* was not only the end of the Umayyads Caliphate but also a turning point in the political relations between the Muslims and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula. Although it was a crucial period in Spanish history, it has hardly generated much academic research, with studies concentrating more on the periods before the civil war (Scales, 1993).

The Court Life of the Umayyads

The architecture and palaces of the Umayyad Emirs and Caliphs extravagantly illustrated their power and influence. As discussed above, the types of royal palatial architecture varied depending on the purpose, yet all were lavishly designed to articulate the superior sovereignty of the Emir or Caliph. For the city estates as the ruling palaces, under the rule of the Emirate, particularly Abd Al-Rahman II, the court protocol took on an Eastern influence in becoming more strict, formal, and extravagant. Despite the political animosity between Andalusian and Abbasid rulers, cultural relations were still present. The exchange of scholars and royal members arbitrated and enriched the intellectuality of both courts, such as the case of the Iraqi singer Ziryab, a previous courtier of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mahdi. The presence of Ziryab introduced the court of Abd Al-Rahman II to new musical notations and instruments as well as different culinary recipes and dress styles (Vernet Ginés, 1984). The lavish court, protocols, ceremonies, and feasts led to a growing distance between the Emirs and the public in mainly hosting elite courtiers and intellectuals. During the Caliphate, the court affairs became more formal and a barrier was developed between the Caliph and his subjects with no direct interactions. The Caliph resided in an inaccessible palace with he and his government departments having relocated to Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007; Borrut & Cobb, 2010).

As for the suburban estates, or *munyas*, the royal courts mainly functioned as retreats and leisure sites for the ruler and privileged members of his circle, as previously mentioned. The splendid residential palace with its fertile landscapes and orchards surrounded by enclosing walls was the favored relaxation setting among the nobles of the Umayyad court. The occasional recreational time spent at the *munyas* involved several stimulating courtly activities, both physically and intellectually, such as hunting, fishing, festivities, and the enjoyment of *majalis*. The gatherings of *majalis* encompassed literature debates and musical performances, which will be detailed shortly. During the Caliphate time, the *munyas* served not only as a stage for pleasure pursuit activities but also as the state's official political events, exhibiting the lavish life of the Caliph to demonstrate his power and influence (Anderson, 2013). The practice of *majalis* was essential in the Umayyad courts of both ruling palaces and *munyas*, where each *majlis* encompassed different settings or activities based on the purpose. Analyzing the practice of these *majalis* will help to enhance the understanding of the Umayyad court life and ceremonies.

The Arabic culture has many significant practices that assumed an essential aspect in the society; among these practices is the tradition of *majlis*, which constituted a substantial role in political and cultural life. In fact, the word *majlis* (pl. *majalis*) in Arabic is a noun derived from the verb *yajlis*, which means sitting down or to sit. Among the derivative meanings of *majlis* is what Arabs call the salon, lounge, reception hall, or a meeting place, where the host usually receives his guests for numerous reasons. In this sense, *majlis* has many derivative meanings in Arabic, including the name of the gatherings or the meeting settings performed since early times in Arabic civilizations (Lazarus-Yafeh et al., 1999; Meri, 2006). These sessions could differ in purpose and formality from religious to social, political, legislative, scholarly, literary, or even entertaining. Each purpose required a different decorum based on the setting of the *majlis*. It could vary from a highly regulated set to a simple circle gathering, such as councils, tribunals, diwans, lectures, preaching sessions, scholarly debates, and many others (Lazarus-Yafeh et al., 1999; Meri, 2006). The intended *majlis* term in this paper refers to the royal assemblies among the sovereigns and their

noble courtiers dedicated to intellectual exchanges and poetic readings, which were usually appointed as the *majalis* of literature or *Majalis Al-Adab*¹⁰.

The royal *majalis* have been practiced since pre-Islamic times, which laid the basis of the essential role of the literature *majalis* in displaying the prestige of the tribe and society (Adamec, 2016). However, with the introduction of Islam, the *majalis* shifted more towards educational and religious purposes, yet the literature ones were still a fundamental part of the culture. Nonetheless, with the expansion of Islamic lands starting from the seventh century, the practice of literature *majalis* continued to spread. As a result, the succeeding Islamic dynasties thrived not only in the geographical extent of their realms but also politically and intellectually in many aspects (Hoyland, 2015; Kennedy, 2015).

Along with the citizens who still practiced the *majalis* sessions tradition, the *majlis* assembly became an essential part of the court life of the rulers of Al-Andalus. The architecture and palaces of the Caliphs, or Emirs, extravagantly illustrated their power, which created multiple levels of complexity and etiquettes of the held *majalis* far more than the previous modest circle ones (Lazarus-Yafeh et al., 1999). The attendees of the royal *majalis* were carefully selected elite courtiers and renowned intellectuals to reflect the prestigious frontier of the leader. The Caliph would attend different *majalis* in his court, from *Majlis Al-shura* to *Majlis Al-dhikr* to *Majalis Al-Adab*¹¹, each of which served to portray a valued side of his royal role (Lazarus-Yafeh et al., 1999). As for the literature *majlis*, many distinguished *Udaba'a*¹² illustrated the narrations of these assemblies over the centuries.

The highly intellectual court of the Umayyad Andalusian rulers developed different variations of literature *majalis* that ranged from formal ceremonial ones to private assemblies (Haikal, 1985). The formal literature *majalis* included not only *udaba'a* and

¹⁰ *Adab*: the Arabic word used for literature, derived from etiquette that entails culture, courtesy, manners, and enrichment (Starkey & Meisami, 1998). *Adab* requires a knowledge of history, poetry, grammars, parallels, precedents, and the creative correct use of language (Meri, 2006).

¹¹ *Majlis Al-Shura* is the political and ruling council, *Majlis Al-Dhikr* is the religious lectures, *Majalis Al-Adab* is the literature ones.

¹² A person who practices *Adab* is called an *Adib* (pl. *Udaba'a*) (Meri, 2006).

scholars but also the ruler's political guests to display the court's esteemed intelligence level (Haikal, 1985). On the other hand, the private informal *majalis* involved the presence of the ruler and his close noble courtiers, took place mainly at night, and were dedicated to intellectual exchanges and poetic readings, accompanied by drinking and musical performances (Calvo Capilla, 2013; Puerta Vélchez, 2012; Robinson, 2002).

The private informal literature *majalis* were mainly held at the *munyas*, the suburban estates. The ruler's yearning for intellectual stimulation was gratified among these *majalis* at which the elite court circle members would discuss intellectual topics concerning science, history, or any current provocative topics of that time in poetic performances. Ibn Abd Rabbih, poet and official panegyrist at the Umayyad court, demonstrated his fondness of the *majalis* activities, which included music and singing, drinking, women, and the company of elite court members in his great poetic anthology of the *Al-'Iqd Al-Farid*, The Unique Necklace (1983), which is considered one of the most famous works of *Adab* in the Umayyad court (Anderson, 2013). Ibn Abd Rabbih (1983) illustrated the captivating range of topics that noble courtiers discussed and debated during the poetic *majlis* held at the *munyas*, such as wars and battles, love and women, the structure of poetry, beauty and nature, and rulers' achievements.

The concept of the private literature *majlis*, or, as some historians refer to it, *Majlis Al-uns*¹³, was first started during the last years of the Caliphate period by the Amirids, who were the descendants of Al-Mansur ibn Abi Amir, the Hajib of the Caliph Hisham II. The culture of *majlis* united its members not only through mutual scholarly interests but also through the noble brotherhood that elevated their hierarchal positions in the society, which fostered the Amirids' claims to governing instead of the rightful Caliphal line (Robinson, 2007; Rosser-Owen, 2007). *Majalis Al-uns* was the primary forum for the sovereigns and court members to exhibit their poetic skills (Robinson, 2012). The poet Ali bin Ahmed described a private literature *majlis* held at Al-Mansur's *munya* in Valencia as pleasurable, illustrating in detail the paradisaical atmosphere of the *majlis* setting, saying:

¹³ *Majlis Al-Uns*: Uns means entertainment, companionship, and enjoyment. *Majalis Al-Uns* often refers to the private literature *majalis* of close companions purposed for enjoyment (Hamilton, 2007).

قم سقني والرياض لابسة ... وشيا من النور حاكه القطر
في مجلس كالسما لاج به ... من وجه من قد هويته بدر
والشمس قد عصفت غلائلها ... والأرض تندى ثيابها الخضر
والنهر مثل المجر حف به ... من الندامى كواكب زهر
فحللت ذلك المجلس وفيه أخذان ... كأنهم الولدان
وهم في عيش لدن ... كأنهم في جنة عدن

Get up, and pour me a glass
while the gardens are dressed
in gowns of light woven by rain
In a *majlis* like the sky loomed with
a face known as a full moon
And the sun yellowing its shields
and the land dampening its green garments
And the river like the galaxy surrounded with
companions of planets as flowers
So, I stayed in the *majlis* whose servers
as if they are the servants of the Garden of Eden

Ali bin Ahmed also continued the poem by indicating that the courtiers resided the night as if the dawn had vanished, which implies the setup and long nightly durations of these *majalis*.

وأقمنا نتنعم بحسنه طول ذلك اليوم ... ووافي الليل فزدنا عن الجفون طروق النوم
وظللنا بليلة كأن الصبح منها مقدود ... والأغصان تميمس كأنها قدود،
والمجرة تتراءى نهرا ... والكواكب تخالها في الجو زهرا

We sat enjoying the glory of the *majlis* all day
and the night came as our eyes forgot the roads to sleep

While we stayed in a night as if its morning would never come
The branches leaned like stalks
and the galaxy were seen clear as a river
and the stars in the sky seemed blooming as flowers
(Al-Maqqari, 1968)

The *majlis* anecdotes of many historians and courtiers illustrate the paradigms of the *majlis* itself, the debates held in it, and the manners conducted even in polemics (Lazarus-Yafeh et al., 1999). Among these renowned historians was Al-Humaydi (1095), who narrated many anecdotes of scholars traveling throughout Islamic Iberia to these *majalis*. Also, the books of Al-Maqqari (1968) portrayed collections of poems written by intellectuals and *majlis* attendees. During the formal literature *majalis* and court ceremonials, the *udaba'a* of the courts were commissioned to speak eloquently about the sovereign and his power. Al-Maqqari (1968) reported how the courtly poet Al-Mundhir ibn Sa'id was chosen in one of Abd Al-Rahman III's *majalis* to address the audience, glorifying the Caliph. Ibn Sa'id's poetic attributes earned him the role of *Qadi Al-Jama'*¹⁴ (Cardoso, 2018), which illustrates the significance of poetry in political and hierarchical court advancement.

The Taifa Period

Formations of the Taifas

As a consequence of the *fitna* at the beginning of the eleventh century, Al-Andalus was fractured into at least 30 separate independent small states and principalities called *Taifas*, an Arabic word for party or group (Flood, 2018), all fighting with one another to gain control over the other's land (Tolan et al., 2012), and ultimately the larger, dominant Taifas conquered most of the smaller ones (Collins, 2012). The period of the Taifa kingdoms was challenged with territorial instability not only among the different Taifas themselves but also in the face of two other rising powers: the Christians of the north and the Berbers of the south (**Fig.3**) (Calvo Capilla, 2011).

¹⁴ *Qadi* means judge. In Al-Andalus a single *qadi* was appointed by the ruler to each province to handle the matters of *shari'a* (religion) and municipal administration (Francis, 1975).



Figure 3. Geography of Taifa Period in the 11th Century

The power shifted from the central authority of the Umayyad Córdoba Caliphate to the hand of several rulers, mainly referred to as Taifa Kings. The Taifa kings were either officers of Berber armies, respected judges, or even former courtiers of the Umayyad Caliphate. They derived their legitimacy mainly from military success and popular acclaim (Arnold, 2017). The best-known Taifas were the Taifas of Seville, ruled by the family of Banu Abbad, Toledo, ruled by Dhu Al-Nun, Zaragoza, ruled by Banu Hud, and Granada, ruled by Banu Ziri (Robinson, 1992).

The Taifas were formed in different ways. In many cases, the local government declared independence from Córdoba and assumed control over the area, such as the Taifa of Zaragoza and the Taifa of Toledo. The Taifa of Zaragoza was governed by Banu Tujib under the Umayyad Caliphate until independence was announced in 1018 by the ruler Al-Mundir I ibn Yahya Al-Tujibi. Similarly, in Toledo, the local leader Abu Bakr ibn Ya'ish broke away from Córdoba to rule independently. In other states, a council comprised of local nobility assumed administration, as in Seville and Córdoba. The Taifa of Seville was governed by a council of aristocratic leaders instead of a singular ruler until the reign of Banu Abbad. Córdoba after 1031 was governed by a council with Banu Jawhar in control up to 1070 when the Taifa of Seville seized Córdoba. Another way was establishing a new Taifa, like the

situations with the Berbers and former *Saqaliba*¹⁵. Some troops founded their own Taifa, such as Banu Ziri, who founded the Taifa of Granada, and Banu Hammud, who became the Taifa rulers of the coastal region of Málaga and Algeciras. Relatedly, the Taifa of Badajoz was created by *Sabor*, of former *Saqaliba* origins, until it was ruled by the Berber-origin family Banu Al-Aftas (Collins, 2012; Flood, 2018; Wasserstein, 1985).

During the first half of the eleventh century, although the rulers of Córdoba were still proclaimed as Caliphs and the caliphal fiction remained, they were no more powerful or significant in practice than the other regional rulers of the other Taifa kingdoms (Collins, 2012). The Taifa kingdoms reacted differently to the proclaimed Caliphate in Córdoba, which was demonstrated in various ways, including coin minting. Some declared independence by omitting the Caliph's name from their coins, such as the Hudid dynasty of Zaragoza, the Dhunnunid of Toledo, the Aftasid of Badajoz, and the Abbadid of Seville, who later joined the movement in the second half of the century. On the other hand, the Slavic dynasty of Almería and Dénia – and also the Amirid of Valencia – stayed longer in the doctrine of minting money in the name of the designated Caliph on duty in Córdoba (Calvo Capilla, 2011).

The Taifa period is one of the least understood periods in Al-Andalus history. As Cynthia Robinson pointed out, until recent times, scholars only interpreted the history of Taifa kings as an age of collapse and decline after the great caliphal time of power and unity (Robinson, 1992). In addition to the continuous wars among the different Taifas, a cultural rivalry of intellectual activity was also pursued. Rulers of each Taifa state competed in recruiting the most skilled court artists, architects, poets, scientists, and even astronomers to symbolize power and prove legitimacy (Middleton, 2015). Therefore, the eleventh century is not only considered an age of conflict but also a century of wealth, culture, and science (Franco-Sánchez, 2004).

¹⁵ *Saqaliba*: medieval Arabic for slaves.

The Dominant Taifas

Among the numerous Taifas formed during the Taifa period, several stood out in history either based on their power, size, or intellectual impact on the period. Among these Taifas are the Taifas of Seville, Toledo, Córdoba, and Zaragoza¹⁶.

The Arab family of Banu Abbad of Seville was one of the most famous, successful, and prestigious families of Taifa rulers since the Taifa of Seville was one of the largest and most dominant Taifas. Over the century, the Taifa of Seville gained power over much of the western part of Al-Andalus by seizing the Taifa's neighbors, including Huelva, Niebla, Algeciras, and Silves, among many others, and even annexing the capital, Córdoba. During the eleventh century, the kingdom of Seville was one of the most important cultural centers in Al-Andalus (Ciotta, 2017). The Abbadid took the city palace, the Alcázar of Seville and its gardens, as their residence. The Alcázar was founded in 913 by Abd Al-Rahman III as a fortress and was known as *Dar Al-Imara*, Arabic for the governing house, but the Abbadid extended the complex during the eleventh century. The Alcázar, currently Reales Alcázares de Sevilla, was known as the *Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak* during the Abbadid rule (Tabales Rodríguez, 2001).

The Abbadid ruler Al-Mu'tamid was known for his poetry and extensive building activities, and he expanded the structure of the Alcázar with the Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak. He added various stables, fountains, gardens, and a central domed hall called Al-Turayya (Pavón Maldonado, 2004) with the deliberate aim of outshining Dar Al-Imara and thus demonstrating the power of the Abbadids (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak mainly functioned as a residence, and it was the favored dwelling of Al-Mu'tamid. The characteristics of Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak during the Taifa period are difficult to determine because of the lack of documentation and the heavy transformation by the Almohads and Christians, which almost eliminated the Abbadid architecture (Ruggles, 2000). The Abbadid also built many palaces in the city's suburbs, including Qasr Al-Zahir and Qasr Al-Zahi, which also had a domed hall called *Sa'ad Al-Su'ud*, Arabic for Joy of joys (Guerrero Lovillo, 1974).

¹⁶ The Taifa of Zaragoza will be studied later on.

The Taifa of Toledo was ruled by the Berber family of Dhu Al-Nun, who formerly governed Toledo during the Umayyad Caliphate. The kingdom of Toledo became independent in 1016 and was led by the Dhunnunids until the Christians conquered it in 1085 (Ruggles, 2000). A famous palace of the Taifa period is the palace of Al-Hizam, which was built by the ruler Yahya Al-Mam'mun of Toledo. The palace was a huge complex but only the domed hall survived, the only preserved domed structure of the eleventh century (Delgado Valero, 1987). Currently, the domed chamber is located within the Convento de Santa Fe. The dome was supported by a set of crossing arches and encompassed narrow window slits to provide light to the space (Calvo Capilla, 2004). The Dhunnunids also had several palaces outside the city, including Al-munya Al-Na'ura, meaning estate of the waterwheel (Torres Balbás, 1950), which also encompassed a domed pavilion (Sobh, 1986). The building of Al-munya Al-Na'ura was replaced in the thirteenth century by Alfonso X of Castile with a new structure called Palacio de Galiana. However, the garden area around the palace is the preserved part of the waterwheel of Al-munya Al-Na'ura (Martínez Caviro, 1980).

On the other hand, the city of Córdoba was hardest hit by the civil war in 1009. Since Córdoba and both palatial cities, Madinat Al-Zahra'a and Madinat Al-Zahira, were damaged, much of the population eventually left (Arnold, 2017). Many of the inhabitants of Córdoba, especially those linked to trade, art, and industry, would seek in the other new kingdoms the security that the deceased monarchy no longer gave them (Fernández, 1998). Therefore, the leading citizens of Córdoba refused more attempts to restore the Caliphate and adopted a new style of rulership. They elected the most prominent Córdobaan sheikh Abu Al-Hazm of Banu Jawhar as a community representative. Abu Al-Hazm developed a council of ministers and judiciaries where he and his heirs ruled in conjunction with a collective leadership (Viguera Molíns, 1992) from 1031 until 1070 when the Taifa of Seville took it. While Córdoba was the main center of luxury arts production and architecture in Al-Andalus during the Umayyad period, there are no records of any palatial construction in it after 1010. With the new method of rulership, Banu Jawhar did not attempt to reconstruct Madinat Al-Zahra'a nor Madinat Al-Zahira, as they took the Alcázar as their residence (Arnold, 2017). Moreover, in the earlier years, the Great Mosque of Córdoba received

significant interest in terms of embellishment by Muslim rulers who aimed to manifest their power and legitimacy in visual terms. Taifa kings were considered patrons of art and architecture, yet no textual data show renovation during the eleventh century. During the Taifa period, Córdoba did not play an active part in territorial expansions and no longer attracted the poets and scholars of Al-Andalus, only nostalgia over the lost Córdoba (Robinson, 1992).

The Architecture of the Taifa Period

With no direct lineage to the Umayyad dynasty and no traditional hierarchy of authority, Taifa rulers built palaces that reflected a new order of independent power (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). Throughout the Taifa period, palatial architecture thrived in the Iberian Peninsula. The Taifa palaces were not grand in scale like the Caliphate's dominant palaces but large in quantity and diversity, which reflected each Taifa (Robinson, 1992). The Taifa kings continued the Caliphate tradition of using the term *Qasr* for their palaces as an act of sovereignty and affirmation of their power (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). Since there were a great number of palaces in the Taifa period, it is hard to generalize their appearance.

Nonetheless, the archeological work of recent decades significantly improved the understanding of the palatial architecture of the Taifa period. Three main types of palaces can be distinguished, namely the fortress, the city estate, and the country state, with each serving a particular goal for the ruler. The military background of many Taifa rulers made them accustomed to residing in fortresses. These fortresses were built on elevated ground for strategic reasons to provide protection for the leader. The second type was the city estate built near the congregational mosque as a continued tradition of the Alcázar of Córdoba, which gave the Taifa ruler direct access to people to serve his role as a judge and a leader (Arnold, 2017). The third type was the country estate, following the Umayyad custom of *munyas*. These country estates were outside the city limits and featured luxurious architecture, along with gardens with exotic plants, water, and pavilions. The *munyas* served the fame of the leader to reflect him as a patron of the arts by being centers for performances of art, poetry, and music (Robinson, 2002). Over the century, the three types began to emerge, creating a blend between city palaces, fortresses, and *munyas*, resulting in a palatial complex called "*Qasaba*," which could be translated as Citadel. The *Qasaba* was

a new concept of a palatial city, a fortified enclosure located on the highest part of the residential city, which included multiple palaces, baths, facility areas, mosques, and gardens, all staffed with military garrisons (Arnold, 2017). While the *Qasaba* was connected to the city's fence, it was usually located strategically, generally high, and had a more powerful defense than the city. Although the term *Qasaba* appeared in some texts from the Umayyad period, such as the *Qasaba* built in Barbastro by Abd Al-Rahman III, the term denomination did not become general until the Taifa period in the eleventh century (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). Continuing the concept of *Qasaba*, numerous cities built new defensive walls or improved the old ones. The Alcazaba Cadima "*AlQasaba Qadima*" was occupied by the Zirid, who erected a protective fence along *Albaicín* in Granada in the eleventh century, which is still extant (García de la Leña, 1764). Also, the town of Játiva was connected by a wall to a fortress. Cities like Almería, Dénia, Orihuela, Balaguer, and many others all had similar connecting walls, many of which still exist. Most of the walls consisted of rammed clay, a technique already used during the Caliphate, with the addition of stone corner reinforcement or rough stones. Both materials, rammed clay and rough stones, were used in the region even before the arrival of the Umayyads (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007).

Moreover, many features of the architecture of the Taifa period have changed from the previous periods of Al-Andalus. Although the construction techniques were refined, the building materials were a mixture of rammed earth and brick instead of the stonemasonry used in the tenth century (Graciani García & Ángel Tabales Rodríguez, 2008). The ornamentations were made of stucco in place of marble or limestone. Using bricks and rammed earth made the process faster yet more short-lived. Therefore, many palaces of the eleventh century did not survive (Arnold, 2017).

Meanwhile, architecture and decoration started to blend even more than before. Ornaments not only became an integral part of the architectural elements but also adopted a meta-language. The metaphorical approach was designed in the palatial space of the court for the highly educated audience (Robinson, 1995). The metaphorical decoration was pursued in the Taifa architecture with various techniques such as mixing different materials like plaster, glass, and painting in the same decorative space, a combination of calculated geometrical forms with symbolic vegetation figures, as well as the significant arrays of

multiple surfaces of different textures of objects with diverse and exotic origins like ivory, marble, and cloth, each carefully selected to draw out the symbolic meaning of the space (Calvo Capilla, 2011; Rosser-Owen, 2007). The interest in materials, splendor, views, and extravagant gardens was echoed to varying degrees in the palaces built after the *fitna*, such as the Alcáza of Málaga, the Al-Munya Al-Na'ura of Toledo, and the Aljafería of Zaragoza (Ruggles, 2000).

Only a few Taifa palaces have physically survived, including the Aljafería of Zaragoza, and parts of the palaces of Almería, Córdoba, and Málaga, though many others are known through literature (Robinson, 1995). Among the Taifa palaces that are no longer preserved are the palaces of the Abbadids in Seville and the Dhunnunids in Toledo. These palatial complexes contained architectural elements mentioned in literature not found in the other surviving courts (Arnold, 2017).

Moreover, the art and architecture of the Taifa period are diverse and rich; the architects of the eleventh century aimed to create a theatrical illusion through palatial complexes. There is a clear connection between the ideas of the lavish influence of the ruler and architecture. The large number and different backgrounds of Taifa rulers affected the architecture and court life. As mentioned previously, the roles of Taifa rulers varied between those with a military background, judges, and former courtiers of the Umayyads. Yet, they all had a common need to legitimize their rule to compensate for the political and military instability. The Taifa kings used their palaces and court members of scholars and poets as theatrical stages to enrich their authority. The main common feature of eleventh-century architecture is illusionism. The extravagant architectural elements and ornamentation of their palaces made them appear larger, richer, and more significant. The concept of the Caliphate architecture in the tenth century of "framing the view of the beholder," which provided the ruler with a powerful view of the infinity of his monarchy, was elevated into a tool of fantasizing that this infinity existed, which was powerfully deepened by the metaphorical approach (Arnold, 2017; Calvo Capilla, 2011; Robinson, 1997).

It is important to note in dating the palatial architecture of Islamic Iberia that it is hard to separate and define the exact time of the beginning and end of the Taifa period. It is unclear due to the Taifas' different timelines. The time of formation or collapse of each Taifa varied based on the circumstances, where many were included to other Taifas while others fell under the Christians or the Almoravids, on different time periods and did not end at the same time. From an archeological perspective, the civil war ended in 1031, yet it cannot be defined as the date of the beginning of the Taifa period since some Taifas had already clearly declared themselves as independent political entities earlier, and they certainly had to their credit the execution of some architectural work. However, any architectural erections before 1010 cannot be considered Taifa executions; hence they would belong to the Umayyad period (Fernández, 1998). Similarly, the rupture of the Taifa period is also indefinite. Although the conquest of Toledo in 1085 led to the request for help of the Almoravid to unite the empire, it took years of battles and sieges for Taifas to fall to the Almoravid's rule. The end date varies for each kingdom, from the Zirid's surrendering of Granada in 1090 to the fall of Zaragoza in 1110, or even the defeat of the Balearic Islands in 1116 (Viguera Molíns, 1992).

The Court Life of the Taifa Period

The refined court life was a significant part of the Taifa period. Most Taifa kings employed their court's splendor to demonstrate the power and legitimacy of their rule and enrich the visibility of their kingdom (Calvo Capilla, 2011). The display of luxury in the culture of their court life through knowledge, art, and architecture compensated for the lack of political and territorial stability since most Taifas had to pay *parias* to Christian neighbors in exchange for maintaining peace on the borders (Guichard & Soravia, 2006). The astonishing architecture of their palaces and the theatrical court protocols were part of the goal of presenting themselves as the patronage of the arts and sciences (Arnold, 2017). As Córdoba's role during the golden ages of Al-Andalus was to create a center spreading its influence throughout the peninsula to seek new patrons of art, the Taifa kingdoms reinterpreted the Umayyad art language with their own individual characteristics and distinctive approaches in each kingdom (Marinetti Sánchez, 1990). This allowed the Taifa kingdoms to shift from a unified official Umayyad aesthetic to various artistic forms that

reflected and elevated the traditional ornamental language, turning the eleventh century into a fine period of lavish aesthetic (Calvo Capilla, 2011). The splendid generosity of the Taifa rulers resulted in an increase in the number of prestigious members of the court's circles (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007).

During the eleventh century, the field of Arabic literature was a major intellectual activity that focused on the use of *Adab*, in which the culture of literature *majalis* was richly nourished. In addition, the *Adab* consisted of knowledge of various humanities, including studies on eloquence, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics, as well as literature, poetry, astrology, and even gemology (Calvo Capilla, 2013).

Those who specialized in *Adab*, the *Udaba'a*, acted as a secretary or *Katib* and were of great importance in the court circle. They were in charge of providing the Taifa kings with the necessary legitimating arguments, such as the poets who served primarily to exalt the qualities of the ruler. However, the glories of the past and the beautiful ruins of Córdoba were also evoked in their verses (Barceló, 2004). The court circle, or "*majlis*," not only included secretaries, poets, and writers, but it also had astronomers, mathematicians, philosophers, architects, and geometers as advisors for the ruler. The court also had judges, "*Qadis*," and religious figures who represented and served the public and participated in the meetings (Calvo Capilla, 2011). These respected court members, motivated by promises of prestige and profit, used to move from one court to another to offer their sublime services (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). The display of luxury in the *majlis* culture of Taifa court life was demonstrated through the *majlis* backdrop of the astonishing architecture of Taifa palaces, along with the theatrical court protocols in presenting the king as the patron of the literature, arts, and science that he acclaimed to be (Arnold, 2017).

The famous intellectual court of the Banu Abbad of Seville was a literary center that attracted the *Udaba'a* from all parts of Al-Andalus. The royal *majalis* of Al-Mu'tamid bin Abbad were culturally extravagant. Al-Mu'tamid took the *Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak*, Real Alcázar of Seville, as his dwelling and a platform for his private royal *majalis* (Tabales Rodríguez, 2001). Al-Marrakushi (1967) reported that Al-Mu'tamid leaned toward poets when appointing his court councils, such as the renowned poets Ibn Ammar and Ibn Zaydun, who

are considered among the greatest Andalusian poets. Equally significantly, the court of Banu Hud of Zaragoza was famous for its remarkable intellectual and cultural outputs, where Al-Muqtadir and his successors hosted these literature *majalis* in their pleasure palace, the Aljafería (Calvo Capilla, 2011). At the same time, many Taifa kings were distinguished as remarkable in the *Adab* discipline. For example, Al-Mu'tamid of Seville and Ibn Tahir of Murcia were great poets, and Abdallah Al-Ziri of Granada wrote 18 books of memoirs (Ibn Ahmad Andalusi et al., 2000).

In this stage of political fragmentation, the need for power legitimization was essential, which appeared through the Taifa's art and architecture. Similarly to their previous Caliphate rulers, Taifa kings used epigraphy to commemorate their achievements and constructions. The Umayyad Caliphs used epigraphy to reflect their Syrian inheritance while projecting their dominance as a Caliphate in Al-Andalus. The architectural epigraphy of the Caliphate is characterized by an absolute predominance of Kufic writing, which encompassed two stages: the floral Kufic and the simple Kufic. The floral Kufic style was widely used during the reign of the first Umayyad Caliph, Abd Al-Rahman III, while the simple Kufic was introduced during Al-Hakam II's reign. Both techniques were used during the Umayyad Caliphate, as confirmed in the inscriptions of the Great Mosque of Córdoba and Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Martínez Núñez, 2001, 2019). During the eleventh century, Córdoba lost not only its supremacy but also its centralization of the production of luxury artifacts and architectural elements. The movement of architects, artists, and artisans to seek prestige and profit from other Taifas resulted in an increased number of production centers, where each Taifa adopted its style of ornamentation and calligraphical art (Martínez Núñez, 2018). Some Taifas, such as Almería, Seville, and Córdoba, still followed the simple Kufic Cordobán Caliphate style, while others, like Toledo and Zaragoza, did not. However, whether the Taifas used the simple Kufic or the floral style or even a version of both, like Toledo, new artistic features were incorporated into the epigraphy that did not exist before in order to establish their independence from the Caliphate (Martínez Núñez, 2018; Ocaña, 1983). Although the epigraphs of Taifa architecture are a result of assigned work commissioned by rulers and superiors and thus don't translate the authentic representations of Taifa life, it is still essential to investigate them. Analyzing these

inscriptions is fundamental in order to understand the conception of the influence of the Taifa rulers since epigraphy is a vital indication of how the sovereign aimed to be perceived.

The Taifa of Zaragoza

The City of Zaragoza

Zaragoza was known as *Saraqusta* according to Muslims at that time, which is an Arabized version of the ancient city name Caesaraugusta (Lupón González, 2018). Since its Roman foundation, Zaragoza has been the most important city in the valley of the Ebro and has maintained its position as the capital of this region to the present day. Zaragoza was occupied in 714 by the Muslim army under the command of Tariq ibn Ziyad, becoming part of the Umayyad territory. From that year, Zaragoza was a vital post in the fight against the Christians from the north. Later on, around 720, the entire Ebro valley and the most important cities of the Aragón region were governed by Muslims, forming the Upper March. As part of the Upper March, Zaragoza was the frontier province for the Umayyads in northeastern Al-Andalus facing the Christian lands (Molina & Ávila, 1985). The Umayyads ruled Zaragoza through appointed governors who used the city estate called the *Zuda*, or "*Sudda*," as a governing palace. The *Zuda* was the term applied to governmental and administrative buildings with the character of a fortified residence. The term was primarily used in the eastern cities of the Iberian Peninsula, such as Zaragoza, Calatayud, Egea, Tarazona, Barbastro, and Palma de Mallorca (Torres Balbás, 1952). The fortress of the *Zuda* was built by Muslims in the form of a fort attached to the city wall, erected by the Romans. The tower of the *Zuda* was located in the northwestern corner, next to the Ebro river, and served as the city's governor's residence. Later on, it was used by the Taifa king as a winter residence (Ledesma Rubio, 1963). The appointed governors of Zaragoza exercised their rule of government on behalf of the Andalusian Emirs or Caliphs; however, the distance from the capital and its role as a defensive position gave Zaragoza undeniable political autonomy. This governmental autonomy was mostly recognized by the central power in Córdoba due to the need for rapid judgments to implement war initiatives effectively.

Zaragoza was also known as the white city, "*Al-Madina Al-Bayda'a*," as documented by the traveler and geographer Al-Idrisi, and many other Arab historians such as Al-Zuhri, Ibn-Sai'ed, and Abu Al-Fida. The title is justified for various reasons, most likely due to Zaragoza's

houses being plastered with lime or white plaster. It could also be a reference to the block of white marble that the mihrab of the Al-Jama' mosque of Zaragoza is made of (Souto & Bramon, 1987). The famous geographer Al-Idrisi (1799) illustrated the beauty of Zaragoza, saying that it is large, populous, and broad, with wide streets and pathways and beautiful houses and dwellings. It is surrounded by gardens and orchards and has an invincible wall built of stone. Therefore, the city of Zaragoza is *Al-Madina Al-Bayda'a* because of its abundance of whitewashing and plastering. And then, he continues to explain that the city has a great bridge through which one passes to enter the city, which has mighty walls and tall buildings. In Al-Idrisi's description, the town was presented as it was visited at the end of the Caliphate since it does not mention the palace of the Aljafería, the main innovation of the Taifa period (Frutos, 1998).

Moreover, the land of Zaragoza was rich and fertile due to its privileged location. The medieval Egyptian encyclopedist Ahmad Al-Qalqashandi (1913) described how the city looked like a white spot in the center of a large emerald, signifying the city's wall surrounded by its orchards, through which the water of four rivers flows, making Zaragoza look like a mosaic of precious stones. Furthermore, its strategic location benefited not only agriculture but also the trade industry, where the medieval route that crossed the peninsula from the north joined with the one that came from the south (Lupón González, 2018), which gave it an advantage in terms of commercial activities. The culture of the city of Zaragoza was rich and diverse with its different ethnic groups and religions. The inhabitants belonged mostly to Muslim Arab lineages but also to Muslim Berbers and Muladíes. The Jews and Christians, who had to pay taxes, occupied many areas of the city where they were allowed to continue with their customs, religion, worship, and legal institutions during the Muslim rule of four centuries (Bosch Vilá, 1960).

Rulers of the Taifa of Zaragoza

However, the remote location of Zaragoza and its distance from Córdoba allowed it to have numerous political conflicts (Molina & Ávila, 1985). After the Tujibid successfully ruled Calatayud in 872 (Flood, 2018), Muhammad Al-Anqar of Banu Tujib appointed himself governor of Zaragoza in 890 with the support of the Emir in Córdoba against the previous

governors of Banu Qasi. Due to continuous battles among the area's troops, the Troubadour tower was built as a defensive structure at the end of the ninth century (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986). Nevertheless, Banu Tujib remained loyal to the Umayyads until the rebellions of 935–937 against the Caliphate, which led Abd Al-Rahman III to direct military campaigns and keep the Tujibis under the rule of the Caliphate.

Banu Tujib Dynasty

After the collapse of the Caliphate, Banu Tujib ruled Zaragoza as an independent kingdom, the Taifa of Zaragoza, for three decades, starting from 1018 (Middleton, 2015). Mundir I was the first king of the Taifa of Zaragoza and was given the title *Hajib*, which was the rank Al-Mansur and his descendants held, and the first Taifa kings embraced their independent power. The Tujibid dynasty was the first to issue currency and mint coins in their names as an independent Taifa, which helped to strengthen the economy of the city (Bosch Vilá, 1960).

The rule of Banu Tujib maintained a policy of internal peace and good relations with their Christian neighbors, both the Castilians and Catalans, while defending their lands from the Navarres, governed by Sancho III, who also managed to conquer a few territories from the Tujibis. Like other Taifa kings, Mundir I concentrated on increasing the luster of both the city and his court. He instructed the renovation of the Al-Jama' mosque of Zaragoza, located where the Cathedral of Salvador de Zaragoza is today. He also welcomed prestigious members who fled from Córdoba to join his court circle to serve the amplified politics of Zaragoza, such as the poets Ibn Darraj Al-Qastalli and Said Al-Baghdadi, who were both formerly members of the Al-Mansur court circle (Andú Resano, 2007; Lomba Fuentes, 2002). Jewish scholars also had significant roles in the court of the Tujibid. Among them were the poet Yequtiel ben Isaac ibn Hasan, who became a grand vizier of Mundir II, as well as the physician, writer, and grammarian Marwan ibn Yannah, who was the teacher of Ibn Gabirol¹⁷ (Cervera, 1999; Gabirol & Cano, 1992). Nonetheless, the supremacy of the Tujibi

¹⁷Also known as *Avicebron* or *Avencebrol* in Latin, Ibn Gabirol was considered the greatest Hebrew poet and Neoplatonist in the medieval Arabic philosophical tradition (Gabirol & Cano, 1992).

dynasty ended with the assassination of its last king, Mundir II, in 1039, which resulted in conflicts won by their rivals Banu Hud (Montaner Frutos, 1998).

Banu Hud Dynasty

Sulayman Al-Musta'in bi Allah of Banu Hud, who governed Lérida/Lleida and Tudela, seized control of Zaragoza, founding the Hudi Dynasty period (Kennedy, 2014). The Hudi dynasty maintained power in the Taifa of Zaragoza for three quarters of a century, from 1039 to 1110. Banu Hud, just like Banu Tujib, was a prestigious family of Arab origin who had been in the region since they joined the conquest of Spain in the eighth century. It should be noted that Sulayman Al-Musta'in bi Allah was one of the first Taifa kings who adopted a laqab or a title that ended with *bi Allah* as shown in the coins minted in his name. During his reign, Banu Hud omitted the Cordobán Caliph name from their currency (Guichard & Soravia, 2006). Following a common practice in the Taifa period, at the end of his rule, Sulayman Al-Musta'in divided the government of the land between his five sons: Lérida to Yusuf Al-Muzaffar, Huesca to Lubb, Tudela to Mundir, Calatayud to Muhammed, and Zaragoza to Abu Ja'afar Ahmad (Cervera, 1999). Due to the critical geographical location of the Zaragoza kingdom and its ongoing civil battles, it had always maintained close relations with its Christian neighbors. The Taifa kings paid parias to the Christians either to obtain peace or for help for their political advancements (Burnett, 2010).

Abu Ja'afar Ahmad ibn Sulayman was the second king of Banu Hud and reigned from 1046 to 1082. Abu Ja'afar was a cultural patron and military victor, which resulted in the most refined period of the Taifa (Bosch Vilá, 1960). Abu Ja'afar managed to reunite the divided lands among his brothers under his rule, except for Lérida, which Yusuf Al-Muzaffar ruled for more than 30 years until it was finally reunited at the end of Abu Ja'afar's reign. During Abu Ja'afar's rule, the kingdom of Zaragoza reached its maximum territorial expansion and fame for great power (Huici Miranda, 1962). Abu Ja'afar's authority was recognized not only in Huesca, Calatayud, Tudela, and Lérida/Lleida, but also in the kingdom of Tortosa, the Taifa of Dénia, and the vassal kingdom of Valencia, which gave his kingdom an outlet to the sea that would facilitate the commercial activity (Cabañero Subiza, 2008).

Among the military triumphs of Abu Ja'afar, he recaptured the frontier fortress of Barbastro from the hands of the Christians in 1064 (Cabañero Subiza, 2008). Upon that victory, he adopted the honorary title of *Al-Muqtadir bi Allah*, the powerful by Allah, and commissioned the Aljafería from whose forename it is derived to symbolize his supremacy (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).

The Aljafería was considered a *munya*, a country estate, and it was built on the banks of the Ebro river to the west of the capital, Zaragoza (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007), where the Troubadour tower was integrated into the palace (Arnold, 2017). The architectural and decorative basis of the palace of the Aljafería was influenced by the Umayyad art (Ewert, 1977), with more extravagant and elaborate ornamentations (Robinson, 2002). The Aljafería is perceived as a transitional building between the Umayyad artistic customs and a new adopted decorative shape. Therefore, it can be seen as liberation from the previous formal Caliphate artistic methods, enriched by the independence of Banu Hud and the prominent disassociating from Córdoba. The *munya* of Aljafería was built for the purpose of leisure and relaxation for the Hudid kings, as it was named *Qasr Al-Surur*, Arabic for "Palace of Joy," by Al-Muqtadir himself in his famous poem (Barberá Fraguas, 1990). As Puerta Vílchez (2012) demonstrated, Al-Muqtadir considered the Aljafería to be his most precious jewel, which was demonstrated clearly in his poetry:

قصر السرور ومجلس الذهب ... بكما بلغت نهاية الطرب
لو لم يحز مُلكي خلافكما ... كانت لديّ كفاية الأرب

Oh, palace of joy! Oh, hall of gold!
Thanks to you I have attained the height of my aspirations
And though my kingdom were bereft of all else,
You would be the only thing I would yearn for
(Al-Maqqari, 1968)

Nonetheless, the main governing palace for Al-Muqtadir, and his successors, was the city estate, the *Zuda*, located inside the city of Zaragoza (Arnold, 2017), which Banu Hud continued to use after the fall of the Caliphate.

Al-Muqtadir was famed for many reasons, including his prolonged government as he was the longest-reigning Taifa king, for the great extension of his territories, his political abilities, and his courage on the battlefield, as well as his patronage and his work on Zaragoza's cultural advancement (Montaner Frutos, 1998). The court of Banu Hud hosted a highly scientific environment based on art, philosophy, and mathematics. Al-Muqtadir was not only a patron but a renowned scholar himself as Al-Saundi praised him, wondering: "Is there a known king with the knowledge of astronomy, geometry, and philosophy like Al-Muqtadir bin Hud, lord of Zaragoza, as he is a prodigy in these matters?" (García Gómez, 1976). Furthermore, Al-Muqtadir recruited the most astonishing scholars to create the best possible school for his children (Lomba Fuentes, 1989), including Abu Al-Fadl ben Yosef Hasdai and Abu Al-Walid Al-Baji, who were both renowned scholars and poets. Despite all Al-Muqtadir's efforts to reunify his father's kingdom, he also divided his territorial inheritance between his two sons, Yusuf and Al-Mundir. Yusuf was the head of the western part of the land, which included Zaragoza, Tudela, Huesca, and Calatayud, while Al-Mundir ruled the coastal area of the kingdom that included Lérida, Monzón, Tortosa, and Dénia (Cervera, 1999), in which continued the conflict between the two brothers to expand their assigned territorial lands.

Following the flourishing period of his father, Yusuf ibn Ahmad inherited the throne during the peak of the power of the Zaragoza Taifa and ruled as its third king from 1081 to 1085. Yusuf adopted the name *Al-Mu'tamin bi Allah*, meaning the trustee by Allah, after he acceded to the throne (Hogendijk, 1995). Although it was a common practice of Muslim royals to be well educated, Al-Mu'tamin, as his father, was a scholarly king and patron of science, astronomy, philosophy, and the arts (Bosch Vilá, 1960). Al-Mu'tamin was one of the leading mathematicians of the eleventh century and wrote the *Kitab Al-Istikmal (Book of Perfection)*, which is the most important mathematical treaty of those preserved from Al-Andalus and contributes to our knowledge of Zaragoza as a scientific center (Hogendijk, 1986). Al-Mu'tamin continued the work of his father by creating a center for intellectuals

and artists at the palace of the Aljafería. While his reign represented a great advancement in science, it also faced numerous battles with the Christians and other Taifas. However, Al-Mu'tamin reinforced his army by hiring Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, the Castilian knight known as El Cid – derived from the Arabic title *Sayyid*, meaning "master" – who had been exiled from Castile by Alfonso VI (Burnett, 2010). Díaz de Vivar successfully defended Zaragoza against attacks from Al-Mundir, Al-Mu'tamin's brother, and the Christians, including Sancho I of Aragón (O'Callaghan, 1983). In 1085, the year of Al-Mu'tamin's death, Toledo was taken by Alfonso VI, king of Castile and León, which weakened Zaragoza as a result of being disconnected from the rest of Al-Andalus.

Ahmad Al-Musta'in II succeeded his father at a critical time due to the advancement of the Aragonese into the land and the continuous internal wars between the southern Taifa kingdoms. The situation forced the other Taifa kings to seek help from the Almoravids, the powerful dynasty of Berbers in northern Morocco (Viguera Molíns, 1992). The Christians' defeat by the Almoravids in 1086 freed Zaragoza from the pressure of the Castilians. In 1090, the Almoravid empire reunited all the Taifas as provinces subjected to the central power of Morocco. They removed all the Taifa kings except Al-Musta'in, who maintained good relations with the Almoravids (Bennison, 2016). Al-Musta'in sustained his rule of Zaragoza as an independent frontier kingdom, protecting Al-Andalus from the Christians' attacks (Huici Miranda, 1962). Al-Musta'in died in 1110 in a battle in front of the Aragonese Alfonso I, the Battler, with his son Abd Al-Malik inheriting the Taifa. Abd Al-Malik, Imad Al-Dawla, could not keep up the pressure from the Christians and the Almoravids and gave up the land to the Almoravids in the same year, which ended the reign of Banu Hud and the Taifa of Zaragoza. By 1118, Alfonso the Battler had conquered Zaragoza, ending the four centuries of Islamic rule over the kingdom (Arnold, 1928; Calvo Capilla, 2011; Huici Miranda, 1962; Robinson, 1997).

Entering the Aljafería Walls: An Architectural Analysis



Entering the Aljafería Walls: An Architectural Analysis

The Islamic Aljafería

The building complex that can currently be seen is the sum and result of numerous transformations that have taken place throughout history. The goal of this paper is to analyze the relationship between the palatial architecture of the Islamic Aljafería and the court life practices of the Hudid kings. Thus, the first part of this chapter is dedicated to the architectural analysis of the Aljafería during the Islamic period.

The Site of the Palace

The city of Zaragoza continued to grow throughout the eleventh century and at the beginning of the twelfth century. As Al-Muqtadir reigned from 1046 to 1081, a period of 35 years that is more than enough time to carry out an outstanding advancement of public work. His son Al-Mu'tamin ruled for five years, and his successor Al-Musta'in ruled for another 25. During the 65 years of Al-Muqtadir and his successors' reign, the city of Zaragoza went through many intellectual, architectural, and economic advancements (Enamorado & Gonzalvo, 2016). As mentioned previously, *Al-Madina Al-Bayda'a* of Zaragoza, as was known and documented by the famous geographer Al-Idrisi (1799), in which the beauty of the city was praised for its large scale, population, fertile lands, broad streets and pathways, and beautiful houses and dwellings.

