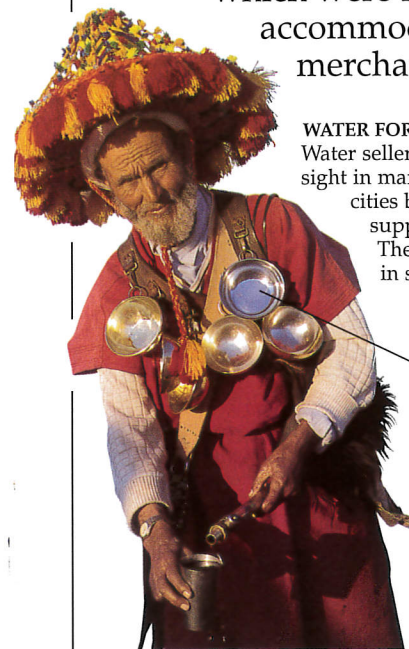


The Islamic city

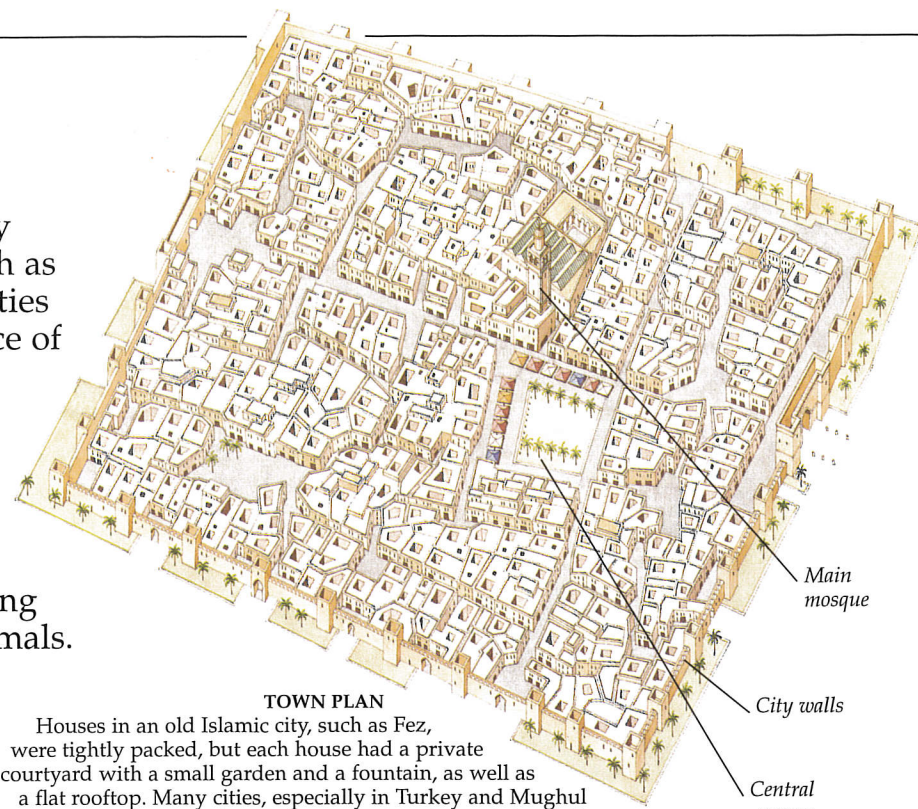
MUSLIMS INHERITED ideas about city planning from early civilizations such as ancient Rome, and they built large cities with facilities that were far in advance of those in Europe. A typical city in the year 1000 would have had a large mosque – usually with a school and library – and a market and baths.

There were also caravanseries, which were hotels providing accommodation for traveling merchants and their animals.



WATER FOR SALE
Water sellers were a common sight in many Middle Eastern cities before reliable water supplies were installed. They can still be seen in some places.

