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## **Urban planning of Medina before Islam**

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***In the name of God, The merciful the Merciful, the Compassionate***

*“They said, “Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You  
have taught us. It is you who are the Knowledgeable, the Wise”*

***Almighty God has spoken the truth***

*“Al-Baqara, 32”*



## **Abstract**

The study aimed to identify the design of Medina before Islam, where it used the descriptive approach and the historical approach, due to their relevance to the study objective and its questions. The theoretical framework included four main topics: the first topic: Medina before Islam, the second topic: urban planning in Madinah before Islam, the third topic: Architectural buildings in Medina before Islam, and the fourth topic: Architectural heritage in Medina before Islam.

It was ensured that the subject of the research is very important and vital because of its close connection with the Medina of the Messenger of God, Peace and blessings be upon him, and its cultural heritage and architectural landmarks, and that Medina before Islam was full of houses and residential buildings that local natural materials have been used in their construction. These houses are considered different from the attams that Arabs and Jewish built in Medina at the time. Not all these houses were equal in height, as there were single-floor buildings and others with two floors, as we have seen in the narration of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. The research tried to answer the research questions, where the most important results that were reached during this research are to know the type of planning in Medina before Islam, to know the image of buildings in Medina before Islam, to know the most important architectural landmarks in Medina before Islam, and to know the images of architectural heritage in Medina before Islam.

**Keywords:** Urban planning - Medina - before Islam.



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## Introduction

Medina, which was called Yathrib before Islam, is one of the most famous Islamic cities throughout history. It is the city to which the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Muslims migrated. It is also the home of the Ansar who supported God and His Messenger and had an important and influential role in the march of the Islamic call, and this blessed city was the first capital of the Islamic state.

Medina was characterized by a unique architecture before Islam, where the dry and hot climate in Medina imposed the residents to build their homes of stones and mud in a contiguously, separated by narrow streets and alleys to benefit from shade and ensure protection from the hot sun. Every house had a well which is used to provide fresh water for drinking as well as for hygiene and washing purposes, and the residents obtained water from the tank that the waterer bring to them, which was called saqi or saqqa<sup>1</sup>.

The design of Medina differs from the design of other cities, in Medina there are forts and attams (attam is a high building). There were found during the migration, the fort of Ka'b bin Al-Ashraf, the master of Banu Al-Nadir, in the southeast of Medina on Hurra, and an attam at the outskirts of Wadi Mudhainah, and the attam of Al-Dhahyan in the southwest, and their ruins are still visible. As for the rest of the forts mentioned in Medina by Arab geographers and historians, their features have been studied, and each of the sections of Aws and Khazraj had their homes in the upper or lower places of Medina, and they had their forts in which they were sheltered in the event of war or danger. These forts depend on their own wells to provide water in normal circumstances and in times of war, and their people benefited from the availability of groundwater, so there were many forts and attams, and there were many houses and orchards in Medina.

Most houses consisted of two floors, and some of them might be with three or four floors, and these houses characterized by its spaciousness from the inside. There is a

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Ansari, Abdul Quddus (1973) Ruins of Medina, 3rd Edition, The Salafi Library in Medina.



space inside each house called the hall, which is a large room with an open-roofed part that allows the entry of light and air, equipped with a piece of cloth to cover it in times of sun and rain. They used lanterns powered by oil and wicks for lighting, while they used firewood and charcoal for cooking<sup>2</sup>.

Urbanism is the mirror of society. With its different types and the development of its forms, it represents groups of peoples with their civilizations, cultures, and social behaviors that have evolved with the evolution of successive time periods. The urban heritage is the material cultural heritage of these societies and is an expression of their fixed and changing values and beliefs through behaviors and practices formed by environmental, economic, social, and cultural factors.

The importance of knowing the urban heritage and benefiting from it is not only manifested in the fact that it represents our cultural and civilizational identity that we are proud of it and with its rich components, but also because it constitutes a basic scientific reference and a living source for the genius of artistic creativity in architectural and decorative shapes and proportions, and technical and craftsmanship skills in harnessing the available capabilities and local materials to benefit from them without harming it and building the earth with kindness.

Since most of the studies that talked about the history of Medina before Islam were talking about political and social life, but few of them talked about urban planning of Medina before Islam, and due to the lack of studies that dealt with architecture and planning of Medina before Islam, we found that it is a topic worthy of study and research.

The current research includes the introduction of the research, the importance of the research, the problem of the research, the limits of the research, studies and research that dealt with the subject, the research methodology and results, recommendations, references, and appendices.

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<sup>2</sup> Balloul, Mukhtar Muhammad (2000) Al-Madinah Al-Munawara, Durrat Al-Madaen, 1st Edition, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.



## The problem of the research

Through the experience of the researcher in work environments and his specialization in the field of architecture and planning, he found that there is great importance to study the urban planning of Medina before Islam, as this helps in knowing the architectural development in Medina in particular, and in civilized cities in general.

Also through previous studies and literature such as the study of Salama (1994)<sup>3</sup>, the study of Badr (1994)<sup>4</sup>, the study of Hafez (1970)<sup>5</sup>, the study of Shaban (2006)<sup>6</sup>, the study of Ansari (1997)<sup>7</sup>, the study of Balloul (2000)<sup>8</sup>, the study of Balhishi (1988)<sup>9</sup>, the study of Hafez (1982)<sup>10</sup>, the study of Al-Khiari's (1990)<sup>11</sup>, and the study of Al-Samhoudi's (2001)<sup>12</sup>, he found the importance of studying planning of Medina before Islam.

It can be concluded from the researcher's experience and previous studies and literature, the importance of the research and that it is worthy of study.