In Zaragoza, at the beginning of the Islamic period, the existence of an already consolidated city based on the Roman remains did not lead to such planning, but instead the existing houses and open spaces had to be reused. The city of Zaragoza during the Caliphate and Taifa periods had a direct relation with the Roman remains, in which was favored the possibility of reusing the classical structures as foundations, which would suggest continuity using the Roman streets during the Taifa period. Almagro (1987) has already defined the urban planning of Islamic Zaragoza as an atypical model, in which the reuse of structures of Roman origin was conventional, which led the city to distinguish itself from most other Andalusian cities. The structure of the Islamic city is closely related to the structure of its social organization – a city where its inhabitants are first and foremost believers in which

the natural meeting place is the mosque, and the dwelling is a family sanctuary. In these aspects, the houses would grow based on the adjacency of the Arabic Islamic social structure in which areas are divided according to a social organization based on clans and tribes related to a common lineage. However, due to the massive immigration at the beginning of the eleventh century since Zaragoza was a center of attraction, the city became compact. This growth and strengthening of the city during the Taifa period required a great deal of building activity. Interestingly, the appearance of specific areas while moving toward the suburbs where the palace of the Aljafería is located was superior. It has been supposed as an explanation for the flourishing of the building in this area and the better quality of the constructions since it was an attractive area that the local elites would gravitate towards as it was considered closer to the royal palace of the Aljafería (Gutiérrez González, 2015). Documentation showed a proportional relationship between the care and ornamentation manifested in the use of different pavements and the size of the dwellings, which could be related, in turn, to the status of the residents of these areas (Camacho, 2008).

Environmentally, the city of Zaragoza is cradled in a basin surrounded entirely by mountains. The location of the mountains around the city filters out humid air from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Although the sun's rays are felt in the city, the landscape is faced with unpredictable changes in environmental elements. Zaragoza's Cierzo wind, blowing in from the northwest, brings an abundance of breeze, fog, and snow. The basin landscape of Zaragoza is reflected in the palace of the Aljafería, surrounded by a fortress of stone, a glimpse of paradisaical architecture created by the Hudid Taifa.

As mentioned previously on many occasions, the palace of the Aljafería was constructed outside the city walls of Zaragoza. It is situated around 250 meters to the west of the city walls, near the Ebro river. The location of the palace was selected strategically where the medieval route that crossed the Iberian Peninsula from the north met the one that came from the south (Lupón González, 2018). At that location, the Umayyad's Troubadour tower accompanied by a large well fed from the river existed previously and were included in the enclosure of the fortified walls of the palace (Ewert, 1979). The *munyas* of Al-Andalus were accustomed to being surrounded by cultivated agricultural lands for both productive and recreational services for the royal dwellers of the *munya*. However, the cultivated spaces

that historically surrounded the Aljafería, known as Huerta del Rey, have disappeared, creating a challenge in understanding the Andalusian palace. When one visits the monument today, it is very difficult to envision that the palace was inside an agricultural estate, surrounded by orchards and water channels (**Fig.4**). Unfortunately, it would be difficult to advance one's archaeological knowledge of these productive spaces since they were urbanized and integrated into the city (Castillo & Palazón, 2016). Nonetheless, there is much to be done in its historical reconstruction based on the written documentation and the numerous graphic documents that are preserved (Paulino & Valenzuela, 2010).

The Islamic Aljafería refers to the structures built during the Islamic period, which are defined by two phases: the Umayyads' Troubadour tower and the Taifa's Aljafería palace.



Figure 4. The Palace of the Aljafería, Zaragoza

The Troubadour Tower

The Troubadour tower, *Torre del Trovador*, is the oldest Islamic structure on the site, which was built for military purposes as a defensive structure outside of the city for the Cordoban ruler in the Upper March of Al-Andalus. It should be noted that, according to Cabañero Subiza (2008), no written sources for the tower's dating provide an absolute chronology. However, researchers showed that the first floor and part of the second were erected at the end of the ninth century based on its analogy to the Cordoban towers that were built during the reign of Abd Al-Rahman II (Íñiguez Almech, 1977), while others proposed that it was erected in the second half of the tenth century (Cabañero Subiza, 2008). Nonetheless, both proposed dates belong to the Umayyad period, which indicates that the Troubadour tower existed before the construction of the Hudid palace, the Aljafería.

Although the tower has been recognized for a long time, it was given its current name relatively recently. Documentations show that for a time, the tower was known as *Torre Mayor* or *Torre del Alcaide*, the Warden Tower (Vidal, 2008). The current name is based on the play *El trovador*, a romantic drama by the writer Antonio García Gutiérrez (1813–1884). It was first performed in 1836. The play's plot identified the tower as the location of the imprisonment of Don Manrique de Lara. Subsequently, the play served as an inspiration for the libretto of one of Giuseppe Verdi's most famous operas, *Il Trovatore*, in 1853, which led to the popularity of the tower. From that time, it assumed its present name, *Torre del Trovador*, the Troubadour Tower (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).

Aside from all this, the Troubadour tower was built to function as a military structure outside the city walls for the Cordoban governor. The tower consists of a quadrangular base and five floors. The heavy bulk of the tower's exterior reflects its defensive characteristic (**Fig.5**). It appears as an enormous prism with narrow openings as embrasures, as it doesn't reveal the division of the five internal levels. Entry to the interior was accessed through a small door located at a height that was only accessible by a portable ladder or stairway, probably made of wood, which could easily be destroyed or removed for protection purposes (Cabañero Subiza, Lasa Gracia, et al., 2006; Cabrera & Parra, 1998). Today, built stairs leading to the entrance have been added that did not exist during the Islamic periods (**Fig.6**).



Figure 5. The Troubadour Tower, The Aljafería, Zaragoza



Figure 6. The current entrance to the Troubadour Tower

The Troubadour tower contains five floors, with the first three being of Muslim origin and the top two dating to the Christian period. The first floor and part of the second floor belong to the pre-Hudid period. The different construction periods of each floor can be clearly reflected in the materials used in the formation of the external walls of the tower. The lower part of the tower is 6 meters high and was formed by three layers, an alabaster bond masonry exterior, a rubblework interior, and the central filling of stone bonded with mortar, which suggests the defensive characteristic of the essential purpose of the tower. Significantly, the use of alabaster ashlar was typical in Caliphate architecture. The walls are 18 meters high to the roof and are made of a simple plaster and lime concrete. The thickness of the walls decreases as it goes up, from 4.15 m on the first floor to 1.20 m at the top. The roof of the tower was reconstructed by Íñiguez Almech in 1973, where the edges of the roof were cut into 18 parts on the four faces with the addition of the current crenelated wall (Ávila Jalvo, 1988; Cabrera & Parra, 1998; Íñiguez Almech, 1977).

Moving inside, the interior structure of the first and second floors consists of two cruciform pillars with branching horseshoe arches that extend to the walls while creating the layout of two naves of three sections each (Cabañero Subiza, Cantos Carnicer, et al., 2006). This

layout was found later in the fortress of Granada, built during the thirteenth century. On the first floor, there is an internal staircase to access the second floor and a narrow corridor on the west side leading to an underground space of 5.6 meters in diameter and 15.7 meters deep. At the bottom of this cylindrical space is a well that received water from the Ebro river, which guaranteed a constant water supply to the tower (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986). The third floor is from the Taifa period; it is less rigid than the caliphate parts but still demonstrates Islamic architectural characteristics. On the Taifa floor is an inscription in Kufic characters that reads *Al-Mulk le Allah*, which is the Arabic for “Everything that belongs to Allah” (Fig.7). The other top two stories were added during the time of the Aragonese King Pedro IV when he constructed the Mudéjar parts of the Aljafería. The slightly pointed arches of these floors reflect Christian architecture and support the flat ceiling with wooden crossbeams (Ávila Jalvo, 1988) (Fig8).



Figure 7. The inscription of "Al-Mulk le Allah", The Troubadour Tower

In the excavation of the San Martín patio carried out in 1985 under the direction of Juan Souto, remains of a wall that belonged to a previous palace were discovered in direct relation to the Troubadour tower. The wall runs in a north-south direction, completely perpendicular to the southern front of the Troubadour tower (Souto, 1987). During the restoration work of Francisco Íñiguez Almech that started in 1954, the remains of the foundation from the previous palace were located, which would have been elevated following a geometric, proportional, and harmonious scheme, with at least five ashlar towers with a quadrangular plan (Cabañero Subiza, Lasa Gracia, et al., 2006). This foundation could be part of an enclosure that would have protected the southern side of

the Troubadour tower, where the gate is located, and would have surrounded the area of the well and the palace itself (Íñiguez Almech, 1962b). The first palace was built according to the custom of Umayyad architecture in Córdoba since it was fortified and was located outside the city's defensive walls; it doubled as a palace and fortified garrison for the Cordoban ruler or whoever was in charge of territorial missions. It could also serve as a dwelling for officers and masters of handicrafts required for the army and capable of withstanding a siege (Íñiguez Almech, 1977).

The Troubadour tower suffered significant deterioration, which is shown in the remains of some of the ashlar in the tower's lower area that are burnt and fractured. This destruction of the Troubadour tower and demolition of the first palace were probably due to the fire during the siege of the Hudis in 1039 that resulted in the fall of the Tujibid (Cabañero Subiza, Cantos Carnicer, et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, the Troubadour tower has defined artistic features such as the massive thickness of the walls, which decreases going upward, the absence of ornamentations except for the inscription of the Taifa floor, and the strong contrast of construction materials from the lower to upper floors. All these characteristics convey the tower's defensive purpose and the prison function that was given to the tower later during the Christian periods.

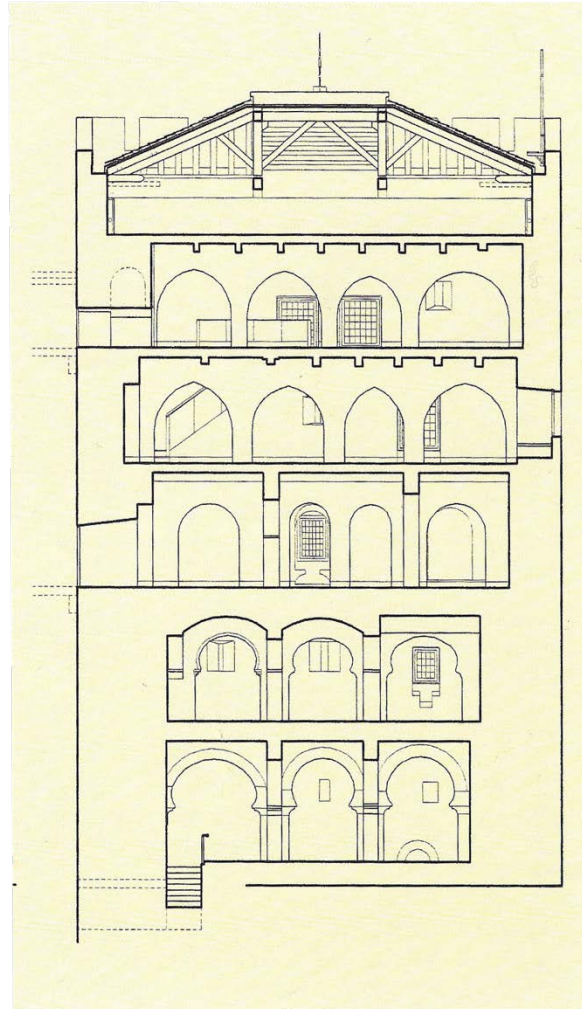


Figure 8. Sectional elevation showing the different floors of the Troubadour Tower

The Taifa Palace

The Aljafería palace is considered by far the best-preserved palace of the Taifa period (Arnold, 2017). Although it went through several changes over the years, the Taifa palace, which is the central focus of this dissertation, is certainly one of the most outstanding artistic spaces of the building, which over the centuries has shaped the distinctive character of the Aljafería (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).

The erection of the Aljafería palace, as mentioned before, is linked to the second monarch of the lineage of the Hudis kings, Abu Ja'afar Al-Muqtadir, based on the documentation and the remains of the inscriptions in the palace. There are four Arabic Kufic epigraphs from the Aljafería, each of which refers to Al-Muqtadir. Two of these epigraphs are located in an arch of the portico on the south side (**Fig.10**), while another one is in one of the columns' capitals, and there is (**Fig.9**), an additional one in a fragment of a water basin. The Arabic inscription carved with his title *Al-Muqtadir bi Allah* shows that the southern face of the Aljafería was built after, or at least that it was being erected in, the year 1065. He only started embracing the title of *Al-Muqtadir bi Allah* following his success in reconquering Barbastro for his kingdom from the Christians that year (Cabañero Subiza, 2008). These inscriptions also show the Aljafería as a monument commemorating the glory and supremacy of Al-Muqtadir, which emphasizes his legitimacy and authority (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986). While the main building and decorative works conducted in the Aljafería were carried out during Al-Muqtadir's reign from 1065 to 1081 (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2002), further construction continued during the reign of Ahmad Al-Musta'in II from 1085 to 1110 (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).

The current name of the palace, "Aljafería," is a clear simplification and deformation of the Arabic name *Qasr Al-Ja'afariya*, which can be translated as Abu Ja'afar's palace. The name Aljafería is first documented in a text by the Taifa court poet Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (Pérès, 1953). Originally it was named *Qasr Al-Surur* or *Dar Al-Surur*, Palace of Joy, as chosen by Abu Ja'afar Al-Muqtadir in his famous poem (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2002; Puerta Vílchez, 2012). The name *Dar Al-Surur* was mentioned in the book of Al-Maqqari, referring to Al-Muqtadir Bin Hud's palace (Wright et al., 1855). As stated above, the Aljafería is considered a *munya* and was built for the purpose of leisure and relaxation to serve its

name, *Qasr Al- Surur*. Moreover, it was a space featuring a remarkable court of artists, scientists, and intellectuals hosted by the Hudid monarch (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). Arabic sources always refer to the Aljafería as *Qasr*, as in *Qasr Al-Surur*, and never as *munya*; however, the term *Qasr* was widely used in these cases in which the residential building of the *munya* presided over a certain size. Ultimately, the great polysemy of the Arabic language allows the use of different names for the same reality, in order to give prominence to some elements over others existing in the territory of the *munya* (Castillo & Palazón, 2016).



Figure 9. Kufic inscription of the title *Al-Muqtadir bi Allah* on a Column Capital



Figure 10. Kufic inscription of the title *Al-Muqtadir* on an arch on south portico

The Aljafería was located in a strategic position where the medieval route that crossed the peninsula from the north joined the one that came from the south (Lupón González, 2018). The site, during the eleventh century, was completely flat, surrounded by cultivated fields and ditches, which meant it lacked the defensive element that characterized the other Islamic Iberian palaces, such as the palaces in Almería, Murcia, Málaga, and Granada, which were located on the top of prominent hills (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1999). Nevertheless, the location served the use and purpose of the Aljafería as a pleasure palace during the Huidid period. However, the surrounding massive thick walls of the palace provided the defensive factor needed (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). Its isolation made it a strategic link to Christian kingdoms and also allowed for semi-independence from the powers at Córdoba, which encouraged Banu Hud kings to create a palace complex utterly unique to their own imagination (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017).

The architectural and decorative foundation of the palace of the Aljafería was inherited from the Umayyad art (Ewert, 1977), but with more elaborate ornamentations (Robinson, 2002). The Aljafería should be considered an evolutionary building and a transition between the Umayyad customs and a new adopted decorative shape. Thus, it can be viewed as liberation from the formal Caliphate artistic methods, cultivated by the prominent disassociating from Córdoba.

Along with the grand imaginative creation, the building had artistic precedents studied by Manuel Gómez Moreno (1951) and the German researcher Christian Ewert (1977). According to them, the Aljafería adopted many features of the eastern Umayyad desert palaces, dating from the first half of the eighth century, including Qasr Al-Hayr, Qasr Al-Mushatta, and Qasr Al-Qastal, as well as an influence from the Al-Ukhaider fortress in Iraq from the early Abbasid period. The palace also embraced many visual links to the Cordoban Umayyad architecture, such as the Great Mosque of Córdoba and Madinat Al-Zahra'a – detailed subsequently. However, Robinson (1992) disputes the connection to Umayyad palaces due to the observation that Al-Muqtadir would not have been likely to entail a correlation with the Umayyads since Banu Hud did not claim a lineage from them.

The complex of the Aljafería consists of a trapezoidal plan surrounded by a massive thick wall of stonemasonry with a series of crenelated towers on the east side, where it shapes the quadrangular palace's ground plan. Although the architectural plan is a trapezoidal shape, the dimensions of the side of the wall of 110, 101, 93, and 90 meters indicate that it is also approximately square in shape (**Fig.11**). The length of the sides and the surface of the Hudid palace is also reasonably comparable to that of the smaller square enclosure of palaces in the eastern Umayyad: Qasr Al-Hayr Al-Sharqi and Qasr Al-Qastal (**Fig.12**) (Creswell & Gautier-van Berchem, 1969; Cabañero Subiza, 2008). The facade of the original wall was reinforced by 16 semicircular turrets on the north side and the preexisting rectangular Troubadour tower (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). The semicircular towers are similar to those in the Umayyads' Syrian Qasr Al-Hayr, and the Jordanian Qasr Al-Mushatta (**Fig.13**) and Qasr Al-Qastal (Cabañero Subiza, 2008). The massive intimidating size of the walls not only served as a defensive feature but also enhanced the image of the triumphal character of the building and acted as a symbolic separation between the palatial world of the sovereign and the common everyday exterior (Juarros & Higuera, 2000).

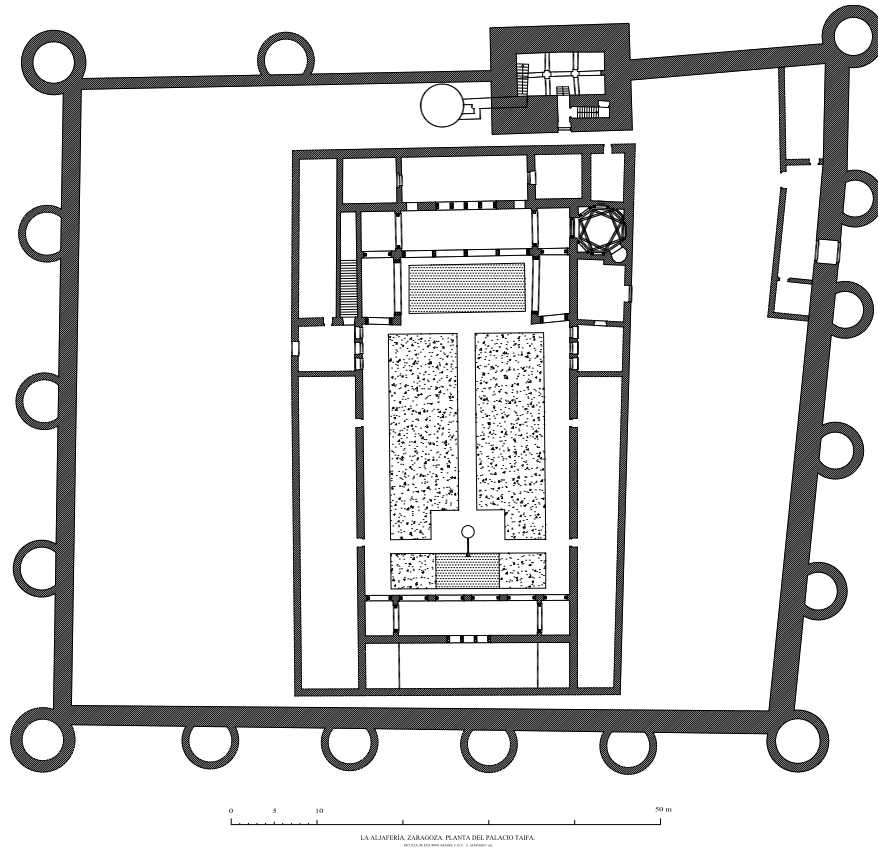


Figure 11. Hypothetical ground floor of the Aljafería palace in the 11th century illustrated by Antonio Almagro Gorbea

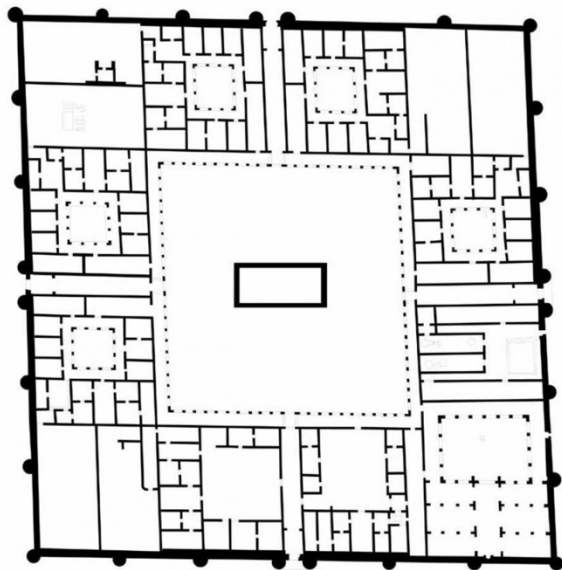


Figure 12. Plan of Qasr Al-Hayr Al-Sharqi, Syria

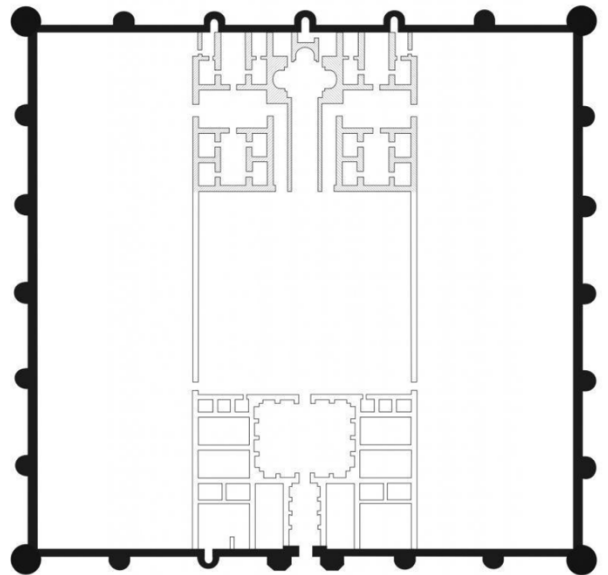


Figure 13. Plan of Qasr Al-Mushatta, Jordan

The dating of the construction of the fortified wall is uncertain. Francisco Íñiguez Almech (1977), the restoration architect of the Aljafería since 1954, indicates that the wall was built in the times of the Caliphate during Abd Al-Rahman III's siege to Zaragoza in the tenth century; however, he stated that the time of the building of the wall could be debatable due to the entrance gate. The main entrance gate has a strong Cordobán influence shown through the horseshoe arches with bonded springers and an off-center double-ring course that was used in the extension of the Great Mosque of Córdoba during Al-Hakam II's rule at the end of the tenth century (Ewert, 1977; Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986). The influence was possibly caused by Al-Hakam II's visit to Zaragoza along with his father, Abd Al-Rahman III, to inspect the defense of the shielding line to Al-Andalus, the Upper March, before the expansion of the Mosque (Íñiguez Almech, 1977). However, many researchers, including the historian Juan A. Souto (Souto, 1987), who led an archeological excavation at the Aljafería in 1985, argue that the historical and archeological evidence of the remains of the wall shows that it was built during the Hudid dynasty in the eleventh century, except for the base of the Troubadour tower. It should be noted, however, that the current entrance gate and crenelated turrets located on the east wall are the results of the reconstruction work done by Íñiguez Almech in the twentieth century, where he used the sixteenth-century drawings of the Aljafería by the Italian Tiburcio Spanochi as a reference (Íñiguez Almech, 1947). Antonio Almagro Gorbea created illustrations of hypotheses of the fortified walls during the eleventh century (**Fig14-15**).

The design of the entrance gate provides a glimpse of the architectural atmosphere of the interior palace (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). The entrance is situated between two towers, which is reminiscent of the Umayyad Syrian desert castles, the Qasr Al-Hayr Al-Gharbi and Qasr Al-Hayr Al-Sharqi palaces (Cabañero Subiza, 2008) (**Fig16-17**). Yet, the entrance's location on the eastern side wall is uncommon for eastern palaces. Furthermore, this location reduced the distance in the Aljafería to access the main hall of the palace from the outside, which is unusual in eastern palaces where the distance crossed is mostly kept as long as possible. On the other hand, the location of the entrance is similar to many *munyas* and palaces in the Iberian Peninsula, including Munyat Al-Rummaniya, the Upper Hall *Dar Al-Jund*, and the Salón Rico of Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Arnold, 2017).

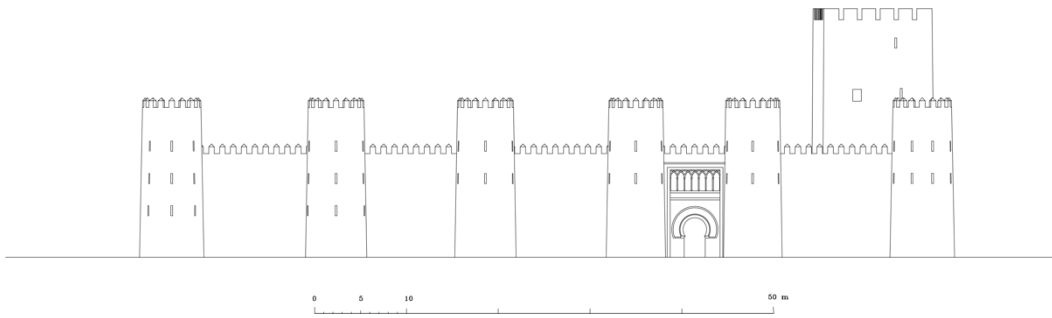


Figure 16. Hypothetical Elevation of the walls of the Aljafería, 11th century, illustrated by Antonio Almagro

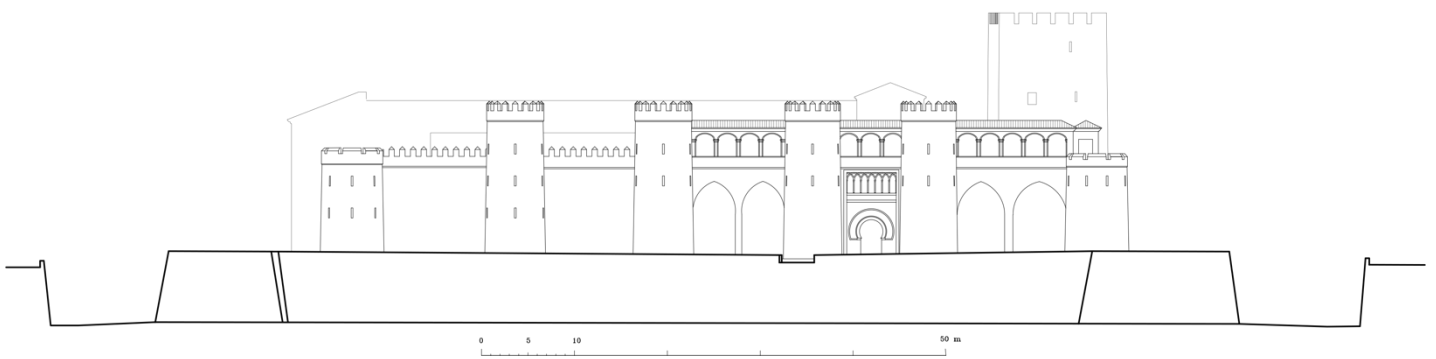


Figure 15. Sectional Elevation of the current fortified walls of the Aljafería, 20th century, illustrated by Antonio Almagro



Figure 14. Entrance to the Aljafería palace, Zaragoza



Figure 17. Entrance to Qasr Al-Hayr Al-Sharqi, Syria

Upon entering the fortified masonry walls of the Aljafería, one experiences an instant decrease in scale and adjusts to the intimacy of the palatial interior and courtyard garden (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). Approaching the interior of the palace today, it is clear that, from the Taifa period, the compositional essence of the original space remained, which is the organization of the complex around a central generating element, the patio. The interior of the palace is divided into three parts: a central section, which encompasses the main court, and two side extensions (**Fig.18**). The entryway leads to the main court in the middle area of the palatial complex. In the main court, two halls are placed face to face, preceded by porticos across a large rectangular courtyard, with one being a residential area and the other a reception area (Juarros & Higuera, 2000). The layout of oppositely faced halls was common in the tenth century, as is shown in the House of the Water Basin, La Vivienda de la Alberca, in Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Arnold, 2017). Yet, in the Aljafería, the closed porticos of the House of the Water Basin are transformed into open columnar ones (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2004). However, many characteristics of the Aljafería are linked with Qasr Al-Mushatta. The intimacy of the palatial plan of Qasr Al-Mushatta is echoed in the Aljafería, with both palaces containing three narrow longitudinal sections. Also, both palaces include a central courtyard with smaller rooms bordering their edges, and a small-scale mosque is also found in each palace (Cabañero Subiza, Lasa Gracia, et al., 2006; Grabar, 1987).

It is interesting to recognize, from a compositional perspective, the broken axis layout of the entry area of the palace. The Caliphate tradition of developing large transitional spaces and stately rooms was drastically limited due to the birth of several small kingdoms in the Taifa period that caused an increase in the number of built royal spaces. The Caliphate's known method of creating a spatial separation of a journey carried out in-depth according to a directional axis was gradually replaced by another mechanism from the military world. The new approach to the entry layout allowed the development of the exterior-interior and public-private transition spaces in reduced areas. To clarify, in Madinat Al-Zahra'a, a clear difference in the environment of the axis layout of the entry areas was established between the sections destined for protocol and those corresponding to private residential life. In the case of the palace of the Aljafería, the entry area is merged into a single environment by absolute necessity (Vidal, 2008). If the Aljafería had followed the same caliphate tradition, hypothetically, the access to the interior of the residential area should have been arranged

diagonally with respect to the main axis of the palace. However, the approach to the entry layout in the Aljafería is illustrated through the creation of a non-direct path from the main entrance to the interior of the palace. This broken axis entry could be viewed not only as a solution to be articulated in reduced-dimension spaces but also as a form of privacy creation since the palace was considered a private leisure palace.

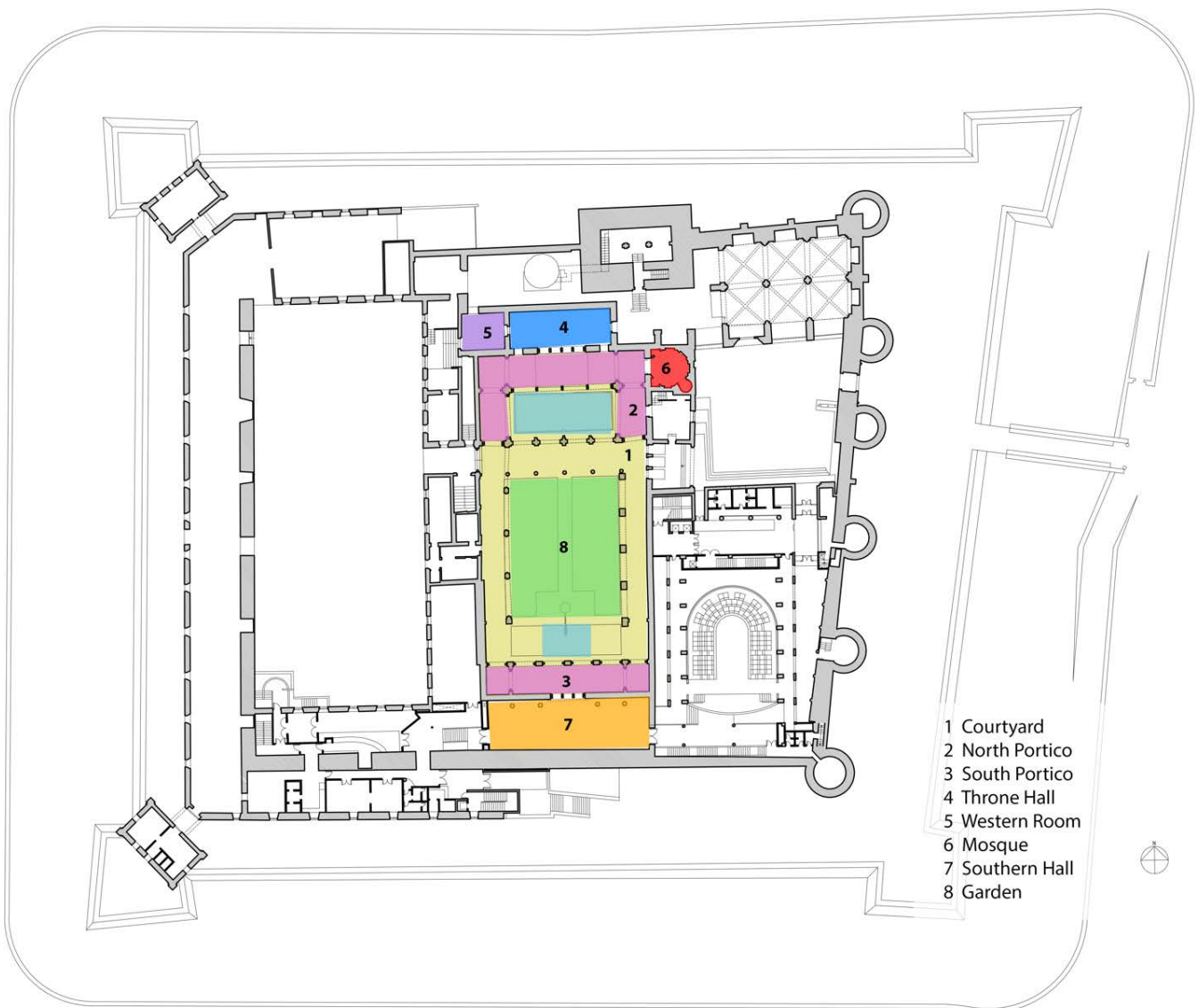


Figure 18. Floor plan of the current palace of the Aljafería with highlighted parts of the Taifa palace

The courtyard is the unifying element of the Taifa palace (**Fig.19**), overlooked by the rooms and porticos of the north and south sides. The large rectangular courtyard is about 23.7 meters wide and 39.5 meters long, which resembles the golden section in proportion (5:8) (Cabañero Subiza, Lasa Gracia, et al., 2006). The size of the courtyard is similar to the northern courtyard of Almería, albeit more elongated. The courtyard has been known since the seventeenth century as the patio of Santa Isabel, after the daughter of Peter IV King of Aragón, who altered the palace's design after conquering the city (Sobradiel Valenzuela, 1995).



Figure 19. Santa Isabel Courtyard, view toward the southern side, Aljafería

Archeological excavations by Íñiguez Almech in 1967 uncovered the remains of two broad water basins of the eleventh century, one in front of each hall (**Fig.18**). The borders of the basins were on the same level as the adjoining halls, while the garden between them was on a lower level. The northern pool was made of lime and plaster concrete, with red plastered walls, and was unfortunately destroyed during the restoration process (Lahoz & Gavín, 2001). The water basins were supposed to have been connected by an elevated

channel that divided the court into two halves, similar in design to the House of the Water Basin of Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Arnold, 2017). The pools were carefully designed to enhance the paradisiacal atmosphere of the space through different aspects. Their location enhanced the aesthetic value of the optical effect whereby the reflection of the porticos, arcade, and garden trees in the water produced a complicated continuity and created depth in the space (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). The channeling of the water caused a drop in the temperature, which offered a cool respite during the feverish Spanish summers (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). The play upon water in Islamic architecture is essential both symbolically and practically. As the Qur'anic verse goes:

“Do the disbelievers not realize that the heavens and earth were [once] one mass then We split them apart? And We created from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (Qur'an 21:30)

This illustrates the importance of water's role in Islamic culture. Water is the origin and symbol of life, a gift from Allah that purifies, both internally and externally, in a spiritual sense (El Shakhs & Ezzat, 2018). The concept of purification was illustrated visually, physically, and poetically through the architecture of Al-Andalus, with palaces that celebrated water and gardens throughout the centuries. The use of water was an active element to transmit a series of intentions linked to life and culture from a metaphorical perspective of representing spiritual purity through a physical function of providing water for ablution¹⁸ as well as a weather adjustment.

Both water basins of the Aljafería's courtyard were arranged as a transitional spatial element to the porticos and therefore created a liquid mirror effect for the decorative profusion of the fronts of the halls; however, their different proportions and depths force a distinction in the different functions for each of them. While the northern water basin played the role, as mentioned earlier, of giving the palace the presence of a carpet of water with a depth of 55 centimeters (**Fig.20**), the southern water basin was deeper. The depth of

¹⁸ Ablution is a ritual washing performed by Muslims and is among the compulsory activities to ensure cleanliness before a Muslim prays five times a day.

the southern water basin was 2.25 meters, which could suggest that it functioned as a water tank for watering the garden as it was fed from the well behind the northern hall near the Troubadour tower **(Fig.21)** (Vidal, 2008). The existence of a source or a channel that would feed the water basin of the southern side would cause a vibration of the surface creating a trembling effect that would enrich the reflection of this part of the palace, along with its function of nurturing the vegetation areas of the garden. On the other hand, the water basin on the northern side probably gets its inspiration from the large pools that stretched out in front of the Salón Rico in Madinat Al-Zahra'a, thereby highlighting the political importance of the northern halls of the Aljafería (Vidal, 2008). The current ceiling above the northern pool is actually due to the construction of the gallery on the second floor by the Catholic monarchs, which implies that the northern pool was exposed during the eleventh century. The exposed area would cause a reflection of the light on the surface on the water, which would reflect off the golden ornamentations on the wall creating a lavish effect **(Fig.20)**.



Figure 20. The wooden flooring highlighting the previous location of the northern water basin, Aljafería



Figure 21. The southern water basin, Aljafería

The palace relied on the preexisting well to ensure a constant and safe water supply to the enclosure. The well's great depth of 15.70 meters allowed it to reach the groundwater levels of the Ebro river, and its width of 5.20 meters would classify it as the largest in Al-Andalus. Furthermore, the archeological excavations of the western area of the well resulted in the appearance of a series of hydraulic structures, which could have been sourced from the well. Among these structures, a channeling in an east-west direction would seem to have functioned as a source to both channels that supplied the pool of the palace patio as well as some latrines that were located nearby inside the residential building (Bueno & Preciado, 1998).

The courtyard, the patio of Santa Isabel, acted as a central point for the compositional layout of the Taifa palace. The courtyard in Islamic architecture commonly contained aromatic floral plants, a fountain, a pool, shade, and a minimum of a few trees, which all played essential roles both symbolically and practically (Lehrman, 1980). The garden in Islamic architecture is viewed as a sample of paradise on earth, in which Paradise, or *Jannah* in Arabic, is the ultimate reward for the afterlife, as believed by Muslims (Zakzouk, 2017)¹⁹. The garden at the patio of Santa Isabel of the Aljafería encompassed two lines of vegetation planted along either side. The design of the garden was meant to emphasize the concept of earthly paradise, which was illustrated through many elements, including the use of water basins and vegetation areas (**Fig.19**). The planted aromatic fruit-laden trees of the Aljafería's garden replicated the paradisaical fruit trees mentioned in the Qur'an in the verse "In them will be fruits, and dates and pomegranates" (Qur'an, 55:68), which suggests the existence of citrus and pomegranate trees at the palace (Ruggles, 2000).

However, the structure of the courtyard in terms of the distribution of platforms of vegetation, the path, and the placement of the water basin was negotiable. Ewert proposed that the locations of the two water basins at the north and south ends were linked by a possible water channel so that their supply would be joint. In contrast, Almagro Gorbea and other historians proposed a solution for the central space as a vegetation area. However,

¹⁹ The concept of paradise will be detailed later on in the chapter entitled "Within the Walls of the Aljafería: A Cultural Examination."

the excavations carried out during the restoration works in the 1960s ruled out the existence of a possible transept garden and strengthened the hypothesis of the presence of a single central platform along the entire length of the yard. At the same time, the exploration of the perimeter of the water basins did not provide evidence of the existence of a connection between them, as Ewert suggested.

Nonetheless, the courtyard was restored in the 1980s by the architect Ángel Peropadre Muniesa in an attempt to reflect the original splendor of the Taifa period. The courtyard was repaved with luxurious white marble slabs and had two new rectangular water basins at each end (Luis Pano Gracia & Expósito Sebastián, 1993). Today, however, the original water basin on the south side has been recovered, while the one on the north no longer exists (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1999). Currently, the northern water basin location is highlighted through a different flooring material to allow visitors to understand the dimension and the effect on the space (**Fig.20**). The placement of the garden as two planted lines along both sides extended the design of the porticos across the courtyard (Eguaras Ibáñez, 1988), which helped it to appear more elongated, while the creation of the porticos and the garden would have merged (Arnold, 2017).

On the east side of the north portico, closer to the entrance, is the private mosque (**Fig.18**), the only palatial mosque preserved from this period. Although the mosque was severely damaged, it still demonstrates the skills and artistic techniques of Taifa architects. The small-scale size of the mosque reflects that it was considered more of an oratory, as well as demonstrating the exclusive access it gave to the ruler and his court members. However, the scale of the mosque suggests the existence of another prayer space for the rest of the court members and assistants where it was theorized that it was located in the chapel of Sant Martin where the surviving oratory was only for the kings and close courtiers. The entrance to the mosque is framed by a horseshoe arch decorated with extensive plaster of floral ornamentation and Kufic inscriptions, which was blocked up until its restoration by Francisco Íñiguez Almech (**Fig.22-23**). The horseshoe arch entrance of the mosque was inspired by the facade of the mihrab at the Great Mosque of Córdoba. The two-storied mosque has an octagonal ground plan. It is roofed by a ribbed dome, originally golden, the most significant example of this dome type known so far from the eleventh century. A

hypothesis the dissertation proposes is that the original dome of the mosque was made of alabaster following the ornamentation of the upper half of the mosque walls, which enabled the light to penetrate through the alabaster carving to the interior of the mosque. Unfortunately, the original dome was demolished during the fourteenth century when the Catholic monarchs built their palace over the Islamic halls; nonetheless, the current dome was reconstructed by Íñiguez Almech following the pattern of the one in the Great Mosque of Córdoba (Fig.25).



Figure 23. The entrance to the private mosque of the Aljafería



Figure 22. Details of the ornamentations of the entrance to the mosque

The wall of the mosque is divided horizontally into the lower and upper floors by a balustrade running around the space. The balustrade is inscribed with Qur'anic verses, as well as the alfiz of the mihrab (Fig.24). The walls of the lower floor consist of heavily ornamented arches resting on columns with the traditional pattern of the shaft, capital, and

impost. The columns of the first floor are made of alabaster and much taller than those of the second arcade. The lower columns are part of a plaster ensemble where the painted surface of the shaft imitates the texture of stone materials, and their arches form a weave of interlocking bands. The second floor opens to the central space through niches divided and supported by three columns, each creating multi-lobed arches covered with inscriptions and ornamentations, and remains of polychromed colored ornamented alabaster (**Fig.26**). The location of the mosque is reminiscent of Madinat Al-Zahra'a, where the congregational mosque is located along the path leading up to the palace entrance (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007; Calvo Capilla, 2011; Ewert, 2012; Franco & Pemán, 2001; Pano & Expósito, 1993).



Figure 24. Interior of the private mosque of the Aljafería

The mihrab niche is notably large and polygonal in shape and framed by a horseshoe arch. The capitals of the columns holding the arch of the mihrab are made of marble not alabaster like the rest of the palace (**Fig.24**). The facade of the mihrab has ornamented moldings on the arch that run eccentrically to the intrados. The size and design of the mihrab are similar to the mihrab of Al-Hakam II in the Great Mosque of Córdoba.



Figure 26. The Current Dome of the Aljafería's Mosque



Figure 25. Details showing remains of the polychromed colors of the arches, the mosque of the Aljafería

The ornamentation and architectural elements of the mosque convey the customs of the Taifa art of architectural metalanguage and metaphors, which were shown through different techniques in the design of the oratory. For example, the mosque's complicated vegetal stucco ornamentation that is repeated in the palace itself, as well as its close location to the throne hall, reflects the king's intentions to emphasize his dynasty's relation to the religion he claims to defend (Robinson, 1992). Another metaphorical approach is through the design of the mihrab. The mihrab is the most sacred space in the mosque, where it doesn't only point to the Qibla, which is the direction toward Mecca, but also symbolically stands in front of Allah while praying (Khoury, 1998).

“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth, his light is like a niche that enshrines a lamp, the lamp within a crystal, the crystal is like a brilliant star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light, Allah guides whomever he wills to his light. And Allah sets the parables for people, for Allah has the knowledge of all things.” (Qur'an 24:35)

The Qur'anic verse indicates the symbolic essence and divinity of light in Islam. The concept of filtered light as a symbol of holiness is illustrated in the design of the mihrab. The penetration of natural light through the carved stucco surfaces used in the space of the mihrab forms movement and depth on the two-dimensional surfaces. The contrast of light and shadow across the curved stucco is harmonized by the glow and reflection of the golden tesserae and the iridescent green and ruby arabesque ornamentation of the alfiz (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). Based on the proposed theories that the original dome was made of alabaster as well as carved stucco ornamentation of the upper half of the mosque walls, which allowed the exterior light to penetrate through the carvings, which enhanced the contrast of light and shadow in the interior of the oratory. Moreover, not only were the materials of the decoration of the alfiz used to express a metaphor, but also their colors of blues and reds were carefully selected to signify eternity and divinity while emphasizing the importance and holiness of the mihrab (Ewert, 2012).

Another way of illustrating Taifa art traditions is by obeying religious instructions prohibiting the presence of figures in the ornamentation of space, especially religious ones. However, as time passes, not all traditions are followed strictly since the ornamentations of figures are more often presented through paintings, sculptures, and alabaster carvings in the spatial design of civil places, as evidenced widely in Andalusian architecture. In the case of the Aljafería, although a plaster-carved dove is still preserved on the exterior arcade of the north wing of the palace **(Fig.27)** (Lupón González, 2018), the mosque does not



Figure 27. Detail of Dove on plasterwork on the north side, Aljafería

include any figurative depictions. The absence of figures in the ornamentations of the mosque conveys the respect for the religious space where the Hudid kings present themselves as followers of the Islamic religion.

Moving to the adjoining halls, the northern part, which is larger and better preserved than the southern, is the reception area **(Fig.18)**. The reception zone encompassed the portico in front and a rectangular throne hall flanked by two approximately square rooms, accessible only from the hall, not from the portico (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). This structure's layout could be linked to the hall of the Patio de Los Pilares in Casa Real "Dar Al-Mulk" in Madinat Al-Zahra'a and the halls of Munyat Al-Rummaniya (Cabañero Subiza, 2008). It is important to note that the spatial experience of the building is altered today due to the changes to the layout and the addition of the second story in the fifteenth century by the Aragonese kings, which destroyed the Islamic roofs and the second floor, if it had one (Lahoz & Gavín, 2001). There are two doors on the side walls of the throne hall; the door on the west side is the entrance of a room that is said to be a private bedroom of the Hudid king, which was approximately square **(Fig.28)**. The wall of the room used to be covered with floral plaster carvings and alabaster socles and had lavish white marble as flooring. Unfortunately, the original exquisite decoration of the western side rooms that reflected the Hudid period did not survive except for a few fragments (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986). However, the room was later used as a royal bedroom by the Aragonese kings (Lupón González, 2018), and it is currently used as a gallery to showcase some of the

preserved remains of the palace. The other door on the eastern side is said to be an entrance to another private bedchamber of the king in some documentation, but it currently leads to an exterior space where it offers an access to the main entrance of the Troubadour tower. However, the existence of the room on the eastern side is debatable due to the small space, which doesn't fully allow a space for the Troubadour tower entrance from the exterior (**Fig.29**). This assumption would either lead to the conclusion that the door was used as a second private entrance for the Hudid king to reach the Troubadour tower directly from the throne hall in the case of an emergency or the other assumption that it would mean that the eastern door did not exist during the eleventh century. Consequently, if the existence of the eastern door is doubtful, it would suggest that the stucco decoration surrounding the entrance is a mirrored replica of the western room entrance.



