

Welcome to

# HISHAM'S PALACE

## Archaeological Park

Made by



# INTRODUCTION



Right now you are standing in one of the most important Palestinian cultural heritage sites: Khirbat al-Mafjar or Hisham's Palace. The complex was built in the 8th century and named after Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik, the caliph of the Umayyads. The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750 CE) was the second of the four major caliphates established after the death of Muhammad. The building complex was used as a winter resort. Because of the mild winters it was a popular place to stay. After the Umayyad period, the palace continued to be inhabited by several other dynasties, but the audience hall and the bath house had already been destroyed by the severe earthquake of 748/749 CE. During this visit to the archaeological park, you will admire the remains of the magnificent Umayyad buildings of Hisham's Palace.

## How does it work?

You are divided into several groups. All groups start at the starting point in front of the museum (see plan). There are six spots at the park which you will visit; each group starts at a different spot. The teacher will tell every group where to start. By the end you will have come across the following locations:

- 1) The entrance hall
- 2) The star window
- 3) The sirdab (cold bath)
- 4) The mosque
- 5) The bath house
- 6) The pavilion

In this workbook you will find assignments for each location. When you have finished the assignments at one of the locations, you proceed to the next spot in line. When you have completed the assignments at the pavilion (6), you continue the visit at the entrance hall (1).

# Hisham's Palace Archaeological Park

1 Entrance hall



2 Star window



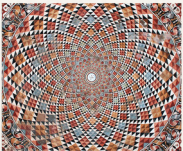
3 Cold bath



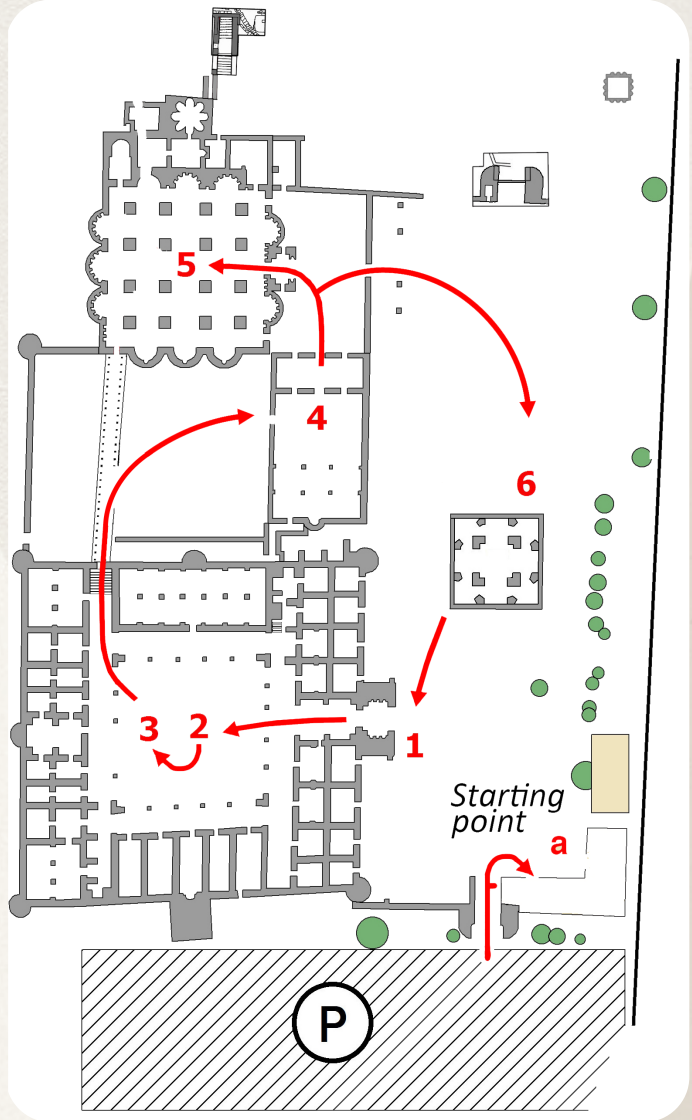
4 Mosque



5 Bath house



6 Pavilion



You definitely will enjoy your visit to Hisham's Palace Archaeological Park. But please do not forget that you are a guest at the park and therefore have to respect the following rules:

- Remain on the designated paths
- Do not cross any barriers which are set up
- Do not touch the buildings
- Do not damage any item of the park
- Throw away garbage in the garbage cans
- Do not disturb other visitors

Good luck and have fun!