## The questions of the research

In light of what was presented in the research problem, the researcher tries to answer the following main question:

- What was the urban plan of Medina before Islam?

It stems from this main question, several sub-questions as the following:

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<sup>3</sup> Salama, Salah (1994) The First Book on the History of Medina, Journal of Medina Research and Studies Center.

<sup>4</sup> Badr, Abdul Basit (1994) A comprehensive history of Medina, Medina.

<sup>5</sup> Hafez, Ali (1970), Chapters from the History of the City, Al-Madina Printing and Publishing Company, Jeddah.

<sup>6</sup> Shaaban, Ahmad (2006) Medina History and Landmarks, Medina Research and Studies Center.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Ansari, Abdul Quddus (1973) Antiquities of Medina, 3rd Edition, The Salafi Library in Medina.

<sup>8</sup> Balloul, Mukhtar Muhammad (2000) Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, Durrat Al-Madaen, 1st Edition, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Balhishi, Muhammad Salih (1988) Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, 2nd edition, General Presidency for Youth Welfare, King Saud University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Hafez, Abd al-Salam Hashem (1982) Medina in History, a comprehensive study, 3rd edition, General Agency for Distribution, Damascus.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Khiari, Ahmed Yassin Ahmed (1990) A History of Medina Landmarks, Old and New, Madinah Literary Club.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Samhoudi, Nouredin Ali Abdullah (2001) Wafaa Al-Wafa with the Akhbar Al-Mustafa, Part One, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.



1. What are the forms of urban planning in Medina before Islam?
2. What is the shape of the buildings in Medina before Islam?
3. What are the most important architectural landmarks in Medina before Islam?
4. What are the types of the architectural heritage in Medina before Islam?

### **The goals of research**

The research aims to answer the research questions that concern the urban planning of Medina before Islam, through:

1. Knowing the type of urban planning in Medina before Islam.
2. Knowing the shapes of buildings in Medina before Islam.
3. Knowing the most important architectural landmarks in Medina before Islam.
4. Knowing the types of the architectural heritage in Medina before Islam.

### **The importance of the research**

The importance of the research is attributing to:

1. Knowing of the architectural heritage of cultural and historical cities.
2. Preserving the architectural and urban identity by making new designs that simulate the heritage designs in Medina.
3. Improving the architectural and planning designs of historical cities.
4. Study of history and heritage in Medina before Islam.
5. Reviving the cultural heritage and highlighting the historical identity of Medina.
6. Developing a scientific reference for the urban plan of Medina.
7. Dissemination of the urban heritage of Medina.

### **The limits of the research**

- **Time limits:** the second semester of the academic year 1441 AH / 1442 AH.
- **Spatial limits:** Medina in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- **Objective limits:** a study of urban planning for Medina before Islam.





## The approach of the research

To answer the research questions and to achieve the research objectives, the researcher used the historical approach to study the urban planning of Medina before Islam and he used the descriptive approach to refer to previous studies, literature, scientific and historical references.

## Previous studies

The researcher found previous studies related to the research topic, including:

- The study of Salah Salameh (1994)<sup>13</sup> which aimed at studying the history of Medina.
- The study of Abdul Basit Badr (1994)<sup>14</sup> which aimed at studying the comprehensive history of Medina.
- A study of Hafez (1970)<sup>15</sup> which aimed at studying chapters of the Medina history.
- A study of Ahmed Shaaban (2006)<sup>16</sup> which aimed at studying Medina, its history, and landmarks.

It can be added to these studies, historical books about Medina, including:

- The History of Medina, by Ibn Zabbalah (199 AH).
- The History of Medina, by Ibn Shabbah (262 AH).
- The Precious Durra in the News of the Noble Medina, by Ibn Al-Najjar (647 AH).
- Introducing the features of Dar Al-Hijrah, by Al-Matari (741 AH).
- Achieving Al-Nusra by summarizing the features of Dar Al-Hijrah, by Al-Zain Al-Maraghi (816 AH).
- The good spoils in the landmarks of Taba, by Al-Fayrouzabadi (817 AH).
- Wafaa Al-Wafa in the news of Dar Al-Mustafa, by Samhoudi (911 AH).

Among the contemporary books are:

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<sup>13</sup> Salama, Salah (1994) The First Book on the History of Medina, Journal of Medina Research and Studies Center.

<sup>14</sup> Badr, Abdul Basit (1994), The comprehensive history of Medina, Medina.

<sup>15</sup> Hafez, Ali (1970), Chapters from the History of the City, Al-Madina Printing and Publishing Company, Jeddah.

<sup>16</sup> Shaaban, Ahmad (2006) Medina; History and Landmarks, Medina Research and Studies Center.



- Mukhtar Muhammad Balloul (2000)<sup>17</sup> Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, Durrat Al-Madaen, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.
- Ahmed Yassin Ahmed Al-Khiari (1990)<sup>18</sup> A History of Medina Landmarks, Old and New, Madinah Literary Club.
- Nour Al-Din Ali Abdullah Al-Samhoudi (2001)<sup>19</sup> Wafaa Al-Wafa with the News of the Mustafa, Part One, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.
- Abbas Salih Tashkni (2007)<sup>20</sup> Encyclopedia of Mecca and Madinah, Attam Al-Madina, Volume I Athifah Wells, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.
- Abdullah Abdul Rahim Asailan (1997)<sup>21</sup> Medina in the Archeology of Authors and Researchers, Old and New, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.
- Yassin Ghadban (1993)<sup>22</sup> The city of Yathrib before Islam, Dar Al-Bashir Publishing, Amman.
- Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman Ibrahim Kaaki (1998)<sup>23</sup> Landmarks of Medina between Architecture and History, Saudi Publishing and Distribution Company.