Figure 28. The current entrance to the west room, the throne hall, the Aljafería



Figure 29. The assumed space for the eastern room near the entrance to the Troubadour Tower, highlighted

The throne hall is known as the Salón Dorado or the Golden Hall, which is the translation of “*Majlis Al-Dhab*,” as Al-Muqtadir called it in his famous poem. It was also known in some documentations as the Marble Hall. The Golden Hall is the largest interior space of any Taifa palace known so far, with dimensions of 14.66 meters in width and 5.28 meters in depth

(Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2002), though still not as massive in scale as the Caliphate's halls. The Golden Hall was specially designed to function as a backdrop for the royal *majlis*. Its size indicates that it was intended for such an intimate function since it could comfortably seat ten people at most. The northern hall's walls were covered with Arabic inscriptions and Qur'anic verses bordered by motifs located at the eye level of adults sitting on the floor (**Fig.30**) (Robinson, 1997). The remains suggest that the throne of the ruler in the center of the hall was marked on the northern back wall by a blind arch, which is similar to the one on the back wall of the hall (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2004). However, Robinson (1997) argues against the throne position, since the reduced space implied the contradiction with the placement of the throne in the center of the hall. Furthermore, if the position of the throne had been against the back wall, it would have covered some of the inscriptions; thus, she believes that there was no throne in the hall at all. The hall is accessible from the portico in front, through a two-tier four-bay arcade with three central columns, five columns in total, and two small doors on both sides of the central wall (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). The design is similar to the northern hall of Almería, where both designs could be linked to the large columned halls of Madinat Al-Zahra'a (Arnold, 2017).

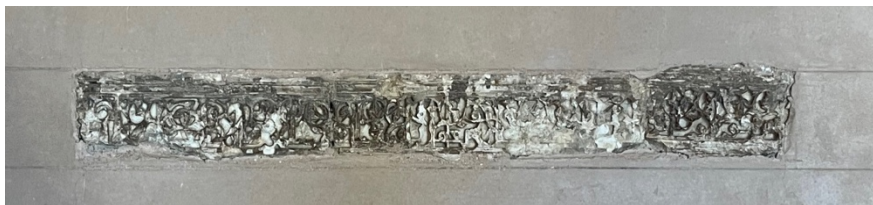


Figure 30. Remains of the inscription on the northern wall of the throne hall, Aljafería

The north portico is U-shaped and is divided into five segments: the central broad segment, two square sections on each side, and two side wings attached in front bordering the area of the northern water basin, which doesn't exist anymore (**Fig.31**). This layout follows the same pattern as many palaces of Madinat Al-Zahra'a, except for the innovative addition of the side wings (Arnold, 2017). Notably, there is no prototype of the side wings in any other Islamic palaces, which suggests that the architects of the north structure might have been inspired by Roman architecture (Cabañero Subiza, 2008).



Figure 31. View of the northern portico between the throne hall on the right and the water basin on the left, the Aljafería

Remarkably, the arrangement of the throne hall and flanking alcoves is not only repeated in the front portico with the addition of the side wings, but also it is harmoniously repeated across the courtyard on the southern side of the main palace, the residential area, albeit in a fairly simplified form (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). However, the southern side is not yet restored like the northern one. Only the porticos and its two side rooms have been restored. The porticoed area would have served as the lobby to a large hall with the same layout as the north side. However, the southern side was demolished during the time of Pedro IV el Ceremoniso to construct the Mudéjar Chapel of San Jorge until its destruction in the nineteenth century (Luis Pano Gracia & Expósito Sebastián, 1993).

From an elevation perspective, an offset sections view to be specific, the northern hall has five layers: the open wings to the patio, the north portico arched wall, the arches in front of the Golden Hall, the Golden Hall with the two side rooms, and the mass of the Troubadour tower at the back. These layers, with different volumes and heights, add an illusion of depth to the relatively small space (**Fig.32-33**). However, this layering method was not used in the Salón Rico in Madinat Al-Zahra'a, since it is already deeper at 17.55 meters compared to the 5.28 meters of the Golden Hall (Cabañero Subiza, 2008; Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2004). The architectural style of the northern part broadly reflected Islamic architecture through the concept of creating spaces separated by a series of archways that increased

harmony and acted as visual screens, creating an optical illusion through light and shade (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).



Figure 33. Hypothetical illustration of an axial view to the north side of the Taifa palace in the 11th century, the Aljafería, illustrated by Antonio Almagro



Figure 32. Highlighted areas showing the depth of the different layers of the northern side

Architectural Ornamentation of the Aljafería

One of the characteristics that best define the architecture of the Aljafería, at least in the part that has survived to the present day, is the decorative abundance that the palace must have had at its peak in the Hudid period. The interior of the Islamic palace reflected the rich heritage of the Caliphate architecture of Córdoba, yet it was highly evolved in terms of ornamentations. The most remarkable feature of the Aljafería is shown in the interlocking arches that reach an astounding degree of complexity. The most complex design is found at the entrance to the Golden Hall, where arches intertwine on two heavily ornamented levels. Interlocking arches are also found in all parts of the portico and in the facade of the southern hall to unite the palace interior into a continuous pattern. The famous interlocking arches of the Aljafería seem to have evolved from the ordinary supporting function to abstract interwoven patterns that act as visual screens. Stacking one arcade of polylobed archways behind the other creates separated spaces while linked in harmony, yet furthers the impression that the spaces are united in a dense web (Ewert, 1968). These visual separation screen arches create an optical illusion, with the help of a light and shadow contrast, to add depth to the relatively small space and enrich the theatrical experience of the palace. This theatricality of the interlocking arches demonstrated the conception of Taifa rulers' power, whose extravagant claims to sovereignty had a weaker foundation of actual political strength (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). Therefore, the ornamentation of the Aljafería forms part of the architecture as an intrinsic element, since through it, the space seeks the magnificence inherited from the previous period. It illustrated the luxury and abundance of the Umayyads' palaces yet elevated it **(Fig.34)**.

The complexity of the polylobed arch design connects the Aljafería to the Great Mosque of Córdoba yet sets it apart. The polylobed arches of Córdoba with their stacked small columns are used only near the mihrab. The rest of the hypostyle halls of the mosque consist of double arches ornamented with red and white voussoirs, where the top arch is an upper semicircular form, and the lower is a horseshoe instead of the aforementioned polylobed **(Fig.35)**. The sacred space of the mihrab of Córdoba is not only distinguished by the polylobed arches but also by complex vegetal motifs, located nowhere else in the rest of the mosque, to physically emphasize the mihrab's power and divinity (Khoury, 1996, 1998).

However, the Aljafería dissolved the Cordobán reservation of these architectural features to the holiness of the mihrab by encasing the Taifa palace with heavily ornamented polylobed arcades. The architects of the Aljafería retracted the illustrations of sacredness and holiness from the Great Mosque of Córdoba but applied them on an innovative scale as a guiding theme throughout the palace (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). These heavily decorated interlocking arches set apart the Aljafería and are considered its distinguishing characteristic, from where these types of arches will be diffused to future Islamic structures.



Figure 34. The magnificent arches of the Aljafería, the north side



Figure 35 . Illustration of the arches of to the Great Mosque of Córdoba showing the resemblance of the Aljafería's arches, from the Antonio Almagro collection

The columns of these interlocking arches consist of an attic base, a smooth shaft with a torus and scotia, and Corinthian capitals. The Islamic palace of the Aljafería originally had four marble capitals from the tenth century and at least 98 alabaster capitals from the eleventh century, of which less than half survived, almost intact. Bernabé Cabañero Subiza (2013) wrote an in-depth study of each column's capital of the Islamic palace, which can be generally categorized into two series: the first capitals group has floral ornamentation that covers the whole capital, while the offshoot was transformed into leaves or interwoven small lobed arches. The other capitals category comprises the more traditional ones similar to those in the Al-Hakam II extension in the Great Mosque of Córdoba, where they have the typically smooth, heavy, and full-bodied leaves that differentiate them from the rest. The columns' capitals, as well as all other architectural elements of the palace, were carefully studied to convey a message. To illustrate, the capitals of the interlocking arches of the access to the Golden Hall have differences in height to emphasize the center of the arcade and convey its hierarchal importance, where the Taifa ruler stood behind. Also, the height of the capitals of the Aljafería varies. The reason for this height variation is their arrangement on the columns of arches, whose elevation from the base's ground to the top

also varied. For example, the height of the columns of porticos on the north face measures 288 cm, while those in the lower arcade of the mihrab measure 185 cm. Another reason for the capitals' different heights is explained as an attempt to create an optical effect, the intention of which was that when the viewer sees the highest capitals from his point of view, it gives him the illusion that their size was smaller, and thus similar to the ones at eye level (Cabañero Subiza, 2000, 2013; Ewert, 1978). It is interesting to note that according to Christian Ewert (1978), the arches with the more traditional design are found in the private mosque of the palace, while the more artistic ones with Taifa art innovations are placed in the porticos of Santa Isabel courtyard, where the architects had more freedom to express the originality of their art.

Furthermore, throughout the Aljafería palace, many architectural and decorative innovations were introduced, including advancements in the style of the epigraphy. The Kufic calligraphy carved on stucco with rich floral decorations and complicated geometric extensions distinguishes the Hudi's calligraphy style from that of the Umayyad Caliphate (Martínez Núñez, 2019). These characteristics and the abundant use of stucco in the decoration illustrate the complexity of artistic skills presented in the Aljafería palace (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 1998). The rich inscriptions can be seen on the mihrab, the columns' capitals, and the walls of the north rooms, among others. This style of writing, which is known as the Ja'afri Kufic, was not only heavily used in the ornamentation of the Aljafería but was also found in other Hudi constructions such as Balaguer, whose stucco fragments are of the same type as those of the Aljafería (Kircher, 1997).

Nonetheless, it is essential to comprehend that the appearance of the eleventh-century Taifa palaces differs from the current one. All the ornamentation of the polylobed arches, from the vegetal, the geometric, to the epigraphic, were polychromed. The royal colors of blue and red were used for the backgrounds, while gold was used for the inscriptions and motifs. Altogether, along with the marble flooring, it portrayed the magnificence and splendor of the court life of Banu Hud Taifa kings. These splendid polychromatic arches with the flooring do not exist in today's Aljafería, where parts of the flooring are covered by wood, and the plaster replicas of the original arches are portrayed in a monotone neutral color. The remains that have been preserved, either in the Museo de Zaragoza or

the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid, allow the eleventh-century palace to be reconceptualized (**Fig.36-37**) (Íñiguez Almech, 1947; Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2004).



Figure 36. Remains of a decorative frieze with epigraphic bands from the throne hall, exhibited in Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid



Figure 37. Fragments of polychromed carved alabaster, exhibited in the gallery of the Aljafería palace, Zaragoza

Moreover, the complexity and layers of the Aljafería's architecture illustrated that the architects based their design on the concept of "framing the view of the beholder." As explained above, the concept was introduced during the Umayyad Caliphate, such as in the design of Madinat Al-Zahra'a. In the case of Madinat Al-Zahra'a, the central axis plan with the open-porticoed facade with the elevated landscape of the entire complex gave the Caliph a privileged view over his entire palace suburb (Ruggles, 1990). More than any other Islamic Iberian buildings, the design of the halls and porticos of the Aljafería blended the interior and the exterior spaces. The tradition was framing the view onto an open landscape, but in the case of the Aljafería, the open landscape is the confined courtyard of Santa Isabel. The palace did not have any windows onto the landscape surrounding the palace where all the rooms were oriented toward the interior, the courtyard. Therefore, the design not only shaped it as the focal point of the whole palace complex but also created the illusion of an exterior landscape within the palace's interior (**Fig.38**).

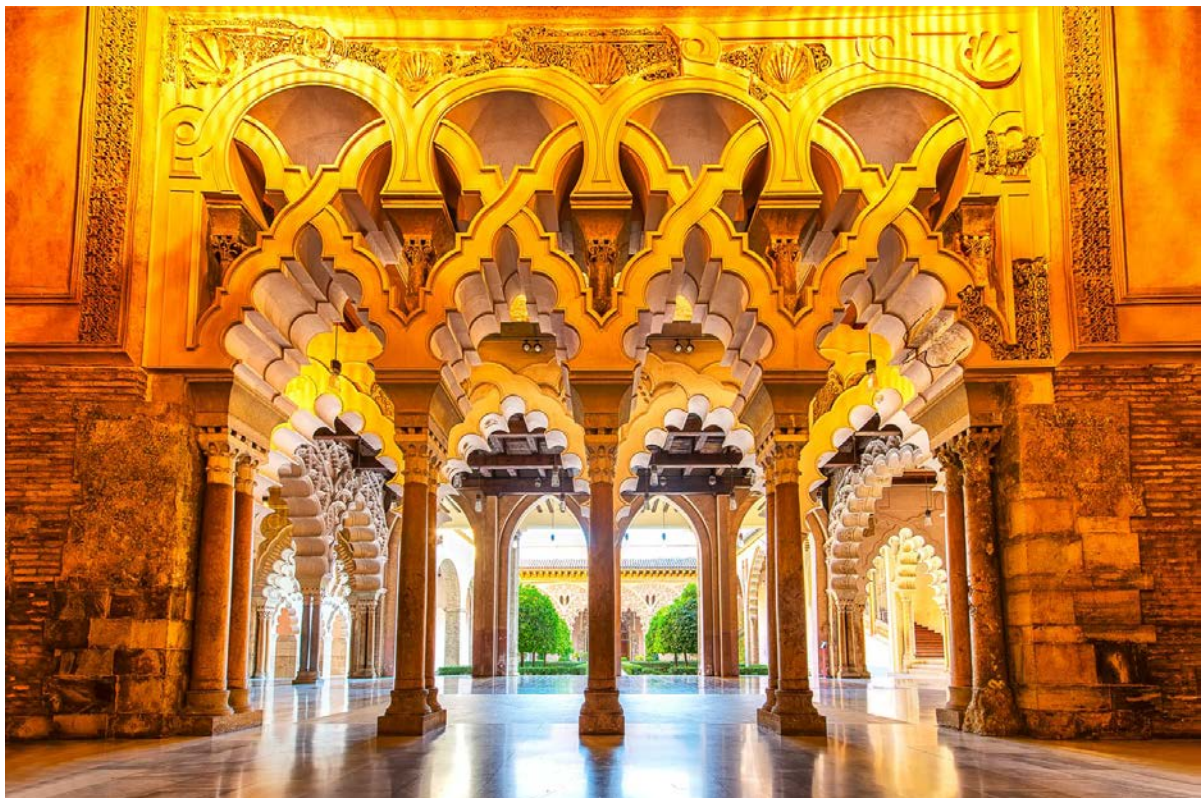


Figure 38. The framed view from the Throne Hall

Furthermore, the design of the northern hall and its portico is the most complex design based on the concept of “framing the view of the beholder.” The view of the ruler from his throne at the back of the Golden Hall to the garden courtyard is framed three times: first, by the entrance arcade; second, by the central arcade; and third, by the side wings of the portico. These three frames created a set series of stages where each archway was cut out to frame the view of the ruler. The entrance and central arcades are located along the central axis, where both are divided into an even number of bays with columns placed along the central axis. The placement of the columns partially blocked the view along the central axis. If the columns had not been placed this way, it would have allowed the beholder to concentrate their gaze only along the central axis instead of seeing the whole picture. The placement of the columns ensured that the view of the ruler framed the view where all elements were considered equally. The experience of the space of the Aljafería and all its physical poetic metaphors encouraged uninterrupted individual contemplation where the eye is motivated to get lost in both internal and external visions. Thus, the view of the beholder, in this case, was not blocked but theatrically framed by architecture **(Fig.38)** (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2004; Cabañero Subiza, Lasa Gracia, et al., 2006; Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).

Architectural Comparative Placement

When examining the architecture of the Islamic Aljafería palace, it is crucial to consider it and place it within an architectural comparison and historic framework with other palaces that share similar architectural features. This comparative placement can help to enhance the analytical understanding of the palace and its unique design elements.

The Castell Formós of Balaguer

The Castell Formós de Balaguer is strongly linked to the Aljafería as the nearest Taifa palace, architecturally. In 897, Lubb ibn Muhammad, the governor of Lérida and Tudela during the Umayyad Emirate period, ordered the construction of a fortress in Balaguer, a small town on the River Segre 140 kilometers east of Zaragoza. The fortress was built due to the frequent conflicts and raids between the Muslims and Christians in the area. During the Taifa period, between 1045 and 1082, the fortress was transformed into a palace by Yusuf Al-Muzaffar, the brother of Al-Muqtadir, who reigned in nearby Lérida and used Balaguer as a secondary residence (Viguera Molíns, 1992). The castle gained the name Castell Formós when Armengol VII, Count of Urgel, conquered Balaguer in 1105, at which point he assigned it as the capital of the county. However, in 1413, the castle was demolished as a result of the war between the last Count of Urgel, Jaime II, and King Fernando I. The Castell Formós has been appointed a Historical Artistic Monument since 1988 (Trepal et al., 2018).²⁰

As the palace of Castell Formós was built inside the territories of the government of Banu Hud in Lérida, it had architectural similarities to the Aljafería. The Taifa palace of the Castell Formós contains architectural and decorative features parallel to those in the Aljafería, which are believed to have been produced in the same workshop (Ewert, 1979). Archeological excavation carried out between 1969 and 1973 at Castell Formós resulted in discovering the remains of the Taifa palace. The palace contained decorative fragments with plants and geometric motifs, and epigraphic friezes that were similar to ones found in the Aljafería. Many of these fragments, including parts of the interlocking arches, were

²⁰ The fascinating history of Castell Formós after its transformation into the residence of the Counts can be followed at Velasco & Fité, 2016; Alòs, Escuder & Solanes, 2016.

documented and published by Christian Ewert in 1971 (Ewert et al., 1971). Further excavations were conducted by J. Giralt Balagueró (1985), which resulted in the discovery of more fragments and some remains of the palace building itself. These remains discovered in the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula showcase formal guidelines and execution that are almost identical to the architectural and decorative program of the Aljafería of Zaragoza, which is considered the eleventh-century Islamic monument par excellence of the entire Upper March. With the exception of those found in Zaragoza and a few examples from the fortress of Málaga, these fragments are believed to be the only remnants of royal Taifa architecture on the Iberian Peninsula (Ewert, 1979). The surviving fragments indicate that the palace was decorated with refined vegetal motifs rendered on plaster and polychromed painted stucco. The epigraphic friezes that survived show Qur'anic inscriptions in which one of the remains allows the interpretation of the corresponding verse: "I have submitted my whole being to Allah" (Qur'an, 3:20) **(Fig.39)**. Among the common vegetal ornaments and inscriptions, several animals are depicted **(Fig.42)**. Felix Arnold (2017) suggested that these animals in the decoration were intended as a representation of the Tree of Life standing in paradise, which links the palace to an earthly paradise. All these motifs and inscriptions show great similarities to the ornamenting style applied throughout the Aljafería **(Fig.40-41)**.

Due to the severe destruction of the palace, it is hard to recognize the spatial layout and distribution of the rooms in the palace, except for the water basin arrangement. The main element still preserved today is an elongated water basin, about 20 meters in length. The water basin seemingly separated a small garden from a palace building that stood on elevated ground. The water basin would irrigate the garden area close to a gallery of abundantly decorated polylobed arches that would look towards the Segre river area. According to a recent reconstruction by Bernabé Cabañero Subiza (2010), the palace was U-shaped and surrounded the water basin on three sides, in which it could be compared to the northern portico of the Aljafería. These parallel artistic features illustrate that the kingdom of Zaragoza was disseminating an artistic ornamental language shared in the Huid territories, which could be translated into the authority and power of Banu Hud and enriches their political legitimizations.



Figure 42. Fragment of epigraphic frieze from Castell Formós, exhibited in Museu de la Noguera, Balaguer



Figure 41. Fragment of poly-lobed arche from Castell Formós, exhibited in Museu de la Noguera, Balaguer



Figure 39. Fragments of the Taifa palace, exhibited in the gallery of the Aljafería, Zaragoza



Figure 40. Fragment of plaster of Harpy from Castell Formós, exhibited in Museu de la Noguera, Balaguer

The Palace of Monteagudo

Another palace that could be linked architecturally to the Aljafería is Castillejo de Monteagudo. The palace of Monteagudo, or as many historians refer to it, the palace of El Rey Lobo, is classified as a Taifa *munya* of the second Taifa period. The palace of Monteagudo, as well as the palatine complex surrounding it, was constructed by the king of the Taifa of Murcia during the second Taifa period, Muhammad ibn Mardanis, who is also known as El Rey Lobo, or the Wolf King, by Christians.

During the second Taifa period, the former general of the Banu Hud in Zaragoza, Ibn Mardanis, managed to rule his state as one of the most successful Taifas of the period, where he reigned from 1147 to 1172. Ibn Mardanis included under his rule the cities of Murcia, Valencia, and Dénia, and for a short period even Córdoba, as the Almoravids' rule declined, and he fought the spread of the Almohads. During his wealthy reign as an independent king, Ibn Mardanis carried out ambitious architectural projects to illustrate his influence and power by building fortresses and palaces (Viguera Molins, 1992; Eiroa & Gómez, 2019). One of these lavish constructions was the palace of Monteagudo where he ordered the construction of a fortified *munya* on the outskirts of the city of Murcia, and it was called *Qasr Ibn Sa'd*, as Ibn Sa'd was one of his known names at that time (Navarro Palazón & Jiménez Castillo, 1995). However, the progressive collapse of the Mardanisi state led to *Qasr Ibn Sa'd* losing its function and suffering damage. The siege by the Almohad troops on the city of Murcia in 1165 affected the surrounding orchard and consequently the Mardanisi palace. The final collapse of the kingdom to the Almohads in 1172 led to the demolition of the palace of Monteagudo, with the state of abandonment being increased over the centuries (Rodríguez Llopis, 1998). In 1931, it was declared a National Monument, and despite the multitude of proposals that have been presented in recent decades for its restoration, the place was still in a state of abandonment until April of 2023 when the first partial restoration phase of the palace of Monteagudo began.

The enclosure of the palace of Monteagudo that combined the palace with lush gardens surrounded by fortified walls shows similarities to the enclosure of the Aljafería. The rich

palatine setting with the defensive fortification along with beautiful gardens, large water basins, and an extensive cultivated area created an exquisite environment of an Islamic court within a *munya* (Rodríguez Llopis, 1998) which lays the foundation for architectural comparison to the fortified *munya* of the Aljafería (**Fig.43**).

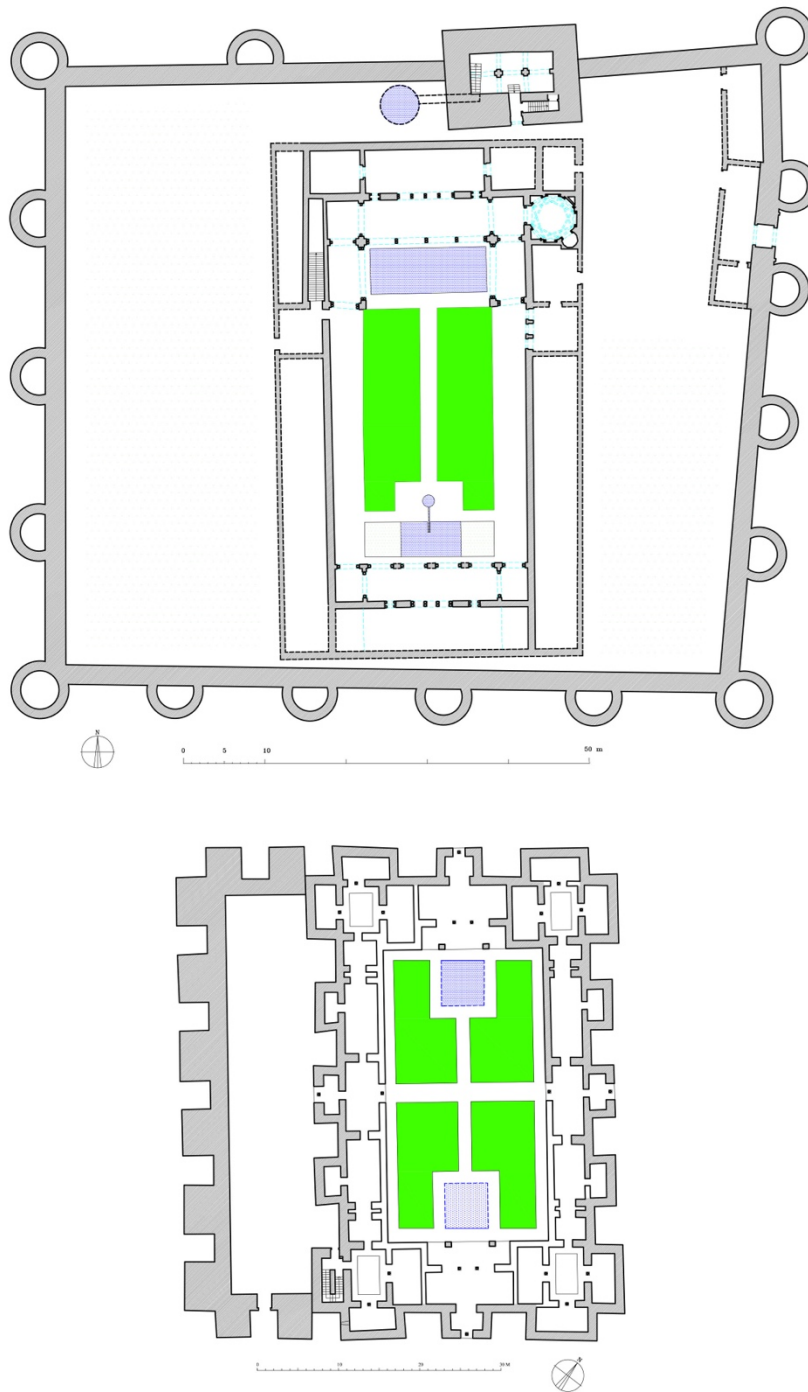


Figure 43. Comparative plans illustrations by Antonio Almagro of the Taifa Aljafería palace and the Taifa palace of Monteagudo

The palace of Monteagudo of Ibn Mardanis was excavated in 1924 by Andrés Sobejano, which resulted in finding column capitals, fragments of stucco decoration of arches, and painted decoration *in situ*; unfortunately, the results were not properly published. However, Torres Balbás (1934) identified the enclosure as a pleasure palace of Ibn Mardanis cited by Arab sources.

The design of the palace is remarkable for its strict geometry. The walls were made of rammed earth and are notably thick, creating a solid and massive appearance that is not found in any other palace of the region. The outer walls formed a quadrangular plan and were fortified with rectangular towers. It is uncertain whether these fortifications were actually used for defense, due to the narrow spacing of the towers, which doesn't appear to serve a functional defensive purpose (Navarro Palazón & Jiménez Castillo, 1995). It is believed that the primary goal was to convey the idea of a fortified stronghold to demonstrate the monarch's role as a military leader. The fortified walls with towers forming a quadrangular plan exhibit comparable architectural features to the Aljafería (**Fig.43**).

As for the interior, similarly to most palaces of the period, as well as the Aljafería, the spatial layout consisted of two halls facing each other across a garden within a courtyard. However, at the palace of Monteagudo, the broad hall was flanked by two apartments that were situated in the corners of the palace instead of the common side bedchambers. These apartments were composed of smaller courtyards and possibly functioned as private spaces for the ruler and his family (Arnold, 2017). The courtyard of the palace of Monteagudo has much larger dimensions than those of any Andalusian palatine patio, as it doubles in surface area that of the Aljafería in Zaragoza. The garden layout in the courtyard is similar to the one in the Aljafería; however, due to the larger proportions of the courtyard, unlike the Aljafería, the garden encompasses a central walkway with two basins at either end, where the walkway is crossed at right angles by a second walkway (Navarro Palazón & Jiménez Castillo, 2012). However, the published documentation is inadequate for reconstructing the facade of the halls surrounding the courtyard.

For the architectural features and ornamentations based on the found fragments (**Fig.44-45**), the palace of Monteagudo illustrates the peak of artistic and architectural development

that started during the eleventh century, which presented in the fortified walls encompassing a residential palace or a *munya* (Arnold, 2017). The architecture of the palace demonstrates a heavy influence from the Upper March as well as the western part of Morocco. This architectural reminiscence might be explained by the background of Ibn Mardanis where he has Berber origins along with being a former general of Banu Hud. The architecture of the palace of Monteagudo displays an adaptation of features from both Morocco and the Iberian Peninsula, especially the Upper March. These similarities demonstrate that the palatial architecture of the Aljafería influences substantially the architecture of subsequent periods.



Figure 44. Fragment of plasterwork from the palace of Monteagudo with remains of polychromed finish, from the collection of Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid



Figure 45. Fragment of plasterwork from an arch of the palace of Monteagudo, from the collection of Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid

A Critical History of the Aljafería's Architecture

The Aljafería palace is a fundamental historical palace to study since it played a vital role in the development of both Andalusian and Mudéjar architecture. The Aljafería is considered the best-preserved palace of the small group of Taifa palaces of which physical traces have survived (Robinson, 1997), with studies showing that it had a significant influence on the Almoravid, Almohad, and Nasrid architecture later on. Moreover, the Aljafería constitutes an intermediate bridge between the Caliphate Cordobán art of the tenth century and the Mudéjar art of the Christian monarchs (Galiay Sarañana et al., 2002), as it was included in the Mudéjar Architecture of Aragón as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2011. Therefore, in order to deepen our understanding of the Aljafería, a critical analysis of the architectural changes through all the historical periods the palace witnessed is essential.

The palace of the Aljafería was built on the site of a ninth-century Andalusian watchtower by the ruler of the Taifa of Zaragoza around 1064. The Aljafería palace functioned as a country state for the Taifa Muslim rulers until the conquest of Zaragoza in 1118, when the building became the residence of the Christian kings of Aragón. With splendid architectural transformations at the end of the fifteenth century, the palace continued to serve as a Catholic monarch's dwelling until the modification of its fortification at the end of the sixteenth century. Furthermore, from 1485 until 1706, the Aljafería was also the seat of the Holy Office of Inquisition. Unfortunately, the medieval palace of the Aljafería suffered significant damage and was converted into military barracks in the middle of the nineteenth century. However, in 1931, the Aljafería was declared a national monument of historical and artistic interest, which led to the palace's ongoing restoration projects. Currently, starting from 1987, the Aljafería serves as the seat of the Cortes de Aragón (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986; Lahoz & Gavín, 2001).

One of the most interesting aspects that reflect the combinations of outstanding styles that the Aljafería faced over the centuries is the entrance of the fortress, which is Saint Martin's courtyard. Upon standing in the courtyard, one can see the archaeological remains of these different periods. The entrance to the Islamic Taifa palace, the Christian arch in front of the Islamic entrance, Saint Martin's Chapel, the windows of the grand hall of the Catholic monarch's palace, the main facade of the new building accommodating the courts of

Aragón, and also the Troubadour tower can be seen from the courtyard, which is the oldest architectural component of the building complex. All these remains are incorporated in one space, which demonstrates the uniqueness of the palace (Fig.46-47).



Figure 46. Saint Martin's courtyard, Showing the entrance to the Taifa palace with a window from the Catholic Monarch palace, the Aljafería



Figure 47. Saint Martin's courtyard, Showing Saint Martin Chapel, and the Troubadour Tower, the Aljafería

It is important to note, as the focus of the paper is centered on the eleventh-century Taifa palace, that the previous chapter is dedicated to the Islamic period. However, this part of the Architectural chapter investigates the architecture of the palace during the subsequent historical periods that followed the Taifa palace through an analytical lens.

IX - XI Centuries

To introduce these chronological periods, a brief summary of the Islamic Aljafería is a must. The Islamic period consisted of two construction stages, the Troubadour tower built by the Umayyads and the Taifa palace by the Hudis.

To summarize what was mentioned previously, the Troubadour tower, known as the Torre del Trovador, is the oldest Islamic structure on the site and was built between the ninth and tenth centuries during the Umayyad period. The Troubadour tower functioned as a military structure outside the city walls for the Cordobán governor in the Upper March of Al-Andalus. The tower consists of a quadrangular base and a heavy bulk exterior reflecting its defensive characteristic (Cabañero Subiza, Lasa Gracia, et al., 2006; Cabrera & Parra, 1998). Though it suffered significant damage after the siege of the Hudis in 1039, it was replenished afterwards and incorporated into the palace of the Aljafería during the Taifa period (Luis Pano Gracia & Expósito Sebastián, 1993).

The tower consists of five floors, with the first three floors being considered Islamic while the top two are dated to the Christian period. The different times of the construction of each floor can be clearly identified through the materials used in the assembly of the tower's external walls. The first and part of the second floor belong to the Caliphate period and translate its initial defensive function through the rigid layout and materials (Cabañero Subiza, Cantos Carnicer, et al., 2006). The third floor reflects the eleventh-century Hudid architecture and Kufic inscriptions. Finally, the last two floors were built during King Pedro IV's reign, which links the Troubadour tower to the reception hall of the Mudéjar palace through a corridor and reflects the Mudéjar work with flat wooden ceilings (Ávila Jalvo, 1988). However, the Troubadour tower was transformed into a prison for the Spanish Inquisition in 1486, lasting until the nineteenth century, which can be seen through the engravings of the hostages on the interior walls of the tower (Cuervo, 1967).

Nevertheless, the Troubadour tower has distinct features that define it from the palace and convey its primary role as either defensive or custodial over time. These architectural features can be outlined as: the heavy thick walls, which decrease going upward; the lack of embellishments; and the evident dissimilarity of construction materials between the lower and upper floors.

As for the Taifa palace of the Aljafería, it was commissioned by the second king of the Taifa of Banu Hud, Abu Ja'afar Al-Muqtadir bi-Allah. The palace was built during the most refined period of the Taifa and functioned as a country estate, or *munya*, for the purpose of leisure

and pleasure for the king. "*Qasr Al-Surur*," as it was named by Al-Muqtadir, was intended to serve as a monument commemorating his reign's glory and supremacy to emphasize his legitimacy and authority as sovereign (Cabañero Subiza, 2008; Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 1998). The palace, especially the throne Golden Hall, hosted the famed royal *majlis* and represented a unique platform for court life amongst artists, scientists, and intellectuals (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2004; Robinson, 1995). The Taifa architects used the three leading sciences in which the Taifa of Zaragoza excelled and merged them into the palatial architecture, where they integrated the complex geometric and mathematical theorems with the philosophical aspect to create the rich interlocking arches and ornamentations of the palace (Ewert, 1977, 1978).

The Taifa palace, aside from the fortified surrounding walls, mainly consists of a courtyard with a garden and water basins flanked by the northern and southern wings that each consist of porticos and halls. The splendid Golden Hall is located at the side of the northern part. The heavily decorated mosque, the only private mosque preserved from this period, is located on the east side of the north wing (Arnold, 2017; Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007; Fernández, 1998). The lavish ornamentations of the palace perfectly reflect the splendor achieved by the Taifa kingdom in the second half of the eleventh century. However, as the main building and decorative works in the Aljafería were carried out during Al-Muqtadir's reign from 1065 to 1081, further construction continued during the reign of Ahmad Al-Musta'in II until the Almoravids occupied the palace in 1110 (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2002).

XII - XIV Centuries

The Aljafería continued to serve as a pleasure palace for the Muslim governors until the fall of Zaragoza to the Christian King Alfonso I el Batallador in 1118 (Huici Miranda, 1962). From that year, the Taifa palace became the property of the Aragonese kings, who left their mark on the palace over the next four centuries with numerous refurbishments, extensions, and renovations. Nonetheless, even though the abundance of written references about the building works were supported by the medieval Christian monarchs, it is difficult to relate the data from the archives to the remains that survive today due to the excess modifications and alterations the palace witnessed later on. Essentially, most of the remains dating from

the medieval Christian period were related to the long reign of Pedro IV el Ceremonioso (1336–1387) (Borrás Gualis, 1996, 1998; Dorado-Ladera, 2019).

In the late medieval age, the Aljafería palace was one of the focal points for spreading Aragonese Mudéjar art, which is the artistic style of architecture created for Christian patrons and greatly influenced by Islamic architecture. The work carried out by Kings Jaime II and Pedro IV forms one of the most critical chapters of Aragonese Mudéjar art, in which the Mudéjar master builders were aware of the presence of the Taifa artwork (Borrás Gualis, 1978). Additionally, during King Pedro IV's reign, the Aljafería palace became the city's political center instead of the Cathedral of San Salvador, which was the main religious center of the town of Zaragoza and one of the most important historical archbishoprics of the whole Crown of Aragón.

The work of the Christian kings in the Aljafería stands out for their attitude of respect and appreciation towards the existing building and its creators. In fact, the work during the medieval period is perceived as an extension and reconditioning of the Islamic palace without significant alterations. The kings showed their appreciation of the Islamic palace by commissioning Moorish master builders such as Yusef and Mohammed Bellito to continue to work on the building (Orcástegui, 1985). The most outstanding work of that period was by King Pedro IV where he commissioned the construction of the churches of San Martín and San Jorge as well as the Mudéjar palace that carries his name, and the addition of two floors to the Troubadour tower on top of the already existing three Islamic ones.

The earliest documented details about the Aljafería's San Martín church go back to 1129 when the bishop of the diocese of Zaragoza, Pedro de Librana, confirmed a donation by King Alfonso I to Abbot Berengario of Lagrasse and his monks to authorize the construction of a church for the glorification of Santa María, San Martín, and San Nicolás (Latorre-Ciria, 2021; Paulino & Sobradiel, 2010). However, whether a Romanesque chapel was built or the Hudi

palace mosque²¹ was repurposed to function as a church is unknown. Gonzalo M. Borrás (1998) theorized, relying on Francisco Íñiguez's comments, that it was common for palatine mosques to be repurposed as chapels. The surviving Mudéjar church of San Martín was commissioned by King Pedro IV in 1338, though it underwent several alterations from post-medieval times (**Fig.49**). The church of San Martín was erected in the northeast corner of the surrounding fortified walls, with a front courtyard that visitors faced first when entering the walled enclosure, and gave access to the Taifa palace, bearing the San Martín Courtyard as its name. The Mudéjar church consisted of two aisles with three sections each, separated by square pillars with built-in semicircular columns. The chapel's plain ribbed vaults were ornamented with wooden rosettes that displayed King Pedro IV's coat of arms and that of his wife, María de Navarra. At the same time, only a few fragments of the original ornamentations have survived. The initial construction of the church of San Martín has undergone three essential modifications over the centuries. The first was during the eighteenth century when the chapel was remodeled, along with the refurbishment of the barracks that affected the whole palace. Among the changes was the addition of a third aisle and a renovation of the interior with classical baroque decorations that covered the Mudéjar pillars and capitals. However, these changes were eliminated during the second intervention by Francisco Íñiguez Almech's restoration work. Íñiguez completely removed the classicistic Baroque modifications, intending to return the chapel to its original medieval aspect. The third and last transformation was in 1985 when Luis Franco and Mariano Pemán reformed the chapel as a library first, then a documentation center for the Aragonese Cortes as its current function (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986; Martín-Bueno et al., 1996; Paulino & Sobradiel, 2010).

The most notable aspect of the church is the Mudéjar patterned brickwork of its doorway. This entrance was constructed after the reign of Pedro IV and can be dated by its formal features to the reign of Martín I of Aragón (1396–1410). The doorway is constructed of flat brick that forms a molded double arch entrance topped with a larger pointed arch with a

²¹ Some documentations assumed that there was another mosque used by non-nobles, servants, and soldiers, since the oratory functioned as a private mosque for the royal family of the Hudid King and high status courtiers.

set of small arches bordering an engraving, a recently incorporated motif, on the tympanum space. The design of the doorway contains both Christian and Islamic elements (**Fig.48**). The arches are datable to Aragonese gothic doorways of the fifteenth century and framed by a double alfiz, which was of an Islamic influence like the facade of a mihrab. However, the decoration between the double alfiz is replaced from the typical Arabic epigraphy with projecting diamonds, which was a common motif of Aragonese Mudéjar work (Borrás Gualis, 1985; Galiay Sarañana et al., 2002).



Figure 48. Entrance of San Martín Chapel, the Aljafería

Another sacred space of King Pedro IV's work is the Chapel of San Jorge, also known as the Queen's Chapel. It was placed in the southern rooms of the Hudi palace and occupied the space until the middle of the nineteenth century (**Fig.49**). The private chapel was single-aisled with ribbed vaulting on consoles. In 1867, the chapel was demolished when the

barracks were built. The only preserved tangible element is a lobed rose window. The current space of the Chapel of San Jorge, or the south room of the Taifa palace, is used as a museum space to exhibit two Hudi arches, the rose window, and several different Islamic capitals, formally transferred to the National Archeological Museum of Madrid to be displayed (Paulino & Sobradie, 2010).

Aside from the churches, the rest of Pedro IV's commissioned work is usually referred to as the Mudéjar palace. Although it actually consisted of independent halls assembled around the northern section of the Hudi palace on different levels, the space was enveloped by the Mudéjar work. It is important to remember that the work carried out under King Pedro IV was very respectful of the existing Taifa palace (**Fig.49**).

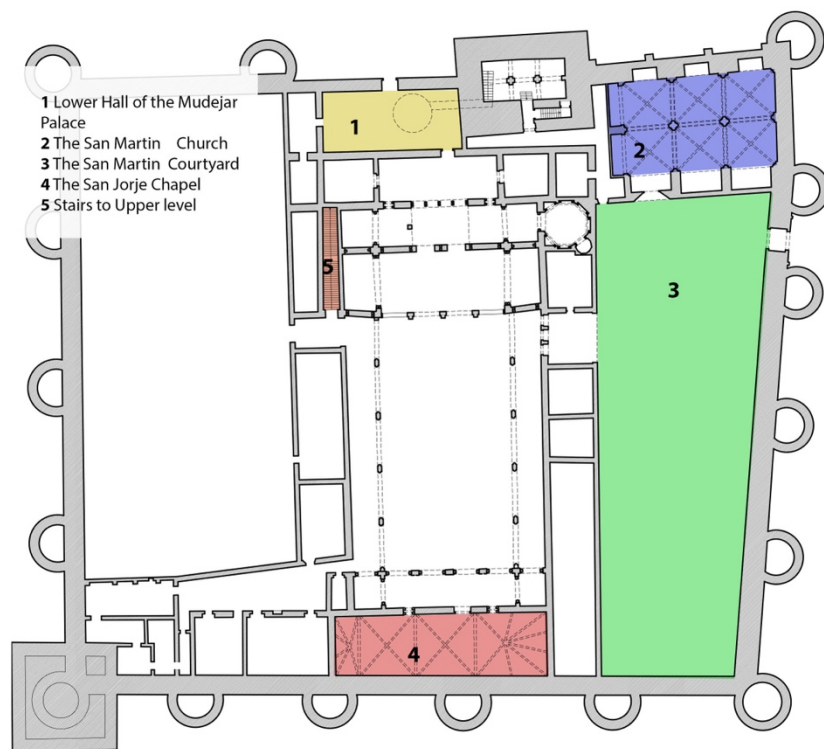


Figure 49. Hypothetical illustration of ground floor plan of the 14th century, the Aljafería, illustrated by Antonio Almagro

To the north of the Taifa palace, two halls were built, featuring two paneled windows, one above the other (**Fig.49**). The upper room was partially loaded onto the Hudi's Golden Hall and had direct access to the Troubadour tower. The lower room, called the reception hall of Pedro IV's palace as per its function, contained the existing large well and four open arches that the king used to enter his country state on horseback. Both halls were roofed with splendidly decorated wooden ceilings (Martínez García, 2006; Sarasa Sánchez, 2017). The restoration and repair work of the Mudéjar galleries was carried out at the end of the twentieth century with the permission of the Cortes de Aragón. The restoration work resulted in the discovery and restoring of the ceiling of the Mudéjar reception hall by Luis Franco and Mariano Pemán (1998). The splendid paneled wooden ceiling, the *Alfarje*, is decorated with heraldic motifs and has been heavily studied by many historians. Martín Bueno, Saez Preciado, and Monforte Espallargues, who also restored and studied the ceiling, confirmed the function of the hall as an initial reception room where the splendid ceiling conveyed the impression of the power and magnificence of the King of Aragón (**Fig.50**) (Martín-Bueno et al., 1996; Sáenz & Martín, 2000).

Another small room was identified as a bedchamber located above the Islamic oratory. The room is called the alcoba de Santa Isabel, referring to the said story that the Infanta Isabel, daughter of Pedro III and queen of Portugal, was born in the room, whose name also passed to the great Taifa courtyard. The room is square in shape and covered by an octagonal wooden dome. The entry to the room is a remarkable aspect due to the Mudéjar decoration of the openwork plaster that frames the interior of the door. The frame contains a pointed arch with lobed intrados, surrounded by an alfiz and decorated with delicate vegetal motifs influenced by the Hudi style. No record has been found of the bedchamber; however, the room is currently not accessible due to Íñiguez's reconstruction work of the dome of the lower Hudid mosque. Additionally, documentation and chronicles mentioned separate rooms built around the patio of Santa Isabel; however, they were lost in the modifications carried out during the period of the Catholic monarchs (Borrás Gualis, 1998; Nogués Secall, 1985).



Figure 50. The Lower Hall of the Mudéjar Palace, the Reception Hall of Pedro IV's palace, the Aljafería

The Aljafería palace of the medieval era continued during the Mudéjar period to be the source of artistic influences not only for its Islamic precedents but also for its role in the advancement of Aragonese Mudéjar art (Borrás Gualis, 1978), where José Galiay (1950) dedicated a book of drawings and photographs not only devoted to the Mudéjar art of the Aljafería's architecture, but also ceramics, decorations, and carpentry in furniture and doors, as well as in roofs. Furthermore, Galiay's work influenced many historians, including Francisco Íñiguez Almech, Leopoldo Torres Balbás, and José María López Landa, to draft analyses of the structural aspects, including plans and sections of the Mudéjar monuments (Galiay Sarañana et al., 2002).

The XV Century

In the early fifteenth century, after the festivities of the coronation of Fernando I (1412–1416), the Aljafería entered a stage of progressive abandonment. The deterioration period continued until the end of the century when King Fernando II of Aragón (1479–1516) ordered the construction of a magnificent structure between the years 1488 and 1495, known as the palace of the Catholic monarchs (Borrás Gualis, 1996). The Catholic monarchs' palace includes the nobles' staircase, which leads to the second floor and a gallery that functioned as a passage to two small anterooms for the marvelous throne room.

