


## Southern Portugal – An Architectural Heritage With Strong Islamic Influence

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### Abstract

The western part of al-Andalus was a peripheral zone of the Islamic World, far from the area of the gualquivir river and the mediterranean coast. But in this western area there are important architectural elements from the Islamic era. In addition to the reuse of defensive and civilian structures from roman times, there were military building programmes on the coastlines, from the 9th century onwards, with the arrival of Norse raiders. moreover, some chronicles refer, for the 10th and 11th centuries, to the construction of 'qasaba'(s) (military enclosures) in some cities and the total reconstruction of city walls.

Recent archaeological activity has made evident traces of small palaces, houses and city walls but there is also an architectural heritage visible relative to other buildings – such as mosques and even small 'ribat'(s) along the coastline. Some techniques, like that of 'rammed earth', are known to have been common in the Almohad period.

In general terms, one can identify several remnants of buildings – religious, civil and military – with different construction techniques and traditions, not only the reuse of older constructions but also the erection of new buildings. On the other hand, it is possible to find parallels to these buildings in such varied areas as other parts of the ancient al-Andalus, North Africa, Syria and even Samarra (Iraq).

This area of the Iberian Peninsula, described in chronicles as gharb al-Andalus, is a hybrid region, where different traditions converged, taking advantage of the legacy of previous periods, mixing that legacy with contributions from North Africa, different areas of the mediterranean and even the middle east. This 'Islamic legacy' is currently perceived as a regional legacy and is well preserved

### Keywords

bench entrance, fortifications, qasaba, rammed earth, Vikings.

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