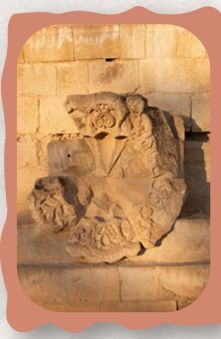
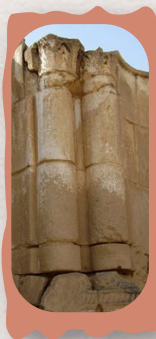
EVENT  
CONAR  
CENTRE  
HALL

# ENTRANCE HALL



When visitors of the palace arrived at Hisham's Palace, they had to wait for the caliph until he had time to receive them. Because a lot of people needed to wait here and the caliph wanted to impress his guests, the entrance hall was finely decorated with murals. A lot of decorations are still visible at this spot. Some decorations also reflect the way of life they used to have in the Umayyad period.

1. Here is a modified picture of the entrance hall and four photos of decorations you can find at the entrance hall. Draw a line from the decorations to the correct spot on the picture of the entrance hall, where the particular decoration is situated.





When archaeologists excavated the entrance hall in the 1930s, the hall looked a bit different to what it looks like today. But some features also remain the same.

2. Compare this picture with the present situation and describe the similarities and the differences between the entrance hall in the 1930s and today.

#### Similarities

.....

.....

.....

#### Differences

.....

.....

.....

Remember that you are not allowed to touch the decorations and have to walk over the walking bridge!



3. Imagine: you are a decorator of the caliph in the 8th century. Design your own decoration and draw how you would decorate the entrance hall. It would be great if the decorations were in the Umayyad style.



4. The staff of the archaeological park of Hisham's Palace looks after the monuments very carefully. Have a good look at the entrance hall you are standing in. Describe the way the archaeological park preserves the entrance hall for the future.

.....

.....

.....

.....



S-T-A-R

W-i-N

Q-D  
W

# STAR WINDOW

You are standing in front of the so-called Star Window. This piece of decoration used to stand on the roof of the palace.



1. One of the tasks of an archaeologist is to study discovered objects very precisely, to describe them and to imagine how the object has been used in the past. Archaeologists call such objects 'artefacts'. Sometimes archaeologists use an artefact card to describe the most important artefacts. Now it is your turn! Fill in the exercise paper to describe the Star Window of Hisham's Palace.

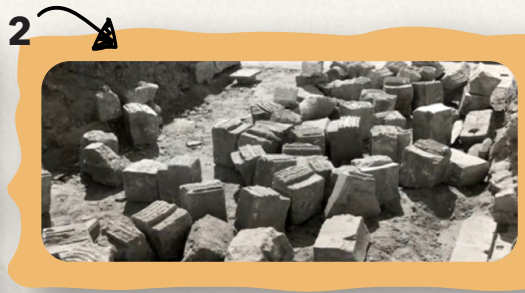
*Remember you are not allowed to touch the Star Window!*





Fill in the answer or mark the correct answer.

How big do you think the artifact is?	Lenght:      cm	Height:      cm	Width:      cm				
Which colours does the artefact have?							
Which material is the artefact made from?	Wood	Metal	Stone	Glass	Earth-work	Clay	Bone
Draw the artefact, including the decorations.							
How old is the artefact?							
What was the function of the artefact?							



2a.

Read the text on the next page. Then look at the four pictures and describe what you see on each picture.

1 .....

.....

.....

2 .....

.....

.....

3 .....

.....

.....

4 .....

.....

.....

.....

.....



When archaeologists encountered the Star Window in the 1930s, it was not in a good condition. Archaeologists regularly find parts of artefacts or architectural structures and have to imagine how they would have looked in the past. In an archaeological park or museum cultural heritage is often presented to the public in a reconstructed way. The Star Window has been reconstructed in the past. Here you see pictures of the Star Window in four different stages.

**2b.** What is the right chronological order of the pictures? Start with the oldest picture and end with the newest picture.



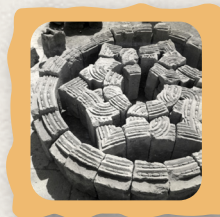
.....