Although the palace is usually referred to as a Renaissance palace, its style is classified as the Catholic monarchs style, which is a combination of different artistic movements from the end of the Gothic period, the beginning of the Renaissance, and also elements of the local Mudéjar art (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986). The most recent restorations of the Aljafería suggest that the palace of the Catholic Kings was mainly limited to occupying the previous upper rooms of the Mudéjar palace and transforming them via interior reform. The Catholic Kings palace was assembled over the northern wing of the Taifa palace to illustrate, symbolically, the supremacy of the Christian monarchs over Al-Andalus's previous rule. At that time, King Fernando and Queen Isabel captured the longed-for Kingdom of Granada for the Crown of Castile, as shown on the inscriptions of the throne room ceiling (Janke, 1984). However, the political circumstances did not restrain the Christian kings from hiring the finest Mudéjar artisans with an Islamic background to carry out the work on the palace, continuing the tradition of Mudéjar builders in the Aljafería. Documents dating back to 1488 correspond to the payment of a vineyard by Fernando II to the housemaster Faraig de Gali as a reward for his work on the palace. In 1493, the building works continued in the palace by commissioning Faraig de Gali, Mahoma Palacio, and Braham Muferrich to decorate the throne room, and Faraig de Gali was awarded with the title of "Chief Master Builder" by Fernando II. Mahoma de Gali succeeded his father as the Chief Master Builder of the Aljafería (Paulino & Sobradie, 2010; Gómez Urdáñez, 1998).

The palace is accessed by a monumental noble staircase situated behind the western arcade of the Santa Isabel courtyard (**Fig.51**). The noble staircase comprises two broad sections

with openwork geometric plasterwork parapets illuminated by semicircular windows decorated with small leaves and stems of Gothic roots and Mudéjar influences, finished with crocket motifs on the arches' keystones. The large ceiling, which is one of the most remarkable features throughout the whole palace, consists of a series of offset transverse vaults placed between the beams of the roof. The ceiling is beautifully painted in tempera with collections of iconographic motifs. The painted motifs are related to the Catholic monarchs; the yoke and arrows in the presence of grisaille squares reveal the distinctive decoration of the Renaissance (Menéndez Pidal de Navascués, 2005; Montaner Frutos, 1980).



Figure 51. The stairway to the Catholic Monarch palace on the upper level

Via the stairs, one accesses a gallery that links the stairway and the Royal Palace chambers. The gallery opens onto the patio with a row of eight windows separated by twisted columns that rest on wooden capitals with carved anthropomorphic reliefs at the ends. These

capitals were reinstated during the restoration work of Íñiguez as a replica of the preserved originals. The gallery is the only remaining hallway of the four that bordered Santa Isabel's patio during the Catholic kings' period. In order to support the addition of the upper gallery and the rest of the new complex, the high areas of the Taifa halls were cut, and five octagonal columns were built before the north portico. From an elevation perspective, from the patio of Santa Isabel to the northern section, you can see the added octagonal columns, which visually continued as vertical lines to the upper floor. These new pillars helped to break up the symmetry and former layout of the Taifa porticos and, together with the pointed archways behind them, created a new front portico that unites the two Andalusian perpendicular pavilions (**Fig.52**).



Figure 52. View from the courtyard to the north side, showing the Catholic Monarch palace's gallery above the Taifa palace

One of the most exciting elements of the gallery is the leading portal of access to the throne room, flanked by two large windows made up of three mixtilinear arches. The entrance consists of a tri-lobulate basket-handle arch ornamented with a five-lobed tympanum, which appears in the center of the shield of the Spanish monarchy, which includes the arms

of the kingdoms of Castile, León, Aragón, Sicily, and Granada, supported by two reclining lions (Montaner Frutos, 1980; Paulino & Sobradiel, 2010).

The gallery leads to three small square antechambers, known as rooms of the lost steps, which precede the throne hall. The pacing rooms originally served as waiting spaces for those who were received as an audience by the Catholic monarchs. Unfortunately, only two of the rooms can currently be seen since the third one was sealed off by Íñiguez when he replenished the dome of the Taifa mosque, as mentioned above.

The pacing antechambers were known for two remarkable features: the flooring and the ceiling. The distinctive flooring was originally composed of square tiles and hexagonal colored glazed ceramic skirts forming whimsical borders in blue, white, manganese, and green that historians have studied intensely. The rooms' magnificent ceilings are decorated with sections of paneling crafted by Aragonese master carpenters, with a geometrical lattice of wood carved, painted, and gilded with a gold leaf between the moldings showing the well-known heraldic motifs of the Catholic Kings, the yoke and arrows, and the Gordian Knot, together with the typical pineapple motifs (**Fig.53**) (Janke, 1984).



Figure 53. The ceiling of the pacing antechamber before the Catholic Throne room

The splendid throne room was the focal point of the Catholic palace. It was used for royal ceremonial purposes and served as the place where the Catholic monarchs hosted audiences for the most distinguished members of the Kingdom of Aragón. The throne room resulted from the union of three previous small rooms from the Mudéjar Palace of Pedro IV to shape a rectangular space that measured 20 meters long by 8 meters wide. The hall's walls were plain to allow them to be decorated with tapestries, brocades, and draperies to add a luxurious touch of distinction for grand ceremonies (**Fig.54**).

However, the most distinguished aspect of the palace is the coffered ceiling of the throne hall, which is supported by carved gilded colored thick beams and crossbeams decorated with interlacing arches and eight-pointed stars creating 30 large, deep squares. Each square is decorated with an octagon with a curled leaf and the renowned hanging pineapple motif, which is linked symbolically to fertility and immortality, with the repeated symbol of the yoke and arrows (Janke, 1984; Latorre, 1981). Bordering the room, running below the ceiling, is a gallery with consecutive arches and openwork railing where guests could join and observe the royal ceremonies held in the hall. Below the gallery are two moldings decorated with motifs and Latin inscriptions in Gothic letters praising King Fernando and Queen Isabel, and in two of the corners can be seen the year 1492, signaling the political peak of the monarchy reign when the Nasrid were defeated, and Granada joined the kingdom. The palace was finished with two small rooms located north of the throne room: the Deliberation Room and the Santa Isabel Room.

The end of the works on the Catholic monarchs palace would take place after April 1493, when documents show that the capitulation of the roof of the throne room was signed, which would be considered finished in the same year (Borrás Gualis, 1996; Lupón González, 2018). Accordingly, the German traveler Jerónimo Münzer (1951) visited the Aljafería in 1495, where he described the Catholic monarchs' throne hall and the rest of the palace in detail, indicating its completion before that year.

Moreover, on the parapet of the wall at the northeast end, a gallery of arches is erected to allow the view of the city and the banks of the Ebro to be contemplated. This breaks the

enclosed concept of the Muslim fortress, opening the view towards the exterior, which assumes a radical change in the formation of the Christian palatine that respected the Islamic precedent (Almagro, 1998).



Figure 54. The throne room of the Catholic Monarchs, showing the ceiling and the gallery

It is essential to understand the hierarchal and influential message conveyed throughout the Catholic monarchs palace complex through the visitor itinerary experience. The compositional scheme of the palace was altered through the establishment of the use of the upper floors as the main area of the palace. The patio of Santa Isabel no longer held the central and symbolic role of the focal point of the palace as in the Taifa and Pedro IV periods. With the end of the fifteenth century's reform, one goes across the Taifa palace and Santa Isabel patio to the entrance of the monumental noble stairway. The calculated height of the ceiling and the placement of the two-flight stairway with the carved stucco rails enable ascent to the nobility and monumentality of the palatial space one is approaching. After passing along the gallery, the spatial structure of the palace itself draws the obligatory route, which leads first to the pacing room at the end of the gallery to wait for the monarch's audience, which raises the anticipation and the influence of power and hierarchy of the awaited meeting. The glimpse of the throne hall through the entrance from the pacing room doesn't reveal the inner bordered gallery with the additional attendees, which stimulated the feeling of astonishment and apprehension after accessing the hall to approach the monarchs.

Aside from the Catholic royal palace, documents show that some of the rooms of the Aljafería, from 1485 to 1706, were allocated for the installation of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. As the seat of the Inquisition, parts of the building served as lodging for officials and leaders, with the court's premises mainly located in the vicinity of the church and patio of San Martín, as seen by the plans discovered in the Archives of the Zaragoza Provincial Council. The time of the Inquisition was likely when the first use was made of the various floors of the Troubadour tower as a prison (Borrás Gualis, 1998; Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986; Sesma Muñoz, 1989), which was also mentioned in the visiting documentations of the German traveler Jerónimo Münzer in 1495 (Münzer, 1951).

XVI – XVIII Centuries

The Inquisition installation led to a series of modifications to the palace during the reign of King Felipe II (1556–1598). The political events in Zaragoza at the hands of Antonio Pérez intensely impacted the Aljafería's functional and structural transformation. In the hope of avoiding future uprisings, King Felipe II initiated a fortification project for the Aljafería. Between the years 1592 and 1593, the Italian military engineer Tiburcio Spannocchi was assigned to design the Aljafería's fortification. The fortification was based on the idea considered 60 years earlier when Antonio de Leiva, under the orders of Carlos I (1516–1556), proposed a citadel with four towers to keep artillery and firearms (Paulino & Sobradriel Valenzuela, 2010). Tiburcio Spannocchi's work led to him being awarded the title of Chief Engineer of the Kingdom by Felipe II in 1601. The remains of Spannocchi's designs and drawings of are preserved in the General Archive of Simancas, province of Valladolid **(Fig. 55-56-57-58)**.

According to the project's drawings, stables located on the west and sets of rooms for the accommodation of soldiers on the east and south sides would be attached to the Islamic wall. Also, a rampart walk was built protected by a new wall with four mighty bastions in the corners. Surrounding the fortress was a large moat, around 20 meters deep, that could be crossed by two bridges, one on the north side and the other on the east side. All these changes were intended to adapt the building to the new military needs before the use of artillery and weaponry (Sobradriel Valenzuela, 2006). Currently, the only remaining element of Spannocchi's fortification is the moat, which was re-excavated in 1983 under the direction of Ángel Peropadre Muniesa. Original fragments of the moat's walls survived, which can be recognized by their darker brickwork, unlike the light ones of the reconstructed areas during modern times (Gil & Souto, 1985). These alterations caused a critical change in the image of the palace, which, far from its original hierarchal royal residential use, would hereafter employ a role of institutional control imposing the submission of the community (Ximénez, 1955).

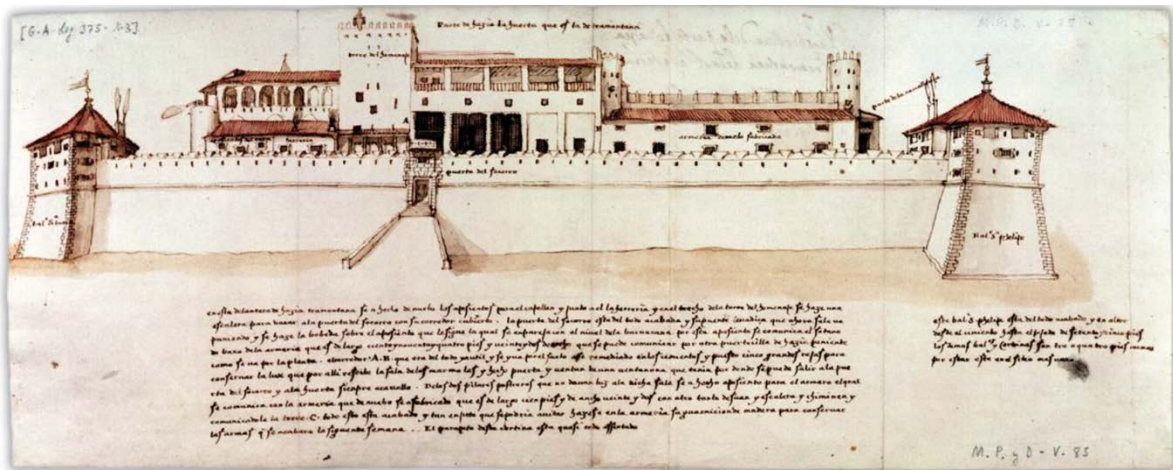


Figure 56. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the north side, 1593, Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

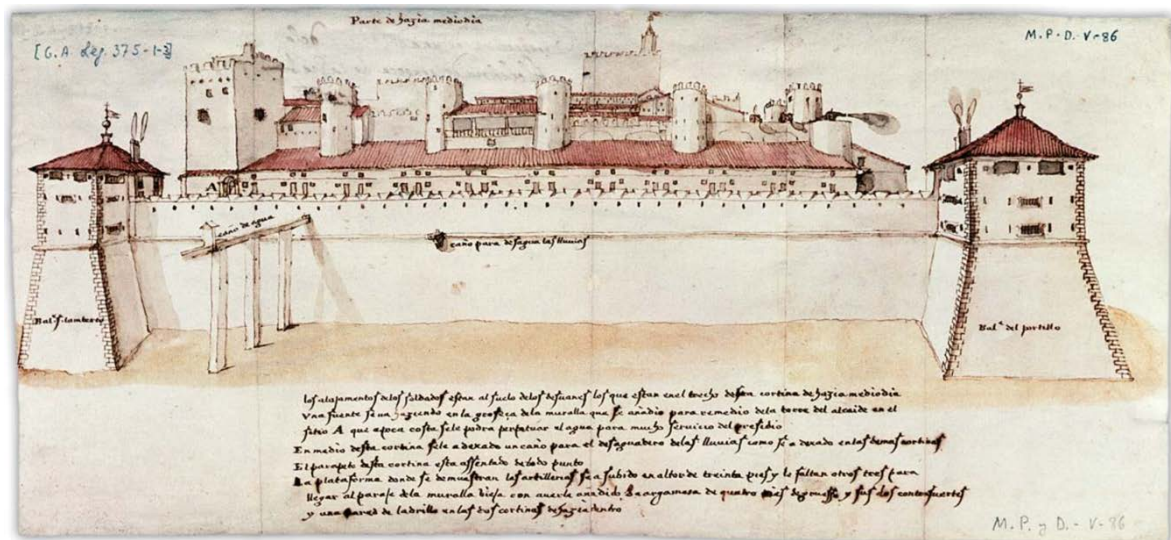


Figure 57. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the south side, 1593, Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

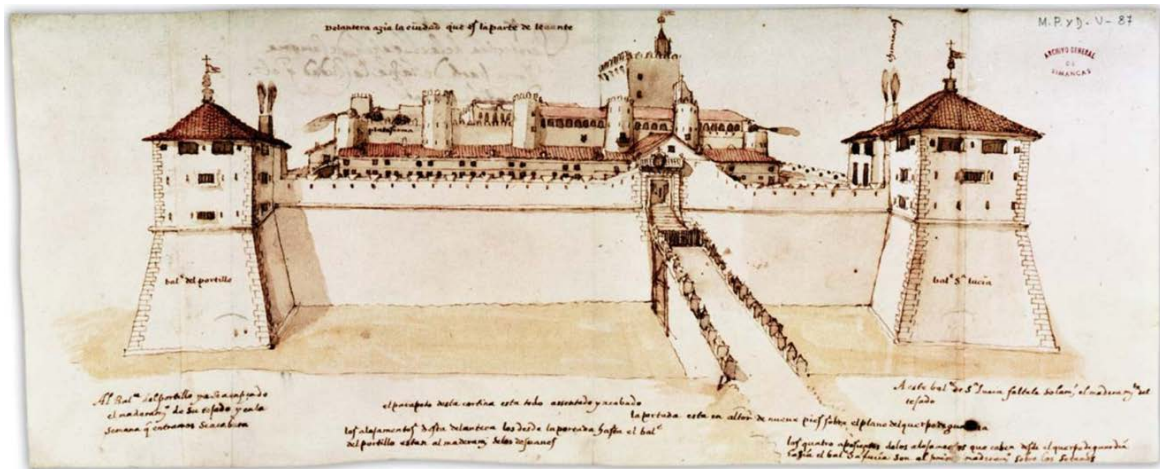


Figure 55. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the eastern side, 1593, Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

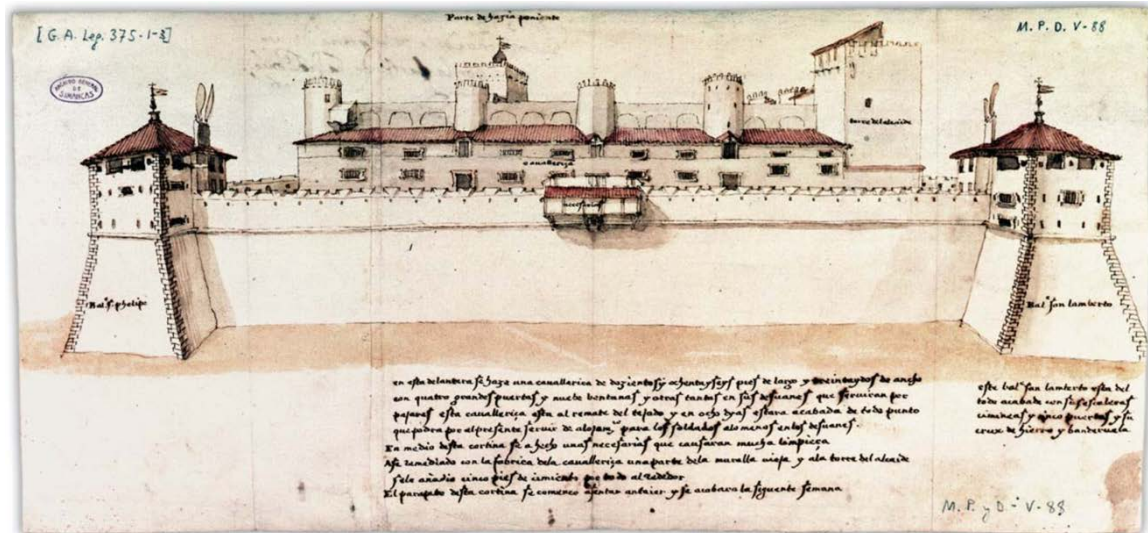


Figure 58. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the western side, 1593, , Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

The Aljafería of Spannocchi remained without substantial changes until 1705 when King Felipe V (1700–1746) appointed the military engineer Dezveheforz to reinforce the fortress by increasing the size of the moat's lower wall during the Civil War (1701–1715). The drawings of Dezveheforz's project are kept in the National Historical Archive in Madrid. In the subsequent years, works were carried out that would affect the structures and internal distributions of the fortress, as shown in the plans drawn up by the military engineer Miguel Marín dated 1757, which are preserved in the Military History Department in Madrid (Almagro Vidal, 2008).

During that time, the Court of the Holy Office of the Inquisition would be moved to the center of the city based on a collection of plans dated 1737–1738 preserved in the General Archive of Simancas that illustrate the interior of the building (Lupón González, 2018).

At the end of the eighteenth century, during the reign of Carlos III (1759–1788), important works were carried out to garrison the fortress by building military barracks, which allowed the Aljafería to become the permanent headquarters of the royal troops (Fig.59). The work of the assigned military engineers would result in the disappearance of any traces of the external appearance of the former medieval palace. The towers of the Islamic wall and the bastions built by Spannocchi were completely replaced with a series of bays for the

headquarters of the new barracks with a rigid, simple facade of classicist style that is only remarkable in terms of its proportion and size.



Figure 59. Section of the enclosure according to Miguel Marín, 1757. Military Historical Department

Additionally, the interior of the enclosure was also altered. New arches with a simpler heavy aspect would cover the previous Islamic and Mudéjar remains of the Santa Isabel patio. At that time, the chapel of San Jorge, which was previously replaced the south wing of the Hudi palace, lost its religious function and was used as a weaponry warehouse for the barracks built in the Aljafería. The chapel of San Martín was extended towards the outside of the complex by large openings in the Islamic wall. Collectively, the palace went through radical transformations toward a military image that made it harder to allow interpretations of its previous luxurious state (Almagro Vidal, 2008).

During the Peninsular War (1808–1814), the Aljafería played a vital role in the city's defense and later as a redoubt for the French armies, which resulted in massive damage to the palace. After the French troops' departure, the bastions, built under Felipe II's order, were demolished (Nougués Secall, 1985). Due to the serious state of ruin of the palace in 1848, the image of a fortress that the complex conveyed was reduced to a simple building with a neoclassical facade.

As a result of the heavy damage that affected the palace, Mariano Nougués Secall (1985) urged the preservation of the Islamic and Mudéjar remains of the Aljafería. Queen Isabel II (1833–1868) contributed funds for the restoration due to her interest in the importance of preserving ancient remains, and a conservation board was established, including the participation of Mariano Nougués Secall to restore the monument in 1848. However, the desired results were not achieved, and Nougués Secall's work was reduced to certain repairs

carried out in the great hall of the palace of the Catholic monarchs (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986; Nogués Secall, 1985)

In 1862, the Aljafería's ownership was passed to the Ministry of War, which stopped the restoration while the execution of different projects continued at the palace in order to be adapted to its new barracks function (Sobradíel Valenzuela, 1988). Due to the destruction of the palace, fearing a fatal outcome in the building's fate, the Provincial Commission of Monuments of Zaragoza proceeded in 1866 to extract fragments of the building to be transferred to the Zaragoza Fine Arts Museum and the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid. Unfortunately, a year later, the remaining Islamic arches in the palace were demolished (Sobradíel Valenzuela, 2009). However, the conditions in which the operation was carried out and the documentation process that accompanied it and its subsequent assembly were not as thorough and adequate. Therefore, it made it challenging to identify the fragments' place of origin subsequently, affecting the corresponding anastylosis processes (Almagro Vidal, 2008).

The XX Century

After falling into disrepair for almost a century, fortunately, the Aljafería was declared a National Monument of Historical and Artistic Interest in 1931, which led to the restoration project, from 1947, under the supervision of the architect Francisco Íñiguez Almech. However, the Board of Trustees of the Aljafería was founded in 1951, and it was not until 1954 that the first restoration works began to be undertaken, directed by Íñiguez Almech until he died in 1982, which would later be continued by the architect Ángel Peropadre Muniesa. The main objective of Íñiguez's work was recovering the damaged appearance of the Islamic and Mudéjar palaces, excavating the elements masked by the successive modifications, and the reconstruction works. The German archeologist Christian Ewert documented most of the preserved architectural elements of the palace's restoration (Borrás Gualis, 2007a; Íñiguez Almech, 1952; Soro López, 1998). The current appearance of the complex is due to the work carried out by Francisco Íñiguez, whose methods are currently under debate since elements of each period were compromised in order to restore another one.

The restoration project involved the demolition of the barracks structures on the entire eastern front and the reconstruction of the wall and the towers according to the Islamic period, as well as the main gate of the enclosure and the patio from the eleventh century of the northeast end. Moreover, the Troubadour tower and the chapel of San Martín were recovered. In addition, in the Taifa palace, the original plasterwork and arcades of the patio and the oratory were excavated, which had been hidden under successively added walls, in order to restore the lavish aspect of the Taifa palace (Íñiguez Almech, 1962a). Each of the restoration elements is detailed in different sections of the paper.

After Íñiguez Almech's death in 1982, the architect Ángel Peropadre continued his work and undertook the recovery of the moat, the excavation and discovery of the bases of the bastions, and the canvases of the sixteenth-century wall. These modifications facilitated the return of the monumental presence of the complex that had previously suffered all the damages of the historical events that occurred. However, the western side has preserved the eighteenth-century military structure and the two neo-Gothic corner towers added in the nineteenth century (Almagro Vidal, 2008).

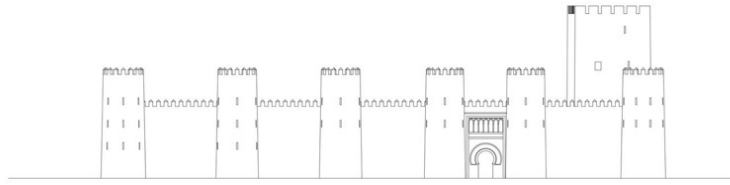
It is important to note that the restoration works assumed until the 1980s did not concentrate on a specific period nor attempt to reconstruct a precise historical moment. However, the interventions of Íñiguez and Peropadre were anticipated to restore the mentality and vision of the palace's value as an artistic historical monument that was forgotten under the altered rigid military barracks. Nonetheless, the multiple transformations, extensions, destructions, and reconstructions that the Aljafería has undergone shaped the unique identity of the monument.

End of the XX Century – Current Times

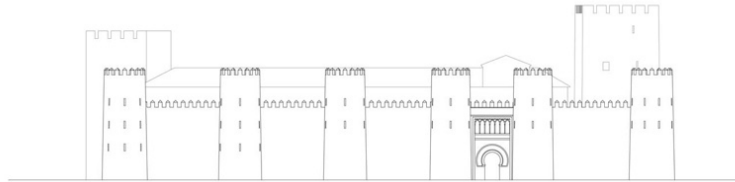
Starting from 1985, the Aljafería served as the seat of the Cortes de Aragón, which marked the addition of a new function to the Aljafería's preceding roles over the centuries. Therefore, a new series of interior transformations was established to adapt the palace to its intended function and to offer compatibility between the operation of the Cortes and the public use of the monumental area.

The project started in 1985, carried out by the architects Luis Franco Lahoz and Mariano Pemán Gavín, with the aim of renewing the parts of less artistic and historical value in order to implement the newly assigned uses of the Cortes, in which the primacy and respect of the monumental parts of the complex were maintained (Lahoz & Gavín, 2001). Nonetheless, the installation of the Cortes de Aragón did not prevent the studies and restoration of the monumental areas, such as the archeological excavations in the San Martín courtyard led by Juan Antonio Souto (Souto, 1987).

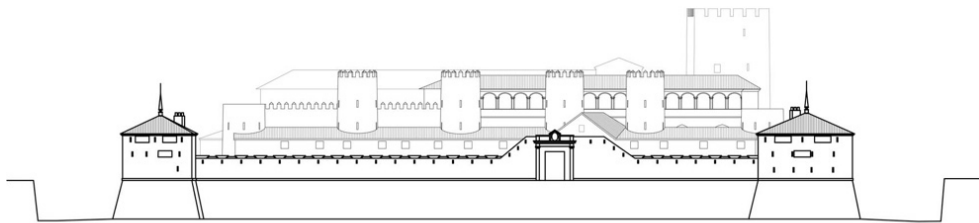
The continuous interventions of the Aljafería illustrate that the purpose of architecture is to create areas in which the life and activities of man take place. Thus, the historical value of the evolution of the building is not only constrained by its surviving aspect but also by the historical events the complex witnessed. Throughout the centuries, the Aljafería's architecture and function echoed the different transformations of its surrounding, from the political situations, the economic fluctuations, the victories, and the defeats to the cultural and religious revolutions, and yet sustained its preeminence as a symbol of Zaragoza (**Fig.60**). The standing position of the Aljafería with all these alterations made it a center of interest for many historians, in which a large number of studies and excavations have been conducted.



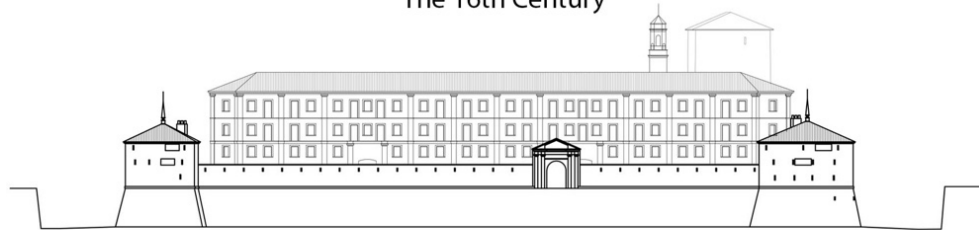
The 11th Century



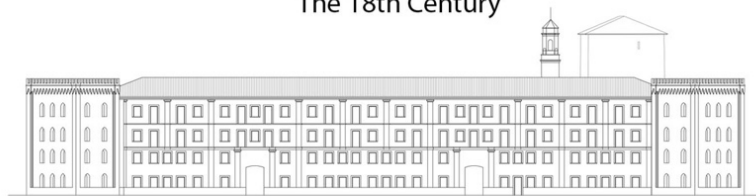
The 14th Century



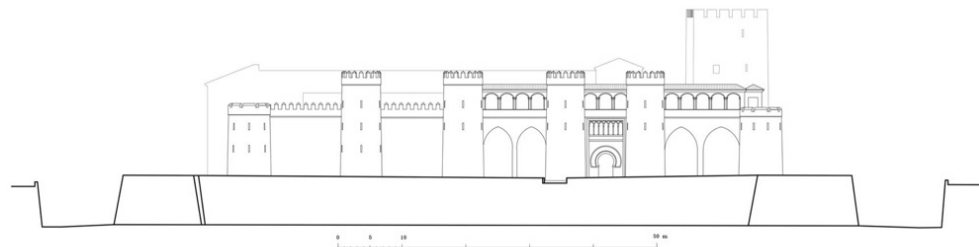
The 16th Century



The 18th Century



The 19th Century



The 20th Century

Figure 60. Elevation drawings of the walls of the Aljafería, showing the changes over the centuries, illustrated by Antonio Almagro

Within the Walls of the Aljafería: A Cultural Examination



Within the Walls of the Aljafería: A Cultural Examination

The Hudid Intellectual Court Culture

As discussed previously, the refined court life was a fundamental aspect of the Taifa period. Rulers of each Taifa state commissioned the splendor of their courts and competed in recruiting the most highly regarded court intellectuals and scholars. The knowledge fields of these scholars varied from architecture, art, and poetry to mathematics, philosophy, science, and astronomy to validate the power and legitimacy of the Taifa kings' rule and increase the prominence of their kingdoms (Abbas, 1960; Middleton, 2015). The Taifa kings' generosity resulted in inflating the number of prominent court members, with these esteemed courtiers moving from one court to another motivated by promises of prestige and profit (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007).

For the evolution of thought, the intellectual activities that took place in Zaragoza during the eleventh century were remarkably significant. As Lomba Fuentes (1987) pointed out, during the Taifa period alone, more than 50 scientists and philosophers were in Zaragoza. The work of several of these intellectuals was highly rated in scholarly history. Thus, the Taifa of Zaragoza was recognized as one of the fundamental periods of not only the Islamic culture but also the medieval.

Under the Hudid rule, the culture of Zaragoza reached its maximum development where numerous scholars stood out, especially in the mathematical and philosophical cultivation disciplines. During the reign of Sulayman Al-Musta'in, one of the many recognized scholars was Abdallah As-Saraqusti, who was a native of Zaragoza where he taught mathematics. Abdallah As-Saraqusti excelled in geometry and astronomy, on which he composed numerous treatises, and his students and followers were also renowned scholars later on

(Frutos, 1998). Another prominent intellectual was the poet Yusef ibn Hasday, the son of a known vizier of the Caliph Abd Al-Rahman III²² (Lomba Fuentes, 2002).

The greatest glory of the Zaragoza court coincides with the Taifa's highest political dominance during the second half of the eleventh century, starting from the second king of Banu Hud. Al-Muqtadir followed the Hudid path of creating intellectual settings for both his court and the city of Zaragoza. Al-Muqtadir intended the palace of the Aljafería to serve as a monument commemorating his reign's glory and sovereignty, displaying him not only as a powerful ruler but also as an intellectual leader and a scholar himself. Al-Muqtadir employed several of the most astounding scholars, some of whom were appointed councils and viziers, to create a highly scholarly environment of schools and *majalis* for his descendants (Calvo Capilla, 2013). Amongst these scholars were the Jewish philosopher, poet, and mathematician Abu Al-Fadl ben Yusef ibn Hasday, whose father was a courtier of the previous Hudid king. Abu Al-Fadl ben Yusef ibn Hasday held his position as grand vizier under the successive monarchs Al-Mu'tamin and Al-Musta'in II later on due to his extensive literary, philosophical, and scientific disciplines. Other renowned poets of the Hudid court were Abu Al-Walid Al-Baji, who was a renowned scholar and poet, and the poet Abu Ishaq Al-Tarsoni, who was recognized for praising Al-Muqtadir (Al-Maqqari, 1968; Fuentes, 1989). Al-Saqundi, who was also a celebrated poet, wrote a famous tribute to Al-Muqtadir asking if there was a known king with knowledge of astronomy, geometry, and philosophy greater than that of Al-Muqtadir bin Hud (García Gómez, 1976). Also, as a courtly poet, Ibn Haddad cultivated heroic and praising poetry, celebrating Al-Muqtadir's victories over both his brother Yusuf Al-Muzaffar of Lérida/Lleida and Sancho Ramírez of Aragón (Garulo, 1998).

²² Note that the city of Zaragoza was rich in intellectuals and scholars. For the purpose of this paper only the courtly scholars are mentioned. For more about Zaragozaan scholars during the Taifa period read Al-Hulal Al-Sundusiyya fi Al-Akhbar wa-l-Athar Al-Andalusiyya (Arslan, 1936).

Al-Muqtadir also surrounded himself with notable intellectuals as councils and viziers, such as the poet Abu Amir ibn Gundisalb²³, who reached the rank of grand vizier and composed both praiseworthy and satirical poetry, and the prominent *adib* in epistolary Abu Mutrif Al-Dabbagh, who was appointed as Al-Muqtadir's secretary (Frutos, 1998). Al-Muqtadir created an intellectual space as a refuge that attracted philosophers and scientists fleeing the civil strife in the south of the peninsula. Drawn by the fame of Al-Muqtádír, the famous Abu Al-Hakam Al-Kirmaní chose Zaragoza as the platform for his intellectual practices after his return from the east and lived there until his death. Al-Kirmaní was not only the personal physician and grand vizier to Al-Muqtadir and his two successors but also a recognized mathematician and philosopher as well, whose travels to the eastern Islamic culture transmitted fundamental knowledge. Al-Kirmaní's work and knowledge contributed greatly to the advancement of Zaragoza in the fields of science, medicine, mathematics, and philosophy (Al-Andalusi et al., 1996; Lomba Fuentes, 2002). Although it was a common practice of Muslim royals to be well educated, both Al-Muqtadir and son, Al-Mu'tamin, were distinguished scholarly kings and patrons of science, astronomy, philosophy, and the arts (Bosch Vilá, 1960).

Al-Muqtadir's successors displayed an equal or even greater vocation for patronage intellectual settings. The third Hudid king, Al-Mu'tamin, was one of the leading mathematicians of the eleventh century and wrote the Book of Perfection, *Kitab Al-Istikmal*, which is considered the most important mathematical treatise of those preserved from Al-Andalus and contributes to our knowledge of Zaragoza as a scientific center (Hogendijk, 1986). As one of the examples of social advancement in Andalusian society, the poet Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti, who was known by his previous trade as a nickname, the butcher, became the courtly poet, secretary, and vizier of Al-Mu'tamin and Al-Musta'in II. He refined the aulic panegyric and satirical poetry and composed poems in Andalusian romance dialect. According to the Andalusian historian and poetry compiler Ibn Said Al-Mghrabi (1978), Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti was the most representative author of the Taifa of Zaragoza. Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti was famed in the field of panegyrics, and was recognized for his

²³ Also Known as Gundisalvo.

praise of Slav Khalifa Zuhayr, the architect of the palace of the Aljafería, for whom Al-Gazzar was known as “The Poet of the Aljafería”; his poem will be discussed later on.

This rich culture of scholars and intellectuals was maintained in the courts of the Aljafería even after the fall of the Hudid dynasty to the Almoravids. Ibn Tifilwit, the Almoravid governor of Zaragoza and last Muslim ruler of the city, dedicated himself to courtly activities and indulgence. Ibn Tifilwit positioned the halls of the Aljafería palace as a cultural center by surrounding himself with a court full of writers, scientists, poets, and philosophers. Among the recognized scholars of that period was Ibn Khafaja²⁴, who was considered one of the most important poets of the Almoravid period (Al-Nowaihi, 1993). Also, the prominent Andalusian polymath Ibn Bajja²⁵, whose intellectual knowledge truly stands out in the history of Al-Andalus, was born in Zaragoza. Ibn Bajja’s intellectual background was formed during the Taifa period in Zaragoza under the last Hudid king Al-Musta’in II, where Ibn Bajja immediately gained fame as a musician and poet (Guichard, 2002). After the Almoravids occupied Zaragoza, Ibn Bajja gained the position of the grand vizier of Ibn Tifilwit, whose close relationship was mentioned by both Ibn Al-Khatib and Ibn Khaqan (Al-Khaṭīb, 2009; Khallikan, 1978) as Ibn Bajja enjoyed music and wine with the governor and composed panegyrics in praising him. Ibn Bajja is one of the most important figures of Islamic Iberia; his work included astronomy, physics, music, philosophy, medicine, botany, and poetry. Ibn Bajja was not only a renowned figure of philosophy but also of music and poetry, and possibly developed the concept of *Zajal*²⁶ (Rubiera Mata, 1980). Al-Tifashi stated that Ibn Bajja merged the music of the Christians with that of the Arab East, creating a uniquely Andalusian style (Shannon, 2015). The significance of Ibn Bajja was mentioned in the memoirs written by Ruler Abdallah Al-Ziri of Granada, in which Abdallah also reported

²⁴ Also known as *Ibn Jayya*.

²⁵ Best known by his Latinized name *Avempace* or *Ibn Bayya*.

²⁶ *Zajal* is a form of spoken poetry pronounced in a colloquial dialect. The Spanish Islamologist Emilio García Gómez believes that Ibn Bajja was the one who first joined Arabic poetry to the romance forms of Christian-influenced poems, which resulted in *Zajal*.

the importance of the scholarly work of Al-Mu'tamin and how he was glorified by many poets including Al-Acma Al-Tutili (Abbas, 1962; Tibi, 1986).

The Court Life Cultural Practices in Relation to the Spatial Design of the Aljafería

In the eleventh century, the royal *munyas* were very present in most of the Andalusian capitals. Although the *munyas* played a subordinate role from the political and military points of view in relation to the urban ruling palace, they were essential for the development of court life and the luxurious exhibitions of the royal sovereigns.

As discussed previously, the Aljafería palace was built to act as a *munya* and was destined to serve as a leisure space for the ruler by being separated from public life. *Munyas* functioned not only as recreational occasional residences but also as the setting for *majalis* and receptions hosting prominent visitors to show the extravagant economic wealth and power of the ruler (Juez & Pérez, 2000). The *munya* of the Aljafería was built for the purpose of relaxation and enjoyment for the Hudid kings, as was indicated through its name *Qasr Al-Surur*, which means Palace of Joy. The Taifa *munya* of the Aljafería followed the model of Madinat Al-Zahra'a, which also combined both functions, being a summer residence while also serving as a setting for some official receptions (Cabañero Subiza, 2012). In the *munya* of the Aljafería, the royal court of Banu Hud functioned as a retreat space for the ruler and privileged members of his circle, in which they practiced several stimulating courtly activities and festivities. One of the main pleasure pursuit activities of the royal court was the practice of *majalis* where it reflected the renowned intellectuality of the Hudid court. One of the main *majalis* practices of the court of Banu Hud was the literature *majalis* that was held in the palace of the Aljafería. The palatine setting of the Hudid royal *majalis* was the throne hall of the Aljafería, known as the Golden Hall, *Majlis Al-Dhab* (Lomba Fuentes, 2002).

The culture of the *majalis* of Banu Hud that took place in the palace of the Aljafería is significantly conveyed through the knowledge of two art forms: literature and architecture. The poetry and *majlis* anecdotes illustrate the practices and traditions of these *majalis* while

the palatial architecture²⁷ of the palace demonstrates their spatial settings and hierarchical layout. Approaching the palace of the Aljafería through both an architectural and a cultural approach deepens the understanding of the physical component of the palatial architecture in relation to the cultural aspect of the court life of its royal builders, the Banu Hud Taifa kings.

The *majalis* of the Aljafería were informal gatherings of the Hudid king, his noble court members, and cupbearers or *Saqis*. The *majalis* usually occurred at night and were dedicated to intellectual conversations and poetic performances mostly on the topics of paradise, gardens, wine, or even the pleasures and delights that characterized the *majlis* itself, accompanied by drinking and musical instruments (Robinson, 2012). The knowledge of the setting, activities, and topics of these gatherings was transformed through the poems and anecdotes of several poets and court members who attended these *majalis*, such as Al-Fath ibn Khaqan, who was a renowned Andalusian anthologist (Ibn-Haqan & Ali Sawabika, 1983) and Ibn Al-Sid Al-Batalyawsi, a famous philosopher and scholar who accompanied many Taifa rulers including Al-Mu'tamin of Zaragoza (Lomba Fuentes, 1987).

Several architectural and ornamental features of the Aljafería illustrate the nature of the royal *majlis* hosted by Banu Hud kings. Architecturally, the spatial design of the Aljafería indicates the functionality of the palace as a pleasure space. The intimate size of the Taifa palace surrounded by high walls implies its function (Robinson, 2006), which is to provide the necessary sense of privacy and isolation to accommodate the private and intimate *majalis* that the Hudid Taifa king hosted. Moreover, the throne hall of the Aljafería or, as it was called by Al-Muqtadir, *Majlis Al-Dhab*, served as the exquisite setting for the royal *majlis*. As mentioned in the book of Al-Maqqari (1968), Abu Al-Mutriq ibn Abdul-Aziz narrated a *majlis* anecdote where he and the famous poet Ibn Ammar attended a *majlis* hosted by Al-Mu'tamin in the Aljafería palace; the narration of the *majlis* recounted the windy cloudy weather, the swaying tree branches, and the blooming flowers of the garden at the patio of Santa Isabel. This narration implies that the *majlis* was assembled at the

²⁷ Although the spatial design and architecture of the palace was detailed in the previous part of the chapter, the architecture is approached here through a cultural analytical lens.

throne hall where it provided a perfect location for this view to be illustrated as narrated. Through an architectural lens, the throne hall is the largest interior space of any Taifa palace known so far with dimensions of 14.66 meters in width and 5.28 meters in depth (Cabañero Subiza & Lasa Gracia, 2002). Although it was considered to be the largest Taifa hall, it was still not as massive in scale as the preceding Caliphate's halls. The size of the golden hall indicates the intimacy of the royal majlis, with Robinson (1997) indicating that it could comfortably seat ten people at most.

Drawing on the size of the golden hall where it hosted these *majalis* and the privacy intended to accommodate it, the attendance of these *majalis* would have been selective to ensure the experience anticipated to be achieved, of which there was evidence through both anecdotes and the architectural composition of the palace. Numerous narrations in Al-Maqqari's book (1968) indicate that *majalis* attendees would attend upon invitation such as the anecdote of the *adib* and scholar Ali bin Khayr Al-Tutili writing to the poet Ibn Abdul-Samad Al-Saraqusti inviting him to a court's *majlis* Uns, or another anecdote when the poet Abu Al-Rabei' Suliman Al-Saraqusti invited a boon companion to a literature *majlis* through a written poem. These invitations signify the privacy and intimacy of these *majalis* through the selection of their attendees. Architecturally, the entrance to the palace is positioned on the eastern side wall, which led to shortening the distance to the entrance to the golden hall (Robinson, 1992), with this short distance implying that the Aljafería was destined for people of a high noble status, which would allow them easy access to the sovereign and his palace (Fig.61).

As was common during the Taifa period, the ornamentation was not only an important part of the physical aspect of the palatial architecture but also an embrace of metalanguage and symbolism for the intellectual representation. The metaphorical ornamentation practiced in the Taifa palaces was used as a symbolism to indicate the high intellectual atmosphere in the space, which could be illustrated through the use of different design techniques, and also through combining different building materials or scientific disciplines such as geometry, philosophy, or astronomy in the production and design of these motifs. In the case of the Aljafería palace, the architecture of the palace and its ornamentation adopted a

metalanguage codes that were understood by intellectuals that were full of cultured references to the Andalusian traditions, literature, and science (Calvo Capilla, 2011, 2013).

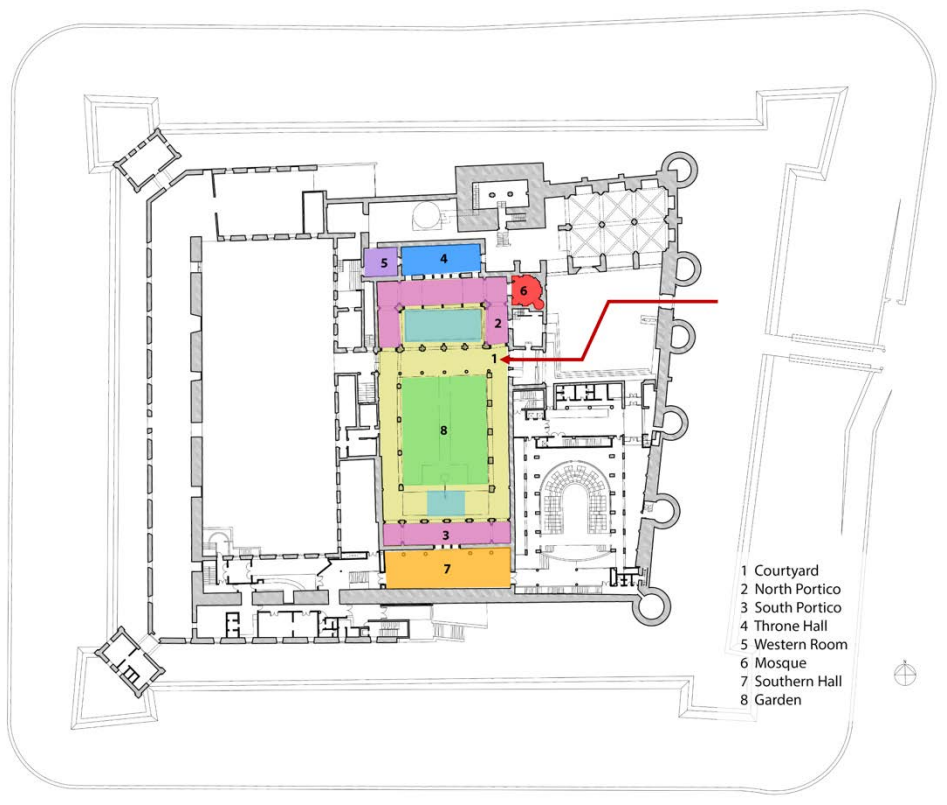


Figure 61. Plan of the Islamic Aljafería, showing the entrance access to the palace

The decorative lavishness of the ornamental implementation that the palace was given during the Hudid period represented the claim of power that the Hudid monarchs asserted after the fall of the Caliphate. Thus, the palace of the Aljafería illustrated a highly theatrical effect to translate their esteemed intellectuality and acclaimed authority. The power of the Hudid court was translated architecturally through the most astonishing feature of the Aljafería, namely the interlocking arches, which reach an extraordinary level of complexity. The most extravagant design of the arches can be found around the entrance to the throne hall, where arches intertwine on two lavishly decorated levels. The interlocking arches are also found all around the courtyard, in the portico and in the facade of the southern halls to connect the palace interior into a cohesive pattern. These theatricalities created a lavish backdrop for the *majalis*, which elevated the contemplation process that the *majlis* attendees experienced (Fig.62).



Figure 62. The Lavish arches of the east portico, Aljafería

As mentioned before, the Aljafería was perceived by Banu Hud as paradise, or *Jannah*, on earth, which was illustrated through the architectural design and embellishment of the palace. Paradise or heaven, or *Jannah* in Arabic, is the ultimate reward for the afterlife according to the beliefs of Muslims (Zakzouk, 2017). In the architecture of the Aljafería, the intersection of the remarkable arches materializes the concept of paradise, where the polylobes of each opening bay at the southern hall consistently number seven, which is believed in Islam to be the number of heavens (Ahmadi & Meftah, 2013). To illustrate, the number seven in Islam conveys divinity in many aspects, both symbolically and practically, with many religious rituals being directed to be repeated in sevens. Among the celestial aspects related to number seven in Islam is the number of heavens, as described in the Qur'anic verse:

“Allah is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah indeed encompasses all things in (His) knowledge.” (Qur’an 65:12)

Thus, creating the repetitions of number seven in the architectural elements of the palace connects the palace of the Aljafería to the perception of an earthly paradise (**Fig.63**).