## Theoretical framework

- The first topic: Medina before Islam.
- The second topic: Urban planning in Medina before Islam.
- The third topic: Architectural buildings in Medina before Islam.
- Fourth topic: Architectural heritage in Medina before Islam.

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<sup>17</sup> Balloul, Mukhtar Muhammad (2000) Al-Madinah Al-Munawara, Durrat Al-Madaen, 1st Edition, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Khiari, Ahmed Yassin Ahmed (1990), A History of Medina Landmarks, Old and New, Madinah Literary Club.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Samhoudi, Nouredine Ali Abdullah (2001), Wafaa Al-Wafa with the News of the Mustafa, Part One, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.

<sup>20</sup> Tashkni, Abbas Saleh (2007), Encyclopedia of Mecca and Medina, Adam al-Madina, Volume I, Athifah Wells, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.

<sup>21</sup> Usaylan, Abdullah Abdul Rahim (1997), Medina in the works of Authors and Researchers, Old and New, Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.

<sup>22</sup> Ghadban, Yassin (1993), The city of Yathrib before Islam, Dar Al-Bashir Publishing, Amman.

<sup>23</sup> Kaaki, Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman Ibrahim (1998), Landmarks of Medina between Architecture and History, Part Two, Landmarks of Urban Development and Urban Progress, Saudi Publishing and Distribution Company.



## **The first topic: Medina before Islam**

The history of the city of Yathrib goes back to the fifteenth millennium BC, and the name of Yathrib was mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions in the sixth century BC when it was referred to a city in Hijaz called Lathriba, and this name was also mentioned in the writings of the Greek Ptolemy. Tribes known as Eibel had inhabited and settled in this city, and Yathrib was part of the lands belonging to the Amalekites who controlled Palestine, North Sinai, and Hejaz. After that, Yathrib became part of the Yemeni kingdom of Ma'in, which controls Yemen at the time, then the city witnessed the displacement of several Jewish tribes to it, especially in the second century BC, when the Jewish in Palestine were subjected to persecution from the Romans, forcing them to migrate south, where they were found in Yathrib a suitable land for living and decent life.

Medina is located at longitude (39) degrees, (36) minutes and one second and at latitude (24) degrees, (28) minutes and (5) seconds, and it rises from sea level between (597) and (639) meters<sup>24</sup>.

The city is surrounded by two mountains and two valleys, from the south Ayr Mount, which is bordered by Al-Aqiq Valley for a short distance, then this valley bends towards the north to become extending to the west of Madinah. From the north, Uhud Mount and Qanat Valley, which passes alongside Sayyid al-Shuhada and crosses Medina, passing through its middle, Bathan Valley, extending from south to north. It is called Abi Jaidah Valley and meets with Al-Aqiq Valley at the bottom of Medina on the northern side. As for the east and west of the city, it is bordered by the Eastern Hurra and the Western Hurra.

Cities in the world are more like a living organism, they start small and then grow and become larger and larger until they age, except for the civilization cities in the world, as they continue to pulsate with life and shine with the light of civilization. Islamic civilization comes at the forefront of global civilization, and it has always been associated with the name of Medina, whose importance and position have increased through the ages after the migration of our master Muhammad, may God's prayers and peace be

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<sup>24</sup> Balloul, Mukhtar Muhammad (2000) Al-Madinah Al-Munawara, Durrat Al-Madaen, 1st Edition, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.



upon him, to it. Its history is related to the history of the noble Prophet's migration, and the Islamic history, which is full of great glories and the giving of great ancestors.

### **The establishment of Medina**

Historical sources say that the first people who inhabit Medina after the drowning of Noah's people were Amalekites... Rather, the Amalekites were considered the first inhabitants of Medina. Yathrib, their grandfather, was the first to stay there, who was Yathrib Abu Ubeil bin Awad bin Adam bin Sam bin Noah. That is why it was named after him, as it was called (Yathrib). But Yathrib, in fact, is not the name of the entire city, rather it is the name of an area of it, which is the area between Qanat Valley and the Jurf. It appears that (Yathrib) settled firstly at this site in Medina, then gave the name to the entire city. Historians mention that Amalekites were tyrannical and oppressive, and they were under the command of an old man among them called (Al-Arqam bin Abi Al-Arqam). So, the Prophet of God, Moses, peace be upon him, sent an army to fight them, where He destroyed them, and did not leave any trace of them. These Amalekites inhabited the cities of the Hijaz, including Khaybar, Taima and Medina.

Opinions and sources varied about the establishment of Medina, to the extent that some of them linked the history of its establishment to myths and legends. We will mention here what is almost in agreement among them, since before the Prophet's migration, Madinah did not have the character of an integrated urban city, whether in terms of demographics, or in terms of the urban fabric, which lacked civil cohesion. Medina was a group of oases interspersed with water springs, and the availability of water for cultivating was the main element for the formation of the Medina society in the form of an agricultural society, which was the cause of population and urban stability. Therefore, the presence of water was one of the most important factors that made many nations migrate to it, live in it, and live there before the migration, and work in the cultivating and herding for which Medina was known for.

Historians almost agree that the first people who inhabit Medina were the people of Yathrib bin Ubeil bin Awad, son of Adam bin Sam bin Noah), and it was later known by their name of (Yathrib), and his people settled there for some time, until the mighty



Amalekites came to it, who Moses were sent to them Soldiers from the people of Israel and killed them<sup>25</sup>.