.....



.....



.....



S  
D  
R  
A  
B

# SIRDAB

You are standing above the *sirdab*. A *sirdab* is an underground room which stays cool in a warm climate. At Hisham's Palace the Umayyads built a cold-water bath house inside the *sirdab*.

1. This *sirdab* is very old and dates to the 8th century. Here is a picture of how the *sirdab* looked when archaeologists uncovered it. Compare the picture with the present situation. What similarities and differences do you see?

## Similarities

.....

.....

.....

## Differences





2. One of the tasks of an archaeological park is to make cultural heritage accessible to the public. Which measures did the park take regarding the sirdab to achieve this aim?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

*There is no internal water source at Hisham's Palace. A major investment was needed for the Umayyads to secure the water supply of the palace. They built several constructions in order to transfer the water from the wadis and springs in the mountains to the palace. An example of such buildings is an aqueduct: a bridge which channels the water in the required direction. This picture shows an old aqueduct near Jericho.*



**Photograph taken by Corporal Henry Philips R.E. in 1867 of an aqueduct bridge over the Wadi Nueima (PEF-P-827; Courtesy Palestine Exploration Fund)**



3. Where did the water of this particular sirdab come from?  
(hint: do not forget to read the text board near the sirdab)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



**Walk down the stairs and enter the room**



In the Umayyad time the people could not have a shower at home, because they did not have access to water inside their own house. Only the richer people and the caliphs had access to water inside their property. When people wanted to wash themselves or wanted to relax they went to a bath house. There are two different kinds of bath houses. Right now you are standing in a cold-water bath house; the cold water from the wadis and springs was channelled to this building and just flew down into the bath from a hole in the wall. The Umayyads also had warm-water bath houses. In this kind of bath house they used fire to heat the water inside the bath house: a cosy place to relax and socialise with other people!

4. Explain why common people had to go to a public bath house and the caliph could have his own warm-water bath house at Hisham's Palace.

.....

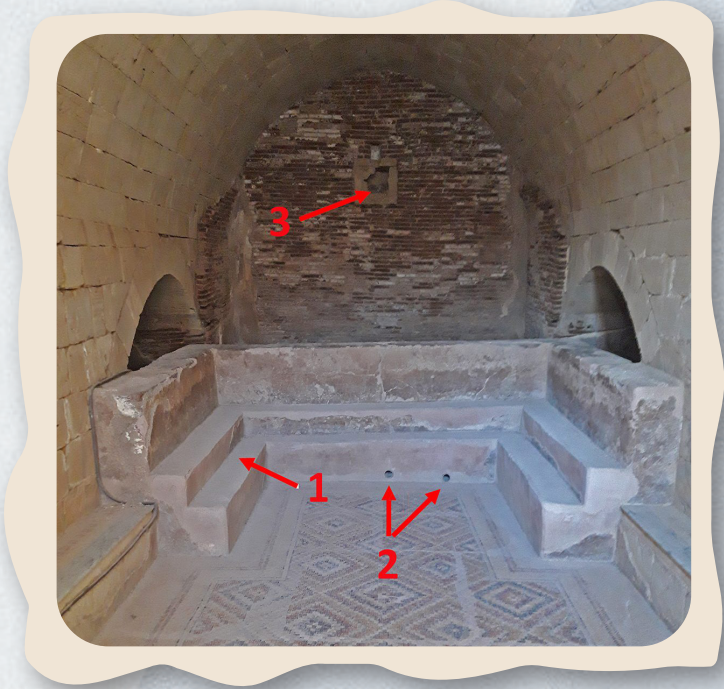
.....

.....

.....