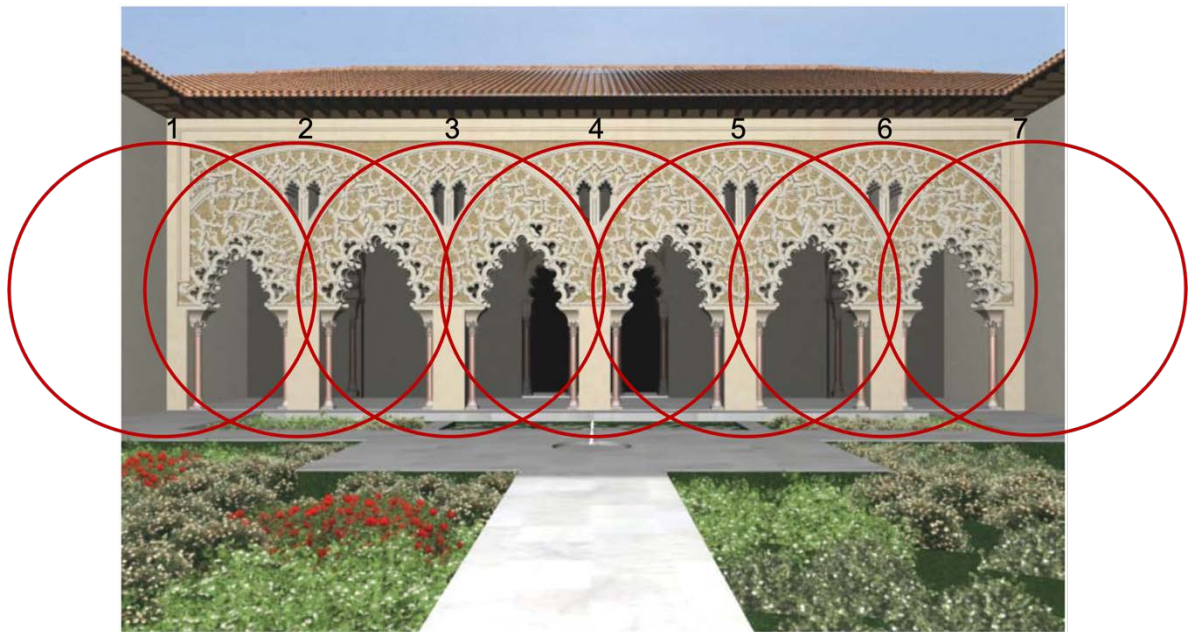


Figure 63. illustration of the Southern side of the Taifa palace in the 11th century, showing the repetition of number seven

Moreover, the throne hall’s walls were covered with Arabic Kufic inscriptions bordered by motifs located at the eye level of adults seated on the floor (Robinson, 1997) compiling Qur'anic verses. The Qur'anic chapter or surah corresponding to these inscriptions was assumed from the remaining surviving fragments. The lavish design of the inscriptions and ornamentation on the walls of the golden hall along with the rest of the Taifa palace anticipates enriching the *majlis* topics by allowing its members to contemplate the metaphorical approach applied throughout the palace.

Moreover, the garden in Islamic architecture is viewed as a sample of paradise in several ways. The Arabic word for Paradise is *Jannah*, which in Arabic literally means "garden," therefore, paradise and garden are consequently tangled concepts in Islamic and Arabic

cultures. The Qur'an describes Paradise as a garden, or *Jannah*, in a large number of verses to motivate Muslims, with one of the Qur'anic verses stating:

“And such will be the Paradise promised to the God-fearing: rivers will flow beneath it, its fruits will be eternal, and so will be its blissful shade.

That is the ultimate destiny of the God-fearing while Fire is the destiny of the unbelievers.” (Qur'an 13:36)

Drawing on the Qur'anic description, even the simplest Islamic courtyard contained aromatic floral plants, a fountain, a pool, shade, and a minimum of a few trees, all of which are symbolically a reflection of Paradise (Lehrman, 1980).

In the case of the Aljafería, the garden at the patio of Santa Isabel was designed to reinforce the concept of earthly paradise, where it encompassed all the elements that made up an Islamic Garden of water, shade, and vegetation. The two water basins on the north and south sides of the courtyard fulfilled the Islamic Garden's element of water. The two flanking water basins were connected by an elevated water channel that created a reflection of the lavish arches of the porticos and arcade, which enhanced the paradisiacal atmosphere of the courtyard (Barrucand & Bednorz, 2007). The water basins not only served ornamentally but also practically, with one nourishing the vegetation of the garden, while both created a drop in the temperature, which offered a cool respite during the sweltering Andalusian summers (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017), especially at night during the royal *majlis*. The depiction of Paradise could also be illustrated in the relationship of the courtyard with the surrounding arcades, where the water and vegetation act as the heart of paradise where they appear to sprout into the structure. As for the shade and vegetation elements, the planting of floral plantations and trees served the purpose. The selected aromatic fruit-laden trees of the Aljafería's garden replicated the paradisiacal fruit trees mentioned in the Qur'an as follows: “In them will be fruits, and dates and pomegranates” (Qur'an, 55:68), which indicated that the trees planted were citrus and pomegranate trees. All these elements of the garden of the Aljafería not only followed the Islamic Garden criteria but also enhanced the conceptualization of the palace as an earthly paradise (**Fig.64**).

It is interesting to note that although most scholars adopt the concept of paradise as described in the Qur'an as the only justification for the interest in the advancements of gardens in Islamic architecture, it is essential to recognize the scope of other factors too, such as the environment, economy, and politics, which all participated in shaping the Islamic culture (Ruggles, 2000). As the Hudid court was both an intellectual and metaphorical space, the existence of the garden in the courtyard of the Aljafería was essential in representing both the paradisaical atmosphere of the palace and the intellectuality of the court.



Figure 64. View to the Santa Isabel courtyard, showing the garden and the lavish arches

Moreover, the meaning of vegetated landscapes and gardens may derive from the concept of heaven and paradise, but also the Islamic gardens in the Andalusian period reflected the relationship of culture and society with the surrounding physical environment in which the aspirations and intellectuality of people were played out (Ruggles, 2000). This relationship provided an arena where Muslims not only used agriculture for nutrition and economy but also enhanced the intellectuality of the culture with botanic and remedial knowledge that advanced the fields of medicine, botany, cookery, and perfumery. The Andalusian era showed a development not only in the sciences related to botany but also in its metaphoric language, in which all known trees, plants, and flowers were used in gardens for practical, ornamental, and symbolic purposes. As for Banu Hud, the intellectuality of the Hudid court in terms of both science and literature helped the courtyard of Santa Isabel of the palace of the Aljafería to reflect the idea of earthly paradise not only through the vegetation and elements that form the Islamic Garden but also through the metaphors and symbolism along with the activities and practices of the *majalis* held in the courtyard.

As for the setting of the *majlis*, the king and his courtiers sat on luxurious silk cushions surrounded by objects of diverse and exotic origin such as cloth, ivory, marble, glass, and metal to complete the sophisticated and scholarly setting, situated in either the garden or the throne hall (Robinson, 1995, 2012).

These *majalis* settings reflect the Muslim belief that believers will be graced by pleasurable gatherings of poetry in paradise. Their vision of the paradisaical *majalis* came from the description of heaven in the Qur'an. The sitting of the *majalis* in heaven will be in shade in the garden setting facing each other reclining on lavish cushions while dressed in luxurious garments. They will enjoy the pleasure of poetry and communicating with each other without having any negative feelings. They will also be served fresh fruit and wine that will not cause them any body ailments, served in lavish vessels, as the Qur'anic verses illustrate:

“And reward them for their perseverance with a Garden [in Paradise] and [garments of] silk (12) There they will be reclining on [canopied] couches, never seeing scorching heat or bitter cold (13) The Garden's shade will

be right above them, and its fruit will be made very easy to reach (14) They will be waited on with silver vessels and cups of crystal (15) crystalline silver, filled precisely as desired (16) And they will be given a drink [of pure wine] flavored with ginger (17) from a spring there, called Salsabîl (18) They will be waited on by eternal youths. If you saw them, you would think they were scattered pearls (19) And if you looked around, you would see [indescribable] bliss and a vast kingdom (20) The virtuous will be [dressed] in garments of fine green silk and rich brocade, and adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a purifying drink²⁸ (21) [And they will be told,] All this is surely a reward for you. Your striving has been appreciated (22).” (Qur’an 76:12–22)

All these components of paradisaical *majalis* mentioned in the Qur’an were imitated in the *majalis* of the Aljafería not only to enjoy the pleasure of paradise on earth but also to reflect the paradisaical atmosphere intended of the palace. There is also a narration in Al-Maqqari’s book (1968) when the *adib* and scholar Ali bin Khayr Al-Tutili wrote to the poet Ibn Abdul-Samad Al-Saraqusti inviting him to a court’s *majlis Uns* in the Aljafería while referring to the *majlis* as a paradise of eternity where it illustrated the practice of the *majlis* as infinite pleasures and laughter surrounded by musical instruments:

أنا - أطال الله تعالى بقاء الكاتب سراج العلم وشهاب الفم -
في مجلس قد عبقت تفاحه ... وضحكت راحه
وخفقت حولنا للطرب ألوية ... وسالت بيننا للهو أودية
وحضرتنا مقلّة تسأل منك إنسانها ... وصحيفة فكن عنوانها
فإن رأيت أن تجعل إلينا القصد ... لنحصل بك في جنة الخلد
صقلت نفوساً أصدأها بعدك ... وأبرزت شموساً أدجاته فقدك

²⁸ The purifying drink means in the explanation of the Qur’an that once the believer takes the pure drink, there will be no bad feelings in their hearts or ailments in their bodies.

I – may God Almighty grant the writer “me” a long life,
light of knowledge, and bright eloquence –
in a gathering “*majlis*”
whose apples “fruits” are fragranced
its drink cups are amused
where flags of melody waved around us
and rivers of delights and enjoyments ran between us
...
if you desire to visit us
we would welcome you in our paradise of eternity
you would polish the rusted souls in your distance
and bright the flares that have been dimmed in your
absence.
(Al-Maqqari, 1968)

The descriptions of the *majalis* of the Aljafería demonstrate the enjoyment of the settings and practices of these *majalis* in which the *majalis* formed were a symbolic reproduction of the conceptualized gatherings in heaven that were promised in the Qur’an where believers would eternally drink and enjoy each other’s company with no hatred or ailments. The setting described in the poem of these *majalis* contributes to creating the symbolical factors of the atmosphere of Paradise while being surrounded with the materialized paradisaical architecture of the Aljafería.

As for the famed poem by Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti in praising the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr, who was known as the architect of the Aljafería palace, Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti wrote this poem to celebrate the wedding of the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr (Lomba Fuentes, 2002). Many lines of the poem illustrate information about the palace and that period. Al-Gazzar mentioned a verse saying:

واشكر صنيع المُستعين المُرتضى ... ملك الملوك وسيد الرؤساء

لقد انتقاك لسره ولجهره ... وحباك ممتناً بخير جِباء

Be thankful for the deed of the glorified Al-Musta'in²⁹
King of kings and lord of chiefs
He chose you for his secrets and known matters
And endowed you gratefully of best endowment.
(Al-Gazzâr, 2005)

These verses reveal that the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr was a courtier in the time of Al-Musta'in II, which indicates that Zuhayr was the architect responsible for the renovation work of the palace between 1085 and 1110 and not the main architect who built the palace in the time of Al-Muqtadir.

أَعْلَاكَ قَدْرًا وَاصْطَفَاكَ مَكَارِمًا ... حَتَّى كَأَنَّكَ وَاحِدَ الْأَبْنَاءِ
وَكِفَاكَ تَشْرِيفًا وَفَخْرًا أَنْ تُرَى ... بِبِالْجَعْفَرِيِّ مُؤَهَّلًا لِبِنَاءِ
قَصْرٍ غَدَا فِيهِ السَّرُورُ مُعْرَسًا ... يَغْشَى الْعَيْونَ بِسَاطِعِ اللَّأَلَاءِ
تَطَأُ الدَّمَقْسَ بِأَرْضِهِ أَقْدَامَنَا ... عَوْضًا مِنَ الْآجِرِ وَالْبُوعَاءِ
وَنَرَى نِمَارِقَ صُورَةٍ مَصْفُوفَةٍ ... مَوْشِيَةَ الْأَقْطَارِ وَالْأَرْجَاءِ
مِنْ أَيْبُضٍ فِي أَحْمَرَ قَدْ أَشْبَهَا ... صِلْفِ الْغَوَاةِ وَخِجَلَةِ الْعِذْرَاءِ
أَرْضِ دَحَاهَا حُسْنَهَا مِنْ سِنْدَسٍ ... مَتَهَلَّلٍ كَالرُّوْضَةِ الْغِنَاءِ
بَنِيَتْ عَلَى أَرْضِ الدَّمَقْسِ سِتُورَهُ ... فِي خَالِصِ الْعَقْيَانِ خَيْرِ سَمَاةِ

He (Al-Musta'in II) raised your rank and honored you
As if you are one of his sons
It is enough honor and pride for you to be seen
As an eligible of the Aljafería to build
A palace that joy is celebrated in
overshadowing the eyes with dazzling pearls

²⁹ It is important to note that the poems included are an individual attempt at an idiomatic translation from the original Arabic form.

Our feet tread on its floor of gilded silk
Instead of bricks and sand
And we see cushions formed in lines
Embroidered in the center and sides
White on red resembling
The arrogance of the seducer and the blush of the maiden
A land that is flatten by beauty of fine silk
Rejoiced as lush orchard
Build on its silk floor, covers
That of pure gold as finest sky. (Al-Gazzâr, 2005)

These verses imply the great honor endowed on the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr of working on the already existing palace of the Aljafería, as it was already known as the Palace of Joy. Also, the poem illustrates a snapshot of the interior of the Taifa palace, which is mostly the Golden Hall. The dazzling pearls indicate the several lamps that lit the room and their reflection on the gilded walls, where the use of lamps enhanced the idea of visiting the palace at night during the royal *majalis* since there was no need for lamps during the day as the Golden Hall oversaw the uncovered patio. As for the flooring, there is the verse about their feet treading on gilded silk indicating the softness of the marble flooring. Al-Gazzar used the term *Damqas* in the original Arabic poem, which is a type of expensive fabric that is usually white silk with golden embroidery, which would resemble smooth white and veined marble flooring. Al-Gazzar mentioned the embroidered cushions lying on the floor, which would be used as seating places for the *majalis* attendees. The luxury and beauty of the Golden Hall was symbolized as being as delightful as a lavish garden, with the author using the word *Rawdah* in the poem, which is the name for a garden depicting paradise or heaven, which takes us back to the common view of the Aljafería palace as paradise on earth. Al-Gazzar describes the covers built on the ground, which could imply either the walls or the curtains (or both), as pure gold, which illustrates the gilded walls of the Golden Hall in the Taifa period as the preserved fragments of the original walls exhibited both in the museum display at the Aljafería palace and in the National Archeological Museum of Madrid (Fig.36-37).

The poems of Ibn Al-Sid illustrate the pleasures of the *majlis* as a platform for the communication of philosophical concepts. Through the *Adab* lens, the *majlis*, as Ibn Al-Sid explained, was not only pleasurable but part of rituals that used metaphors and analogies through reflections of the soul and paradise (Fuentes, 1987; Palacios, 1940). The experience of the poetry of the *majlis* was through improvising verses, as the reciter relied on the attention of the *majlis* circle to stimulate the journey of the physical interiors of the palace to the intellectual imagination of the interior of Paradise (Brown-Hedjazi, 2017). The architectural design of the Aljafería palace enabled the paradisaical experience of the *majlis* to amuse the poets as described in their anecdotes and poems.

Experiencing the Aljafería: A Sensorial Perception



Experiencing the Aljafería: A Sensorial Perception

Approach of Atmospheres and Sensibility on the Historical Architecture of Al-Andalus

The emergence of Islam from the environment of a desert influenced Islamic architecture heavily. The reference to the oasis as a goal and a constant hope when scanning the horizon in the midst of the hardness of the environment was always part of Islamic philosophy that appears symbolically and physically in both literature and architecture. The concept of an oasis as a reward is clearly demonstrated through Paradise³⁰, *Jannah*, as the ultimate abode of pleasure for Muslims rewarded by Allah in the afterlife through the following Qur'anic verse:

“Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment.” (Qur'an 9:72).

From that ultimate goal of a garden or oasis as a divine pleasure, Islamic architecture thrived. The birth of the Islamic Garden as an integral part of the architecture, and a necessary place for recreation and leisure, and also a materialization of the orchard where water is the genesis of life, shaped the perception of Islamic palaces and *mynyas*. It is important to recognize that the application of gardens as pleasure was not limited to Islamic civilizations, since most of the Eastern lands and southern Mediterranean areas with similar climates included a concept of vegetation in their architecture. However, as Islamic territories expanded to most of these lands, they would adapt and familiarize themselves with new architectural methodologies that were shaped by Islamic philosophies to create palatial masterpieces.

³⁰ The concept of Paradise is detailed in the chapter “Within the Walls of the Aljafería: A Cultural Examination.”

Islamic architecture is always an architecture intertwined with philosophy and beliefs, as well as being conceived from the pleasure of the senses (Rubiera, 1988). As a conceptual foundation of the desert and oasis as pleasure, it is an illustration of the view of an inhabited space in the middle of nowhere escorted by a sound materialized through architecture that blends with the wind demonstrated through various textures of architectural and ornamental elements, accompanied by the smell of essence and perfumes along with citrus vegetations.

Drawing on the assessment of María Jesús Rubiera Mata (1988) on the oasis as the conceptual foundation of the Islamic Garden in Arabian cultures, Ana Almagro Vidal (2008) pointed out the Islamic culture perspective on the oasis as a reward to the reference of the pleasures of the *munyas*, which is an interesting lead to trail on. Arabs demonstrate through Islamic architecture a more definitive way to build a place where inhabiting other lands does not mean losing reference to their origins. Palatial architecture, through a variety of modes of materialization, preserves certain aspects inherent to their culture, way of life, and strong religious beliefs. The architecture elements will integrate with geometry, light, sound, color, water, and the senses to demonstrate a fundamental role, accompanied by nature as a constant reference to Paradise.

The formation of Islamic palaces is a sensory conception where the physical elements serve as an environment for a series of visual, sound, tangible, and odorous stimulations that shape and define the space built as a dwelling. The incorporation of geometric, vegetal motifs, and epigraphy as a composition for not only the ornamental aspect, but also a layer of metaphorical approach, enriches the depth and value of the space.

In order to deepen our understanding of the palace of the Aljafería and conceptualize the relationship between the palatial architecture of the Islamic palace and the court life practices of the Hudid Kings, the palace is approached in this dissertation through an architectural and cultural approach by taking into consideration both artistic formats of architecture and literature, where each approach examined the palace through a different lens to achieve a specific purpose of the study. The analytical architectural lens inspected

the physical component of the Aljafería and its articulation of shaping the practices of the Hudid court life of royal *majalis* and ceremonies. The literature and poetry written by the Andalusian historians and intellectuals illustrate the connection of historical backgrounds of architectural elements within the practices and ceremonies and intellectuality of the court members. However, an approach to the Aljafería through the methodology of atmospheres in architecture with a perspective from the history of the senses is essential to assimilate our understanding and perception of the palace.

The following chapter is intended to trail a sensorial analysis of a perceptual experience of space throughout the palace of the Islamic Aljafería within the concept of atmospheres in architecture.

The atmosphere in architecture is a form of physical perception recognized through emotional sensibility (Gandy, 2017). Architects, urban planners, and designers tend to use the concept of atmosphere to illustrate that space and architecture are designed and built for people not only to use but also to interact with and experience. According to Peter Zumthor (2006), one of the leading architects to acknowledge the significance of architectural atmospheres, one perceives or experiences spaces through one's emotional sensibility, which is a form of perception that works intensely. This form of instant appreciation of an impulsive emotional response to a space is a reflection of its atmospheric feature. Even if the built space is complex and its detailed architectural elements might gradually grab the attention of the users of the space, the sense of the building and its features will instantly affect them upon entering (Borch, 2014). The encounter with built spaces is based on the human body as the measure of architecture determines the quality of the atmosphere of that space. Vitruvius, the first Roman architect to have written surviving records of his field during the first century BC, established the relationship between human body as measurement to spaces centuries ago (Morgan & Warren, 1914).

Reflecting on Vitruvius's discussions on architecture, several architects and philosophers of the last century assumed a phenomenological interpretation of architecture to understand the interaction of body and space in both physical and sensual aspects. With the increasing interest in atmospheres, an extended conception has appeared in parallel with new

theoretical reflections on subjects and space, where the atmospheric features have become more frequent in various fields such as architectural theory, urban planning, and cultural geography (Griffero, 2014). Combining philosophy with architecture, art, and design provides an essential platform for architects and philosophers whose work affects our knowledge of atmospheres from Peter Zumthor, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Gernot Böhme to Olafur Eliasson, Jens Soentgen, and Martin Heidegger.

Juhani Pallasmaa (2014) constructs essential arguments about the experience of atmospheres where he argues that atmospheres are experienced emotionally and sensually before they are understood rationally. People sense the space and get affected by it before arriving at an intellectual reaction or appreciation of it, in which the pre-rational encounter with architecture is a multisensory experience. This means that the spatial architecture is seen, heard, and felt before it is consciously reflected upon. Architecture not only offers a visual aspect but also a multisensory platform, since the architecture of the eye controls the visual narrative while the haptic and atmospheric architecture engages and unites a complete experience (Pallasmaa, 2012). A multisensory approach is necessary to understand the atmosphere of a space. Architecture is not a visual but a spatial art; vision alone is inadequate to tackle how users sense spaces and their atmospheres.

An atmospheric perception also involves arbitrations beyond the five senses, such as sensations of orientation, balance, stability, movement, continuity, scale, and brightness. Undeniably, the instant judgement of the space requires our entire existential sense, and it is perceived in an unconscious manner rather than through specific, attentive, and conscious observation (Pallasmaa, 2014).

It is also important to recognize that atmospheres can be produced within both the built structure and its surroundings, where it can be instrumented strategically in ways that shape how people experience architecture. Atmospheres emerge as a consequence of the daily urban life of the inhabitants (Böhme, 2017), as in the scale of the Aljafería, where the atmosphere can emerge as a result of the cultural practices of court life. In the same principle, a comprehensive theory is that the spatial configurations provide meaning and immunity to the people who gather under them, in which Peter Sloterdijk (2012)

contributed to both fields, architecture and politics. This concept articulates how physical design shapes the atmospheric assembly to create a space, both physical and psychosocial, in order to achieve specific political and influential objectives (Böhme et al., 2014) – which will be applied to the Aljafería subsequently. Approaching a space through an atmospheric perspective implies analyzing the architecture to an extent beyond form and function by examining the space through the nourishment of multisensory experiences.

In the scope of the architecture of Islamic Iberia, approaching spaces through the sensorial aspects of historical architecture must take into consideration the work of María Jesús Rubiera and José Miguel Puerta, who laid the foundation for understanding the unique elements of these spaces – an architecture interlaced with philosophy, beliefs, and cultural nostalgia to a deserted land while conceived from the indulgence of the senses. The Islamic architecture of Al-Andalus demonstrates multilayers of complexity that need to be approached through various methods. Rubiera and Puerta both asserted that interpreting the Islamic Iberian architecture demands an understanding of the Arabic language as an essential instrument. As José M. Fórneas and Darío Cabanelas (1978) stated, the knowledge of Hispanic Arabic constitutes a basic instrument to understand more deeply the varied aspects of Spanish culture in the Middle and Modern Ages since it was the basis of the coexistence and interconnection of people who lived in that period. The study of the toponymy and onomastics of that Iberian Islamic period taking Arabic into consideration is very elemental since it could be a fundamental source for understanding several aspects, including the geographical population, culture, art, and architecture through the Arab perspective of that time.

Furthermore, it helps to discover the nature of the atmosphere and habitat during the Muslim era, by understanding both the evolution and the references of the names behind numerous elements (Epalza & Rubiera, 1986). Considering the knowledge of the Arabic language as an instrument to analyze Islamic architecture and its intended atmosphere advances the understanding of the perception and the meaning of the epigraphy and inscriptions in the palatial architecture; consequently, it clarifies the purpose behind them. It also assists through the process of interpreting the complex metaphorical approach and

the atmospheric creation that Muslims used through their constructed spaces. Recognizing the Arabic language as a fundamental tool for examining Islamic architecture is the same as acknowledging the importance of images in paintings or tapestries to navigate Christian architecture.

The work of María Jesús Rubiera Mata (1988) in *La arquitectura en la literatura árabe: Datos para una estética del placer* is considered an irreplaceable tool to introduce the ideas and culture behind Islamic architecture. Her work is valued for its nature as an anthology of Arabic texts and documents on Islamic art and architecture, and also as an excellent introduction that María Jesús Rubiera's own comments offer to assist in understanding the main typologies of Islamic architecture. Her work gives individual treatment to palaces, gardens, baths, and mosques both in the East and in Al-Andalus since each archetype serves a specific purpose in the Islamic conceptualization of architecture. To approach the meaning of any work of art, it is fundamental to start from the consideration of the thoughts and culture of the society to which it corresponds. Thus, it is necessary to reference and resort to the literary sources of that period. The work of María Jesús Rubiera introduces the concepts of Islamic culture and the concepts behind the architecture, which is essential, especially for Western culture to be immersed in unfamiliar points of view other than the common presumption of oriental aesthetic. Her work pioneers the reflection of the Islamic idea of architecture conceived as a space of pleasure for the senses, which is an art whose purposes are contrasted with those of Western aesthetics (Borrás Gualis, 1993–1994).

It is also critical to take into consideration the literature approach while analyzing Iberian Islamic architecture and its atmospheres, since Islamic culture relies heavily on literature not only to deliver its conceptualized ideas and intellectuality but also as a tool to create a social ceremony and hierarchy through its written and verbal *Adab*. Historians generally have been accustomed to an increasingly technical way of writing and an absence of literary resources (Zanón, 1993). The literature in relation to Islamic art and architecture method is an approach where both María Jesús Rubiera and José Miguel Puerta paved the way for other historians to follow. Their work demonstrates that the accuracy and rigor of analyzing

architectural spaces through scientific disciplines are not thorough without the literature aspect.

The work of José Miguel Puerta shows the importance of literature with a reflection of the metaphorical meanings through the senses that Islamic architecture display. His work illustrates the importance of key elements such as light and water in creating the atmosphere intended for dwellers and visitors to perceive through a sensorial experience. Among the valuable work of José Miguel Puerta, I would like to highlight his study on light, time, and appearance in Islamic architecture, in which the Aljafería received some of his most sensitive insights from the point of view of the history of the senses (Puerta Vílchez, 2012). On the other hand, and as a synthesis of this methodology and perspective over architecture, his book *Leer la Alhambra: Guía visual del monumento a través de sus inscripciones* (2011b) is a must. Puerta illustrates an approach to the palace of the Alhambra intended to draw a better understanding of the functions, forms, and meanings of the palace, including all its different areas based on the elevated idea of literature as a tool and means of conveying the power and influence of the royal court.

The rich inscriptions and epigraphs of Qur'an and poetry of the palace were analyzed visually to illustrate the meaning and purposes behind them with constant reference to Arab sources of the time. Puerta offered the opportunity to examine Islamic monuments through the inscriptions that transform the physical elements to an exceptional architecture of words. This approach demonstrates how the architecture of the Alhambra, including all its elements from constructive to ornamental, was intended to create a sensorial experience that is carried out throughout the palace. José Miguel Puerta offered a distinctive method of studying Islamic architectural spaces that opens the door to being applied to other monuments of both Al-Andalus and the East in which other historians could follow and navigate as a combined method of literature with architectural or archaeological analysis.

The following chapter is intended to track a multisensorial analysis of the experience of space through the perspective of visitors of the original Taifa palace while recognizing and discovering the sequence of atmospheric environments of the spaces of the palace.

However, it is essential to understand that the aim of approaching the Taifa palace of the Aljafería through an eleventh-century perspective could be debatable. The extent of our perception of the eleventh-century Taifa palace is still not a coherent vision for many reasons. The architectural elements and spaces of the palace went through countless alterations, extensions, destructions, and reconstructions in which extensive studies and archeological excavations have been conducted to re-envision the Taifa palace, yet it still has room for interpretation and further clarity. Moreover, understanding the palace through the exact perception of an eleventh-century dweller or visitor is nearly impossible. Perception is an experience and therefore it is distinctive and unique. Navigating the historical perspective requires being immersed in the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional settings that defined the lives and actions of people from that time period. Claiming to have the capability of perceiving in precisely the same way as a person of the eleventh century is only understandable from the arrogance of a society that believes itself capable of everything in the twenty-first century. Being alive during the twenty-first century means being continually exposed to different human knowledge through various distinct mediums.

It is interesting to note that the experiences and perceptions of spaces and ideas are shaped not only by the digital revolution, but also by the scientific and cultural norms of the present day. As architectural historians try to recapture the perception of art from past centuries, it becomes clear that achieving a truly accurate sensorial experience is impossible, as through such effort some might steer toward an unrealistic history in order to get closer to the truth. Even though many studies have been conducted on the sensory and emotional experiences of different historical periods, it's difficult to fully understand what it was like to see or hear in the past. Studies might theorize and make assumptions about it but can never truly experience it. However, bearing all these points in mind, not having the exact sensorial experience of the past does not validate ignoring the documented studies. Rather, investigations should be done giving due consideration to the recognized studies within the context of rationality and documentation and viewing them as hypothetical propositions (Carrero Santamaría, 2020).

Therefore, the approach through the sensibility and historical reception of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería in this chapter is intended to recognize the humbleness of stating that it is only a proposal and, as such, it is interesting yet limited.

A Sensorial Analysis of a Perceptual Experience throughout the Aljafería Palace

Drawing from the desired goal of a garden or oasis as a heavenly pleasure, the construction of *munyas* and pleasure palaces thrived. The architectural elements that define a *munya*, a country estate, from the compiled spaces of a palace or a residential area surrounded by lavish watered gardens and orchards in a distant location articulate the primary divine pleasures of the oasis.

The pleasure palace of the Aljafería illustrates the concept of the conceptual foundation of the desert and the oasis. Being located strategically in the plain of the Ebro river at a prudent distance from the urban area allowed the Hudid kings to have a recreational space separated from public life that created an isolated sanctuary for leisure and relaxation. At the same time, the palace was seen as an oasis or a hub that attracted scholars and intellectuals from all parts of Al-Andalus to the secluded intellectual atmosphere created by the remarkable flourishing court life of Banu Hud.



Figure 65. The fortified walls of the Aljafería palace, Zaragoza

Zumthor's (2006) conception of architectural atmosphere implies that it is not just the bodily engagement with the building itself that matters but also how the building relates to its environment and how it becomes a constructive part of its surroundings. Accordingly, a building should attempt to immerse itself in its environment, in order not to fail from an atmospheric point of view. This concept was demonstrated clearly in the relationship between the fortified palace of the Aljafería and its surroundings, where the palace surrounded by a stone enclosure reflects the basin landscape of the city of Zaragoza. The fortress, with its Syrian-Umayyad associations, reflects the elements of the desert through the language of the ultra-semicircular towers that surround the palace. The massive intimidating size of the walls not only served as a defensive feature but also enhanced the image of the ceremonial character of the building and served as a symbolic seclusion between the palace world of the sovereign and the common everyday exterior (**Fig.65**) (Juez & Pérez, 2000) At the same time, the preexisting military element, the Troubadour tower, fulfilled an important function as a visual reference in the territory. Its appearance as a massive and powerful configuration conveys an idea of security and protection to the fortified enclosure (Vidal, 2008). Still seen as an exterior and isolated piece, the Troubadour tower is deliberately considered in the general composition. The arrangement of its location on the north side of the palace created a connection as it became a part of the visual elevation perspective of the leading space of the layout, even though both elements are not functionally connected. Furthermore, the tower's relationship with the Taifa palace could be perceived as an element that symbolizes strength, authority, and presence through the differentiation from its surrounding.

Upon entering the fortified masonry walls of the Aljafería, one senses an instant decrease in scale and adjusts to the intimacy of the palatial interior and courtyard garden (**Fig.66**). Zumthor (2006) explains that the atmosphere of the building and its feature is immediately sensed upon entering, as beholders perceive the spaces instantly through their emotional sensibility. Even if the constructed space is complex due to detailed architectural components and might require deeper attention, the sense of the building will directly be

felt upon arriving (Borch, 2014). The intimate scale of the space offers a sense of privacy and containment which would enhance the confined experience of the courtly practices of the majalis.



Figure 66. Entrance to the Taifa palace, the Aljafería

In the Aljafería, a substantial change from previous Caliphate palaces was created, motivated in part, possibly, by the reduced dimensions of the enclosure. A definitive rupture of the longitudinal axis of access was established, which allowed the development of the exterior-interior and public-private transition spaces in a reduced entry area. From a compositional layout perspective, the method of the entry arrangement in the Aljafería was illustrated through the formation of a non-direct route from the main entrance to the interior of the palace. This broken axis entry could be perceived not only as a solution to be applied in reduced-dimension spaces but also as a form of privacy creation since the palace was considered a private leisure palace.

The private atmosphere of the Aljafería is sensed through the creation of a zigzag path from the main access to the first enclosure and to the palace. Following this same reasoning, a broken collateral route towards the reception spaces was maintained. Once inside the

patio, the compositional path forced the visitor to approach the Golden Hall, always through a broken route, due to the layout of the pool, which could be one of the reasons for the distinctive arrangement of the U-shaped portico in front of the reception room. In such a case, the arches of sideways porticos would perform theatrically as doors or fictitious curtains leading subjects to the sovereign. The sequence of the arches of the rest of the fronts of the portico would draw the route until placing the visitor in front of the entrance of the hall where he would expect to be received (**Fig.67**).

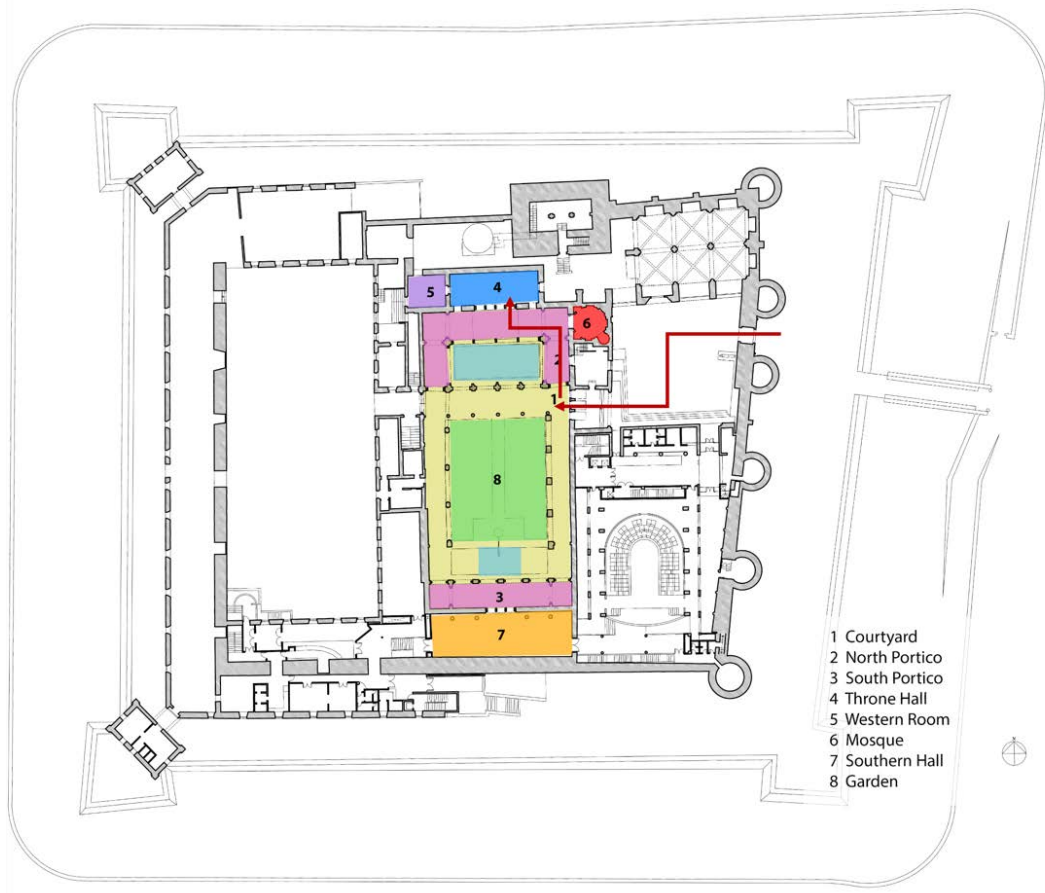


Figure 67. Plan of the Islamic Aljafería, showing the broken path from the main entrance to the Throne Hall

As for the interior, the courtyard fulfills a fundamental function by establishing a space that serves as a connection center between the ceremonial areas of the golden hall and those destined for the residence of the palace on the southern side. The courtyard is also the element in which all the activity of the fortress took place, a space that connects the residential and reception spaces with the outside, transforming itself into a central platform

for creating a multisensory experience. Once in the courtyard of the Taifa palace, one undertakes a multisensorial experience that associates the physical body through all its senses with conceptualized ideas and feelings that connect the beholder both with the materialized architecture and the metaphorical aspect created through the atmosphere of the eleventh-century palace. Subsequently, an approach throughout the courtyard is categorized by each sense based on the speculated perception of the eleventh-century Taifa palace visitor, which would enhance our understanding of the sensorial perspective of the Taifa palace.

The Aljafería, Seen

The built space is experienced in a multisensory way. Although the human perception of architecture is highly diverse, the weight in creating architecture is associated largely with the visual representation (Herssens & Heylighen, 2008). Architecture is perceived above all with the help of sight. The visual perception of a space has attracted abundant interest over the years from architects, master builders, and even historians who illustrated the visual magnificence of monuments through their work. The perception of a building is a multisensory experience, yet the visual aspect tends to grab the most attention (Nickson, 2015). Through the realm of vision, the palace of the Aljafería exhibited a lavish atmosphere in the visual perception through many factors. The architectural elements, lavish ornamentations, applied colors and their meanings, and the rich inscriptions all played a role in enhancing the intended atmosphere of the palace. Moreover, physical elements of the palace were employed to materialize metaphorical concepts that enriched the visual observation of the palace; the paradisaical atmosphere was illustrated through the use of elements such as garden, water, and light, in which all were engaged to create an extravagant visual sensory perception that united the feeling of magnificence throughout the space.

Approaching the interior of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería, the visual experience is escalated through the transition from the entryway to the interior. The extremely complex and ornamented arches create a theatrical stage that elevates the perception of awe to the magnificent space. The vegetal, geometric, and epigraphic ornamentations of the arches were covered in polychromed decorations with the royal colors of blue and red

accompanied with gilded reliefs that enhanced the richness of the space and demonstrated the luxuriousness of the royal court life of the Hudid kings (**Fig.68**). The color red in Islamic cultures often references the life force that Allah gave as in the link to blood – as in to generate life, and then to surrender life to the one who provided it. This concept of red as surrendering life to Allah is also linked to *Jihad*, where one gives one’s life in order to spread and protect the religion of Islam (Arnold, 1928). The choice of the color red in the throne hall represents the role of Hudid kings as warriors who appointed themselves to protect and defend Islam, in which the initial purpose of constructing the Aljafería as a monument was to commemorate the bravery and power of Al-Muqtadir when he recaptured the frontier fortress of Barbastro from Christian hands. As for the color blue in Islamic art, it represents life giving in the form of water, since water is the genesis of life that Allah blessed his creations with. It often symbolized mystical associations with the enigmatic depths of the universe. It was also prevalent in the Islamic cultures, until present times, where the color blue acts as an amulet or protector against evil eyes³¹ (Leoni et al., 2016). The blue in the palace illustrates the blessings of the palace as a reward while also creating protection for the Hudid sovereignty and their monument. The gilded ornamentations not only illustrate the luxurious atmosphere of the palace but also reference one of the ultimate rewards that believers receive in paradise, as indicated in this qur’anic verse: “They will enter the Gardens of Eternity, where they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their clothing will be



Figure 68. Remains of a polychromed decorative frieze from the throne hall, exhibited in Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid

³¹ The evil eye is a common belief in Islam, however, an object such as an amulet for protection does not originate from the Islamic religion. Although it is widespread and generally believed by people in Islamic cultures, it is only a tradition and a ritual passed down over the centuries.

silk,” (Qur’an 35:33) with believers enjoying the reward of gold for eternity in Paradise. Thus, the color gold creates a correlation between the Aljafería as paradise on earth and the ultimate reward of paradise in the afterlife.

The decorative abundance of the ornamental implementation that the palace must have had during the Hudid period elevated the interior of the Taifa palace whereby it imitated the lavish legacy of the Caliphate architecture, and yet was highly superior in terms of ornamentations. Through this decorative application, the Hudid monarchs who had risen to power expressed their overstated claims after the post-Umayyad decline and fragmentation, which was to have exceeded the greatness of the past architecture of the previous Umayyad period by exaggerating the ornamental aspect to compensate the limited scaled space (Ewert, 1977). Therefore, the highly theatrical effect appears with an extremely luxurious atmospheric intention manifested by the Taifa master builders. Visually, the most astonishing feature of the Aljafería is displayed in the interlocking arches that reach an astounding degree of complexity. The most extravagant design is found toward the entrance to the Golden Hall, where arches intertwine on two lavishly ornamented levels. The interlocking arches are also found all around the courtyard, in the portico, and in the facade of the southern halls to unite the palace interior into a continuous pattern. In all this, the embellishments and decoration act as the medium that allow a greater spatial visual and greater depth to be expressed than the actual conditions, which might translate into a lack of correspondence between the intention of the elevation and the actual plan. At the same time, these famous interlocking arches of the Aljafería seem to have advanced from the ordinary supporting function to abstract interwoven patterns that work as visual screens. Stacking one arcade of archways in front of the other generates separated spaces while still linked in harmony yet furthers the feeling that the spaces are united in a dense web (**Fig.69-70**) (Ewert, 1968).

As Juhani Pallasmaa (2014) argues, atmospheres are experienced emotionally and sensually before they are understood rationally. The visitors sense the space before attaining a rational reaction or appreciation of it. The master builders used this visual separation of arches to create an in-depth hierarchy through ornamentation, as they managed to develop it especially through a complex compositional overlapping present in the porticos and

portals, through the effect of continuous interlacing of the plasterwork. The overlapping and interlacing of some sections of the arches with respect to others seeks not only to create the depth and succession of spaces that the palace, due to dimensions, does not have, but also to enrich the theatrical experience of the palace (Almagro Vidal, 2008). This theatricality of the interlocking arches enriches the visual perception of the palace by not only visually expanding the depth of the palace but also creating a sense of magnificence and glory that grabs the gaze of the beholder once they have entered the space. The physical design of any built space shapes the atmospheric assembly that could be purposed physically and psychosocially to achieve specific political and influential objectives (Böhme et al., 2014). Therefore, the theatrical power expressed in the palace reflects the Huidid kings intentions to demonstrate their sovereignty by creating a visual lavish atmosphere that intimidated visitors and courtiers while they were experiencing the palace.



Figure 69. View of the arches of the north side



Figure 70. View of the arches of the north side

This overlapping method of the hierarchical structure of arches had already been implemented in the Great Mosque of Córdoba in front of the *qibla*, where the predominant construction system of double arches breaks down, and its extensions move to several parallel planes (Ewert, 1995). This method was not used in the Aljafería as a way to highlight the importance of a religious sacred space as done previously in the Great Mosque of Córdoba but was applied, in an almost revolutionary way, in the court architecture. The application of the overlapping arches symbolizes the sacredness and importance of the court of the Hudid king, which enhances the sense of awe intended for visitors to perceive. These heavily decorated interlocking arches distinguish the Aljafería, in which from the Aljafería these types of arches will influence many future Islamic structures.

Adding to the visual sensorial aspect of the rich ornamented arches are the inscriptions on the walls that enrich the contemplation experience. The golden hall wall was covered with a band of Kufic inscriptions bordered by motifs comprising Qur'anic verses. The Qur'anic chapter or surah corresponding to these inscriptions was assumed from the remaining surviving fragments. The notable choice of the Qur'anic surah referred to the symbolic and metaphorical meaning of the ornamentation. The chosen surah takes its name from Divine sovereignty as in Arabic *Al-Mulk*, meaning the sovereignty, or as in other translated versions the Dominion, which challenges the disbelievers with declarations of God's total power over them (González, 2019).

“Blessed is He in whose hand is all sovereignty, and He has power over all things (1) [He] who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct. And He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving (2) [He] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see any discordance in the creation of the All-beneficent. Look again. Do you see any flaw? (3) Look again, once more. Your sight will return to you humbled and weary (4) We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps, and made them missiles against the devils, and We have prepared for them punishment of the Blaze (5).”
(Qur’an 64:1–5)

Placing the sovereign surah in the wall of the throne hall illustrates the sovereignty and authority of the throne, which also adds to the powerful atmosphere intended in the hall. The choice of surah is interesting as it holds a special place in Muslims' beliefs. The sovereign surah is believed to protect and defend those who recite and memorize it as the reported Hadith by the Prophet Muhammed, saying, "There is a Surah (referring to the sovereign surah) which will plead for its reciter till it causes him to enter paradise" (Al-Tabrani, 1994). Choosing this surah would suggest the Banu Hud claim of protection from Allah until they reach the final reward of paradise. It would also suggest the protection of their earthly paradise referring to the palace of the Aljafería. Moreover, in terms of the sensorial impact, almost every Muslim recited this surah frequently, which increased the sense of idolization once the eleventh-century Muslim visitors saw the inscriptions on the throne hall walls due to both the spiritual impact of the selected verses and the influential atmosphere of the space. It would correspondingly stimulate the sense of longing for Paradise, which would be enhanced by the paradisaical atmosphere that the palace aimed to create.

As for the architectural references, according to this surah of the Qur'an, a clear reference is made to the heavens through the series of seven skies. This creates an indisputable link with the south portico and its breakdown into seven decorated arches. It is also equally applicable to the north portico, where it is folded into the side wings to achieve the number seven. As mentioned before, the number seven carries symbolic importance in Islam as it conveys divinity (Ahmadi & Meftah, 2013). Thus, the Hudid king presented himself to his subjects and courtiers as the chosen righteous sovereign, surrounded by strong symbolism and religious evocations, as divinity personified in the figure of the sovereign, who appeared in his role as the successor of the prophet, the messenger of Allah on earth (Vidal, 2008). However, the literal translation of the title of the surah is "the owned" from the Arabic title *Al-Mulk* as it starts by praising Allah, who owns everything. The inscriptions of the verses would suggest that the Hudid kings placed all that they owned in their lands and palaces in the hands of Allah, whom they worshipped and submitted their lives to, which Allah empowered them to achieve and attain, thereby reflecting their intentions to emphasize their dynasty's relationship with the religion they claimed to defend. This is a more promising explanation as the phrase *Al-Mulk le Allah*, meaning everything owned by Allah,

also appeared in an inscription in Kufic characters on the walls of the Taifa floor of the Troubadour tower.