Al-Baladhuri says in his book *Fattouh Al-Buldan* that (Bakhtansar) when the people of Israel came and destroyed Bait Al-Maqdis, they dispersed in the country, so a group of them joined Khaibar, Taima and Medina, where they saw that these lands consistent with the description of the country mentioned in the Torah with them, and that one of God's prophets will settle in it, and he is the last of the prophets and the best of them, and that town has palm trees between two Harrats, so they settled and dug wells and planted trees, and neighborhoods of Arabs stayed with the Jewish in Medina, who are Banu Unaif, who it is said that they are a remnant of the Amalekites, Banu Murid, Banu Muawiyah, and Banu Judhama from Yemen. They built dwellings and Attams, which are like war fortresses, to protect themselves from enemy raids<sup>26</sup>.

The Ma'rib Dam has been destroyed and the Yemeni tribes dispersed throughout the Peninsula, so Banu Omar and Banu Tha'labah (Aws and Khazraj) travelled toward Medina and lived next to its Jewish and Arabs, where they built houses and attams, and cultivated the land, and they gained a lot of money. The Jewish envied them for that and plotted against them many plots and plots to stir up hatred among them and eliminate them. So, they sought the help of their cousins, Ghassanid, in the Levant, so they helped them and supported them against the Jewish, and the lands and money returned to them, and Aws and the Khazraj were dispersed in the high and lowlands of the city, and they built many attams until it was said that the number of their attams had exceeded one hundred and twenty-seven, where they became the masters of Medina but the Jewish returned after a period to plotting and inciting the fires of hatred and grudge among the cousins - Aws and Khazraj - to separate and weaken them. As a result, long wars erupted between them, and they made a lot of battles in Medina and the fire of war and intrigue ignited between them until they almost perished because of those fierce wars that lasted between them for more than one hundred and forty years.

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<sup>25</sup> Balloul, Mukhtar Muhammad (2000) *Al-Madinah Al-Munawara*, Durrat Al-Madaen, 1st Edition, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Balhishi, Muhammad Salih (1988) *Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah*, 2nd edition, General Presidency for Youth Welfare, King Saud University Press.



## **Life in Medina before Islam**

Due to the geographical location of Medina, the abundance of its groundwater and the fertility of its land, this made it the object of the commercial caravans' attention that were crossing the land of the Arabian Peninsula on the journey of winter and summer. The Jewish who lived in the Levant and Yemen were among the most skilled people in trade, and their caravans passed and landed in Medina, and some of them liked to stay there because they noticed the good life there. So, some of them lived in it and made it a residence for his work and trade, and Medina became an important commercial center for the Jewish between the north and the south. Then some Arab tribes immigrated to it after the first torrent of al-Aram, around the year 455 AD. Among them were the Banu Amr bin Tha'labah (Aws and Khazraj), who became dominant in it, after the sons of Jafna bin Amr bin Amer killed Abu Jubaila the notables and heads of the Jewish in Medina.

Medina was at that time, a small, unconnected communities, and some historical sources refer to the outbreak of many wars between those communities, especially after the arrival of the Jewish to it, and their attempt to become independent in their own communities, and to dominate the commercial activity.

Among the most important Jewish tribes that chose to reside in Medina were the tribes of Banu Qaynuqa, Banu al-Nadir, and Banu Qurayza, as well as several other tribes that were smaller in size. All of them preferred to reside there, as some worked in agriculture and others in trade, and the Jewish monopolized the manufacture of gold, silver, and hand weapons, and set up residential communities, and built defensive forts around them and took Medina as an important commercial center for the sale and export of their products to the Levant and Yemen, and to the coming trade caravans through Medina. Thus, civil, commercial, industrial, and agricultural life flourished and developed in it, and it surpassed the neighboring cities and villages at that time, due to its strategic location, the nature of its climate, its fertile soil, and the abundance of its ground and surface waters.

Madinah's society remained - despite the prosperity of life in it - a heterogeneous society, made up of a group of discordant tribes, between them enmity and hatred, bickering and quarreling among themselves, in order to impose control and influence.



The wars between Aws and Khazraj continued for more than a century, until it exhausted them, and these wars between them began with Samir's war (relative to Samir bin Zaid, a man from Aws who was the direct cause of ignition it), and ended with the Baa'th War, which ended five years before the migration, and between these two wars are approximately ten wars, which the Jewish were the warmonger.

### **The second topic: Urban planning in Medina before Islam.**

Because of the state of Medina that it was in before Islam, from the provokes of hatred between the Jewish on the one hand, and between Aws and Khazraj on the other hand, and then between Aws and Khazraj themselves, and the incitement of wars between them. All residents built fortresses and attams for themselves to be safe from their enemies, and this is the most important characteristic of Medina before Islam, until it was known as the Master of Atams, as the poet Al-Ashja'i called it in his saying: (Anisa said, leave your country and seek ... a home in the goodness of the god of Al-Attams).

The number of its Attams were more than one hundred and twenty-seven. Atam is a large fortr built with stones. Among the most famous of the city's attams are Uqam, Al-Muzdalif, Al-Mustazal, Qari' Al-Dhahyan, Shammak, Rayyan, Al-Ashnaq, Al-Ajru and so on. Nothing of those attams remains at the current time, except for the Attam Al-Dhahyan, southwest of the Qubaa Mosque, the attam of Abi Dujana in the Sayada neighborhood, east of the General Hospital, and third Attam next to Al-Arid Mosque.

The late scholar Sheikh Abd al-Quddus al-Ansari, in his book "Athar al-Madina", differentiated between attams and the forts, saying: (Attams, although it is not of the forts' type of in the general sense, but it has a special type of architecture, as it is made of stones of different sizes and there is filling of clay between them. It has high terraces that overlook its surroundings, and it can be walked on the top of them. As for the forts, they are built using huge square stones, and there is no filling between them, and wells may be inside).