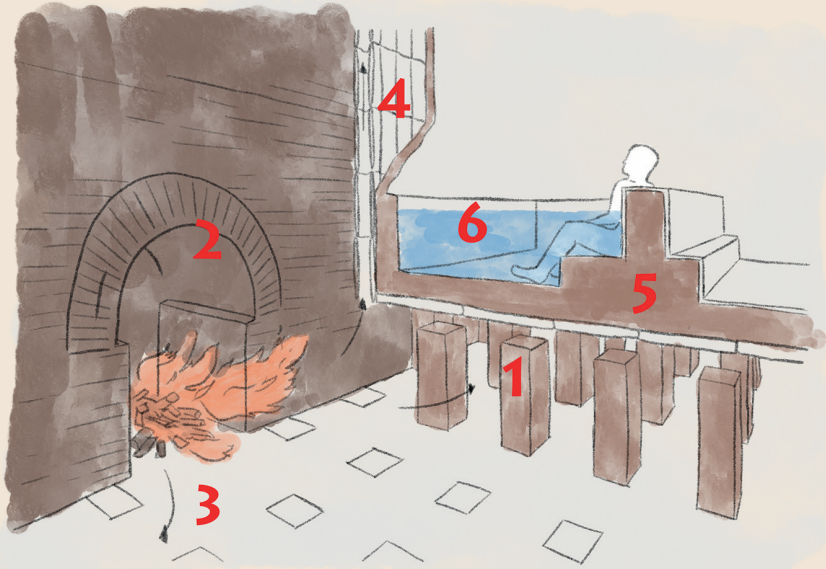
.....

.....



5. So now you are standing in the remains of a cold-water bath. Have a look at this picture. Compare it with the room you are standing in. What was the function of the different features in the bath house that are marked in the picture?

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....



In this picture you see the technique which the Umayyads used to heat the water in warm-water bath houses. The bath house under the shelter [location 5 of this tour] is an example of this.

6. Look at the picture and fill in the missing words in the text. Use the following words: floor, furnace, hot air, pillars, pipes and water.

Bath houses were built on **1**.....with space between them. To warm the water in the bath house, a servant had to burn wood in the **2**..... Consequently, the **3**.....spread over the room. To warm the walls of the bath houses, **4**.....were running through the walls and spread the hot air. Below the bath house, the air becomes warmer and warmer, causing the **5**..... and - in the end - the **6**.....to get heated. With such a system the Umayyads warmed the water in their bath houses.

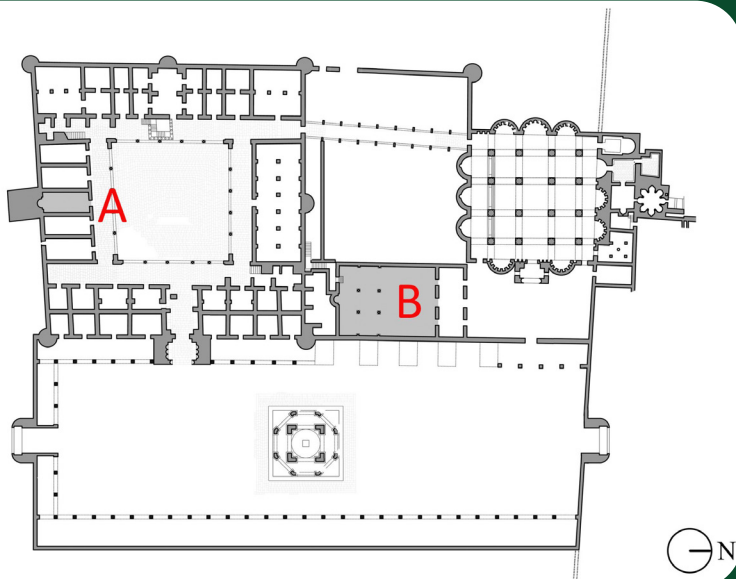
M-O-Q-S  
U-E

# MOSQUE



You are standing in front of the remains of one of the mosques at Hisham's Palace. As it is today, religion was very important for the Umayyads. In the mosques the Umayyads came together to pray.

Hisham's Palace was built in three different phases. In the **first phase** the palace, the cold-water bath house and mosque A were built. In the **second stage** the audience hall and the large bath house were built. **Finally**, the pavilion and mosque B were built. As the palace complex was enlarged the diplomatic and religious functions were transferred from the oldest part of the complex to the audience hall and mosque B; the palace focussed more and more on the function of living.



The location of mosques A and B  
(Courtesy Ignacio Arce)

1a.

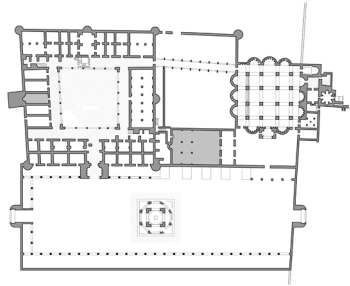
Here you see plans of the palace complex in the three different phases. What is the right chronological order of the three plans? Start with the oldest plan (phase 1) and end with the most recent one (phase 3).