The courtyard is the unifying element of the Taifa palace, whereby it is overlooked by the rooms and porticos of the north and south sides, and it also outlines the Islamic architectural features of the palace. The courtyard offers a visual continuity to the outside through its absent ceiling. The design of the courtyard and porticos of the Aljafería blended the interior and the exterior spaces. The Islamic architectural tradition in framing the view onto an open landscape was applied in the Aljafería; however, the open landscape is the confined courtyard of Santa Isabel. As the palace did not have any windows onto the surrounding landscape due to its fortress walls, all the rooms were oriented toward the exposed courtyard. Therefore, the design not only shaped it as the focal point of the whole palace complex but also created the illusion of an exterior landscape within the palace's interior. The view from the throne hall to the Santa Isabel courtyard's garden not only provided the sense of sovereignty and dominance to the king by overlooking his lavish palace but also offered a glimpse of his earthly paradise (**Fig.71**).



Figure 71. The ornamentation of the interior the throne hall, while offering view to the courtyard through the openings

Courtyards in Islamic architecture commonly contained a form of garden that included aromatic floral plants, a fountain or a pool, shade, and a minimum of a few trees, which all played essential roles symbolically and practically (Lehrman, 1980). The garden in Islamic architecture is viewed as a sample of paradise on earth. The courtyard gardens, while illustrating the greenery of the earth, also reference the heavenly eternal paradise in the sense of a reward space that is fertile, beautiful, relaxing, and pleasurable. Paradise was envisioned as a garden based on the Qur'anic descriptions as paradise was the reward promised to faithful Muslims who devoted their lives following Islamic guidance. To desire to achieve an eternal place was a worthy motivation that encouraged devotion to the laws of God (Ruggles, 2008). However, creating earthly gardens and courtyards as a tribute to heaven teased visually the imagination of Muslims to envision the ultimate dwelling in paradise.

As stated previously, understanding the Islamic Iberian architecture demands recognition of the Arabic language as an essential instrument, since the study of Islamic art is entwined with the linguistic study of Arabic. It is fundamental to view Islamic culture from the perspective of its literature and texts, which consequently means giving greater emphasis to the Qur'an, as it is the manuscript that appointed the birth of the Islamic religion and directed the standardization of the Arabic language. The Arabic word for "paradise" is *Jannah*, which in Arabic literally refers to "garden" too, thus paradise and garden are entangled concepts. Therefore, the understanding of garden symbolism in Islamic culture is mostly steered by using the Qur'anic description of paradise as a guide to explain earthly gardens.

The Aljafería, as mentioned earlier, was perceived by Banu Hud as an earthly paradise, which was illustrated through the architectural design and embellishment of the palace, thus the existence of an Islamic Garden in its courtyard is a core component in creating the intended paradisaical atmosphere of the palace (**Fig.72**). The Muslim builders designed the palatial gardens as a narrated fiction to depict specific concepts, as José Miguel Puerta (2013) pointed out. The garden and the ancient desert oasis occupy a sacred place in

Muslims' imaginations. The concept developed by María Jesús Rubiera Mata (1988) illustrates the oasis as the foundation of the Arabian garden, as it offers the Bedouin the aesthetic pleasure of a luminous spot on the horizon, which symbolizes the hope within hardness. The shelter under the palm trees enriches the senses with the pleasure of the shade and water, since the elements of trees, shade, and water determine the basic essentials of the Islamic Garden. This symbology and perspective on the *munya* as an oasis, a paradise, and an ultimate reward was materialized in the architecture of the palace of the Aljafería and deepens the importance of the garden in the pleasurable aspect of the palace.



Figure 72. View of the courtyard and garden from the south portico

The dominant green color of the vegetations of the garden carries a symbolic meaning in Islam, which was mentioned frequently in the descriptions of paradise. The green color is also the color of the pillows and the silky garments of those who will dwell in Paradise. Al-Ghazali, one of the most prominent and influential medieval Muslim philosophers, wrote about the green color that it reinforces the vision while creating harmony and peace (Nasr, 1987), which all wanted feelings to create the intended atmosphere of the courtyard

gardens. The green color of the garden along with the red, blue, and gold of the ornamented arches all contribute to the paradisaical atmosphere intended.

According to Ibn Luyun Al-Tujibi, an Andalusian poet and scholar who was famous for writing agricultural treatises, indicated that *munyas* resembled *Jannah* in Andalusian cultures, especially the royal ones, since *munyas* were surrounded by cultivated lands of vines and different types of fruit trees. As for Ibn Luyun's description, Andalusian *munyas* tended to encompass landscaped recreational spaces for social activities in the estate, protected by a pavilion and surrounded by plants. In these landscaped areas, water basins, pools, and/or fountains could generally be found, which, in addition to their primary function of watering, contributed to cooling the environment and creating a relaxing atmosphere with its own appearance, sounds, and smells (Trillo San José, 2006). This portrayal of *munyas* also applies to the *munya* of the Aljafería, in which the palace was not only surrounded by cultivated lands during the eleventh-century Taifa period but also its courtyard encompassed the garden of Santa Isabel, which created a recreational space that resembled the idea of earthly paradise that incorporated the elements of the Islamic Garden.

The gardens of paradise rely on the imagination to visualize what the eye cannot see. As divinely perceived places, they existed in a form of perfection untried by human experience. However, the creation of the earthly palatial gardens achieved similar effects with vegetations, shade, and water to form the theatricality and illusion of divine heavens (Ruggles, 2008). In the palace of the Aljafería, the scale of the Santa Isabel Garden reflects the limited size of the palace, contrasting the size of the vegetated fields of the Caliphate architectures of Madinat Al-Zahra'a or the gardens of the Taifa palaces of Seville. However, the Aljafería garden included all the components of vegetations, shade, and water, both physical and theatrical elements, required for achieving an earthly tribute to paradise within the limited spatial context. The Santa Isabel Garden illustrates the rewards provided to believers in heavenly paradise mentioned in the Qur'an. From a visual perspective, the greenery of the vegetations enhances the paradisaical reference of Heaven. The planted fruit-laden trees of the Aljafería's garden imitated the paradisaical fruit trees mentioned in

the Qur'an, as the Qur'anic description of heaven indicates: "The Garden's shade will be right above them, and its fruit will be made very easy to reach" (Qur'an 76:14). The existence of fruits trees and plants immediately links the garden with what Muslims envision paradise would look like. The trees also provided the element of shade, which is a form of comfort and also a reward in itself in Arab cultures coming from a land shaped mostly by deserts. The shade in the courtyard of the Aljafería palace was not formed only by the planted trees but also came from the lavish arches surrounding the courtyard that were incorporated in creating a webbed magnificence that enhanced the visual perception of the space and empowered the idea of the Aljafería as an earthly paradise³².

As for the water element of the Islamic Garden, it was maintained through the two water basins on the north and south sides of the courtyard of the Aljafería. The play on water in Islamic architecture is essential both symbolically and practically. Water is the origin and symbol of life, as through it, the Divine's omnipotence is expressed, since God can give water and make the earth an oasis, an orchard, or he can take it away, turning it into a desert. Puerta (2011a) indicated that the value of water acquires its richest and most profound presence in Islamic cultures where it portrays its sanctified value from the nature of the oasis and the desert. Water as a vital element is clearly illustrated in the individual and collective rituals of Muslims. Water in Islamic culture is perceived as a gift from God that purifies, both internally and externally, and also in a spiritual sense and as physical matter.

The impression of purification was demonstrated visually, physically, and poetically through the Islamic Iberian architecture, with palaces that celebrated water and gardens throughout the centuries. Moreover, water is a fundamental Qur'anic concept closely connected to the images of the garden, Eden, and Paradise, in which almost every description of heaven within the Islamic tradition is characterized by an abundance of water. In addition, water has enormous value in the imagination of Muslims, as it is a fundamental part of *Jannah*,

³² For information on Andalusian gardens, their characteristics, and understanding their problems, see Dickie (1968, 1992); and for a methodological overview, see Tito Rojo (2015).

where the Qur'an described the existence of rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey circulating in the gardens of heaven, watering all kinds of fruit trees. The concept of water as a sanctified asset is shown in many forms of Arabic and Islamic cultural art forms, including philosophy, literature, poetry, architecture, and the visual arts. Consequently, the use of water was a materialization of the ideas of life, paradise, spirituality, and purity in a physical matter integrated as an architectural component that defined Islamic palaces. In the case of the Aljafería, the water element was present through the water basins in both the north and south sides of the courtyards. The existence of the water basins as part of the palatial garden is essential in linking the visual aspect of the garden to the envisioned concept of paradise. These water basins were integrated into the ornamental theatrical display of the Aljafería. Combined with the elements of light, the water basins allowed the effect of duplicating the architectural features through the mirroring effect generated by the surface. The north water pool, as it was large in size and shallow based on the excavation's documents, would have been conceived as a static surface, without movement, surrounded by the space in which the activities held by visitors and dwellers of the palace took place. The north water basin would reflect the architectural elements of the courtyard along with the garden and the courtiers moving around it. It would also allow a fixed reflection of the sun, which served as a dynamic illuminating factor for the Hall where the social activities were held³³. Thus, the water basins not only strengthened the visual connection of the courtyard with the envisioned paradise but also created a visual continuity of the surrounding lavish arches of the courtyards, which enriched the visual depth and richness of luxurious ornamentations of the Aljafería palace. All these elements of the garden in the courtyard of Santa Isabel of the Aljafería from vegetations, shade, and water not only followed the Islamic Garden criteria but also enhanced the conceptualization of the palace as an earthly paradise, in which visitors and dwellers would sense the magnificence of this materialized heaven visually along with the other senses (**Fig. 72**).

³³ This is based on a proposed assumption, since the north water basin currently doesn't exist, and its allocated space is covered with the Catholic monarchs' palace above.

Moreover, another element that is praised in Islamic architecture that is the one that enables the recognition of all the visual characteristics is the element of light. Light manifests itself in outstandingly varied ways in Islamic architecture. The art historian Robert Hillenbrand (2015) categorized the uses of light in Islamic architecture, which varied from the sources of light such as directed light, reflected light, and lighting devices to other factors that affect the perception of the illumination of the light such as the materials used, light and shade manipulations, and also the symbolism of light within the space. Incredibly, all these uses of light classified by Hillenbrand were used in the creation and design of the palace of the Aljafería, some to a greater extent than others.

First, based on Hillenbrand (2015), the most instantly apprehensible use of light in Islamic architecture is direct lighting, which achieves a clear practical need, through the creation of openings in the building. Since every space that has a functioning interior needs to be lit to a certain degree, the idea of light in Islamic architecture is more functional than simply brightening the space. The contrast of open and closed spaces creates a studied ratio in terms of the allowance of light, which could be purposed for creating a specific atmosphere that forms a sense of surprise, emphasis, or even managing a staged theatrical atmosphere. In the case of the Aljafería, the grand ratio of the exposed courtyard allowed a direct natural lighting to brighten the interior of the palace, which visually emphasized the importance of the courtyard as a central space for the Taifa palace (**Fig.73**). As for the enclosed spaces such as the private oratory, direct lighting was used through the arched windows below the dome that allowed the light to illuminate the sacred space.



Figure 73. Sunlight from the exposed courtyard illuminating the interior

The second category of light is reflected light, which is used abundantly to create a particular atmospheric effect. The reflection of light in Islamic architecture could be produced according to Hillenbrand (2015) through the use of specific surfaces such as water, tiles, glass mosaics, and certain kinds of tilework. The reflection of light was produced in the palace of the Aljafería through various surfaces, most prominently through the water basins. The water basins permit the architectural elements of the courtyard to replicate themselves in a breathtaking ephemeral way. Since the north basin, as shown previously, was considered static water, the slightest breeze would cause a ruffle of the surface and dissolve the clear outlines of the reflected building and turn it into a visual mirage. This constant effect, as Hillenbrand (2015) indicated, would generate a metaphorical interpretation regarding the momentary nature of wealth, rank, and life that was demonstrated through the lavish atmosphere of the palace, which would enhance the sense of longing for paradise as an eternal dwelling. At the same time, these water basins constantly reflected sunlight, in which the motioned water caught light in a sparkling and iridescent way that highlighted the visual idea of an oasis and the sacred value of water. The reflection of light was also produced throughout the palace through the smooth surface of the white marble flooring, which increased the degree of illumination of the space since the marble reflected light and appeared to sparkle more when the sun struck its surface.

Another source of lighting that was used in Islamic architecture was lighting devices such as candles or lamps, which varied according to the time period and advancement of knowledge. In the eleventh century, the main instrumental method of interior lighting was the use of lamps. Documentation records showed that the Great Mosque of Córdoba had between 113 and 280 lamps at a time during the tenth century (Hillenbrand, 2015), which indicates that lamps would have been used later on during the Taifa period. The poem by Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005) described the Aljafería palace during the Al-Musta'in rule:

قصرٌ غدا فيه السرور مُعرسا ... يغشى العيون بساطع اللآء

A palace that joy is celebrated in
overshadowing the eyes with dazzling pearls

with this verse mentioning the halls of the palace being dazzled by pearls, referring to the lamps that illuminated the space, which illustrated the use of these lighting instruments in that time period. Despite the beauty mentioned in the poem, these lamps would only have functioned moderately to radiate light but not illuminate the whole space. The lightly illuminated space served the intended atmosphere of the palace by creating a feeling of a private ambiance, especially at night during the *majalis*. Although the effect of these illuminations is hard to recapture in current times, when such lighting has lost its essential functioning, flickering, and unpredictable nature thanks to the different modern light sources installed through not only the interior of the palace but also the surrounding exterior, it is essential to visualize it in order to evoke the perception of the eleventh-century Taifa palace.

Another aspect that distinguished the use of light in Islamic architecture was the creative ways of using the effect of light and shade. Muslim master builders employed the architectural and ornamental elements of the built space as screens to play with light and shadow to create transient patterned spaces in order to enrich the visual impact of the palatial architecture (Creswell & Gautier-van Berchem, 1969). These ornamental screens were used not only as dense decorations but also as a way to filter and tone down the strong sunlight, especially in the natural environment of the areas of origin that Arabs came from. This method was used in the palace of the Aljafería through arranging the famous lavish arches of the Taifa palace in an overlapping arrangement that would create a patterned web of light and shadow effect. This effect formed by the lavish arches enriched the space by creating a continuity of these columns through their shadows, which augmented the theatrical atmosphere created in the palace. It was also used through the dome of the oratory based on the assumption of the original dome building material of carved alabaster following the upper-half ornamentation of the mosque walls. The carved alabaster enabled the light to penetrate through it to create a transient patterned light and shadow effect throughout the interior of the mosque, which increased the perception of the visual divinity of the sacred space of the oratory (**Fig. 74**).



Figure 74. Openings in the oratory to allow light to penetrate through

Moreover, according to Hillenbrand (2015), certain materials and colors were principally favored in creating Islamic monuments for their capacity to absorb and radiate light. Architects and master builders employed the use of certain materials to secure a dramatic visual effect that would be captured through anecdotes and poetry in illustrating these magnificent buildings. Materials such as white alabaster were used to cast a warm radiance that diffused the immediate vicinity with golden light. Using white alabaster in a dim interior would create an impact over a large area where the light color would reflect light to help elevate the brightness of the space. The white alabaster was used throughout the palace of the Aljafería, which enabled the semi-covered halls to reflect light and brighten the interior. It was also used in the mihrab of the private mosque, which helped in highlighting the importance and sacred values of the mihrab, both visually and practically. The mihrab in sacred Islamic architecture serves several ceremonial and functional purposes where it signifies the orientation of the qibla and marks the physical space where the imam stands to lead the congregational prayer. The carved

stucco surface used in the space of the mihrab of the private oratory of the Aljafería allowed the penetration of natural light through the ornamentations that formed movement and depth on the two-dimensional surfaces, which illustrated the holiness of the mihrab through the essence of light as divinity. The contrast of light and shadow across the curved stucco was harmonized by the reflection of colors and materials of the golden tesserae and the iridescent green and ruby arabesque ornamentation of the "alfiz" around the mihrab (**Fig. 74**). Colors are always associated with light in nature. The color of an object that could be seen as the color of light reflected as colors are the results of the presence of light (Mehri, 2016). The lavish use of the gold color applied throughout the palace in the throne hall, courtyard, and the oratory fulfilled the enhancement of the light elements since gold is preeminently suited to reflecting light. The gold color was purposed in creating a strong emphasis of light with spiritual associations as the divinity of light and gold creates an association between the Aljafería as an earthly paradise and the ultimate reward of paradise in the afterlife.

Among the valuable work of José Miguel Puerta, I would like to highlight his study on light, time, and appearance in Islamic architecture, in which the Aljafería received some of his most sensitive insights from the point of view of the history of the senses (Puerta Vílchez, 2012).

Furthermore, the symbolic association of light is essential in Islamic architecture since light symbolizes divinity in Islam, as this Qur'anic verse indicates:

“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth, his light is like a niche that enshrines a lamp, the lamp within a crystal, the crystal is like a brilliant star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light, Allah guides whomever he wills to his light. And Allah sets the parables for people, for Allah has the knowledge of all things.” (Qur'an 24:35)

The concept of the divinity of light is heavily studied by renowned Muslim philosophers, including Al-Ghazali, who is considered one of the most important thinkers in the history of

Islam and wrote a whole treatise on a philosophical exploration of the divinity of light seeking the understanding of the reality and perception of the spiritual symbolism of the celestial light (Al-Ghazali, 1924). Light is also the symbol of God's wisdom that moved the believers from the dark to the light, which is the main message of Islam (Mazaheri & Mazaheri, 2020).

José Miguel Puerta (2012) discussed the role of light in Islamic architecture, where he included the palace of the Aljafería in his study. In Puerta's study, he not only analyzed the functional role of the element of light, similarly to what is discussed above, in penetrating through the exposed courtyard and the theatrical openings of the Aljafería to illuminate the throne hall, but also through its metaphorical role. Puerta indicated the symbolic association of light with the divine as it was illustrated in the inscription of the Sovereign surah on the walls of the throne hall. Along with the eternal time of divinity, through the epigraphs, the divinity of light illustrates the eternity of the sovereignty of the Hudid monarchs that live through the permanence of the palace. As mentioned before, the Hudid king presented himself to his subjects and courtiers, where he exuded a sense of righteousness and divine authority. Being surrounded by powerful symbolism and religious inscriptions embodied the very essence of divinity itself, in which he was portrayed as the chosen sovereign (Vidal, 2008). Puerta (2012) also assumed that the Hudid king might have presented himself theatrically to his subjects after having been hidden by a curtain or the lavish draped crossed arches of the Aljafería as a metaphorical association with a luminous figure appearing to the subjects. The idea of a luminosity was also associated with the atmosphere of joy in the palace in the poem by Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005):

قصرٌ غدا فيه السرور مُعرسا ... يغشى العيون بساطع الألاء

A palace that joy is celebrated in
overshadowing the eyes with dazzling pearls

As illustrated above, the verse described the halls as being dazzled by pearls, referring to the lamps that illuminated the space, indicating the use of these lighting instruments. However, the verse might also highlight the dazzling pearls as a metaphorical symbolism of

the light of the pleasurable atmosphere of the palace. These metaphorical representations of light were nourished by the inscriptions and poetic work to elevate the figure of the sovereign as a resemblance of the divine (Puerta Vílchez, 2012).

Muslim architects often integrated concepts of light and faith in creating Islamic monuments; for those with eyes to see, the theme of light was present in these spaces in both factual and metaphorical senses. In the case of the Aljafería, the master builders employed both physical and metaphoric approaches to enrich the divine presence in the palace through the medium of light. The combination of light sources through direct natural light from the exposed courtyard along with the reflection of light on the water basins and the marble flooring, and the existence of illumination instruments to be used at night, affected the space not only practically by brightening it but also visually to link it with the grand metaphors of the spirituality of the space; so too the use of the celestial colors and materials that reflected light and enhanced the illumination of the space combined with the manipulation of light and shadow through the arrangement of the arches. The Qur'anic verse shown above about God as light is followed by another verse:

“That light shines through houses of worship which Allah has ordered to be raised, and where His Name is mentioned. He is glorified there morning and evening.” (Qur'an 24:36)

This verse indicates that this celestial symbolic light is shining through mosques where the Muslims practice their sacred religious rituals. This verse is what often links the mihrab with light as Al-Ghazali (1924) signified in his famed treatise, in which Islamic architects tended to employ it architecturally through creating a source of lighting in the mihrab as a symbolic representation of the divine. This concept was also applied in the oratory of the Aljafería, where the mihrab niche was lit through the use of carved white stucco as the surfacing material, which enabled the penetration of natural light through it. The contrast of light and shadow across the curved stucco demonstrated the sacredness of the mihrab through the essence of light as divinity. The alfiz surrounding the mihrab also visually emphasized the sacred value of the mihrab through implementing colors and materials that reflected light purposed to highlight the experiences of holiness. The approach applied of combining the mystical concepts of light and paradise throughout the oratory and the whole Taifa palace

of the Aljafería allowed notions of reflecting a divinely projected sovereignty of the Hudid kings to illustrate their power and representation as strong, spiritual, intellectual Muslim leaders.

All these visual aspects integrated through the Aljafería palace, from the lavish architectural elements, extravagant ornamentations, and rich inscriptions to the paradisaical garden, treasured existence of water, and sacred implantations of light, enhanced visually the intended atmosphere in the palace. The lavish paradisaical atmosphere of the palace immersed the visual perception of the eleventh-century visitor in experiencing an astonishment through the sense of vision in which the visual aspect was linked with the idea of the palace as paradise on earth through the metaphorical connection applied throughout the Aljafería.

The Aljafería, Heard

Our understanding of art and architecture does not correspond exclusively with sight, as spatial architecture is seen, heard, and felt before it is intentionally reflected upon. The work of Juhani Pallasmaa (2012) emphasizes the relationship between the human body and the built space since architecture not only offers a visual interest but also a multisensory engagement. The building serves as a container that we physically experience, thus recognizing the importance of the sense of hearing and its role in understanding the space is crucial. Sound is one of the most challenging components of the past to reconstruct, yet it is influential. Architecture provides both visual and spatial frameworks for acoustics (Boynton & Reilly, 2015). Looking into the space through the lens of aural architecture as a sensory stimulus would offer a deeper layer into envisioning the experience of the Aljafería of the eleventh century. Aural architecture is the aspect of space that stimulates an emotional and behavioral response. Acoustics within space, whether planned or unplanned, instrumental or spoken, infrequent or ambient, all stimulate a response and an emotion. A built space can stimulate either desired or unsolicited feelings such as the sense of warmth, intimacy, freedom, seclusion, or unease, as well as sanctity, while these responses would correspondingly be stimulated through the other senses as well (Blessner & Salter, 2009). Drawing on these atmosphere theories, the initial intention of building the palace of the

Aljafería was to commemorate the glory and supremacy of Al-Muqtadir and the Taifa of Banu Hud, thus the intended atmosphere of the palace would stimulate a response upon entering.

Aural architecture, through its aesthetics and symbolism, matches visual architecture, since visual and aural connotations often align and highlight each other (Blessner & Salter, 2009). Once one enters the courtyard of the Aljafería palace, the perception of the space is enriched through a multisensorial experience. As the aural experience is parallel in terms of stimulus to the visual one, to conceptualize the eleventh-century perception of the palace, analyzing the aural factors of the space is fundamental. Standing in the courtyard, one would hear several sounds merged in harmony to create an impactful experience, such as the sound of the trees swayed by Zaragoza's winds in the garden of Santa Isabel courtyard while birds chirped all around, the sound of water from both water basins, the sound of the golden hall's tapestries stirred by the winds, the sound of whispering accompanied by the rhythms of the footsteps of the courtiers walking around, and maybe recitations of the Qur'an coming from the oratory during a prayer time, or the sound of music if one comes at night during the *majlis* sessions. All these various sounds, while synced in harmony, would impact the atmosphere intended for the palace.

Before analyzing the aural experience created in the Taifa palace, understanding the terminology used is essential. The adjective form of the word aural refers to the experience of processing sounds, while hearing refers to the recognition of sound, and listening refers to the conscious attention or response to the meanings, emotions, and indications encompassed within the sound (Blessner & Salter, 2009). Accordingly, aural architecture refers to the properties of a space that can be experienced by listening.

Moreover, multiple senses contribute to the creation of an internal experience of an external surrounding; the input created by listening has a great impact among individuals and cultures (Classen, 1993). Conscious listening and perception of sounds depends on culture rather than just the biological mechanism of hearing. Therefore, the messages behind the audible factors of the space were designed and created to achieve a particular aim within the cultural framework. In order to analyze the aural architecture of a space it is

important to take into consideration the cultural framework and the purposes of the built space. To assess the aural atmosphere within the space in its cultural context, ascertaining how acoustic characteristics are perceived is fundamental by assessing the sources, conditions, purposes, and meaning of the sounds. Understanding aural architecture entails an acceptance and recognition of the cultural relativism for all sensory experiences. Sensory anthropology studies how social structures regulate the practices of the senses and the meaning of the subsequent perceptions (Howes, 1991). Oleg Grabar (1980) remarked that historical Islamic culture found the means of self-representation in hearing and acting rather than in seeing, in which it is not forms that identify Islamic culture but sounds, narration, and the way of life. However, as Nina Ergin (2008) indicated, sound plays a crucial role in Islamic culture, particularly in rituals such as recital of the Qur'an, prayer, poetry, and *Adab* vocals. However, many historians who specialize in Islamic architecture have focused solely on the visual aspects of monuments, neglecting the importance of acoustics. While there have been some studies on the acoustic and hearing factors of these spaces, they tend to be more scientific and quantitative in nature, disregarding the philosophical and religious ideologies that underlie the acoustics. As such, there is much more exploration to be done in this area.

As Tom Nickson (2015) indicated, the magnificence of Islamic monuments was often described in literary works, but not much attention was given to the aural aspect in either Arabic or Christian literature, including journals, memoirs, poetry, and travelogues. These works mainly conveyed information about the physical appearance of these structures. However, there are hints that implied that the visual greatness of these remarkable Islamic buildings was matched acoustically, though this connection is difficult to measure. In the case of the Aljafería, studying the architectural remains in relation to the cultural practices that had been conducted during the Taifa period would allow a glimpse of the aural experience. Nickson (2015) drew on the ideas of Aristotle, one of the most influential philosophers of classical antiquity, for a medieval theory of sound in both Muslim and Christian Iberia, that sound occurring in both actuality and potentiality. While the actuality of sound in these historical buildings may not be present today, delving into the literature and anecdotes of historians who have visited these places in the past could help uncover the potentiality of sound from these currently silent objects and spaces. This, in turn, could

pave the way for an archaeology of acoustics of Al-Andalus monuments. Poetry and literature, albeit limited in quantity, that explains the cultural practices in the Aljafería would illustrate both the architectural setting and the perception of the visitors and dwellers of the palace, in which these factors permit assumptions to be made of the eleventh-century aural setting.

Based on Eduardo Carrero Santamaría (2020), in order to assess the audible factors in creating an atmosphere in a built space, the existing or created acoustics should be considered among the intentions of those who built the building or of those who later occupied it. In the case of the Aljafería palace, as much as the existence of the garden had an impact on the visual experience, as was illustrated above, it influenced heavily the aural one. The movement of the trees due to the breeze and frequent windy weather of Zaragoza created a quick connection in the mind to the paradisaical pleasure of the oasis. In the book of Al-Maqqari (1968), there is a narration by Abu Al-Mutriq ibn Abdul-Aziz of a *majlis* anecdote where he and the famous poet Ibn Ammar attended a *majlis* hosted by the third Hudid king Al-Mu'tamin in the Aljafería palace. The narration of the *majlis* illustrated the audible sounds of the swaying tree branches of the garden at the patio of Santa Isabel due to the effect of the windy and cloudy weather. Another version of the anecdote by Al-Maqqari (1968) was reported subsequently demonstrating the paradisaical atmosphere formed in the palace, recounting that said *majlis* was assembled after the sky had rained hard on the exposed courtyard, followed by lightning and pounding thunder. The flowers of the garden bloomed as if they had been awakened from their silence, as the clustered clouds were dissolved, and the trees ceased echoing while covered in the dewy rain residue. Thus, the courtiers enjoyed the pleasure of the *majlis* accompanied by the surrounding environmental acoustics along with the sound of musical instruments. These anecdote narrations not only exhibit the visual effect of the garden but also the sounds of the movement of trees in the patio of Santa Isabel were an impactful factor in creating the intended paradisaical atmosphere within the palace, as it reminds visitors of the concept of *Jannah* while creating this multisensorial experience.

Studying the sensory experience of a historical space can only be done through the awareness of the circumstances and stages of the building through the changes of its architectural and artistic features, as well as the ceremonial and liturgical periods (Carrero Santamaría, 2020). For spaces with devoted religious beliefs, stimulating multiple senses is fundamental in order to encourage a spiritual atmosphere. To access knowledge of the divine, the sense of hearing is considered above all others (Blessner & Salter, 2009). In the same way as chapels and churches take acoustics into account in architectural design to carry the songs and prayers, Islamic architecture also devotes great importance to carrying sounds within space, since hearing the imam is necessary to perform the religious rituals. The sacred Islamic architecture is famous for many components that are specifically purposed to transmit sounds either to the exterior such as the minaret or within the interior such as the dome and mihrab. The minaret serves to offer an elevated point from which the muezzin³⁴ can call for prayer, *Adhan*, similarly to the concept of village bells. The call to prayer epitomizes the sound quality externally and summons Muslims out of their daily life into the mosque (Bloom et al., 2009). The minaret also serves visually not only to pinpoint the mosque from a distance but also as a powerful visual reminder of the presence of Islam in the land. It unifies the Muslim community and functions as a territorial marker together with an indicator of time. The sound of the call to prayer connects the local community of Muslims through its communal auditory space, and also unifies the Muslim lands through a commonly practiced acoustic ritual (Grabar, 1980). As for the interior, domes can serve as a vessel to project and reflect sounds to enable the Qur'an recitation by the imam to be heard around the space. The volume of the acoustics could be manipulated while building the mosque interior based on a calculated design of the height, circumference, and construction material of the dome (Kayili, 2005). Also, the mihrab in religious Islamic architecture serves several liturgical and functional purposes: It indicates the orientation of the qibla, which the congregation face; it also marks the physical space where the imam stands to lead the prayer, as well as acting as an acoustic enhancer where the recess in the wall functions as a resonator, which helps to disseminate the imam's voice to the fellow worshippers (Ahmad et al., 2013; Othman et al., 2016). However, as most studies regarding

³⁴ The muezzin is the person who announces the call to daily prayer in Islamic rituals.

the sounds in Islamic architecture have concentrated on the architectural and engineering mechanism and measurements of the acoustics within the space, this paper's focus is more on the experience of the sound and the aural atmosphere intended behind it.

In the case of the Aljafería, although the mosque was severely damaged, it still shows the skills and artistic techniques of Taifa architects. The mosque is considered a private oratory that was intended for the private use of the Hudid kings and their court members to perform their religious rituals. Thus, the mosque did not contain all the architectural elements that were intended for public mosques such as the minaret to call for prayers and the minbar for the imam to stand on to perform the Friday speech. Also, the small-scale size of the mosque meant that it did not require the same acoustic enhancers to carry sounds around the mosque, yet it still contained the architectural elements that represented an Islamic sanctuary space. Much of what has been carried out in regard to mosques' acoustic design in general also applies to the Aljafería's private mosque. The mosque was roofed with a centralized dome that served as a sounding vessel to project and reflect the recitation of the Qur'an and prayers voiced by the imam to be heard around the space. However, the original dome was demolished when the Catholic monarchs built their palace over the Islamic halls, and the current dome was reconstructed by Íñiguez Almech following the pattern of the ones in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. Therefore, determining the exact sound experience of the Aljafería is challenging. As for the mihrab niche, it functioned as an aural enhancer where the recess in the wall served as a resonator to distribute the imam's voice to the fellow worshippers praying behind him. Some documentations speculate that the original dome of the Aljafería mosque was made of curved alabaster that allowed the light and air to penetrate, which would alter the acoustic function of the dome; however, the scale of the mihrab in relation to the size of the mosque makes it an adequate sounding vessel to spread the sound of the imam clearly to the whole space. The function of these combined architectural elements was to manipulate the acoustic space for an optimal celestial listening experience. The heavy ornamentations made of alabaster on the walls also contributed to the absorbance of the sounds to minimize the acoustic reverberating to balance it with the supposed echoing effect of the dome (Ergin, 2013). The materials and quality of the ceiling, walls, and floor also played an important role in shaping the

reverberation and quality of the acoustics within the space. As for the flooring, although currently it is surfaced with marble, mosque spaces are accustomed to being covered with rugs. The habit of covering the mosque floor with rugs not only offered a softer surface for performing prayer when kneeling or lying prostrate, but it also functioned as a substantial sound-absorbing material to balance the acoustic reverberation in the space (Prodi & Marsilo, 2003). As the heavy ornamental appearance of the mosque communicates visually through the eyes, its enveloping echo and acoustics connect through the ears. Nonetheless, for those with devoted religious beliefs, both senses create a feeling of being in an earthly symbolic home of the divine.

Moreover, in Islam, the concept of the written Qur'an cannot be separated from its oral rendition, as it is believed in the Islamic faith that the Prophet Muhammad received the Qur'anic verses verbally from the Angel Gabriel and orally recited them afterward to his fellow Muslims. The name Qur'an itself means recitation and was spread verbally until later in 650, when the verses of the Qur'an were compiled in a dependable written form, which still could not disregard the influence of oral transmission. The Qur'an is meant to be recited loudly in a reenactment of the original intonation and articulation, in the same way as Allah first conveyed it to Muhammad (Ergin, 2008). The intonation used in reciting the Qur'an demonstrates the highly complex sound patterns that stretch over lengthy passages and highlight specific theologically critical moments, which creates an affect in which sound and meaning are intertwined (Michael, 1999). The significant effect of intonation in Qur'an recital is carried as much by the sound as by its semantic content. This aesthetic experience of the Qur'an with its complex sound patterns justifies the Qur'an's resistance to translation that carries the same effect into languages other than Arabic (Nelson, 2001). Therefore, the Qur'an is not meant to be read with one's eyes only but also to be perceived and recited acoustically as a multisensorial involvement in order to be immersed in its messages. The reciters use the intonation method to highlight specific words and messages through the extension of phonemes, pauses, and repetition in order to increase the attention to the meaning to elicit a spiritual response from listeners. Thus, the reciter enriches the listener's perception of the Qur'anic verses to involve them intellectually and spiritually (Ergin, 2008).

The significance of the experience of Qur'anic recitation influences builders and architects of Islamic architecture, especially in the religious spaces, to enable the multisensorial perception through the recitation within the built space. Builders and architects would have intended ways to optimize the sensual, and in particular the acoustic, experience of this ritual performance. Although the oratory of the Aljafería was built for the private use of the Hudid kings and courtiers, it was still used heavily since they performed at least the five daily obligatory prayers without adding the other voluntary optional prayers or the further religious rituals performed in the mosque. The importance of the mosque is parallel with that of prayer in Islam as it is the second pillar of Islam, in which prayer allows Muslims to enrich their devoutness and cultivate the putrefaction of the heart to strengthen their faith and worship to Allah (Buyukcelebi, 2005). The existence of the mosque also undoubtedly defines the Aljafería palace as in Islamic space where the Banu Hud kings and their courtiers performed both their social and political ceremonies along with their religious rituals, which clearly illustrates that all aspects of Muslims' lives are intertwined with their religious beliefs. Jale Erzen stated that Muslims connected to art on an experiential level rather than a theoretical one; consequently, they approached architecture as a creation of deep theatrical spaces rather than linear physical ones (Erzen, 1991). The mosque can be recognized as an exceptionally well-tuned acoustic medium, designed to sound and reflect the word of God in the form of Qur'anic recitations and prayers in an effective way whereby listeners experienced multisensorial perception of the power of the divine. Therefore, not only is the existence of the mosque in the *munya* of the Aljafería indispensable but also creating a theatrically rich space that reflects the significance of the religious rituals performed in it is essential in strengthening the representation of the Hudid king as a Muslim leader. The way in which the Aljafería's oratory was conceptualized demonstrates the validity of framing the mosque architecture as experiential space. All elements of the space of the mosque contribute to enriching the aural experience intended. The sounds of the Qur'anic recitations, the prayers, the *dua* or *dhikr* after prayers and the clicking of prayer beads, the physical building and its furnishings, such as the dome, mihrab, arches, rugs, tiles, and lamps, all contribute to the aural spiritual atmosphere. Hearing, seeing, feeling, and engaging in all of these features would lead to a multisensorial experience of the divine (Ergin, 2008). The mosque, with all its religious rituals and functions, demonstrates that the

architecture was not only executed as an instrument for contemplation but also for sensory participation in the spiritual experience.

One of the interesting aspects when analyzing the aural architecture of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería is recognizing that most of the palace is considered an open space, since the courtyard of Santa Isabel fulfills an important function by forming a space that performs as a connection center between the ceremonial areas of the throne hall and the residential areas of the palace. The exposed courtyard is also the section that all the spaces of the palace surround – a section that connects these spaces with the outside. The courtyard allows not only visual continuity to the exterior of the palace from its absent roof but also an acoustic continuity from the surroundings. The acoustic arena of the surrounding exterior would be merged with the interior of the palace; in other words, the sounds of the environmental surroundings could be heard from the interior of the palace due to the exposed space. Although the pleasure palace was built outside the city walls of Zaragoza, where it was supposed to be quieter than in the city, John Cage (1961) indicated that pure silence doesn't exist in nature. Therefore, the sound of the Ebro river, the winds, the trees, and even animals would all contribute to creating a background noise for the palace with various levels of volume. Also, sound travels differently in open spaces than in enclosed ones due to variation in the physical boundaries that affect the acoustic reverberation. If walking in the courtyard one would hear the birds chirping from above, as well as the sound of the movements of the trees both from the palace garden and the exterior. Hearing these sounds would create a continuity that enriches the experience of the visitors by enhancing the sense of connection to the surrounding while still creating a visual physical barrier to enhance the feeling of privacy, which is the intended atmosphere for a dwelling in a pleasure palace. It is also important to understand that the current experience may differ due to the change in the surrounding, since it was a rural area at that time, making it a perfect location for a *munya*, while it is currently inside the urban city of Zaragoza where the acoustic sources and horizons are different (**Fig.75**). However, today, even with the current existence of the palace within an urban city, once in the interior one feels the privacy that the walls have created. As in the courtyard, one still feels isolated from the urban noises where the sounds of birds, airflow, the movements of trees, and running water overpower any surrounding noises. All these factors contribute to the main function of the

munya as a secluded private pleasurable space. Moreover, aside from the enclosed spaces of the mosque and the bedchambers of the residential areas, most of the Taifa palace is considered an open space. The Golden Hall overlooks the patio through the openings created by the arches, which not only give a visual connection to the courtyard but also an acoustic one, although the acoustic experience in the throne hall differs from the courtyard since the throne hall is a semi-enclosed space. The three walls from the north and two sides along with the roof create a partially encircled space that sturdily contains the acoustic horizon better than the courtyard.



Figure 75. The Aljafería, currently, surrounded by urban areas

Furthermore, the aural experience anticipated in the throne hall of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería differs from the aural atmosphere proposed for other palaces, as the function intended for the throne hall of the Aljafería was to serve as a platform for social ceremonies and intellectual and literature *majlis* along with musical and poetic performances, which differs from other halls that were intended for political and ruling formalities. The political spaces that aimed to reflect the power and superiority of the sovereign would be strategized to create an aural atmosphere where the acoustics should travel clearly through the entire space for attendees to hear the sermons or orations by the kings or his viziers. As for the golden hall, the *majlis* circles were mostly private and informal and did not require the same quality of acoustic mechanisms. At the same time, the spatial size of the throne hall, although it is the largest interior space of any Taifa palace known so far, was still not

as massive in scale as other Caliphates' halls. The throne hall was specially designed to function as a backdrop for the royal *majlis*. Its size indicates it was intended for such an intimate function since it could comfortably seat ten people at most (Robinson, 1997). Thus, the space of the hall does not require specific architectural sound vessels to carry the acoustics so far. Moreover, the golden hall was decorated with tapestries, curtains, and embroidered cushions to enrich the theatrical luxurious atmosphere of the hall. These textiles were mentioned in the poem by Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005) in describing the Aljafería palace while praising its architect Slav Khalifa Zuhayr, when he illustrated the tapestries and embroidered pillows distributed in the Golden Hall:

ونرى نمارق صورة مصفوفة ... موشية الأقطار والأرجاء

And we see cushions formed in lines

Embroidered in the center and sides

These aforementioned cushions would be used as seating places for the *majlis* attendees. The existence of the textiles was not only for visual enhancements but also for acousticeffects. Aurally, the rustling of the textiles such as draperies, hangings, and pillows were other elements in the lavish setting of the throne hall (Blessing, 2018) that appealed to the senses with the sounds that they created when moved by the breeze from the courtyard. Standing in the golden hall, one can imagine the eleventh-century aural perception surrounding the space during the *majlis* setting: the sound of the vocal poetry accompanied with musical instruments, the sound of the rustling of textiles moved around by the breezy weather, the sound of the clicking of wine glasses, the sound of water running through from the water basins, the sound of the courtiers and *majlis* attendees talking and socializing, as well as the nature sounds of trees and birds from the courtyard in the background since it is all connected. All these acoustics contributed to the paradisaical atmosphere mentioned in the narration of the *majlis* praising the multisensory beauty of the Aljafería palace.

When proposing the aural experience of the eleventh century of the Taifa palace it is important to consider some critical points. Besides the architectural changes that the Taifa palace endured over the centuries, the current palace is stripped of most of the interior

embellishments that ornamented the eleventh-century palace. While none are currently preserved on-site, the textiles of the interior, including the draperies, hangings, and embroidered pillows, not only functioned for the purpose of visual enchantment but also for acoustic effects. Another element to take into consideration is the loss of most of the ornamental alabaster that covered the throne hall during the Taifa time, in which today only fragments have survived. The textiles and plastered ornamentations in the throne hall along with the decorative pieces would act as sound absorbents, which caused the sound to travel differently in the space; thus, the contemporary acoustic experience is altered. Moreover, the water basin of the northern side no longer exists, with its location currently highlighted through a different flooring material to help visitors to understand the dimension and effect on the space. However, the absence of the northern water basin not only alters the visual aspect but also the aural one. In this line of thinking, Eduardo Carrero Santamaría (2020) demonstrated the concerns in perceiving bare architecture. He explored how the acoustic measurements are carried out in empty spaces as well as how the enjoyment of bare architecture does not contemplate the authentic historical particulars, thus the contemporary perception will be distorted. To consider a study of historical acoustics without taking all these matters into account is to sustain a neglectful approach in searching an ancient building for responses to contemporary requirements. The lack of sensory resources in bare medieval spaces forces us to rely on the documented knowledge to understand the original perception. Although the bare architecture with all its endured alteration does not accurately reflect the historical facts, not having the full sensorial experience is no excuse to ignore the documented studies. Our obligation is to envision them within the rationality and knowledge in which could be considered a hypothetical restoration assumption.

The Aljafería, Felt

As previously discussed, the perception of architecture is a multisensory experience and does not associate exclusively with sight, in which the space is seen, heard, and felt. Feeling an architectural space varies from directly touching a textural object to sensing the airflow on the skin. The feeling of architectural space, both tangible and intangible, carries on with subjectivity in judgments such as temperature fluctuations and degrees of softness (Başyazıcı, 2012). The realm of feeling approached through architecture in this paper

includes the sensorial experience of both touching the tangible elements and feeling the intangible essences through both the tactual and olfactory aspects.

The haptic aspect of architecture, according to Juhanni Pallasmaa (2000), is essential in the sensory experience since touch assumes varied ways in influencing the perception of space. All the senses, including the visual and audible, are a continuation and an extension of the haptic sense, hence all senses are an adaptation of skin tissue, in which any sensory experience is a means of touching. Pallasmaa (2017) theorizes that the unconscious experience of touch is unescapably masked with vision and hearing. Through vision, the eye touches a space or an object and estimates its weight, temperature, and surface texture. Also, through hearing, the ear feels the quality, scale, and echoing surfaces of objects. One wouldn't perceive the surrounding integrally without feeling the texture of surfaces, the temperature of certain materials, the sharpness of corners, or even the difference in walking on slopes (Holl et al., 2006). In the same way that vision is the psychological medium in perceiving optical input, haptics is the medium of receiving what is tangible (Kennedy & Juricevic, 2002).

Perceptions of spaces are processed by haptic sensations, as clarified by Juhani Pallasmaa (2012), in that the mental experience of a space is more closely related to haptic collections than optical imagery sequences. Without the collaboration of touch, the eye would be incapable of interpreting depth and spaces, which would result in sensory fragments. This process of connecting sensations to representations is the human method of spatial perception (Herssens & Heylighen, 2008). However, in this part of the chapter, the term haptic does not include visual and aural perceptions, as it solely refers to touchable experiences through skin contact that encompasses touching tangible elements and feeling intangible ones.

Haptics involves different kinds of sensation. The haptic can be sensed actively through active touching or passively by being touched without preceding the action, or even dynamically by touching through a tool. Some scholars identify haptic as an active feeling while tactile touch as a passive one. Architecturally, as one actively enters a space and touches the surface of the flooring, one will passively feel the warmth of the sun shining in

that space, while dynamically one feels the heaviness of a door through the doorknob (Herssens & Heylighen, 2008). The skin, which is the medium of the haptic sensation, reads the texture, weight, density, and temperature of objects within spaces (Pallasmaa, 1994). Touching a space constructs a conscious experience with that space and enhances spatial recognition (Başyazıcı, 2012). Touch is the sensory mode that integrates the human body with the experiences of the surrounding world.

Pallasmaa (2012) states that without valuing tactility, architectural spaces would be flat, immaterial, and irrelevant. The unconscious tactile aspect in vision is overlooked in current architecture, whereas it was intensely present in historical architecture. Islamic architecture is constantly entangled with creating multisensory spaces (Rubiera, 1988); the tangible aspect is essential in employing these physical elements to deepen the sensual pleasure of the metaphorical layers in built spaces. The physical tangible elements of monumental architecture reflect the symbolism and conceptual representation with respect to the function of the space. It is that aspect that evokes literary descriptions of structures. It is also the aspect that makes it possible to conserve and preserve historical and cultural values. In monumental structural design, the tangible materials are art forms that reflect the function, time period, and cultural and environmental characteristics of the built monument (Sarathi Mishra & Das, 2014).

