Alhambra

The Alhambra (/ælˈhæmbrə/, Spanish: [aˈlambra]; Arabic: الْحَمْرَاء, romanized: al-ḥamrāʾ) is a palace and fortress complex located in Granada, Andalusia, Spain. It is one of the most famous monuments of Islamic architecture and one of the best-preserved palaces of the historic Islamic world, in addition to containing notable examples of Spanish Renaissance architecture.[1][2][3]

The complex was begun in 1238 by Muhammad I Ibn al-Ahmar, the first Nasrid emir and founder of the Emirate of Granada, the last Muslim state of Al-Andalus.[3][4] It was built on the Sabika hill, an outcrop of the Sierra Nevada which had been the site of earlier fortresses and of the 11th-century palace of Samuel ibn Naghrillah.[4][5] Later Nasrid rulers continuously modified the site. The most significant construction campaigns, which gave the royal palaces much of their definitive character, took place in the 14th century during the reigns of Yusuf I and Muhammad V.[6][7]

ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORY

history

The evidence for a Roman presence is unclear but archeologists have found remains of ancient foundations on the Sabika hill.[20] A fortress or citadel, probably dating from the Visigothic

period, existed on the hill in the 9th century.[5] The first reference to the Qal'at al-Ḥamra was during the battles between the Arabs and the Muladies during the rule of 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad (r. 888–912). According to surviving documents from the era, the red castle was quite small, and its walls were not capable of deterring an army intent on conquering. The first reference to al-Ḥamrā' came in lines of poetry attached to an arrow shot over the ramparts, recorded by Ibn Hayyan (d. 1076):

"Deserted and roofless are the houses of our enemies; Invaded by the autumnal rains, traversed by impetuous winds; Let them within the red castle (Kalat al hamra) hold their mischievous councils; Perdition and woe surround them on every side."[21]

At the beginning of the 11th century, the region of Granada was dominated by the Zirids, a Sanhaja Berber group and offshoot of the Zirids who ruled parts of North Africa. When the Caliphate of Córdoba collapsed after 1009 and the Fitna (civil war) began, the Zirid leader Zawi ben Ziri established an independent kingdom for himself, the Taifa of Granada.[4] The Zirids built their citadel and palace, known as the al-Qaṣaba al-Qadīma ("Old Citadel" or "Old Palace"), on the hill now occupied by the Albaicín neighborhood.[4][5]

Etymology

Alhambra derives from the Arabic الْحَمْرَاء (al-Ḥamrā' , pronounced [alħamˈraːʔ]), meaning lit. 'the red one' (f.), the complete form of which was اَلْحَمْرَاءُ الْقَلْعَةُ al-Qal'at al-Ḥamrā' "the red fortress (qalat)".[3][5] The "Al-" in "Alhambra" means "the" in Arabic, but this is ignored in general usage in both English and Spanish, where the name is normally given the definite article. The reference to the colour "red" in the name is due to the reddish colour of its walls, which were constructed of rammed earth.[3] The reddish colour comes from the iron oxide in the local clay used for this type of construction.[18]

Most of the names used today for specific structures and locations within the Alhambra are imaginative names coined after the medieval period, often in the 19th century.[19][6] The original Arabic names of the Nasrid-era buildings are not known, although some scholars have proposed connections between certain buildings and some of the names mentioned in historical sources.[6]

RECOVERY AND MODERN RESTORATIONS

Recovery

Restoration work was undertaken in 1828 by the architect José Contreras, endowed in 1830 by Ferdinand VII. After the death of Contreras in 1847, it was continued by his son Rafael (died 1890) and his grandson Mariano Contreras (died 1912).[66][68] In 1830 Washington Irving lived in Granada and wrote his Tales of the Alhambra, first published in 1832, which spurred international interest in southern Spain and in its Islamic-era monuments like the Alhambra (an apartment of which he decorated in New England style).[69][8] Other artists and intellectuals, such as John Frederick Lewis and Owen Jones, helped make the Alhambra into an icon of the era with their writings and illustrations during the 19th century.[8]

Pavilion in the Court of the Lions in 19th-century photo, showing the "oriental" dome added by Rafael Contreras in 1859, later removed by Leopoldo Torres Balbás The Contreras family members continued to be the most important architects and conservators of the Alhambra up until 1907.[70] During this period they generally followed a theory of "stylistic restoration", which favoured the construction and addition of elements to make a monument "complete" but not necessarily corresponding to any historical reality.

LAYOUT OF ALHAMBRA

Layout

The Alhambra site is about 700–740 m (2,300–2,430 ft) in length and about 200–205 m (660–670 ft) at its greatest width.[3][84] It extends from west-northwest to east-southeast and covers an area of about 142,000 m2 (1,530,000 sq ft) or 35 acres.[84] It stands on a narrow promontory overlooking the Vega or Plain of Granada and carved by the river Darro on its north side as it descends from the Sierra Nevada.[85] The red earth from which the fortress is constructed is a granular aggregate held together by a medium of red clay which gives the resulting layered brick- and stone- reinforced construction (tapial calicastrado) its characteristic hue and is at the root of the name of 'the Red Hill'.[86]

Pompeii (/pɒmˈpeɪ(i)/ pom-PAY-(ee), Latin: [pɔmˈpe̯i.iː]) was an ancient city in what is now the comune of Pompei near Naples in the Campania region of Italy. Along with Herculaneum, Stabiae, and many surrounding villas, the city was buried under 4 to 6 m (13 to 20 ft) of volcanic ash and pumice in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD.