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

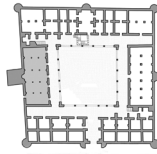
1b.

Explain why you have chosen this chronological order.

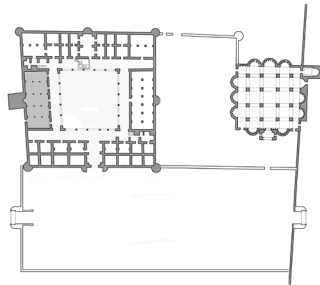
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



Plan 1



Plan 2



Plan 3

**The building complex in three different phases (Courtesy Ignacio Arce)**

2a.

Look at the two plans of mosque A in two different phases. What architectural change do you notice?

.....

.....

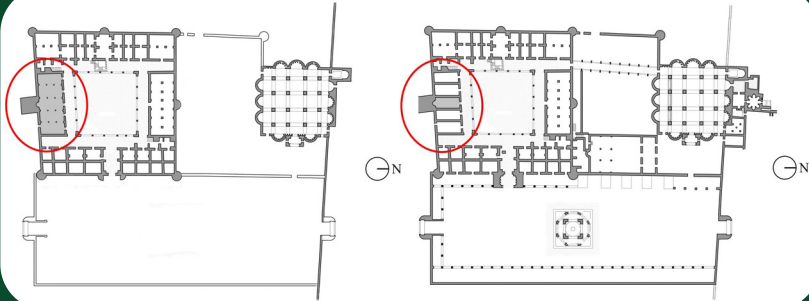
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



*Mosque A in different phases*  
(Courtesy Ignacio Arce)



2b.

How can you explain this adjustment with the knowledge about the changes in diplomatic and religious functions of this part of the palace by the time (see text on page 22)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





3. Now you are standing in mosque B. Unfortunately, there is not much left of the mosque. But, thanks to one remaining feature (see photo) experts concluded that this building used to function as a mosque in the past. What is the name of this characteristic feature of a mosque?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Explain why this characteristic feature stands on this particular side of the mosque and not on the other side.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. What is the area of this mosque in square metres? *Hint: to calculate the area you must multiply the length by the width. First calculate the length and width by using steps of 1 metre.*



Length: ..... meter

Width: ..... meter

Area: ..... meter<sup>2</sup>

6. How many people could stand in this mosque at the same time, do you think?

.....  
.....



BATH

HALL

# BATH HALL



You are standing in the large bath hall of Hisham's Palace. Visitors were welcomed in this bath hall and the special audience hall (*Diwan*). The bath hall and audience hall were decorated with various patterns of mosaics. Mosaics are decorations in different shapes and forms made out of tiny polished stones or glass. The mosaics of Hisham's Palace are an example of early Islamic mosaic art. The mosaics you are looking at are made so professionally that some scholars think the mosaics were made by master mosaicists from Constantinople (Istanbul). Other experts are convinced that the mosaics were made by local people from Jericho. Creating mosaics was quite challenging and very time-consuming in the Umayyad period.

1. Why do you think that making a mosaic in the Umayyad period was a time-consuming and challenging job?

.....

.....

.....



Impression of the bath hall's protection shelter





**Some mosaic patterns that can be found at the bath hall**



The price of a mosaic depends on the size, shape, colours, and different patterns a mosaic has. The more complex the mosaic, the more valuable it was.

2. Have a look at all mosaics. Which mosaic do you think was the most challenging design for the mosaicist to make? Share your thoughts with your team members. What do they think?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Even though creating mosaics like these in the bath house was very expensive, the Umayyad ruler of the palace decided to order them.



3.

Why did he make this decision after all, do you think?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

The problem with mosaics is that the colours and patterns can fade away with too much sunlight, wind and rain after a long period of time. When the bath hall was excavated, the archaeologists decided to protect the mosaics by pouring sand on them. Another danger for the mosaics are tourists. If too many visitors walk over the mosaics, the pieces of stone or glass will be damaged. Therefore, people are not allowed to walk over the mosaics.