One of the main tangible elements that influence the haptic perception of a space is its building materials. Building materials form an integral part of defining architectural monuments. The role of the materials in architecture is not only vital due to the structural importance and constructional behavior but also in conveying the physical appearance, or the echoing effect of the sound, as well as indicating the reasoning behind their selection. This reasoning in the selection of materials could vary in relation to environmental purposes, cultural norms, and availability within the surroundings, along with the historical value, which together form the essence of the built space (Sarathi Mishra & Das, 2014). The building materials affect the perception of spaces and serve to enhance the creation of the atmosphere intended for a specific space. The concept of the selected materials elevates the endurance and visual aspects of design, as it provides a character and visual appeal to the structure and enriches the aesthetic and atmospheric value of a building. Building

materials establish a connection between the structural stability of the building and its visual and haptic quality, since they integrate the aesthetic elements with practicality (Sarathi Mishra & Das, 2014)

The types of building materials that form the space reflect the availability of the building materials in a specific time period when the structure was built and the accustomed techniques that had been used, in which the materials act as a tangible language of that period. Architecture does not solely function as inhabiting space, as Karsten Harries (1982) indicates that it is also a resistance of time, in which the expression of beauty is essentially the expression of timeless existence. Pallasmaa (1994) states that natural materials such as stones, bricks, and wood allow the sensations to penetrate their surfaces and enable visitors to trust the reliability of the building. Natural materials illustrate their age and history as well as the story of their formation and journey of human use. They show through their surfaces and patina of wear the building journey, which enhances the essence of the experience of time. In the case of the Aljafería, the building materials conveyed the journey through time that the palace underwent (**Fig.76**). As was common during the eleventh century in Islamic Iberia, building materials moved toward bricks or a mixture of hard adobe and rammed earth in contrast to the stonemasonry used during the Caliphate in the tenth century. Although using bricks and rammed earth made the building process faster, it led to short-lived monuments since it is less resistant and less durable. This would explain, in addition to the voluntary destruction due to constant wars, why many palaces of the eleventh century did not survive (Guichard, 2002). The only exception to the disappearance of palatine buildings from the Taifa period was the fortified palace of the Aljafería as it was constructed of more resistant natural materials.

Architecture frames experience and assigns a horizon of perceptions and meanings. In addition to inhabiting humans in space, it also relates them to history as it conveys a measure of time (Pallasmaa, 2017). The building materials of the Aljafería not only articulate the endurance through time but also shape the sensual perception of the palace. The haptic sense of the materials used in the Aljafería palace evokes the sense of strength along with



Figure 76. An angle of the north portico showing various original materials of the Taifa palace

the engraved idea of the palace enduring centuries of alterations. Haptically, textures convey important information in identifying objects and recognizing materials (Klatzky & Lederman, 1995), in which textures connect the human body with the surrounding tangible elements. According to Pallasmaa (1994), the tactile sense connects us with time and tradition as through the medium of touch we relate to countless generations. Thus, approaching the Aljafería through a focus on the haptic sense in the exploration of space illustrates the eleventh-century perception as the fragments of the original materials convey the textures of the surfaces that Taifa inhabitants felt. The multiple surfaces of different textures such as the sleek tiles, the deep reliefs in alabaster and stucco, and the polished marble of the flooring along with column capitals imply the rich tactile sensual experience during the Taifa period. The poem by Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005) describing the Aljafería palace during the reign of Al-Musta'in mentioned in one verse their feet treading on gilded silk, which illustrated the softness of the polished marble flooring. In the original Arabic poem, Al-Gazzar used the term *Damqas* in referring to the flooring, which is

a type of expensive fabric that is usually made of white silk and ornamented with golden embroidery, which would resemble the smooth white and veined marble flooring. The description of the flooring based on the haptic sense implies the importance of the tactile sense in creating a pleasurable experience, which serves and strengthens the original intention of the palace to construct a pleasure space where the Hudid kings and their courtiers would enjoy pleasant leisure time.

Further important tangible elements that richly influence the haptic sensation within a space are fabrics and textiles. In the rich haptic spaces offered in Islamic architecture, textural objects such as the various types of textiles were integral (Blessing, 2018). Textiles in Islamic cultures justified an exaggerated role far more than what was anticipated from them in other cultures. The medieval Muslim cultures assigned a vast importance to the haptic sense through heavily integrating fabrics and textiles in inhabited spaces, such as curtains, draperies, and pillows, which were used to enrich the lavish setting within Andalusian palaces. Richly decorated textiles, as Oleg Grabar (1992) indicated, were a distinct form of ornamental production in the Islamic world that was used widely in architectural embellishment.

When approaching Islamic architecture, historians tend to forget the impact of textiles in spatial atmospheres, as surviving monuments mostly consist of bare architecture. The architectural Islamic spaces were elaborately covered in textiles as doorways were hung with curtains to create private spaces, bare floors, which were sometimes unpaved, were covered with carpets and mats, and outside in the courtyards and gardens, royal settings were formed by a tent of brocade. Sources such as a wide array of medieval literature, representations in illustrated pieces or manuscripts, and surviving archaeological textiles demonstrate the elaborate role of textiles in Islamic architecture (Golombek, 1988). The textiles themselves described in these sources provide information, as they are a reflection of the complex industry of a time that produced these materials for a diversified range of tastes and functions that represented that historical period. Textiles could also reflect the social norms and traditional behaviors of a specific culture in which wealth was expressed through one's textile possessions in terms of both garments and furnishings (Grohmann, 1963). According to Al-Azdi, a lush sitting room of the early eleventh century had at least

four different kinds of floor coverings, three types of cushions, and two expensive textile draperies, with the royal halls certainly being entirely draped and spread with lavish textiles (Lamm, 1937). This description of luxuriousness was reinforced through paintings of medieval Islamic cultures that illustrated varied ways in which textile furnishings were used.

Lisa Golombek (1988) discussed the social aspect of textiles in furnishing, which included a set of behavioral patterns concerning sitting and reclining in medieval Arabic and Islamic cultures that excluded the creation of an expanded variety of rigid furnishings like chairs, tables, and beds. Although these furniture items existed at that time, they were constantly complemented by further textiles such as cushions, covers, and carpets; and in most cases, these textile additions sufficed alone. In these social settings, most activities and practices were performed on or close to the floor, as cushions were purposed as seats for sitting and reclining. This style of seating was also applied in the palace of the Aljafería, as illustrated in the poem of Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005), which described embroidered cushions being aligned in the halls of the Aljafería. In the original Arabic poem, Al-Gazzar used the word “*Namareq*” to specify the types of cushions laid out, which refers to small cushions that were used traditionally to recline on. The types of cushions presented in the poem illustrate that the seating of the *majalis* practiced in the Aljafería was close to floor, which allowed *majalis* members to recline on these cushions. The embroidery on the textiles of the cushions evokes the haptic perceptions and enriches the tactile experience of the palace. Also, the use of the word *Namareq* by Al-Gazzar mimics the 15th verse of the 88th surah in the Qur’an using the same word in describing the believers’ seats in heaven, which illustrates the imitation of Paradise of the textile seats of the Aljafería palace. This depiction of Paradise in the textiles of the palace enriches the linking of the Aljafería’s atmosphere to an earthly paradise.

Moreover, Golombek (1988) claims that this social setting of reclining on cushions while surrounded by various types of textiles originated from the preceding nomadic life of Arab cultures in which textiles formed the semi-enclosed space of the tent as well as the rug-covered flooring – a form of nomadic life that persisted even after the building of Islamic monuments, which could be illustrated through the tradition of moving to seasonal palaces

and *munyas*. Thus, the application of this seating style, while lavishly elevated, links the *munya* of the Aljafería to the origin of Arabs, in which the Hudid kings represented themselves as legitimate Muslim Arab leaders, as viewed at that time as strength in power legitimacy.

Furnishings in Islamic palaces were treasured for several reasons. Functionally, furnishings and textiles offered insulation and comfort. They were also a means of changing the aesthetic of a space without altering its constructed structure. Atmospherically, furnishings and textiles allowed the creation of a specific atmosphere through the quality and ornamentation of the material, and this atmosphere could be changed as well, in which changes might entail a seasonal rotation of materials through fabrics and colors. Some Caliphs and rulers had brocade curtains for their *majlis* and throne halls in the winter and fine linen ones in the summer (Canard, 1951). Floor coverings and carpets were also coordinated based on the season. These alterations were not only exchanged based on the seasonal changes but were also applied for special occasions. Furnishings and textiles were purposed for conveying certain messages or demonstrating specific images about the space. The textiles within the space were chosen to display the power and wealth of Caliphs and kings. The visits of ambassadors to the royal court provided the opportunity to exhibit the lavish collections of furnishings, in which the value and rarity of the textiles signified the realm's wealth and influence (Mackie, 2015). Textile furnishings were also purposed during these visits to send nonverbal messages to visitors either through embroidered imagery or through inscriptions due to their portable characteristics, where they could be altered based on the purpose of the hosted visit (Golombek, 1988).

These symbolic purposes and intended messages were also applied to the curtains draped on the walls of Islamic courts. The textiles of the curtains served both symbolically and practically. Functionally, the curtains offered shade and privacy, with both being essential in the environmental setting of most of Islamic architecture, along with the religious and cultural traditions that required isolation (Bush, 2006). The draped curtains also functioned to enhance the theatricality of the royal court where the ruler, attired in his regalia, was presented dramatically as the curtains opened to impress visitors to the court (Golombek,

1988). The existence of curtains in the palace of the Aljafería was proved through Al-Gazzar's poem (2005) as he described them as pure gold, which implies a gilded embroidery on the drapes.

بنيت على أرض الدمقس ستوره ... في خالص العقيان خير سماء

Build on its silk floor, covers (Curtains)

That of pure gold as finest sky

The presence of curtains in the halls of the palace would allow the assumption of the theatrical presentation of the Hudid king during royal visits, which would escalate the perception of awe to both the magnificence of the space and the power of the king. The theatrical power expressed in the palace would mirror the Hudid kings' intentions to establish their sovereignty through the lavish atmosphere that intimidates visitors while experiencing the palace. The heavy lavish drapery on the walls distinguished Islamic culture in which the appreciation of drapery was presented in both the textiles of garments and the textiles in spatial spaces. Lisa Golombek (1988) initiated an interesting observation based on Ewert's studies (1968) that the Islamic interest in the weaving techniques of drapery even penetrated architecture. This drapery technique was demonstrated in the overlapping arches of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, which might suggest that the architects created a wrapping effect in the constructed shape of arches. The surface produced was more similar to woven textiles than interlacing. This woven and drapery method was also presented, and elevated, in the interlacing arches of the palace of the Aljafería.

In addition, the tactile experience of a space is also influenced greatly by intangible elements. Steven Holl (2006) indicates that according to the sensorial experience, architecture is the only art form that can offer a tactual sensation of both tangible textured materials like wood or stones, and intangible materials like air, temperature, light, or odors. Although the idea of intangible materials is more of an abstract element, it heavily influences the tactual perception of a space.

The skin, as the medium of the haptic sensation, traces the ambience of the built space, as it senses the airflow and recognizes the temperature fluctuations between exposed

spaces and shaded ones (Pallasmaa, 1994). The exposed courtyard of Santa Isabel of the Aljafería palace provides a tactual experience in various ways. The natural light penetrated through the exposed areas provides a sense of warmth in contrast to the shaded areas in the throne hall and under the trees of the garden. This variation in temperature engages the body with the surroundings and evokes the conceptualized ideas of the shade as an oasis and a reward, which lead to pleasurable sensations. The coolness offered in the shaded areas induces the connections of the palace to the perception of an earthly paradise, especially with cultures coming from desert origins. Also, the water basins on the north and south sides of the courtyard of the Aljafería offered a drop in temperature, which pleurably invigorated the tactual sensation through providing a cool sensual respite during the feverish summers.

Another sensory feature that is related to the tactual aspect through intangible elements is the olfactory perception. Scent has a dramatic impact on the experience of an architecture, in which it is a subconsciously a nonphysical feature of a space that is felt by anyone within that built space (Drobnick, 2002). Thoughtful planning should be aimed at the role of olfactory experiences in architecture as the olfactory senses are currently mostly neglected, whereas historical Eastern and Islamic cultures valued the psychological and metaphorical influence of odors in their architecture (Başyazıcı, 2012). Islamic cultures attributed great importance to pleasure through olfactory senses. Although Arabic Muslim cultures were not the first or only religious societies to value the importance of scents, as it is an ancient practice (Ergin, 2014), they perceived pleasant odor as a purifier, a protector, and a pleasure (Aubaile-Sallenave, 2006). Unlike tangible elements, scents are challenging to preserve, and architectural archives do not contain olfactory documentations (Jasper & Otero-Pailos, 2016). However, contemporary historical preservations incorporate experimental approaches to olfactory preservation in preserving architecture (Tošić, 2016). Yet, our perception of aromatic experiences within the historical Aljafería is based on assumptions drawing on available documentations. In architecture, the olfactory experience could be integrated in the design of the built space or created by the cultural practices within the space.

Architects, by employing the olfactive aspect in a built environment, are able to incite targeted types of behaviors or sensitive experiences. The sensory experience through the olfactory sense could be incorporated in the design of a built space, such as incorporating gardens or forms of fragrant vegetations within the spatial layout. In constructing an olfactory experience, a garden design would draw the attention to smell, which has lingered in different ways throughout history. The application of aromatic plantings is a common method in enhancing the sensory richness of a garden (Bowring, 2006). The scent of the garden circulating right through the palace is enhanced through the spatial composition. The layout provides natural ventilation across the garden that carries the aromatic essence throughout the space (Classen et al., 1994). This method was applied in the Aljafería palace through locating the garden in the center of the exposed courtyard overlooked by the interior of the Taifa palace through the arranged opening of the lavish arches. This arrangement not only offered visual enhancement but also allowed olfactive perception through the airflow of the courtyard carrying the fragrance of the planted aromatic vegetations. The courtyard of the Aljafería may well have been a type of “crossing courtyard” – a “patio de crucero” – in which a platform between parterres located several meters below ground level made it possible to walk among the fragrant leaves of the trees, among the flowers during the flowering period, and to eat the fruit directly when it had ripened. This type of crossing courtyard, which seems to have originated in Persia, became widespread throughout Al-Andalus and was even imitated in the palaces of the Christian kings of Castile and Aragón (Torres Balbás, 1958; Tito Rojo, 2011; Calvo & Guillén, 2012).³⁵.

Also, the selection of the aromatic trees planted in the Aljafería garden enhanced the olfactory perception. As Jacky Bowring (2006) indicates, the ability of smell to enrich the spatial experience conveys a strong relationship with its effect on the emotions and sensations of the receivers. The fragrant trees of the Aljafería evoked the paradisaical atmosphere as it resembled the trees of the gardens of paradise.

³⁵ For example, in the Reales Alcázares in Seville or in King Pedro’s palace in Tordesillas (see the chapter of Beyond Possibilities: An applicability Exploration), or in the *Palau Reial Major* in Barcelona, after King Martí el Humà’s works, around 1400 (Carrero Santamaría, 2018).

Additionally, the olfactory experience could be generated by the cultural practices within the space. Scents hold a substantial value in Islamic culture, hence pleasant smells are equal to cleanliness and purity, which Islam guides its followers to practice. Throughout the history of Islamic culture, the usage of incense and perfume has performed an important role in religious and cultural practices (Ergin, 2014). The Prophet Muhammad enjoyed incense, and he frequently used oud, camphor, and musk as he would apply incense before going to the mosque, especially during the weekly Friday congregational prayer. The Prophet guided Muslims to apply perfumes and incense during religious practices as well as social ones (Shiner, 2020; Thurlkill, 2016). Early documentations including hadith, anecdotes, and sayings of the Prophet delivered abundant evidence on scenting practices (Hedrick & Ergin, 2015). Since the exercise of perfuming was encouraged by the Prophet, Islamic cultures heightened the olfactive practices into not only bodily perfuming but also for architectural spaces. The use of fumigatories was very common in daily life and during ceremonies in historical Islamic cultures (Thurlkill, 2016), and even current ones. Caliphs and kings offered, along with meals and drinks, incense burners to fumigate oud as luxurious hospitality towards their courtly guests (Aga-Oglu, 1945). This olfactory practice enriched Islamic architecture through evoking the sense of smell.

In the case of the Aljafería palace, although it is hard to distinguish the exact essence of the Taifa palace, the importance of perfuming and incense burners and their value as lavish elements would allow their existence to be assumed based on the lavish wealthy atmosphere of the palace intended by the Hudid kings. There was also the poem written by the scholar Ali bin Khayr Al-Tutili (1968) inviting the poet Ibn Abdul-Samad Al-Saraqusti to one of the courtly *majalis* of the Aljafería, describing the pleasurable olfactive aspect of the *majlis*:

في مجلس قد عبقت تفاحه

...In a gathering “*majlis*”

whose apples “fruits” are fragranced...

The verbatim translation of the poem stated that the apples of the *majlis* were fragranced. The choice of words in the original Arabic allows many interpretations; the choice of apple

would either relate to the exact apple fruit, any fully grown fruit, or the fragranced fruits, which would either indicate the types of trees of the Aljafería garden or that the trees contained aromatic fruits. Whichever connotation, it enriched the olfactive aspect of the garden. However, the word choice for fragranced is *Abeqat*, which in Arabic refers to heavy covering or spreading and mainly implies heavy smells. The heavy covering of smell would allow the assumption of an incense burner as fruit trees would not offer the same intensity, and the choice of apples would be related to the good smell of the perfumed incense, which would be a more promising rationalization. All these interpretations not only illustrate the beauty and variety of Arabic language but also indicate the rich layers of the olfactive sense of the Aljafería.

Moreover, the olfactive sources either selected aromatic fruit-laden trees or incense burners, which were all part of the creation of an earthly paradise. The planted fruit-laden trees of the Aljafería's garden, as previously discussed, imitated the paradisaical fruit trees mentioned in the Qur'an. The scents from the incense burners of oud, musk, and camphor were also included in the Qur'anic verses for describing the scents of Paradise. The most potent and persistent sense in evoking the memory of any space is its smell, as Pallasmaa (2012) indicated. The existence of fruit trees and incense perfumery promptly linked the perception of the Muslim palace visitors to the conceptualized memory of Paradise as what imagined the heavenly fragrance based on the Qur'anic and hadith descriptions. As smell has the ability to evoke a memory of an atmosphere (Bowring, 2006), these scents associated with the divine and heaven were employed in the architecture of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería to create a metaphysical experience to evoke the paradisaical perception through the olfactive sensory.

The Aljafería, Multisensed

In order to understand the palace of the Aljafería in relation to the methodology of architectural atmosphere through the eleventh century's historical perception of the Taifa palace, a look into the multisensorial experience is a must. To highlight all aspects of an individual sense, each sense was formerly addressed separately; nevertheless, it is important to understand that humans perceive with all senses simultaneously. The majority of researchers leaned towards focusing in their studies on analyzing the impact of a single

sense attribute at a time (Herssens & Heylighen, 2008); however, according to Pallasmaa (2000), every profound experience of architecture is a multisensory one. The perception is not just a sum of visual, audible, and haptic inputs, it is a perception with a whole being stimulated by all senses at once (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

The task of architecture is to strengthen the senses of the inhabitants with the surroundings (Pallasmaa, 2017). A walk through a monumental space should invigorate the interaction of all sense modalities reinforcing each other; thus, the spatial experience would be empowered and articulated. The realm of one sense would nourish the modality of others (Pallasmaa, 1994). The quality of a built space, as Peter Zumthor indicates (2006), is not only a visual one, as the judgment of the environment of a space is an integration of multisensory perceptions, which are immediately comprehended as an overall atmosphere or ambience of that space. The immediate judgment of the quality of a space requires all the senses, and it is received in an unconscious manner instead of an intentional observation. Thus, every monumental piece of architecture has its audible, tactile, and olfactive qualities, in which those qualities contribute to the visual aspect with the sense of richness and life (Pallasmaa, 2017).

Moreover, architecture is significant in defining historical time periods; it conveys environmental factors along with cultural and religious ones. Pallasmaa (1994) articulates that the goal of architecture throughout time is to create symbolized existential metaphors that demonstrate the existence of man on earth. Architecture reflects and materializes ideas of life, in which it immortalizes the culture and ideas of the past and contributes to placing the present in the continuum of culture. Analyzing the architectural experience and materialized metaphors of the Aljafería enriches the understanding of the culture and, correspondingly, the perceptions of the eleventh-century Taifa palace.

Multisensory aspect in Islamic culture is an essential and definitive aspect in creating the relationship between the self and the surrounding, in which the Qur'an and the Prophet's anecdotes clarify multisensory illustrations in different aspects of Muslims' lives. However, Christian Lange (2022) indicates that the long period of Islamic history was challenging in

giving a lot of attention to the senses among scholars. Accordingly, she (2022) initiated a typography of the cultural history of the senses in the Islamic world, where it demonstrates diverse studies in relation to the sensory based on various knowledge fields. In the field of Islamic architecture, historians started to move from an ocular-centric approach to a multisensory one, in which the study of Muslim afterlife was tended to José Miguel Puerta (2013) illustrating a multisensorial glimpse of Islamic architecture and stating that the architecture was formed through a theatrical display of appearances produced by walls, arches, columns, as well as ornamentation, inscription, and textiles, accompanied by fountains, gardens, natural and artificial light, echoes, and fragrances, in which all were purposed to give an earthly tangible form of paradise. Similarly to this dissertation, a multisensorial approach to Islamic architecture deepens the understanding of both the built space and the cultural practices within the space. As the architectural theories of atmospheres and sensory perception help to analyze the architecture of the Aljafería in that manner, the cultural anecdotes illustrate initial ideas of the eleventh-century multisensory experiences.

Despite the rich records of Islamic architecture descriptions that appear in medieval Arabic Islamic literature, including journals, memoirs, poetry, and travelogues, the Aljafería did not receive the same amount of tributes as other Caliphate or Nasrid architecture. Fortunately, the famed poem of Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005) praising and celebrating the wedding of the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr, the architect of the Aljafería palace, included verses with a description of his master work, the Aljafería. Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti, who was known as the poet of the Aljafería, offers in this poem a fortunate glimpse of the sensorial perception of the Taifa period's beholder. This poem, while it is heavily referenced in this dissertation, serves as an initial base on which to build the projected experience of medieval visitors.

واشكر صنيع المُستعين المُرتضى ... ملك الملوك وسيد الرؤساء

لقد انتقاك لسره ولجهره ... وحبك ممتناً بخير جباء

...

أعلاك قدراً واصطفاك مكارماً ... حتى كأنك واحد الأبناء

وكفك تشريفاً وفخراً أن تُرى ... ب الجعفري مُوهلاً لبناء

Be thankful for the deed of the glorified Al-Musta'in
King of kings and lord of chiefs
He chose you for his secrets and known matters
And endowed you gratefully of best endowment
....
He (Al-Musta'in II) raised your rank and honored you
As if you are one of his sons
It is enough honor and pride for you to be seen
As an eligible of the Aljafería to build

As discussed previously, the poem indicates the great honor bestowed on the architect Slav Khalifa Zuhayr of working on the already existing palace of the Aljafería during the reign of the fourth Hudid king Al-Musta'in II, as it was already known as the Palace of Joy, as mentioned in the verses³⁶.

As for the description of the interior of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería, it illustrates the multisensory depiction in its verses.

قصرٌ غدا فيه السرور مُعرّسا ... يغشى العيون بساطع الألاء
تطأ الدمقس بأرضه أقدامنا ... عوضاً من الأجر والبوغاء
A palace that joy is celebrated in
overshadowing the eyes with dazzling pearls
Our feet tread on its floor of gilded silk
Instead of bricks and dust

When Al-Gazzar described the visual aspect of the dazzling lights of the palace halls he followed it with an integration of touch when their feet trod on the soft marbled flooring, instead of the rough textures of dust and stones.

³⁶ See the chapter "Within the Walls of the Aljafería: A Cultural Examination" for the full poem, with more cultural analysis.

ونرى نمارق صورة مصفوفة ... موشية الأقطار والأرجاء

And we see cushions formed in lines
Embroidered in the center and sides

He also uses the word “see” in the subsequent verse when referring to the alignment of cushions while invigorating the sense of touch through its embroidered textiles, in which he illustrated in both verses the simulated perception of visual and haptic senses.

أرض دحاها حُسْنها من سندس ... متهلل كالروضة الغناء

A land that is flattened by beauty of fine silk
Rejoiced as lush orchard

Al-Gazzar also continued describing the flooring of the palace in saying that it was flattened by fine silk, which evokes the tactile sense of its silky-smooth texture while it is exultant like a rich lush orchard. The Arabic word used to refer to the orchard or the garden is *Rawdah Ghanna'a*, with *Rawdah* principally being used in Arabic for only the type of gardens that include vegetation and the element of water. The word *Rawdah* is also known in the context of paradise where there is a specific place in the Prophet Mosque in the city of Madina called *Rawdah*, where it believed by Muslims to be a place from heaven that was set on earth, based on the Hadith by the Prophet: “Between my house and my pulpit lies a garden from the gardens of Paradise.” The use of the word *Rawdah* in the poem indicates both the elements encompassed in the garden of the Aljafería as well as its strong reference to paradise. The adjective used to describe the garden is *Ghanna'a*, which in Arabic refers mostly to the richness of something, but also in the case of gardens it usually refers to the sound of wind moving through grass. The choice of the word *Ghanna'a* illustrates the aural perception of the garden along with the visual in illustrating the garden elements accompanied by the haptic sense of the smooth flooring, in which all senses were evoked simultaneously in one verse.

Drawing on the literature written about the Aljafería and the practices within the palace, accompanied by the atmosphere and sensorial theories, a multisensory experience of the Taifa place will be assumed in recapitulating this chapter.

It is important to recognize that the medieval perception of beholders with Muslim backgrounds was formed within the framework with the cultural and religious ideas of that time period. For people who were familiar with the sacred texts of the Qur'an, and the longed-for idea of Paradise as the ultimate reward, the paradisaical atmosphere evoked by the architectural, ornamental, and metaphorical elements of the Aljafería palace worked through the instrument of the multisensorial approach, in which people who visited the palace with a different background might not have perceived the palace as intensely as those with devoted Islamic religious beliefs and a particular cultural background.



Figure 77. Glimpses of the multisensorial stimulus of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería

Standing in the courtyard of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería during the eleventh century (**Fig.77**), a beholder would be immersed in a multisensorial experience. All the senses are invigorated stimulatingly – the view of the famed complex extravagant polychromed and gilded arches that shape the lavish atmosphere of the palace grasp the visual sense, while the feeling of the smooth marble flooring impact the haptic sense, as the sounds of steps and murmurs of the courtiers walking around complemented by the sound of the rustling of hanging draperies moving around by the breezy weather stimulate the hearing sense. As one looks through the paradisaical garden of the Santa Isabel courtyard, the view of its vegetations and the water basins' reflection of the surrounding lavish arches enrich the sensorial perception along with the aromas of the fruit-laden trees and the sensation of coolness from the shade on the skin accompanied by the sound of water, birds, and the moving trees. At the same time, the natural light penetrating the aligned columns creating a deep contrast of light and shadow both on the marble flooring and the iridescent water basin arouses the vision and the haptic senses. The sound of the wind moving around the courtyard resonates in the ears with its breeze felt on the skin along with the view of moving trees and the shimmering ephemeral reflections of the arches on the water basins invigorate the idea of Paradise intended.

As for the oratory on the side of the courtyard, the multisensory experience was elevated hence it was seen as an earthly symbolic home of the divine. The heavy extravagant ornamentation with the Qur'anic inscriptions intensifies the putrefaction of the heart and mind through the visual sense, along with the soft feeling of the carpeted floor that stimulates the haptic sense. The view and feeling of the light and air penetrating the oratory through the curved stucco of the windows and dome and the reflecting light from the mihrab integrate with the smell of the fragrances of the incense burners. During the praying time, as the mosque is designed to sound and reflect the word of God, the sound of Qur'an recitations, the clicking prayer beads, the rustling of garments during the prayer body movements, and the *dua* or *dhikr* after prayers all intensify the multisensorial experience. Hearing, seeing, feeling, and engaging in all of these features would lead to a multisensorial perception of the power of the divine.

At night during the *majalis* practices, the activation of the multisensory space is reinforced. The view of artificial lights as dazzling pearls that subtly illuminate the throne hall of the Aljafería, the feelings of the embroidered textiles of the pillows as seating, the fragrant scents of both the garden trees and incense burners escorted by the sound of the vocal poetry accompanied by musical instruments of the *majlis* activity echoing around the room, along with the smell and sound of clicking wine glasses poured by the *Saqis* are all integrated in the multisensorial experience. The view of the garden from the hall connected with the sky through the exposed courtyard, and the feeling of the breezy weather, the sound of the rustling of textiles moved around by that breeze, and the sensation of the drop in temperature from water basins all appeal to the senses to enrich the paradisaical atmosphere mentioned in the narration of the *majalis* praising the multisensory beauty of the Aljafería palace.

All these sensorial aspects, visual, aural, and haptic, contributed to the creation of the paradisaical atmosphere of the multisensory magnificence of the Aljafería palace. These created sensorial experiences demonstrated the extravagant lavishness of the royal court of Banu Hud, in which the architectural, cultural, and sensorial theatrical displays illustrated the Hudid power, wealth, and legitimacy as intellectual Muslim Arab leaders as they aimed to present themselves.

Beyond Possibilities:
An Applicability Exploration



Beyond Possibilities: An Applicability Exploration

The Applicability of the Study of the Sensorial Perception in Relation to the Architecture and Court Culture of Islamic Iberia

The dissertation analyzes the Islamic palace of the Aljafería through architectural, cultural, and sensorial approaches. In order to achieve a deeper understanding of the experience of the Aljafería, a comprehensive analysis of the architectural components and the cultural practices of Banu Hud court is applied, taking into consideration both artistic formats of architecture and literature, where each approach examines the palace through a different lens to fulfill a specific purpose of the study. Accordingly, analyzing the architecture of the Taifa palace in relation to the cultural beliefs and practices would support conducting a sensorial analysis of a perceptual experience of the atmosphere of the eleventh-century beholders, in which the multisensorial study of the space would assimilate a complete vision to assist in understanding and envisioning the Taifa palace at the time.

The approach of this dissertation could be applicable in various ways to other monuments of Islamic Iberia and even to the different historical parts of the palace of the Aljafería itself. The sensorial analysis applied in this paper to the Islamic Aljafería could be used for the added parts by Pedro IV and the Catholic monarchs in the succeeding centuries. Although these changes altered the perception of the Taifa palace, they might have reformed fundamental aspects of the sensorial perception, in which the dissertation tried to build a perceptual experience of the original Taifa palace based on the provided documentation. However, analyzing the current Taifa palace in conjunction with the added non-Islamic parts would conclude in a different sensorial perception. But the sensorial experience of these Mudéjar and non-Islamic parts would allow the exploration of the effect of the cultural and religious backgrounds on perceiving the space in contrast to the analyzed one in this paper. As Pallasmaa (2017) indicated, architecture frames experience and allows a certain horizon of perception and meaning; thus, the perception may defer based on ideas and cultural backgrounds; architecture doesn't define it but frames this perception. Accordingly, people who experience the same space with different cultural backgrounds, although they will experience the pleasurable aspect, may not perceive it in the way as it was intended.

Therefore, the perception of the Taifa palace would vary during these centuries as the visitors and beholders held different cultural backgrounds. At the same time, the perception of the extensions built by the Christian kings and Catholic monarchs would allow an interesting observation of the differences in the atmospheric spatial experience between the Islamic and non-Islamic spaces within the same palace. It would also invite answers to questions about the impact of using Mudéjar or Muslim architects such as Faraig de Gali and Mahoma de Gali in building the Christian and Catholic extensions that would affect the perception of these non-Islamic spaces.

Just as the Aljafería encompassed different centuries of different cultures inhabiting the same palace, other Islamic monuments of Al-Andalus faced similar circumstances. The Reales Alcázares in Seville is one of the most interesting historical monuments to approach architecturally, culturally, and sensorially. The Reales Alcázares or as it is known historically, Al-Qasr Al-Muriq, or during the Taifa period, Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak, has always been a royal palace inhabited over the centuries and faced various extensions and alterations. The initial palace on the site was founded during the Caliphate by Abd Al-Rahman III and was known as *Dar Al-Imara*. Afterward, Banu Abbad took the city palace as their royal residence during the Taifa period (Tabales Rodríguez, 2001). The Abbadid ruler Al-Mu'tamid commissioned extensive building activities during his reign, where he expanded the structure of the Alcázares with the Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak. He added various stables, fountains, gardens, and a central domed hall called the *Al-Thurayya* (Pavón Maldonado, 2004). The Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak mainly functioned as a residence, and it was the favored dwelling of Al-Mu'tamid. The characteristics of the Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak during the Taifa period are difficult to determine because of the heavy transformation of the Almohads and Christians, which almost eliminated the Abbadid architecture (Ruggles, 2000). The court of Banu Abbad was famed for its high intellectuality, especially in the Adab field, where it competed with Banu Hud of Zaragoza as an intellectual cultural center. However, the applicability of the study could be applied to another Taifa palace during the same period of the Aljafería, in which the Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak was significantly mentioned in medieval Arabic literature since the court of Banu Abbad was a rich literary center, where Arabic historians and poets praised both Al-Mu'tamid and the beauty of his palaces. An anecdote mentioned in the book of Al-

Maqqari (1968) indicated that Ibn Zaydoun wrote to Al-Mu'tamid, entreating him to drink wine in his magnificent palaces where Ibn Zaydoun mentioned Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak and *Al-Thurayya*:

وتأمل القصر المبارك وجنة ... قد وسطت فيها الثريا خالا

...

قصر يقر العين منه مصنع ... بهج الجوانب لو مشى لاختالا

لا زلت تفترش السرور حدائقاً... فيه، وتلتحف النعيم ظللا

... and contemplate Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak and a paradise

Centered with *Al-Thurayya* like a mole³⁷

...

A palace that pleases the eyes

And the source of joy, if it walked, it would walk proudly

You are still laying in pleasure in its gardens

Covered with delight and shades...

This poem, accompanied by other medieval Arabic literature, allows an approach to the architecture of Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak in relation to the cultural practices and sensorial description from the written verses. Remarkably, the Reales Alcázares witnessed different Islamic historical periods of the Caliphate, Taifa, and the Almohad, as the Almohad developed Seville as their capital in Al-Andalus and added various new palaces and courtyards on the site as an elaborate extension (Rodríguez, 2001). However, if the study could be applicable to other Taifa palaces, such as Al-Qasr Al-Mubarak, it would be interesting to apply it to another Islamic period such as the Almohad palaces, to observe how it would differ through the metaphorical messages and cultural practices in a different historical period of Al-Andalus, since one of the main aims of Taifa architecture was to prove

³⁷ The mole in Arabic literature and ideologies often refers to a beauty mark on the face, which poets would praise and flatter.

legitimacy and power over other Taifas. Moreover, the palaces built by the Almohad between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries constitute one of the most essential enclosures among the many that made up the unique medieval monumental complex. This period of the Almohad was considered one of the most extraordinary for the Alcázar in terms of reconstruction intensity, which would be reflected based on the suppression, destruction, and alterations of the multiple buildings of the previous Taifa kings (Marín Fidalgo, 2011). A great example of applying the multisensorial approach to metaphors and cultural practices within spatial architecture would be the *patio de crucero*. As we saw before, it consisted of a two-level structure. The upper one was a longitudinal central axis on which a water basin was built. In the four corners of the rectangle, around the main pool and on the lower level, four gardens as parterres were planted with trees in a sublevel. Its flowers could be smelt, and its fruits could be easily reached from the upper aisles, which formed two cross-shaped galleries (Almagro, 1999; Torres Balbás, 1958). This type of courtyard depicts the Islamic concept of paradise on earth, which is clearly presented, among other elements, in the shade created and fruit-laden trees within reach, as the previously mentioned Qur'anic verse indicates: "The Garden's shade will be right above them, and its fruit will be made very easy to reach" (Qur'an 76:14). This example makes it possible to build on the applicability of the atmosphere and multisensorial approach in relation to metaphors and cultural traditions within architecture on other monuments of Islamic Iberia (**Fig.78-79**).

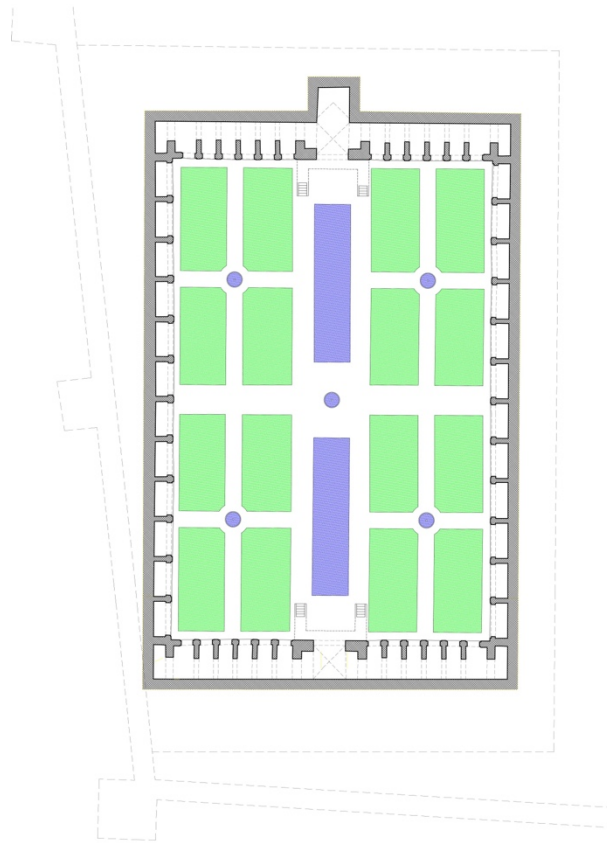
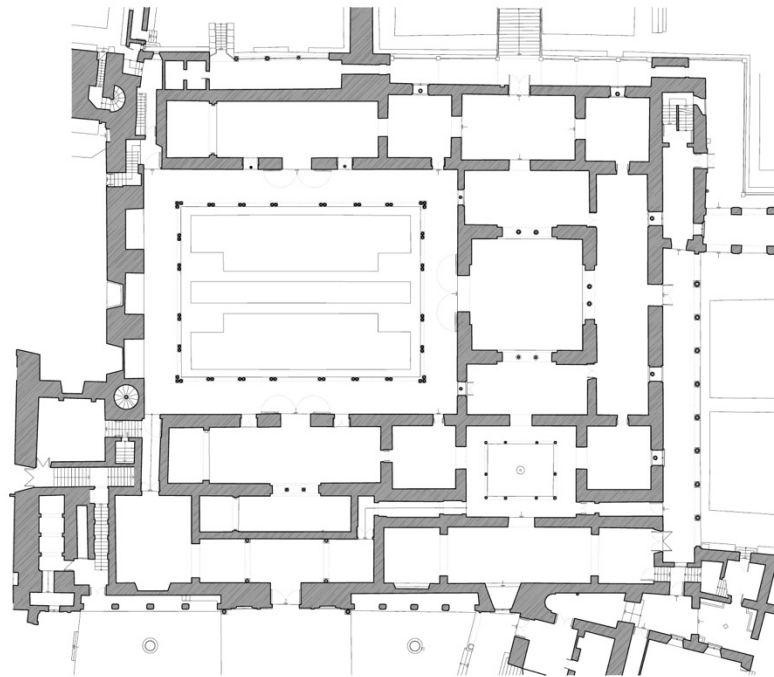


Figure 78. Hypothetical floor plan of the garden level of the patio de crucero in the Almohad period, illustrated by Antonio Almagro



Figure 79. Hypothetical reconstruction of the patio de crucero in the Almohad period, illustrated by Antonio Almagro

Moreover, the Reales Alcázares would also attract an interesting analysis of the atmosphere and perception of the architecture where it witnessed not only different Islamic historical periods but also centuries of royal Christian monarchs' extensions, in which during the five centuries of construction, numerous different architectural styles succeeded one another (Rodríguez, 2001). It would be interesting to study the Mudéjar palace of King Pedro I since it is a Christian palace with Andalusian artistic precedents. King Pedro I requested his Muslim ally Muhammad V of Granada during the Nasrid period to send master builders and carpenters from his Nasrid court to build this splendid palace. The ornamentations, workmanship, and materials respond to the Islamic style, where the Mudéjar arises from combining Muslim elements with others of a Christian stamp (Marín Fidalgo, 2011). As mentioned previously, the multisensorial perception of Islamic architecture relies heavily on the religious and cultural practices and philosophies engraved in Muslims' minds. However, as the Mudéjar palace employed similar architectural and ornamental elements of Islamic architecture, the question arises as to whether the perception of these elements varies based on the different cultural customs practiced in these spaces along with different ideologies and beliefs that dwellers and visitors of the Mudéjar palace carry (**Fig.80-81**). The observation of the sensorial experience of Pedro I's palace would allow deeper investigations of whether, and how, the metaphors of these Islamic-inspired ornamentations would vary based on Christian ideologies. If so, would these differences affect the sensorial perception of the same architectural elements of Islamic architecture? The site of Reales Alcázares is a distinguished example of several enclosures, courtyards, and gardens with various styles built over different centuries to form in harmony a great monumental complex, which invites investigation of the applicability of the study of the sensorial perception in relation to the architecture and court culture of these different palaces.



ALCAZAR DE SEVILLA. PALACIO DEL REY D. PEDRO. PLANTA BAJA.
EN BASE A UN PLANO DE LA GERENCIA DE URBANISMO DEL AYUNTAMIENTO DE SEVILLA
ESCUELA DE ESTUDIOS ARABES. C.A.I.C. ALMAGRO/ 499

Figure 80. Floor Plan of Pedro I Palace, The Reales Alcázares, Sevilla, Illustrated by Antonia Almagro



Figure 81. Hypothetical reconstruction of the patio of Pedro I Palace, The Reales Alcázares, Sevilla, illustrated by Antonio Almagro

Another interesting monument to analyze is the Monastery of Santa Clara de Tordesillas. King Pedro I, from the beginning of his reign, divided his palatial residences and lands between two towns that were distant from each other, namely Seville and Valladolid, with the town of Tordesillas being located at a close distance to Valladolid. The earliest building was commissioned by King Alfonso XI when King Pedro I succeeded his father in finishing the work on the palace (González Hernández, 2007). Unlike the Mudéjar palace of King Pedro I in Seville, the monastery of Santa Clara de Tordesillas was not built on an Islamic palatial site. Yet, it still maintained heavy inspiration from the Islamic architectural style. According to Fernández González (1985), the impact of Pedro I's stay in Seville in the rooms of Reales Alcázares, where he would later build his own palace, would perhaps lead him to choose an Islamic model for the construction of his palace in Tordesillas. The palace is perceived as a Mudéjar palace; however, González Hernández (2007) argued that it is not a Mudéjar palace as has been claimed up to now since *Mudéjar* should refer exclusively to constructions executed with Islamic techniques and modes, but following schemes and plans, or elevations, of Christian origin in its general lines. Antonio Almagro (2005), Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza (1996, 1999), and González Hernández (2007) explained that the palace of King Pedro I of Castilla in Tordesillas is an Islamic-style palace built by Christian monarchs. However, the interesting aspect of the palace is the clear annotation of Islamic architecture through its layout and ornamentations, where it would be interesting to observe the relation between the Islamic metaphorical and sensorial approach to the architecture of the palace.

The spatial organization of King Pedro I's palace in Tordesillas' plan responds to a presumably Islamic scheme in its original organization. Also, the Golden Chapel of the palace, as believed by Pérez Higuera (1993), encompasses decorative details influenced by the Taifa period, as well as its initial function as a royal reception hall. González Hernández (2007) links the ornamentation, layout, and initial function of the Golden Chapel to the Nasrid Muslim custom of placing throne rooms in square-plan spaces closed on top by domes. Nonetheless, it is not the aim to mention the linkage of Islamic precedent to the monastery of Santa Clara de Tordesillas as it was studied heavily (Almagro, 2005; Ruiz Souza,

1996, 1999), but to encourage approaching the palace through the sensorial approach, in which it would be noteworthy to analyze the relation between the Islamic metaphorical and sensorial approach to a Christian palace with an Islamic style (**Fig.82**).

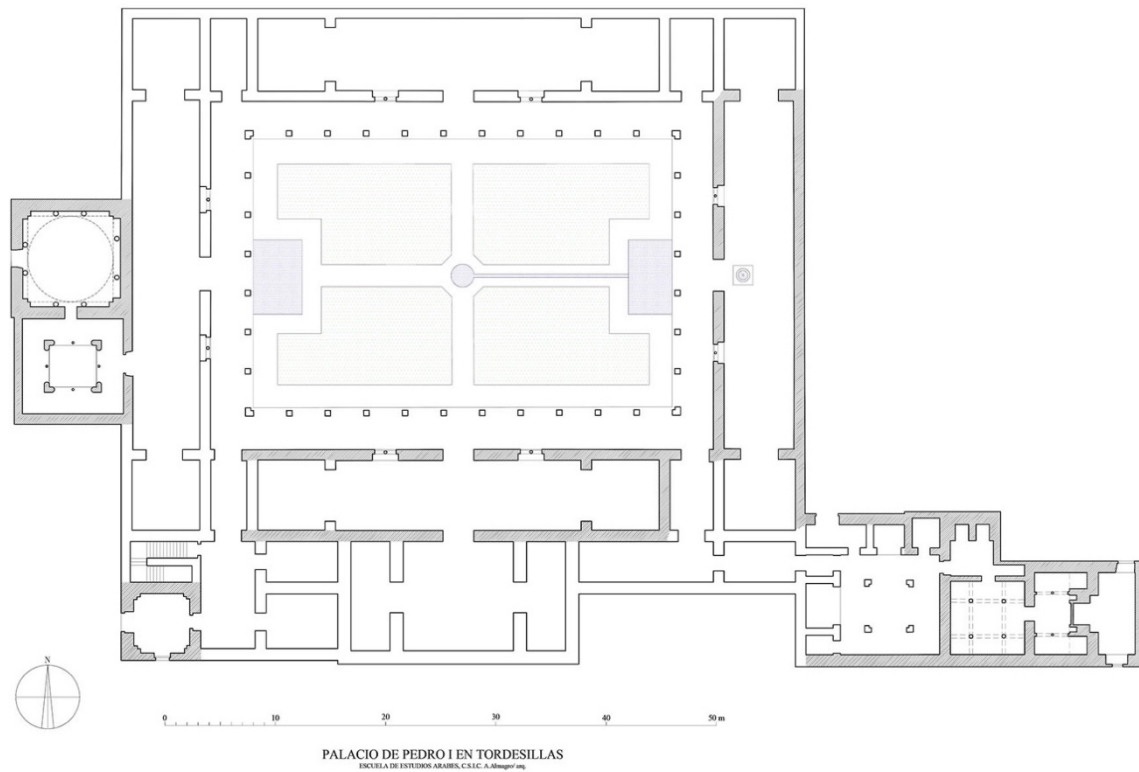


Figure 82. Hypothesis Floor Plan of King Pedro I palace in Tordesillas, Illustrated by Antonia Almagro

Architecture is experienced through a multisensory perception. However, human capacities to experience architecture are very diverse. Thus, another layer of analysis that could be considered in studying historical architecture through multisensory interactions would be taking into account sensual impairment, which is a loss or disability in one or more of the senses. The spatial representation of people with impairments is highly diverse, and the perception of spaces will vary based on the type of disability (Herssens & Heylighen, 2008). For example, people with visual impairment will sensorially experience the space differently, in which the hearing and haptic perceptions will increase in order to navigate and fully perceive the space. Although sensual impairment in experiencing the built space receives heavy attention in the scientific and architectural fields, applying it to historical architectural analysis would offer more profound prospective studies. This approach would allow the impact of some senses when empowered over others to be highlighted, which

would illustrate a deeper understanding of the perception of space of these historical monuments, especially when accompanied by the linkage of cultural practices and ideologies that would affect the skewed perception. At the same time, as discussed in the dissertation, humans perceive with all their senses simultaneously, as the multisensory approach is a perception with a whole being stimulated with all senses at once.