There were many forts in the city, but only one of them remains now, which is the fort of Ka'b al-Ashraf al-Nabhani al-Ta'i, who occupied a high position among his Jewish uncles,





Banu al-Nadir. When the Prophet, upon him be the best of prayers and the purest of surrender, migrated to Medina and Kaab saw the strength of Islam, he began to incite the polytheists against the Muslims and attack them through his poem, so the prophet, peace be upon him, ordered to kill him. The fort is located on a plateau from the southeastern Harra in Qabaa, to the right of the road leading to Bathan Dam via the road connecting it with what today is called the green belt that passes through the farms of Quba. Sheikh Abdul Quddus Al-Ansari, may God have mercy on him, described it in the aforementioned book in detail, as he mentioned that it is 33 meters long with similar wide, and the height of the remaining walls is 4 meters, and their thickness is one meter. It has one door and eight towers. In the middle there is a spacious, square-shaped courtyard with an area of 1,000 square meters where it is neither paved nor paved<sup>27</sup>.

### **Medina attams**

The construction of Atams in Meddina was closely linked to the onset of the agricultural community in it since the time of the Amalekites, and the sources are almost unanimously agreed that in each of the stages of Medina's urbanization growth because of successive migrations to it, Attams were a main axis of the three axes of urbanization in each stage. These axes are planting money, reconstructing the houses, and constructing the lands. Both Al-Hamwi and Al-Samhoudi mentioned that the Amalekites were the first to stay in Medina, planted palm trees there and built the houses and attams<sup>28</sup>.

The Jewish settled in the high Medina in two valleys called Mudhinib and Mahzoor. At that time, they took the money and were the first to dig wells and planted and built attams in this area of Medina. And when the Arabs lived next to them, they were with them and built attams and houses. Then it was the migration of Aws and Khazraj after the torrent of Al-Aram. When they set out in Yathrib and saw the number and strength of the Jewish, they suggested to them that they ally and be safe neighbors with each other, and then they became the masters of Medina after Abu Jbeilah helped them over

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<sup>27</sup> Al-Balhishi, Muhammad Salih (1988) Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, 2nd edition, General Presidency for Youth Welfare, King Saud University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Tashkni, Abbas Saleh (2007) Encyclopedia of Mecca and Medina, Attam of Medina, Volume I Athifah Wells, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.





the Jewish. So, they dispersed in the high and lowlands of Medina, and among them were those who courted to the powerful forces and settled with their people, conquering their worries, and some of them came to a land devoid of homes, so they settled in its palaces and attams and made money<sup>29</sup>.

This urban fabric reveals a functional link associated with this fabric by planting money in the most important areas of economic activity considering the availability of life sources and soil fertility, and the houses that is the seat of residence in times of peace, and then attams in which the owners of money and homes were holed up when the Bedouin raids or when fighting with other nearby tribes.

### **Architectural planning of attams:**

Attams varied in terms of their area, as well as the splendor of their buildings, although the dominate feature was their height. Despite this diversity, it is possible to notice the different architectural units that attam may include in general, as attam is distinguished by its inclusion of houses, i.e., specific rooms for the dwelling of those who resort to it<sup>30</sup>.

The number of these houses depends on whether the fort belongs to a tribe branch or to a particular person. In addition to the houses, there were halls for public meetings and warehouses for storing valuable things, as were synagogues and schools in the Jewish attams. The sources indicate that the Jewish, at the time of danger, would bring their livestock to their attams, which means that attams included places for these livestock, and there were sources of water such as wells or water tanks where the water was supplied from sources outside attam.

### **The third topic: Architectural buildings in Medina before Islam.**

The nature of the dry and hot climate in Medina forced its residents to build their homes of stones and mud in a contiguous manner, separated by narrow streets and alleys, to benefit from shade and protection from the hot sun. Each house had a well to provide

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<sup>29</sup> Tashkni, Abbas Saleh (2007) Encyclopedia of Mecca and Medina, Attam of Medina, Volume I Athifah Wells, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.

<sup>30</sup> Tashkni, Abbas Saleh (2007) Encyclopedia of Mecca and Medina, Attam of Medina, Volume I Athifah Wells, Al-Furqan and Islamic Heritage Foundation.



fresh water for drinking as well as for cleaning and washing purposes, and the residents used to get water from the tank brought to them by the waterer, “saqi or saqqa”.

## Houses in Yathreb

It appears from the narrations of historians about the houses that there were houses in Yathrib consisting of two floors, a ground floor, and an upper floor, and they used to live on both floors, and perhaps they were leaving their livestock and animals on the ground floor, or places attached to this floor. (The house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari in which the Messenger resided was consisting of two floors, the Messenger resided in a floor and Abu Ayyub lived on the other floor.

Most of the dwellings consisted of two floors, and some of them might include three or four floors, and they were characterized by their spaciousness from the inside. There is a space inside each house called the “hall” which is a large room with an open roof and allowing light and air to enter supplied with a piece of cloth to cover it in times of sun and rain, and lanterns that work with oil and wicks were used for lighting, while they used firewood and charcoal for cooking.