Metal drinking cups



TOWN PLAN
Houses in an old Islamic city, such as Fez, were tightly packed, but each house had a private courtyard with a small garden and a fountain, as well as a flat rooftop. Many cities, especially in Turkey and Mughul India (pp. 52–53), had public gardens beyond the walls.

Main mosque

City walls

Central square

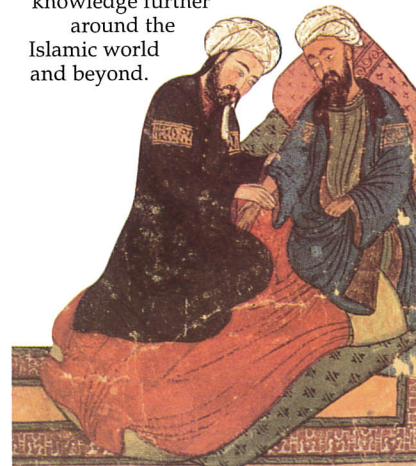


MARKET PLACES
Suqs, or covered markets, are usually large, busy places. They are arranged so that shops selling similar goods are close together, so purchasers can compare quality and prices, and so that the official market inspectors (p. 58) can do their job effectively.



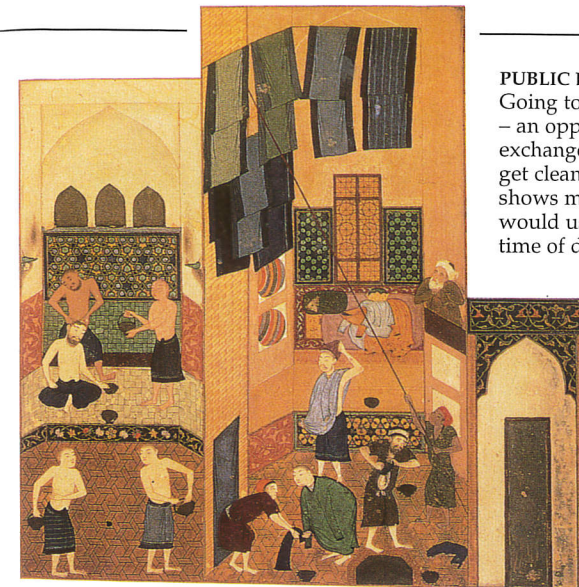
THE CITY GRAVEYARD
Burial places were usually outside the city walls. They were pleasant, green spaces with trees, which provided somewhere to walk, meditate, or enjoy the fresh air. Most people had simple graves, marked with a single stone.

SEEKING A CURE
Medicine was advanced in the Muslim world (pp. 30–31) and some Islamic cities became renowned for their able doctors. Travelers would often return home with news of remarkable cures using remedies such as herbs and spices, and spread this knowledge further around the Islamic world and beyond.



Lookout tower gives a good vantage point and firing platform.

Battlements to conceal defenders



PUBLIC BATHS
Going to the baths was a social occasion – an opportunity to meet friends and exchange news – as well as a chance to get clean. This painting from Persia shows men visiting the baths. Women would use the baths at a different time of day.



TELLING A STORY
In some cities, comfortable coffee houses provided entertainment. People went to this coffee house in Istanbul both for refreshments and to while away the hours listening to the local storyteller.

PIGEON POST
Major Islamic cities were connected with an efficient postal service. Mail was transported by camels, mules, or horses, and in 1150, the Sultan of Baghdad even started a postal service using carrier pigeons.



City walls, Morocco

CITY WALLS
Walls enclosed many Muslim cities. They had to be strong enough to keep out attackers, give somewhere for defenders to stand safely, and provide a good view of the surrounding countryside. Gates could be locked to keep out enemies, or opened, when guards could keep an eye on who was entering and leaving the city.



WATERWHEELS
Bringing water into the city was sometimes a major task. In Hamah, Syria, two huge wooden waterwheels mounted on massive stone arches were built to raise water from the river to supply the town. Building wheels like this required great engineering skill.