Thus, another interesting factor to take into consideration in the multisensory analysis is synesthesia. Synesthesia is an exceptional blending of the senses in which the stimulation of one sensory simultaneously produces sensation in a different modality (Cytowic, 2002). The field of synesthetic design in spatial terms has grown rapidly in recent years, and many architectural historians tend to analyze the integration of multisensorial perception in this aspect (Spence, 2020). As Pérez-Gómez (2016) indicates, that is to ensure that the integration of multisensory features of the built space works together in harmony to convey an experience that positively stimulates the senses, which would facilitate the well-being, instead of hindering it. Accordingly, applying the synesthetic aspect to approaching Islamic architecture would intensify the understanding of multisensory as Islamic culture relies heavily on multisensory throughout all life's aspects.

All things considered, the study of multisensorial perception in relation to the architecture and court culture of the Islamic Iberia would allow various interpretations of, and applications to, either other Islamic monuments or non-Islamic ones with Islamic precedents. The application of the study would also lead to considering integrating exceptional sensual perceptions or impairments, which would offer different perspectives on the matter. Nonetheless, combining the architectural, cultural, and multisensorial approaches in analyzing historical monuments would support historians with a deeper understanding of these monuments and the perception of beholders of specific time periods; it would also influence architectural design practices to consider incorporating these approaches when creating future built spaces. Such approaches would hopefully lead to the development of architectural spaces that would connect beholders with the surrounding and promote cultural, social, cognitive, and emotional growth rather than hindering it.

Conclusion



Conclusion

The topic of this doctoral dissertation requires a series of final reflections, conclusively, around three aspects that have been considered fundamental for the realization of this work, and that start from the initial idea of viewing architecture as a reflection of the Andalusian historical and cultural reality. To answer the research question regarding exploring **the relationship between the palatial architecture of the Islamic Aljafería and the court life practices assumed by its rulers, the Banu Hud Taifa kings, and how this relation shaped the perceptual experience of the palace**, the dissertation employed a multifaceted approach. Through the analysis of architectural, cultural, and sensorial aspects, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of the Aljafería during the eleventh century. Examining the palace through these approaches considered the artistic formats of Arabic literature as a core instrument. The architecture of the Taifa palace was analyzed in relation to the cultural beliefs and practices of the time, which, in turn, supported a sensorial analysis of the perceptual experience of the atmosphere of the beholders. Through a multisensorial study of the space, a complete vision was assimilated to understand and envision the experience of the Taifa palace of the eleventh century.

In aiming to answer the research question of the dissertation, tracing history to the early Umayyads' art language through main political ideas, architecture, and court life was essential, as the Taifa kingdoms were the heirs of the Umayyads' perceptive. The Taifa period's perspective on art, culture, and architecture originated from the previous period of the Umayyads, which helped to place the Aljafería palace within a comparative narration.

Through the history and background chapter, the Umayyads' main architectural movements were discussed, and the typology of the architecture of Islamic Iberian lands was introduced. The introduction of these building types included the city estates as ruling palaces of the Emirs or Caliphs such as Alcázar, the country estates, *munyas*, as pleasure palaces for the leisure of the royals such as Qasr Al-Rusafa, and the *Madina* as a palatine city such as Madinat Al-Zahra'a, along with incredible architectural examples of the lavish period such as the Great Mosque of Córdoba. Each architectural typology introduced was to aid in drawing a historical architectural map of the Aljafería to understand the purpose

and function of the Aljafería later on. Also, each architectural example mentioned in the Umayyad period was chosen carefully as it would be linked to the Aljafería as an artistic precedent or comparison in the architectural analysis chapter. The court life of the Umayyads for both the city estate and country estate was discussed to present the common royal cultural practices of the period, in which the concept of *majalis* and their types and functions were introduced as it has a significant impact on the cultural practices of the Aljafería palace.

As for the Taifa period, when the Aljafería was built by Banu Hud of the Taifa of Zaragoza, it was necessary to discuss the art, architecture, and royal court life of the period. The Taifa period was known for the territorial instability among the different Taifas and the Christians, yet the cultural rivalry of intellectual activity was also pursued. Rulers of each Taifa kingdom competed in recruiting the most skilled court artists, architects, poets, scientists, and intellectuals to symbolize power and prove legitimacy, which led to a century of great wealth, culture, and science. Discussing the formation of Taifas along with the main opponents of the dominant Taifas of the period helped to place the Taifa of Zaragoza and its influence. The architecture of the Taifa period was commissioned to present power and legitimization, where the Taifa kings continued the Umayyad tradition of the main architectural typologies built as an act of sovereignty and affirmation of their power. The palatial architecture of the Taifa period was mainly categorized into three main types of palaces, i.e., the fortress, the city estate, and the country state, where each served a particular goal for the ruler. As for the court life, the refined court life was a significant part of where Taifa kings employed the extravagant architecture of their palaces and the theatrical court protocols to exhibit their influence and legitimacy and enrich the visibility of their kingdoms. The high intellectuality of the court life of the period not only resulted in an increase in the number of prestigious members of the court's circles but also accommodated various purposes of *majalis* based on the function of the palace that hosted them, in which understanding these cultural practices helped in analyzing the elevated intellectuality of the Taifa of Zaragoza and their court life.

Moreover, a discussion of the city of Zaragoza in the Islamic Iberian Peninsula was indispensable to understanding the cultural and geographical environment in which the Aljafería was built. Also, a discussion of the historical rulership of the city during both the Umayyad and Taifa periods helped to navigate the political history that the Aljafería faced during the Islamic period. Studying the rulers of the Taifa of Zaragoza and their influence facilitated understanding the purpose and function that the Aljafería served during that period, which shaped the palace architecturally and culturally. Understanding the history leading up to the palace of the Aljafería is fundamental when analyzing the building type, architecture, and spatial layout of the palace, along with the cultural practices conducted in it, and consequently led to making an informed assumption to visualize the perception and atmosphere intended from that building type.

Regarding the Architectural Analysis of the Aljafería

The building complex seen currently is the sum of numerous transformations and alterations that have taken place throughout history. As the goal of the dissertation is to study the relationship between the palatial architecture of the Islamic Aljafería and the court life practices of the Hudid Kings, analyzing the architecture of the palace of the Aljafería is the first layer in understanding the eleventh-century experience of the palace.

The first part of the chapter was dedicated to analyzing the Islamic Aljafería, which is the main focus of the paper, in which the Islamic Aljafería refers to the structures built during the Islamic period defined by two phases: the Umayyads' Troubadour tower and the Taifa's Aljafería palace. Although it went through several changes over the years, the Taifa palace, which is the center of this dissertation, is certainly one of the most outstanding artistic spaces of the building, which over the centuries has shaped the distinctive character of the Aljafería (Expósito Sebastián et al., 1986).

The dissertation studied the architectural components of the palace, including the spatial plans, fortified walls, construction techniques, entrances, arches, columns, and capitals, each of which was analyzed through documentation and self-observations through field visits. The paper also investigated in detail the courtyard, including the garden, plantations,

and water basins, which made up an essential argument later on in the chapter on experiencing the palace. Also, the paper analyzed the ornamentations, including the materials used, the inscriptions and epigraphs, and their significance. While analyzing the ornamental architectural component that shaped the Taifa palace, I linked several parts to the Qur'an to signify the importance of the elements applied, as in the case of the metaphor of light in the oratory, and the water and fruit-laden trees in the garden, where each was discussed in depth in the subsequent two chapters. Also, the dissertation made a few hypotheses, based on the studies and observations of the palace, as I propose, based on the observation and discussions, that the original dome of the mosque was made of alabaster following the upper half ornamentation of the mosque walls, which enabled the light to penetrate through the alabaster carvings to the interior of the mosque since the original dome was demolished during the fourteenth century when the Catholic monarchs built their palace over the Islamic halls; and the current dome was reconstructed by Íñiguez Almech following the pattern of the ones in the Great Mosque of Córdoba. This assumption would allow the light to penetrate through the carvings, which enhanced the contrast of light and shadow in the interior of the oratory; accordingly, it would support the idea of using light to create the atmosphere intended in the oratory, which would increase the association with Allah as light as the Qur'anic verse indicated.

Another assumption included in this chapter regarded the two doors on the side walls of the throne hall. The door on the west is the entrance of a room that is said to be a private bedroom of the Hudid king, which is currently used as a gallery to showcase some of the preserved remains of the palace. As the other door on the eastern side is said to be an entrance to another private bedchamber for the king in some documentation, it currently leads to a small exterior space that encompasses the entrance to the Troubadour tower. I argued that the existence of the room on the eastern side is debatable due to the small space on the exterior, which doesn't fully allow the bedchamber to exist, along with offering enough space for the Troubadour tower entrance from the exterior. This assumption would either mean that the door was used as a second private entrance for the Hudid king to reach the Troubadour tower directly from the throne hall in the case of emergencies, or it would suggest that the eastern door did not exist during the eleventh century, with the stucco

decoration surrounding the entrance being a mirrored replica of the western room entrance.

Furthermore, to aid in placing the Aljafería in a comparative narration within the architectural comparison and historical framework, a brief analysis of other palaces that share similar architectural features was conducted to enhance the analytical understanding of the palace and its unique design elements. The dissertation linked the palace, as has commonly been done in other studies, to the Castell Formós de Balaguer as the nearest Taifa palace, architecturally. The dissertation investigated the architectural similarities between the two palaces since they were both believed to have been produced in the same workshop. These parallel artistic features demonstrated that the Taifa of Zaragoza was broadcasting an artistic ornamental language shared in the Hudid lands, which showcased the influence and authority of Banu Hud. The other that was linked architecturally to the Aljafería is the palace of Monteagudo of the Rey Lobo from the second Taifa period. I argued through this association for the comparable architectural features between the two *munyas*, including the fortified walls with towers, the quadrangular plan, the spatial layout, and the garden layout. The architecture of the palace of Monteagudo demonstrated a heavy influence from the Upper March as well as the west of Morocco, which would be rationalized by the background of Ibn Mardanis as a former general of Banu Hud with Berber origins. These similarities show that the architecture of the Aljafería substantially influenced the architecture of subsequent periods.

As for the second part of the chapter, as the paper's main focus is on the Taifa palace in the eleventh century, this portion of the Architectural chapter delves into the palace's architecture during the subsequent historical periods that came after the Taifa palace through an analytical lens. The chapter investigated the alternations and modifications the Aljafería witnessed from becoming a resident of the Christian kings of Aragón to a Catholic monarch's dwelling in the fifteenth century, to the various fortifications from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century until it was declared a national monument of historical and artistic interest, which led to the palace's ongoing restoration projects. The Aljafería complex is a testament to the fact that architecture serves as the foundation for human

activity and life. Its historical significance goes beyond its physical structure; it has borne witness to countless political, economic, and cultural changes over the centuries. Despite the many transformations that it has undergone, the Aljafería has remained a symbol of Zaragoza, maintaining its importance and relevance. As such, it has been a subject of great interest for historians, who have conducted numerous studies and excavations to uncover its secrets.

Regarding the Cultural Examination of the Aljafería

In this chapter, the aim was to study the intellectual and historical culture of the court life of Banu Hud, which led to the examination of the cultural practices held in the Hudid court and the reasoning behind them, along with traditions and concepts that shaped the court life. Then an investigation was applied to link the architecture of the palace with cultural practices held in it since architecture and culture are entwined. Thus, architecture was made for humans to interact with and also formed and shaped this interaction, as well as being shaped by the concept of the builders and dwellers. This chapter answered a big part of the research question in understanding the relationship between the architecture and culture of the Islamic Aljafería, which composed the second layer in assimilating this understanding.

In the first part of the chapter, the intellectuality of the royal court of Banu Hud was examined. The intellectual activities that took place in Zaragoza during the eleventh century were remarkably significant as it was pointed out by Lomba Fuentes (1987) that during the Taifa period alone, more than 50 scientists and philosophers were in Zaragoza, and their works were highly ranked in the scholarly history. Under the Hudid rule, the culture of Zaragoza reached its maximum development where numerous scholars stood out, especially in the mathematical and philosophical cultivation disciplines. As Zaragoza was rich in intellectuals and scholars, for the purpose of this paper, only the courtly scholars were mentioned. The dissertation reviewed the rich court of intellectuals of each reign of the Hudid kings to demonstrate the high intellectuality of the royal court encamped in the Aljafería.

For the second part, the cultural practices of the Hudid court life were examined in relation to the spatial design of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería. The Aljafería palace was built as a *munya* and was destined to serve as leisure space for the Hudid kings, as was indicated through its name, *Qasr Al-Surur*, which means "Palace of Joy." The palace served as a retreat for the ruler and members of his inner circle, who indulged in various courtly activities and festivities. One of the most significant activities was the practice of *majalis*, which was reflective of the renowned intellectuality of the Hudid court. The literature *majalis* held in the palace of the Aljafería was a particularly important practice, which took place in the throne hall known as the Golden Hall. The dissertation navigated the culture of these *majalis* conveyed through two art forms: literature and architecture. The dissertation analyzed medieval Arabic poetry and anecdotes from the *majalis* to illustrate the practices and traditions, while the palatial architecture demonstrates the spatial settings and hierarchical layout. The *majalis* held in the palace of the Aljafería were mainly informal gatherings among the Hudid king, his noble court members, and cupbearers that occurred mostly at night and were dedicated to intellectual conversations and poetic performances mostly on the topics of paradise, gardens, wine, and even the pleasures and delights that characterized the *majlis* itself, accompanied by drinking and musical instruments (Robinson, 2012).

The paper looked into the practices of these *majalis* to allocate the setting, activities, and topics of these gatherings, which was achieved by exploring medieval Arabic literature and linking it to the architectural spatial format that encompassed these practices. The paper illustrated that several architectural features showed the settings of the practice of *majalis*, such as the link between the relatively small size of the golden hall and the low count of *majlis* members, as well as the location of the entrance and the nobility level of these members, in which the short distanced access implied that the *majalis* of the Aljafería were destined for people of high noble status to allow them easy access. The paper supported this analysis with literature anecdotes, mostly from the book of Al-Maqqari (1968). I argued that the narration by Abu Al-Mutriq ibn Abdul-Aziz of a *majlis* hosted by Al-Mu'tamin in the Aljafería palace explained the weather and view, which implied that the *majlis* was assembled in the throne hall where it provided a perfect location for this view to be

illustrated as narrated. Another narration that I claim proves the intimacy and social level of the attendees of the *majlis* is that they would attend upon invitation, such as the anecdote of the scholar Ali bin Khayr Al-Tutili writing to the poet Ibn Abdul-Samad Al-Saraqusti inviting him to a *majlis* at the palace of the Aljafería, which signifies the privacy and intimacy of these *majalis* through the selection of their attendees.

Another aspect the dissertation looked into is the metaphorical ornamentation applied in the Taifa palace, as the Aljafería was perceived by Banu Hud as paradise, *Jannah*, on earth. The intersection of the arches materializes the concept of paradise, where the polylobes of each opening bay at the southern hall consistently number seven, which is believed in Islam to be the number of heavens. The paper argued that creating the repetitions of the number seven in the architectural elements of the palace connects the palace of the Aljafería to the perception of an earthly paradise; I supported this claim by linking it to a Qur'anic verse on the creation of seven heavens.

Moreover, many architectural historians link the Islamic Garden to Paradise since the Arabic word for Paradise is *Jannah*, which literally means "garden," therefore, paradise and garden are consequently tangled concepts in Islamic and Arabic cultures.

Drawing on the Qur'anic description of Paradise, I argued how the Aljafería palace is viewed as paradise on earth. The garden at the patio of Santa Isabel was designed to reinforce the concept of earthly paradise, where it encompassed all the elements that made up an Islamic Garden of water, shade, and vegetation. The two water basins filled the Islamic Garden's element of water as they served ornamentally and practically to nurture the vegetation and create a drop in the temperature. As for the shade and vegetation elements, the planting of floral plantations and trees served the purpose, in which I suggested that the selected aromatic fruit-laden trees of the Aljafería's garden replicated the paradisaical fruit trees mentioned in the Qur'an as I provided the Qur'anic verse supporting this. Also, although most scholars adopt the concept of paradise as described in the Qur'an as the only justification for their existence in Islamic architecture, I argued that the existence of the garden in the courtyard of the Aljafería was essential in representing both the paradisaical

atmosphere and the intellectuality of the court. The Hudid court being both an intellectual and metaphorical space, the courtyard and garden held practical, ornamental, and symbolic purposes, in which the Aljafería reflects the idea of earthly paradise through the tangible vegetations and the metaphors and symbolism along with the activities and practices of the *majalis* held in the courtyard.

The paper also linked the cultural practice of *majalis* to the concept of earthly paradise, where these *majalis* settings resembled Muslims' beliefs of the reward of pleasurable gatherings of poetry in paradise, based on the description of heaven in the Qur'an, where I linked each aspect of the *majlis* with a Qur'anic verse describing the *majalis* of heaven such as the sitting of the *majlis* in shaded areas, the reclining on lavish cushions, the enjoyment of the pleasure of poetry, and the delights of fresh fruits and wines, with all these components of paradisaical *majalis* being imitated in the *majalis* of the Aljafería. This claim was supported by narrations from Al-Maqqari's book (1968), such as when the Al-Tutili referred to the *majlis* as a paradise of eternity where it illustrated the practice of the *majlis* as an infinite pleasure and laughter surrounded by musical instruments, along with the poetries of Ibn Al-Sid that illustrated the pleasures of the *majlis* as a platform for the communication of philosophical concepts.

In supporting the relationship between the court life cultural practices and the spatial design of the Aljafería, the famed poem by the poet of the Aljafería, Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti, in praising the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr was deeply analyzed. The verses revealed that the poem was written during Al-Musta'in II's reign, which proved that the Slav Khalifa Zuhayr was known as the architect of the Aljafería for being the architect responsible for the renovation work of the palace between 1085 and 1110 and not the main architect who built the palace in the time of Al-Muqtadir. Also, through the poem analysis, I drew several conclusions, including the use of lamps, which implies the time of the *majlis* at night, and the marble flooring based on the included Arabic term of *Damqas*, which is a type of expensive fabric of white silk with golden embroidery as a resemblance of smooth white and veined marble flooring, and the use of embroidered cushions as floor chairs, among many others included in the chapter. Investigating the Arabic literature deepened the understanding of the

concept and cultural practice with the architectural space of the Aljafería, while the Qur'anic verses supported these concepts and statements.

Regarding the Sensorial Perception of the Aljafería

To assimilate the understanding of the answer to the research question on the relationship between the cultural practices and architecture of the Aljafería, navigating the experience of the palace during the eleventh century within the framework of atmosphere and sensorial perception led to a richer and deeper vision of the Taifa Aljafería. Envisioning the historical experience of the Taifa palace depicted how architecture affected the beholders of the space in which this experience was cultivated through cultural ideologies and traditions. This chapter concluded that architecture and culture are entwined to form the experience and perception of people using the space who shared a common cultural knowledge that enriched their experience.

To reach that conclusion, the first part of the chapter navigated the concepts that the experience of the Aljafería were built on. The dissertation started the chapter with the concept of the oasis as a reward in Islamic and Arabic cultures. As María Jesús Rubiera Mata (1988) indicated, Islamic architecture is an architecture interlaced with philosophy, beliefs, and cultural nostalgia for a deserted land while conceived from the indulgence of the senses. Drawing on this assessment of the oasis as a reward and the basis of the conceptual foundation of the reward of the Islamic Garden in Arabian cultures led to the reference of *munyas* as an oasis and a pleasurable paradise on earth. This concept was supported throughout the chapter with Arabic literature and Qur'anic verses to view the Aljafería as a pleasurable reward on earth. The dissertation also discussed the concept of the atmosphere by examining the atmospheric theories within the reflection of architecture, multisensory, and space, as the atmosphere in architecture is a form of physical perception recognized through emotional sensibility (Gandy, 2017). Combining philosophy with architecture, art, and design provided an essential platform to examine the theories of the pioneers in the field, such as Gernot Böhme, Peter Zumthor, and Juhani Pallasmaa.

Furthermore, to help to discover the nature of the atmosphere of the habitat during the Muslim era, the paper looked into the work of María Jesús Rubiera and José Miguel Puerta, who laid the foundation for understanding the unique elements of these Islamic spaces. Rubiera and Puerta both emphasized that interpreting Islamic Iberian architecture requires an understanding of the Arabic language as an essential instrument, which I aimed to apply in this paper. In this chapter, I viewed the Aljafería as a sensory stimulus space where the architectural elements serve as an environment for a series of visual, sound, tangible, and odorous stimulations that shape and define the palace.

Nevertheless, to envision the exact experience of the eleventh-century Taifa palace's beholders, it is important to recognize that the extent of our perception is limited by many factors. Along with the various alterations that the palace witnessed over the centuries, navigating the historical perspective requires fully immersing oneself in the social, cultural, intellectual, and emotional context that defined that time period. However, it's unrealistic to claim that we can perceive things in the same way as someone from the eleventh century; such a claim is born out of the arrogance of our modern society that believes it can do anything. It's only within the context of a documentary framework, where someone can articulate their actual impression, that we can begin to understand the historical experience of the senses and emotions, where some medieval Arabic literature illustrates their perception of the palace, which I interpreted in the paper. Yet, despite our limitations, we must not ignore the acknowledged studies and should instead envision them within the rationality and documentation available to us. Ultimately, we must approach historical studies with a sense of humility and respect for the complexities of the past.

For the next part of the chapter, which accumulates the work done throughout the dissertation, a trail of a sensorial analysis of a perceptual experience of a Taifa beholder throughout the palace of the Islamic Aljafería was drawn. The paper started by applying the atmospheric and sensory perception theories on the spatial design of the Aljafería from the exterior fortified walls to the interior of the palace while linking them to the functions and intended experience of each feature. As for the interior, the courtyard of the Aljafería fulfilled the function of a central platform connecting the spaces of the palace while creating

a multisensory experience. Subsequently, an approach throughout the courtyard categorized by each sense based on the speculated perception of the eleventh-century Taifa palace's visitors was applied. **The approach I applied in this dissertation that differs from other papers was to look at each sensorial category and link the documented theories of atmospheres and multisensory to an architectural feature of the Aljafería; I also supported these points with Qur'anic verses and Arabic literature to understand the cultural and religious ideologies that framed the experience.**

The first sensorial category the dissertation analyzed is the visual one, as the visual aspect tends to grasp the most attention, even if the perception of a building is a multisensory experience (Nickson, 2015). Through the realm of vision, the palace of the Aljafería exhibited a lavish atmosphere in the visual perception through many factors, such as the architectural elements, extravagant ornamentations, applied colors and their meanings, and the rich inscriptions, which all played a role in enhancing the intended atmosphere of the palace. Moreover, the physical elements of the palace were employed to materialize the metaphorical concept of paradise, which was presented in the use of elements such as garden, water, and light, which were all engaged to create an extravagant visual sensory that united the feeling of magnificence throughout the space.

Each factor was discussed and supported by evidence from Arabic anecdotes and verses from the Qur'an. For the color choices on the polychromed arches, I linked each color with the meaning that the Hudid kings intended as the choice of red signifies the role of the Hudid kings as warriors who assigned themselves to defend Islam, in which the initial purpose of constructing the Aljafería was to honor the bravery and power of Al-Muqtadir. The color blue illustrated the palace as a reward while also creating protection for the Hudid sovereignty and their monument. The gilded ornamentations demonstrated luxury and the reference to the rewards in Paradise as the Qur'anic verse implied that believers would be rewarded by wearing gold in Paradise, which links the Aljafería to the ultimate reward.

For the inscriptions, the fragments of the inscription of the Golden Hall correspond to verses from the sovereign surah of the Qur'an, *Surat Al-Mulk*. My interpretation of the

metaphorical part was the reasoning behind choosing this surah as it was said by the Prophet in hadith that it protects whoever memorizes it until they enter Paradise, which would suggest that the Banu Hud claim protection from Allah until they reach the final reward of Paradise. Sensorially, the impact of the surah on Muslim visitors would stimulate the sense of yearning for Paradise, which would be augmented through the paradisaical atmosphere that the palace intends to construct. Architecturally, the surah made clear reference to the heavens through the series of seven skies, which would be linked to the number seven repeated in the arches of the paradisaical Aljafería. Also, the literal translation of the title of the surah is “the owned” from *Al-Mulk*, which would suggest that the Hudid kings devoted what they owned to Allah, who owns everything. Reflecting on that, I argued that the phrase *Al-Mulk le Allah*, meaning everything owned by Allah, appeared on the walls of the Taifa floor of the Troubadour tower and shows the intention to emphasize the Hudid dynasty's strong relation to the religion they claim to defend.

Moreover, the visual aspect examined the courtyard of the Aljafería in relation to the concept of earthly paradise, including analyzing the garden with vegetation and shade and the water basins, where I examined the depth of each point in relation to the palace and supported the claims with Qur’anic verses. Another element discussed in the visual analysis was the application of light. Robert Hillenbrand (2015) categorized the uses of light in Islamic architecture, which varied from the sources of the light, such as directed light, reflected light, and lighting devices, to other factors that affect the perception of the illumination of the light, such as the materials used, light and shade manipulations, and also the symbolism of light within the space. I linked each category to its application in the palace of the Aljafería, where I navigated all these uses of light in the palace and supported the statements with Arabic poems and Qur’anic references. All these visual aspects integrated throughout the Aljafería palace immersed the visual perception of the eleventh-century visitor in experiencing the idea of the palace as paradise on earth.

The second sensorial category the dissertation analyzed is the hearing sense, as the spatial architecture is seen, heard, and felt before it is intentionally reflected upon (Pallasmaa, 1994). Since sound is one of the most challenging factors of the past to reconstruct,

architecture provides both visual and spatial frameworks for reassembling acoustics. In the case of the Aljafería, studying the architectural remains in relation to the cultural practices that were conducted during the Taifa period would allow a glimpse of the aural experience. The paper looked into different factors of the aural experience of the Aljafería in the oratory, the courtyard, and the golden hall, each of which varies based on the function of that space. In the oratory, the aural experience was based on the religious rituals held in it in which the dome, mihrab, and textiles all took part in impacting the experience, where I analyzed each factor in relation to religious practices and Qur'anic verses. The way in which the Aljafería's oratory was designed validates the mosque as an experiential space. As for the exposed courtyard, as it is considered an open space, the beholders would be immersed in several sounds merged in harmony to create an impactful experience, such as the sound of the trees swayed by Zaragoza's infamous winds while birds chirped all around, the sound of water from both water basins, the sound of the golden hall's tapestries stirred by the winds, along with the sound of whispering accompanied by the rhythms of footsteps of the courtiers walking around, or the sound of music if one came at night during the *majlis* sessions. To support the assumed sounds, one of the aforementioned pieces of evidence I provided in the paper is the narration in the book of Al-Maqqari (1968) by Abu Al-Mutriq ibn Abdul-Aziz of a *majlis* anecdote in the Aljafería that illustrated the audible sounds of the swaying tree branches due to the windy cloudy weather. It is important to understand that due to the current palace's lack of textiles and furnishings, their existence was proven through the poem of Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti, which would impact the audible experience of the palace as it would act as an echoing absorbent.

The third sensorial category the dissertation analyzed is the haptic aspect, which included both touching the tangible elements and feeling the intangible essences through both the tactual and olfactory factors, as Juhanni Pallasmaa (2000) indicated that touch assumes various ways of influencing the perception of space.

One of the main tangible elements that influence the haptic perception of the space is its building materials. The building materials of the Aljafería not only articulated the endurance through time but also shaped the sensual perception of the palace, which would convey the

haptic perception of the texture of the surfaces that the eleventh-century Taifa beholders felt. The paper studied the multiple surfaces of different textures in the palace, such as the sleek tiles, the deep reliefs in alabaster and stucco, the polished marble of the flooring, and the column capitals, all of which imply the enhanced rich tactile, sensual experience during the Taifa period. Along with the building material that formed the tactile perception are the textiles of furnishings and curtains as medieval Muslims placed huge importance on the haptic sense through heavily integrating fabrics and textiles in the built space such as curtains, draperies, and pillows, which were used to enrich the lavish setting within Andalusian palaces. As the Aljafería now, like many other monuments, considered bare architecture, my intention was to reconstruct an initial idea of what textiles existed based on Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti's (2005) poem. The poem indicated the type of embroidered cushions that were aligned in the halls of the Aljafería, as Al-Gazzar used the word *Namareq* to specify that the laid cushions referred to small cushions that had been used traditionally to recline on, which allowed the *majalis* members to recline on them. The use of the word *Namareq* by Al-Gazzar copies the 15th verse of the 88th surah in the Qur'an using the same word in describing the believers' seats in heaven, which demonstrates the replication of paradise in the Aljafería palace. The poem also indicated the use of curtains in its verses, which enriched the haptic experience along with the usual one where the curtains were draped accompanied by the architectural drapery of the Aljafería's interlaced arches that created a magnificent backdrop to the *majalis*.

As for the intangible elements of the feeling sensation sensual and olfactory stimulus factors were used. Through analysis and field observations, the exposed courtyard allowed a tactual experience. Sensing the warmth of the penetrated natural light in contrast to the coolness of the shaded areas engages the body with the surroundings and creates a reminiscence of the oasis in the desert. As for the olfactive aspect, along with the paradisaical smell of the vegetation of the garden, I proposed the use of incense burners and perfumery in the palace. This assumption was based on the Prophet's directions and the common tradition in Islamic and Arabic culture, which I supported with the poem by Al-Tutili (1968) describing a *majlis* in the Aljafería, as he used the Arabic word *Abeqat*, which refers to heavy covering or spreading and mainly implies heavy smells. The heavy covering

of smell would suggest the use of an incense burner. The various tactual stimuli used in the palace aimed to enrich the haptic perception and links the palace in terms of pleasure to paradise.

The last category the dissertation discussed was the multisensorial experience. Although each sense was addressed separately for emphasis, it is essential to understand that humans experience spaces with all senses simultaneously. The overall multisensorial perception illustrated the deep relation between spatial architecture and culture, both of which are entangled and affect each other to produce an impactful perceptual experience, which is the main goal of this dissertation. Multisensory experiences play a crucial role in Islamic culture as they help establish a strong connection between oneself and the environment. The Qur'an and the Prophet's anecdotes provide vivid examples of multisensory illustrations that are relevant to various aspects of a Muslim's life. Furthermore, the importance of architecture lies in its ability to define historical time periods by conveying environmental, cultural, and religious factors. According to Pallasmaa (1994), the ultimate goal of architecture throughout time is to create symbolized existential metaphors that demonstrate the existence of humanity on earth. By reflecting and materializing ideas, architecture immortalizes the culture and ideas of the past while contributing to placing the present in the continuum of culture. Therefore, analyzing the architectural experience and materialized metaphors of the Aljafería can enrich our understanding of the culture and perceptions of the eleventh-century Taifa palace.

It is interesting to note that despite the abundance of records on Islamic architecture in medieval Arabic literature, the Aljafería did not receive as much praise as other Caliphate or Nasrid structures. Fortunately, a few anecdotes, along with the famed poem by Al-Gazzar As-Saraqusti (2005), provide a glimpse into what it was like to experience the Taifa period's sensory perception. This poem, as was heavily referenced in this dissertation, served as the foundation to build the projected experience for medieval visitors. It is important to recognize that the medieval perception of Muslim beholders was influenced by the cultural and religious ideas of that era. Those who were familiar with the sacred texts of the Qur'an, and the idea of Paradise as the ultimate reward, would have been particularly struck by the

paradisical atmosphere evoked throughout the Aljafería palace. This multisensorial approach might be less impactful for visitors without a similar religious and cultural background. With that in mind, by drawing on literature about the Aljafería and the practices within the palace, along with the atmosphere and sensory theories, we can assume a multisensory experience that captures the essence of this unique historical place. For that reason, I concluded the chapter with an assumed narrated multisensorial journey through the Taifa palace of the Aljafería.

Regarding the Applicability of the Study

The dissertation concluded the study with an initiative exploration of the applicability of the study to other monuments of Islamic Iberia and even to the different historical parts of the palace of the Aljafería itself. If the study was applied to the palace's parts by Pedro IV and the Catholic monarchs in the succeeding centuries, it would allow the exploration of the impact of the cultural and religious backgrounds on perceiving the space in contrast to the analyzed one in this paper. It would also allow the evaluation of the effect of Mudéjar or Muslim architects in building Christian palaces and how that would influence the perception. As the Aljafería embraced different centuries of different cultures, other Islamic monuments of Al-Andalus faced similar conditions, such as the Reales Alcázares in Seville. The study could be applied to the Taifa palace of the Abbadid since their court was considered a huge intellectual center during the Taifa period, similar to the Hudid court. Also, it would be fascinating to explore how the study of Taifa architecture could be applied to other Islamic periods, such as the Almohad palaces. It would be interesting to observe how the metaphorical messages and cultural practices varied across different historical periods of Al-Andalus. After all, one of the main goals of Taifa architecture was to prove legitimacy and power over other Taifas. Thus, by exploring different periods, we could gain a more nuanced understanding of how architecture was used to assert authority and communicate meaning in the Islamic world.

The study could also be applied to medieval non-Islamic monuments. Within the consideration of the Reales Alcázares, the study could be applied to the Palace of Alfonso X, the later palace of King Pedro I, and its other palace in Tordesillas since all of them are

Christian palaces with Andalusian artistic precedents. The observation of the sensorial experience of Pedro I's palaces would allow deeper analyses of whether, and how, the metaphors of these Islamic-inspired embellishments would differ based on Christian ideologies; if so, would these dissimilarities affect the sensorial perception of the same architectural elements of Islamic architecture? Another interesting monument to examine is the monastery of Santa Clara de Tordesillas since it has a clear connotation of Islamic architecture through its layout and ornamentations. It would be interesting to observe the relation between the Islamic metaphorical and sensorial approach to the architecture of a Christian palace with an Islamic style. Also, the study of multisensorial perception in relation to the architecture and court culture of Islamic Iberia could also be expanded by taking into account sensual impairment and synesthesia, which would add a richer depth to the study and offer different perspectives on the matter.

Finally, the method used in the dissertation of combining the architectural, cultural, and multisensorial approaches in analyzing historical monuments would allow a deeper understanding of these significant buildings. Understanding the studied perception of beholders of specific time periods would lay the foundations for historians to conceptually restructure these monuments in their original states, which would allow a greater understanding of our history, both architecturally and culturally. This approach to studies would also influence architects and designers to consider incorporating the value of cultural traditions and ideologies with a calculated experience when creating future built spaces. These approaches would undoubtedly lead to the development of architectural spaces that connect beholders with their surroundings to promote cultural, social, cognitive, and emotional growth rather than hindering it.

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Appendices



Appendices

Chronology of the Historical Periods of Al-Andalus

711	Islamic Conquest
756-929	Umayyad Emirate Period
929-1031	Umayyad Caliphate Period
1009-1110	First Taifa Period
1085-1145	Almoravid Rule
1140-1203	Second Taifa Period
1147- 1238	Almohads Rule
1238-1492	Nasrid Period

Related Chronology to the Palace of the Aljafería

9th century	The construction of the Troubadour Tower
1009	The beginning of the breaking of Cordoba, the formation of the Taifa period
1018	The start of Banu Tujib as rulers of the Taifa of Zaragoza
1039	The start of Banu Hud as ruler of the Taifa of Zaragoza
1046 - 1082	The rule of second Hudid king Al-Muqtadir
1064	The construction of the Taifa palace of the Aljafería
1082 - 1085	The rule of third Hudid king Al-Mu'tamin
1085-1110	The rule of fourth Hudid king Ahmad Al-Musta'in II
1110 - 1118	The rule of the Almoravids on Zaragoza
1118	The fall of Islamic Zaragoza to Alfonso I
1336 - 1387	Reign of Pedro IV with various Mudejar extensions to the palace
1485 - 1706	The installment of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition
1488 - 1495	The construction of the Catholic Monarchs Palace
1592 - 1593	Tiburcio Spannocchi's fortification of the Aljafería project
1705	King Felipe V's commissions for fortress reinforcement during the Civil War
1862	Conversion the Aljafería to military barracks
1931	The Aljafería being declared as a National Monument of Historical and Artistic Interest
1947	The beginning of the restoration project by Francisco Íñiguez Almech
1985	The installment of the seat of the Cortes de Aragón in the Aljafería
2001	The Aljafería being declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO

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Source: Espallargas, T. (2018, September 10). Great Mosque, Cordoba. World History Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/9185/great-mosque-cordoba/>

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Source: Mapas Historia de España, Península Ibérica (siglo XI), digital image of cartographic material, APPangea, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://appangea.com/2021/01/07/mapas-de-historia-de-espana-edad-media/>, Edited by the author

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Source: The Troubadour's tower: longitudinal section, Retrieved from Sebastián, M. E., Gracia, J. L. P., & Sauras, I. S. (1999). *The Aljafería of Zaragoza: a historical, artistic and literary guide*. Cortes de Aragón, Pg. 22.

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Source: Antonio Tolosa, J. Kufic inscription of the title Al-Muqtadir bi Allah on a Column Capital, Aragon mudejar, Retrieved from <https://www.aragonmudejar.com/zaragoza/aljaferia/aljaferia03.html>

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Source: Antonio Tolosa, J. Kufic inscription of the title Al-Muqtadir on an arch on south portico, Aragon mudejar, Retrieved from

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Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Planta baja hipotética del palacio de la Aljafería, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro GorbeaArquitectura de Al-Andalus, <https://www.academiacoleccion.com/buscador.php?q=Aljafer%C3%ADa&cat=arquitectura>

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Source: Najjar M, Qasr al-Mushatta, Discover Islamic Art, Museum with no frontiers, 2023,

https://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=monument;ISL;jo;Mon01;2;en&pageD=N

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Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Hipótesis del palacio de la Aljafería en el siglo XI, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacoleccion.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_11

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Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, El palacio de la Aljafería en la actualidad, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacoleccion.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_18

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Source: Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (Esetern al-Hayr Palace or the “Eastern Castle”), Quintin Lake, accessed 30 May 2023, <https://www.quintinlake.com/image/I00001yGemtogbZE>

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Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, El palacio de la Aljafería en la actualidad, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacoleccion.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_18, Edited by the author

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Figure 32. Hypothetical illustration of an axial view to the north side of the Taifa palace in the 11th century, the Aljafería, illustrated by Almagro Gorbea

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Vista axial del patio hacia el norte, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacolectaciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_i02

Figure 33. Highlighted areas showing the depth of the different layers of the northern side

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Vista axial del patio hacia el norte, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacolectaciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_i02, Edited by the author

Figure 34. The magnificent arches of the Aljafería, the north side, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 35. illustration of the arches of to the Great Mosque of Córdoba showing the resemblance of the Aljafería's arches, from the Almagro Gorbea collection

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Mezquita de Córdoba - Alzados exteriores Capilla Real con ortos, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacolectaciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-101_35

Figure 36. Remains of a decorative frieze with epigraphic bands from the throne hall, exhibited in Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 37. Fragments of polychromed carved alabaster, exhibited in the gallery of the Aljafería palace, Zaragoza, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 38. The framed view from the Throne Hall

Source: Nico Trinkhaus, 2016, the Aljafería palace, Sumfinitly, <https://sumfinitly.com/hdr-photos/spain/zaragoza/aljaferia-palace>

Figure 39. Fragment of epigraphic freeze from Castell Formós, exhibited in Museu de la Noguera, Balaguer

Source: Museo de la Noguera ed. 2010. Catàleg de la col·lecció de materials andalusins del Museo de la Noguera, Museo de la Noguera. Balaguer, 2010, <http://www.museucn.com/es/colecciones/fondo-arqueologico.html>

Figure 40. Fragment of poly-lobed arche from Castell Formós, exhibited in Museu de la Noguera, Balaguer

Source: Museo de la Noguera ed. 2010. Catàleg de la col·lecció de materials andalusins del Museo de la Noguera, Museo de la Noguera. Balaguer, 2010, <http://www.museucn.com/es/colecciones/fondo-arqueologico.html>

Figure 41. Fragment of the taifa palace, exhibited in the gallery of the Aljafería, Zaragoza, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 42. Fragment of plaster of Harpy from Castell Formós, exhibited in Museu de la Noguera, Balaguer

Source: Museo de la Noguera ed. 2010. Catàleg de la col·lecció de materials andalusins del Museo de la Noguera, Museo de la Noguera. Balaguer, 2010, <http://www.museucn.com/es/colecciones/fondo-arqueologico.html>

Figure 43. comparative plans illustrations by Almagro Gorbea of the Taifa Aljafería palace and the Taifa palace of Monteagudo

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Generales comparativos – Jardines, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacoleccion.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-001_04

Figure 44. Fragment of plasterwork from the palace of Monteagudo with remains of polychromed finish, from the collection of Museo Arqueológico Nacional

Museo Arqueológico Nacional ed. 1993. Antigüedades Medievales, al-Andalus frente a los almohades. La Taifa de Ibn Mardanis, Murcia, Museo Arqueológico Nacional. Madrid, <https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>

Figure 45. Fragment of plasterwork from an arch of the palace of Monteagudo, from the collection of Museo Arqueológico Nacional

Museo Arqueológico Nacional ed. 1993. Antigüedades Medievales, al-Andalus frente a los almohades. La Taifa de Ibn Mardanis, Murcia, Museo Arqueológico Nacional. Madrid, <https://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>

Figure 46. Saint Martin's courtyard, Showing the entrance to the Taifa palace with a window from the Catholic Monarch palace, the Aljafería, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 47. Saint Martin's courtyard, Showing Saint Martin Chapel, and the Troubadour Tower, the Aljafería, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 48. Entrance of San Martín Chapel, the Aljafería, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 49. Hypothetical illustration of ground floor plan of the 14th century, the Aljafería, illustrated by Almagro Gorbea

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, La Aljafería de Zaragoza - Hipótesis siglo XIV, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacolecciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_12, Edited by the author

Figure 50. The Lower Hall of the Mudejar Palace, the Reception Hall of Pedro IV's palace, the Aljafería, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 51. The stairway to the Catholic Monarch palace on the upper level, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 52. View from the courtyard to the north side, showing the Catholic Monarch palace's gallery above the Taifa palace, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 53. The ceiling of the pacing antechamber before the Catholic Throne room, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 54. The throne room of the Catholic Monarchs, showing the ceiling and the gallery, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 55. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the north side, 1593, Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

Source: Dibujo de la Aljafería de Zaragoza en su parte Norte, 1593. España. Ministerio de Cultura. Archivo General de Simancas. Sobradriel Valenzuela, P. I. (2006). La aljafería filipina: 1591-1597, los años de hierro. In *Arte islámico—colección fuentes documentales*

(Vol. 2). Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo Centro Mixto entre las Cortes de Aragón, el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Figure 56. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the south side, 1593, Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

Source: Dibujo de la Aljafería de Zaragoza en en la parte de Mediodía,1593. España. Ministerio de Cultura. Archivo General de Simancas. Sobradíel Valenzuela, P. I. (2006). La aljafería filipina: 1591-1597, los años de hierro. In *Arte islámico—colección fuentes documentales* (Vol. 2). Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo Centro Mixto entre las Cortes de Aragón, el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Figure 57. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the eastern side, 1593, , Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

Source: Dibujo de la Aljafería de Zaragoza en la parte de Levante, 1593. España. Ministerio de Cultura. Archivo General de Simancas. Sobradíel Valenzuela, P. I. (2006). La aljafería filipina: 1591-1597, los años de hierro. In *Arte islámico—colección fuentes documentales* (Vol. 2). Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo Centro Mixto entre las Cortes de Aragón, el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Figure 58. Drawing of the Aljafería by Tiburcio Spannocchi of the western side, 1593, , Archivo General de Simancas, File 375

Source: Dibujo de la Aljafería de Zaragoza en la parte de Poniente, 1593. España. Ministerio de Cultura. Archivo General de Simancas. Sobradíel Valenzuela, P. I. (2006). La aljafería filipina: 1591-1597, los años de hierro. In *Arte islámico—colección fuentes documentales* (Vol. 2). Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo Centro Mixto entre las Cortes de Aragón, el Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y la Universidad de Zaragoza.

Figure 59. Section of the enclosure according to Miguel Marín, 1757. Military Historical Department

Source: Transverse and longitudinal section by M. Marin, Retrieved from Sebastián, M. E., Gracia, J. L. P., & Sauras, I. S. (1999). *The Aljafería of Zaragoza: a historical, artistic and literary guide*. Cortes de Aragón, Pg. 100.

Figure 60. Elevation drawings of the walls of the Aljafería, showing the changes over the centuries, illustrated by Almagro Gorbea

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,
<https://www.academiacolectaciones.com/arquitectura/arquitectura-al-andalus.php?pag=9&orden=3&direccion=0>

Figure 61. Plan of the Islamic Aljafería, showing the entrance access to the palace

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, El palacio de la Aljafería en la actualidad, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,
https://www.academiacolectaciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_18,
Edited by the author

Figure 62. The Lavish arch of the east portico, Aljafería, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 63. illustration of the Southern side of the Taifa palace in the 11th century, showing the reputation of number seven

Source: Almagro Vidal, A. (2008). *El concepto de espacio en la arquitectura palatina andalusí: un análisis perceptivo a través de la infografía*. Editorial Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Edited: by the author

Figure 64. View to the Santa Isabel courtyard, showing the garden and the lavish arches,

Source: Taken by the author

Figure 65. the fortified walls of the Aljafería palace, Zaragoza, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 66. Entrance to the Taifa palace, the Aljafería, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 67. Plan of the Islamic Aljafería, showing the broken path from the main entrance to the Throne Hall

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, El palacio de la Aljafería en la actualidad, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacolecciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-201_18,

Edited by the author

Figure 68. Remains of a polychromed decorative frieze from the throne hall, exhibited in Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, Source: Taken by the author

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Figure 70. View of the arches of the north side, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 71. The ornamentation of the interior the throne hall, while offering view to the courtyard through the openings, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 72. View of the courtyard and garden from the south portico, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 73. Sunlight from the exposed courtyard illuminating the interior, Source: Taken by the author

Figure 74. openings in the oratory to allow light to penetrate through, Source: Taken by the author

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Figure 78. Hypothetical floor plan of the garden level of the patio del crucero in the Almohad period, illustrated by Almagro Gorbea

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Planta hipotética del nivel del jardín del patio del Crucero en época almohade, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacolecciones.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-303_05

Figure 79. Hypothetical visualization of the patio de crucero in the Almohad period, illustrated by Almagro Gorbea

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Alcázar islámico (Sevilla) - Lado norte del patio del Crucero almohade, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea,

Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacolectores.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-303_i06

Figure 80. Floor Plan of Pedro I Palace, The Reales Alcázares, Sevilla, Illustrated by Antonia Almagro

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Alcázar de Sevilla - Planta baja del palacio de Pedro I, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus, https://www.academiacolectores.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-801_26

Figure 81. Hypothetical reconstruction of the patio of Pedro I Palace, The Reales Alcázares, Sevilla, illustrated by Antonio Almagro

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Alcázar cristiano (Sevilla) - Patio del palacio de Pedro I desde el este, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacolectores.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-505_i14

Figure 82. Hypothesis Floor Plan of King Pedro I palace in Tordesillas, Illustrated by Antonia Almagro

Source: Almagro Gorbea, A. 1948, Palacio-Convento de Santa Clara (Tordesillas, Valladolid) - Planta palacio hipótesis, Fondo gráfico donado por el Académico D. Antonio Almagro Gorbea, Arquitectura de Al-Andalus,

https://www.academiacolectores.com/arquitectura/inventario.php?id=AA-503_03