During the summer nights, most of the people of Medina sleep on the roofs after spraying them with water extracted from home wells to alleviate the hot weather. As for the day, during the nap period, people sleep in the halls, which are usually the coldest place in the house due to the method of ventilation used in them, which allows the hot air to rise to the top and the cold air to fall to the bottom. Five people work in construction: the builder who builds directly, the stonemason who repairs the stone and prepares it until it is ready for construction, the boy who prepares the mortar and the wedging stone, the worker who does other work who is raps the bricks and puts the clay in molds until it dries and is ready for construction. The construction profession is attached to the profession of plastering, which is to do the plastering and bleaching of homes with the plaster<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Balloul, Mukhtar Muhammad (2000) Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, Durrat Al-Madaen, 1st Edition, Dar Al- Balloul for Publishing and Distribution, Riyadh.



Construction is done using stone and mud, or with earthen bricks and adobe, or with stone, mud, and red bricks. As for the ceilings, it is mostly consisting of Athal, and the palm leaves are hung, then the straw, then a layer of mud is placed on top of it, and thus the building become completed.

Attams of Medina are an architectural heritage that represents a type of semi-negative military architecture that consciously reflects an important era in the history of the Arabian Peninsula in general, and the Hijaz in particular, extending from the pre-Islamic era and continuing to the era of the Prophet when he established the Islamic state around Yathrib and its neighboring villages to (Medina).

These attams tell the history of the region urbanization, beginning with the era of the Amalekites - whom the sources indicate that they were the first to build it - and continue to record the date of the Jewish entry into it and their economic control over it, and then the emergence of Aws, Khazraj and other Arab tribes that settled in the region after the flood of Al-Aram. and record the events of the most important Arab wars before Islam, which is the War of Baa'th, which was one of the factors that prepared the acceptance of the new religion and the message of monotheism that Muhammad brought.

The policy of the Messenger of God may God's prayers and peace be upon him, in uniting the community of Medina, spiritually and materially, and formulating it in a new form that would make it one nation, embodied an important axis of the axes that led to the atrophy and death of attams function. The Prophet's wars with the Jewish of Banu Qaynuqa', Banu al-Nadir and Banu Qurayza, and expulsion them from Medina, reveal that Attam no longer fit the new concepts (at that time) and the methods of defense and attack adopted by the Muslims whom Islam made them in a new formulation that depends on the strength of faith and belief. It is based on the principle of jihad for the sake of God, concepts that contradict the war concepts embodied by attams as fortified buildings that their owners will resort to when raiding them, embodying a negative fortified position in defense through the siege position.

The previous vision organizes the importance of research in Attams, which is systematic research in the study of the term Attams in the context of the linguistic, architectural,



and urban dimension. Because of its importance which is primarily related to the origin of (Attams) as a type of specific buildings about which controversy arose among modern researchers. It began with Israel Wilvinson, who tried to attribute the origin of these attams to the Jewish in the context of a wrong political employment that was corrected by the narrations of the authentic Arab sources that accurately recorded the history of Medina.

#### **Fourth topic: Architectural heritage in Medina before Islam.**

The urban development of Medina before Islam is one of the stages whose truth and dimensions have not been fully revealed, due to the lack of clear information and data that can be relied upon except very few, which were originally deduced from ancient historical incidents, where the successive population changes that resulted from the successive migrations to Medina (Yathrib at that time), and the great importance of these migrations in the transfer of many features of those civilizations that prevailed at the time, such as the civilization of the Levant and Yemen.

Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah was not at that time a city in the current sense, but rather was a metropolis dominated by the agricultural character, but trade flourished in some parts of the city through the passage of caravans that were passing through it from the north which were coming from the Levant, Iraq and Persia, and from the south which were coming from Yemen in the two journeys of winter and summer, which were mentioned in the Holy Quran in His Almighty saying: ( For the security of Quraish. Their security during winter and summer journeys. Let them worship the Lord of this House. Who has fed them against hunger, and has secured them against fear).

Medina at that time consisted of scattered groups of huts and simple primitive houses, not subject to any specific ties between them except for tribal and social ties. These houses were surrounded by fields and palm trees that the Jewish cultivated and built in them forts and attams.

The most famous of their tribes that inhabited Medina, were Banu al-Nadir and Banu Qurayza, who lived in Hurra and resided in the south and east of Medina, known today



as al-Harra al-Sharqiya al-Qibliya, and the al-Awali region in particular. This area was one of the most fertile areas and the most abundant of water. As for the tribe of the Jewish of Banu Qaynuqa, they inhabited the southwestern part of Medina, in the Madshunia area and a large part of the southwestern Harra.

Medina was divided into areas inhabited by the Jewish and other inhabited by Arab tribes, and it is divided into two parts: the first includes the agricultural areas with their homes, residents and attams, and the majority of them were represented by the Arab tribes, while the second includes attams, forts, and the high areas surrounding Medina, with its farms and residents. Most of them are the Jewish who settled in these areas, so the number of those attams and forts they built in them reached fifty-nine.

Al-Attam is a Hebrew word that means walls without windows from the outside, and in Arabic the high building, and these ruins were of great importance to the Jewish, as they used to take shelter in them if the enemy attacked them. Some of these attams were designated as temples and schools and as places for their consultations and the developing their plans. The Holy Quran mentioned that in His Almighty saying: "They will not fight you all together except from fortified strongholds, or from behind walls"<sup>32</sup>.

One of the most famous forts of Banu Qurayzah was the fortress of Al-Zubayr ibn Bata Al-Qurazi. The mosque of Banu Qurayzah was erected in its place later in the Al-Awali area, and this mosque is still standing until the present time.