Largely preserved under the ash, Pompeii offers a unique snapshot of Roman life, frozen at the moment it was buried,[1] as well as insight into ancient urban planning.[2][3] It was a wealthy town of 10,000 to 20,000 residents at the time it was destroyed.[4] It hosted many fine public buildings and luxurious private houses with lavish decorations, furnishings and artworks, which were the main attractions for early excavators; subsequent excavations have found hundreds of private homes and businesses reflecting various architectural styles and social classes, as well as numerous public buildings. Organic remains, including wooden objects and human bodies, were interred in the ash; their eventual decay allowed archaeologists to create moulds of figures in their final moments of life.

EARLY HISTORY

History

The first stable settlements on the site date to the 8th century BC when the Oscans,[18] a population of central Italy, founded five villages in the area.

With the arrival of the Greeks in Campania from around 740 BC, Pompeii entered the orbit of the Hellenic people. The most important building of this period is the Doric Temple,[19] built away from the centre in what would later become the Triangular Forum.[20]: 62 At the same time the cult of Apollo was introduced.[21] Greek and Phoenician sailors used the location as a safe port.

In the early 6th century BC, the settlement merged into a single community centred on the important crossroad between Cumae, Nola, and Stabiae and was surrounded by a tufa city wall (the pappamonte wall).[22][23] The first wall (which was also used as a base for the later wall) unusually enclosed a much greater area than the early town together with much agricultural land.[24] That such an impressive wall was built at this time indicates that the settlement was already important and wealthy. The city began to flourish and maritime trade started with the construction of a small port near the mouth of the river.[20] The earliest settlement was focused in regions VII and VIII of the town (the old town) as identified from stratigraphy below the Samnite and Roman buildings, as well as from the different and irregular street plan.

Eruption of Vesuvius

The eruption lasted for two days.[51] The first phase was of pumice rain (lapilli) lasting about 18 hours, allowing most inhabitants to escape. Only approximately 1,150 bodies[52] have so far been found on site, which seems to confirm this theory, and most escapees probably managed to salvage some of their most valuable belongings; many skeletons were found with jewellery, coins, and silverware.

At some time in the night or early the next day, pyroclastic flows began near the volcano, consisting of high speed, dense, and scorching ash clouds, knocking down wholly or partly all structures in their path, incinerating or suffocating the remaining population and altering the landscape, including the coastline. By the evening of the second day, the eruption was over, leaving only haze in the atmosphere through which the sun shone weakly.

A multidisciplinary volcanological and bio-anthropological study[53] of the eruption products and victims, merged with numerical simulations and experiments, indicates that at Pompeii and surrounding towns heat was the main cause of death of people, previously believed to have died by ash suffocation. The results of the study, published in 2010, show that exposure to at least 250 °C (480 °F) hot pyroclastic flows at a distance of 10 kilometres (6 miles) from the vent was sufficient to cause instant death, even if people were sheltered within buildings. The people and buildings of Pompeii were covered in up to twelve different layers of tephra, in total, up to 6 metres (19.7 ft) deep. Archaeology in 2023 showed that some buildings collapsed due to one or more earthquakes during the eruption, killing the occupants.[54]

REDISCOVERY AND EXCAVATIONS

Rediscovery

Titus appointed two ex-consuls to organise a relief effort while donating large amounts of money from the imperial treasury to aid the victims of the volcano.[62] He visited Pompeii once after the eruption and again the following year[63] but no work was done on recovery.

Soon after the city's burial, survivors and possibly thieves came to salvage valuables, including the marble statues from the Forum and other precious materials from buildings. There is wide evidence of post-eruption disturbance, including holes made through walls. The city was not completely buried, and the tops of larger buildings would have been visible above the ash, making it obvious where to dig or salvage building material.[64] The robbers left traces of their passage, as in a house where modern archaeologists found a wall graffito saying "house dug".[65]

Over the following centuries, its name and location were forgotten, though it still appeared on the Tabula Peutingeriana of the 4th century. Further eruptions, particularly in 471–473 and 512, covered the remains more deeply. The area became known as the La Civita (the city) due to the features in the ground.[66]

MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY

Modern

After those of Fiorelli, excavations continued in an increasingly more systematic and considered manner under several directors of archaeology though still with the main interest in making spectacular discoveries and uncovering more houses rather than answering the main questions about the city and its long term preservation.[76]

In the 1920s, Amedeo Maiuri excavated older layers beneath those of 79 AD for the first time to learn about the settlement history.[77] Maiuri made the last excavations on a grand scale in the 1950s, and the area south of the Via dell'Abbondanza and the city wall was almost completely uncovered, but they were poorly documented scientifically.