**The mosaics after excavations**



**4.**

How are these mosaics preserved today? Look around you and describe the methods you notice.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

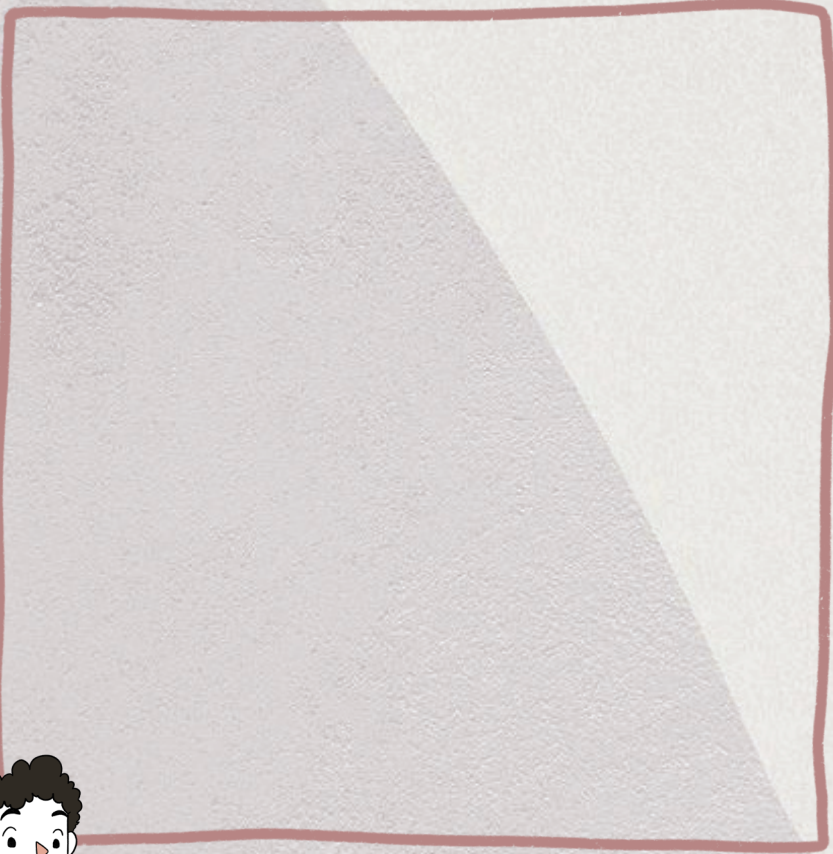
.....

.....

5.

What is your favourite mosaic design? If you have time, you can draw that design here:

.....  
.....





P A V  
i i  
L i  
O N

# PAVILION



You are now standing next to the remains of the pavilion. This pavilion used to stand in the forecourt of the palace's gardens and covered a fountain and a deep pool. It was built on four massive pillars with a high dome at the top. Eight smaller pillars supported a balcony on arches. A water channel crossed the gardens and fed the fountain which was situated in the middle of the pool.

1a.

Here are photos of three remaining features of the pavilion. Try to find them at the place you are standing now. Draw a line from the features to the corresponding location in the plan.