As for the most famous attam of Banu Qaynuqa' is attam Mareeh, and the fort of Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf al-Nabhani is considered one of the most famous forts of Banu al-Nadir. Aws and Khazraj settled in Medina and inhabited it after the incident of the Al-Aram torrent that swept through the Ma'rib Dam because of a hole in it in the fortified land of Saba. Aws and Khazraj tribes descended on Medina, where the Jewish were inhabited, and made covenants with them and established between them an alliance of neighborhood and non-aggression until they multiplied "that is, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj" and became influential, and after that Aws and Khazraj took control of the area. They are several tribes, some of them lived near Wadi Bathan and western Harra, and

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<sup>32</sup> Kaaki, Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman Ibrahim (1998) Landmarks of Medina between Architecture and History, Part One, Natural Landmarks, Volume One, The Mountains, Saudi Publishing and Distribution Company.



others lived in eastern Harra and Urwah, and they had many attams there. Note that this arrangement that was mentioned about the residence of the Arab and Jewish tribes is not final, as some sources mentioned otherwise, but we have chosen the most common sayings.

### **Building attams and forts**

Medina is located on the commercial road linking the Levant with Yemen, which contributed to the large number of displaced people who transferred their civilizations to it, such as the arrival of Aws and Khazraj from Yemen and the Jewish from the Levant, and their settlement in Medina, as they transferred the new architectural elements to it, such as the building attams and forts that were widespread in their country at that time. The locations of these forts and attams were closely related to the locations of the tribes, including Jewish and Arabs, and were numerically proportional to the population of each tribe. The Arabs used these forts and attams later and built more of them to become among the main landmarks constituting the urban fabric of Medina before Islam.

The number of these forts and attams reached more than fifty-nine for the Jewish residing in Medina (Yathrib at the time) and thirteen for the Ansar Arabs who migrated to Medina after that. Al-Sayed Al-Samhoudi mentioned many of the monuments and ruins of the Jewish that they built in Medina during their settlement there, which is a clear indication of the increasing population growth and the urban renaissance which Medina witnessed before Islam.

Many of these forts and attams remained until after Islam, and some of them remain until the present time, such as the Ka'ab Ibn al-Ashraf al-Nabhani's fortress, whose ruins remain.

The Prophet used some of these attams during the Battle of the Trench, as Al-Samhoudi mentioned in what he quoted from Abu Rafee' as follows: (Al-Bazzar narrated with a weak attribution on the authority of al-Zubayr bin al-Awwam, may God be pleased with him, that when the Messenger of God went out to the trench, left his wives and his aunt Safiya in an attam called "Farea" and left Hassan bin Thabit with them...).



Among the most famous attams is attam of Asim, who was in Quba for a Jewish man who was from Bani Al-Nadir, as what it said, and two attams for Banu Qurayza, one of whom is called attam of Al-Zubayr bin Bata Al-Qurazi and attam of Kaab bin Asad, who is called “Balhan” and other attams. Among the forts, in addition to the Ka’ab Ibn al-Ashraf al-Nabhani fort, the Bani Waqif fort, which is located about half a kilometer to the southeast of the Quba Mosque, is well-known.

### **Old markets**

Due to the location of Medina on the ancient trade route, this helped establish some markets that were linked to the tribes of the Jewish, there is a market of Bani Qaynuqa and a market in the Quba region, and often these markets were not linked to the sites and homes of these tribes only, but also had a close and direct connection with the old caravan routes and their paths.

Al-Sayed Al-Samhoudi mentioned many of these markets, as he mentioned what he quoted from Ibn Shabbah as follows: (Abu Ghassan said: There was a market in Medina in the pre-Islamic era in Al-Jisr in Bani Qaynuqa, a market in Al-Safaf in the Asba, and a market located in the place of Ibn Jubayn alley in the pre-Islamic era and the beginning of Islam, and that place was called Muzahim...).

These markets remained in existence after Islam, especially the market of Banu Qaynuqa’, and this is indicated by what Ibn Shabbah narrated on the authority of Ibn Yasar who said: (When the Messenger of God wanted to make Medina a market, he came to the market of Banu Qaynuqa’, then came the market of Medina and hit him with his foot, and said: This is your market It is not narrowed, and no abscess is taken in it). These markets are one of the foundations and components of the urban fabric of Medina before Islam and is one of the apparent characteristics of the basic urban structure of Medina in that period.

### **Homes and residential areas**

There are many historical narratives confirming the existence of simple houses and dwellings that were built using natural resources, and mud and stone were used in their





construction, and palm trunks and fronds were used for their roofs. These dwellings were scattered and did not have any architectural or planning relations except for their relation to the sites of tribes and agricultural areas, where water and arable land were available. Many areas were famous for this, including Quba, Al-Awali, Qurban, and Al-Ayoun. The narrations prove that when the Messenger arrived at Quba, he stayed in the house of Kulthum bin Al-Haddam, and this house was in the south of the Quba Mosque. It is said that the Prophet stayed in the house of Saad bin Khaithamah.

Whoever mentioned that he descended on Kulthum Ibn Al-Haddam says that he sat with people in the house of Sa`d bin Khaithamah, including the house of Khubayb bin Asaf, and this house is where Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him, stayed in. And all the houses that were mentioned were in the Quba area, which makes it clear to us that there are many these houses, and if we follow the story of the Prophet's exit from Quba and his going to Medina, where the tribes asked him to descend with them. When a camel passed by Bani Sa'idah, Saad bin Ubadah and Al Mundhir bin Amr intercepted him among the men of Banu Sa'idah, and they said, O Messenger of God, come to us... to the readiness, the preparing, and the protection. He said: Leave it way, for it is commanded, so they let it go.

So, it went and passed the house of Bani Uday bin al-Najjar, who are the maternal uncles of his grandfather, through Umm Abd al-Muttalib - Salma bint Amr, one of their wives. Salit bin Qais and Abu Salit, Asira bin Abi Kharijah, among the men of Banu Uday bin al-Najjar, they said, O Messenger of God, come to your uncles, to the readiness, the preparing, and the protection, he said: Leave it way, for it is commanded, so leave it way, and it went, until when it comes to the house of Banu Malik bin Al-Najjar, it sat at the door of his mosque).

From the foregoing, it appears to us that these private houses were in the homes of the tribes that were supervising the path that the Messenger took to the house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari. It is also clear to us that there are many these houses and houses from what Abu Ayyub al-Ansari said to the Prophet when he came to Medina (My house is the closest of the houses, so authorized me to transport your luggage. As his saying the nearest houses evidence of the existence of many of them.





## **Building of pergolas**

The residents of Medina before Islam knew the building of pergolas, so this construction type was widespread and well-known at the time. These pergolas were abundant in agricultural areas, and they were based on columns of palm trunks, and they were covered with leaves and wicker, and then they were tied together to become one block. The height of these pergolas is usually about the height of a person, and their land under it are leveled, and then sprinkled with water and used to sit and benefit from the shade, where there are the advantages of the open space.

The Messenger of God took shelter under a pergola that was for the common people when he came to Medina, and his camel sat between the house of Jaafar bin Muhammad bin Ali and the house of Hassan bin Zaid. The construction of pergolas has continued until the present time, where it is often associated with agriculture and is used to sit and be shaded, and it is considered a suitable place for farmers where the dates are collected under it and the seeds are dried, and these pergolas are frequently used during the harvest seasons. Thus, the element of building pergolas is a type of construction that was known about Medina before Islam.

And it becomes clear to us at the end of our talk about the urban development of Medina before Islam that there was a developed architecture and civilization with special foundations and standards related to the needs of its residents. There were houses consisting of one and two floors, and there were forts and attams, and there were facilities and markets, and there were agricultural and commercial activities, so wells were drilled, and lands were reclamation.

These are the residents who interacted with these elements and harnessed them to serve them in accordance with the requirements of their lives. The urban fabric of this stage appeared distinct and with appropriate characteristics for the residents themselves, who had a great role in determining its elements and components.



## **Services buildings and public facilities**

Some of the buildings and forts were designated for public utilities, as some of these buildings were designated for schools and others for the meeting of tribal notables for consultations and discuss their affairs. These places were carefully selected, as their locations were chosen to be near the tribe's homes to facilitate access to them from all sides.

In his narration, Ibn Hisham refers to the story of the entry of Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him, to the schoolhouse, where this house was dedicated to the gathering of the nobles and leaders of the Jewish. Ibn Hisham said: (Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq entered the schoolhouse for the Jewish, and found many people gathered with a man among them called "Finhas" and he was one of their scholars and rabbis, and with him was one of their rabbis who was called "Ashia". Abu Bakr said to Finhas: Woe to you, O Finhas! fear the God and convert to Islam, for by God, you know that Muhammad is the Messenger of God...). The entry of the Prophet to the schoolhouses also confirms this. Ibn Hisham said: (And the Messenger of God entered the school for a group of Jewish, so he invited them to Islam. Al-Numan bin Amr and Al-Harith bin Zaid said to him: What religion are you on, Muhammad?). From the above, it is clear to us that there were those types of building of public utilities.

## **Wells:**

The residents of Medina (Yathrib at that time) dug many wells with the aim of extracting water and creating a stable civilized environment. Some of these wells continued to play their important role even after the advent of Islam, such as the well of Rome, for example, which was drilled by Al-Muzaini and then "Ruma Al-Ghafari" who was Jewish bought it, so it was named after his name later. Othman bin Affan, may God be pleased with him, bought it for one thousand dirhams and gave it as charity.

And it still exists until the present time, including the well of Ares "the well of the ring", which was originally attributed to a Jewish man called Ares, and then it was called the well of the ring because of the fall of the noble ring in it during the reign of the third



caliph. There are a lot of these old wells, which remained until the advent of Islam, and we find them often associated with ancient agricultural areas such as the Al-Awali area, Qurban and some old farms in the Quba and Al-Ayoun area. The availability of water is one of the important factors in creating a stable urban environment that enjoys stability and firmness.

### **The results of research**

After what was presented in this research about the subject of urban planning of Medina before Islam, which is an important and very vital subject because of its close relation to the city of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, and its cultural heritage and architectural landmarks, and that Medina before Islam was full of houses and residential buildings that were used in their building local natural materials, and these houses are different from attams that Arabs and Jewish built in Medina at the time. Not all these houses were equal in height, as there were buildings with one floor and others with two floors, as it appeared to us from the narration of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari. The research sought to answer its questions, where the most important results it reached were the following:

1. Knowing the type of urban planning in Medina before Islam.
2. Knowing the shapes of buildings in Medina before Islam.
3. Knowing the most important architectural landmarks in Medina before Islam.
4. Knowing the types of the architectural heritage in Medina before Islam.



## **The recommendations of the research**

Among the most important recommendations of this research are the following:

1. Paying attention to the architectural heritage of Medina before Islam.
2. Paying attention to the architectural heritage of Medina after Islam.
3. Organizing exhibitions include the most important pre-Islamic monuments of Medina.
4. Establishing an association that includes a group of specialists in architectural history to preserve the cultural identity.
5. Making architectural designs like the heritage designs to preserve the heritage identity.

## **Future research**

The current research recommends conducting several future studies, including the following:

1. Studying the urban planning of Medina in the era of prophecy.
2. Studying the urban planning of Medina after Islam.
3. Studying the urban planning of Mecca before Islam.
4. Studying the urban planning of Mecca after Islam.
5. Studying the urban planning of urban and historical cities.



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