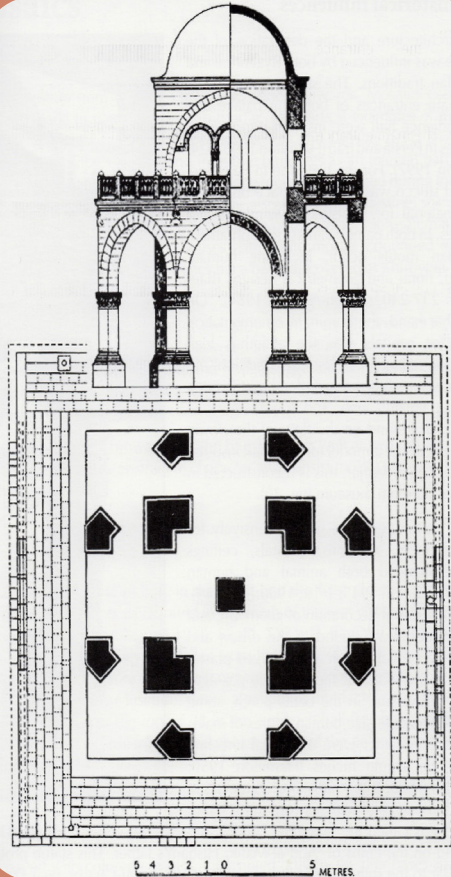
1



2



3



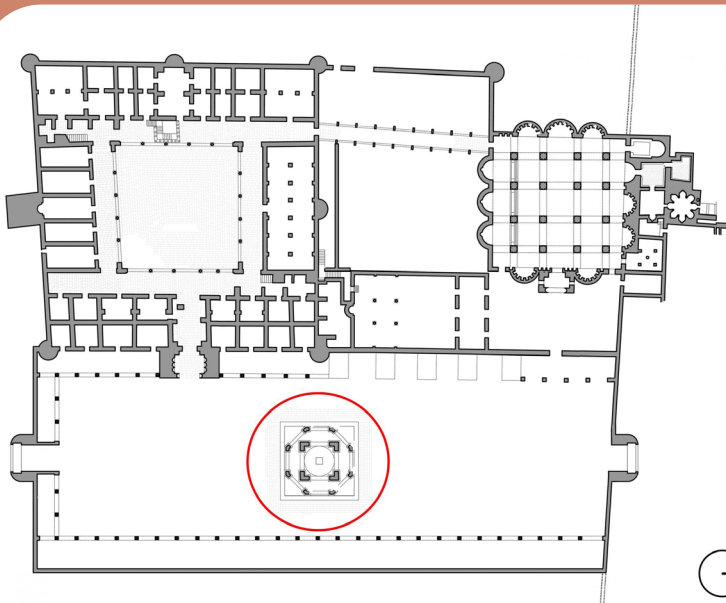
1b.

What was the function of each feature, do you think?

1 .....

2 .....

3 .....



2.

Look at the map of Hisham's Palace. The red circle indicates the location of the pavilion. Why would the caliph have chosen to build the pavilion at this particular place?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3.

The dome of the pavilion is called the 'dome of heaven' (qubat al-khadra). For what reason, do you think?

.....

.....

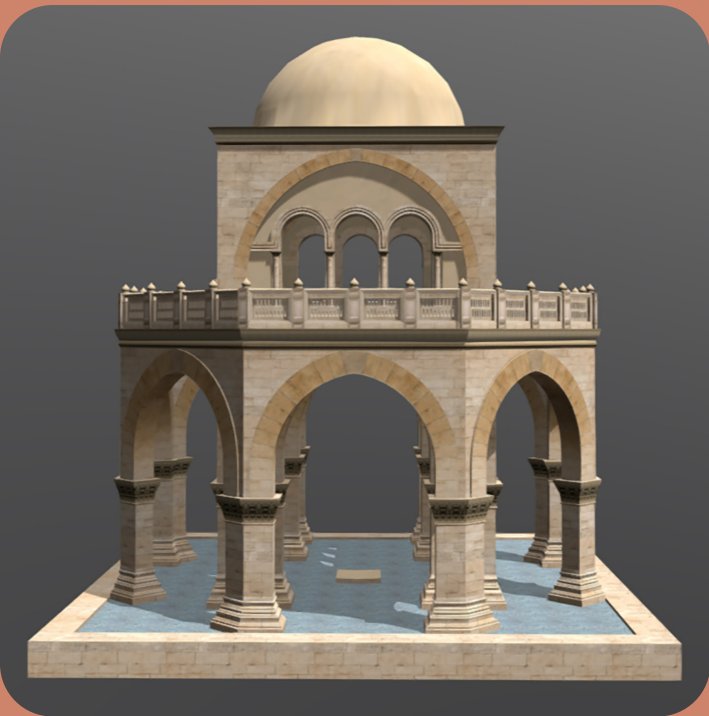
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





Colour this detail of the mosaic floor of Hisham's Palace



# COLOPHON

## **Made possible by**

Cultural Heritage and Education

## **Text**

Niels Drijvers, Jesse Geurtsen  
and Bart Wagemakers

## **Graphic design**

Nicole Kamermans, Roosmarijn  
Lem and Iris Schoester.  
Ronja Bosgraaf (drawing Star  
Window on cover)

## **Arabic translation**

### **(Arabic version)**

Jihad Chamas and  
Mahmoud Barakat

Thank you for visiting

# HISHAM'S PALACE

Archaeological Park

