



1.82b

1.82c

› **1.82 BAM:** (a, b) general views from the south towards the citadel and of the town from the citadel with the governor's palace court centre and the caravanserai below it, (c) citadel entrance.

Bam, controlling a route skirting the Dasht-i Lut Desert, was fortified as a centre of local power at least from Sasanian times: the citadel is integrated with the town defences in the north-west sector. Naturally, mud-brick building needs constant renovation and, though it was generally considered the most medieval of Iranian towns in essence, much that survived until the earthquake of 2004 was substantially Safavid (16th–17th centuries).



1.83

› **1.83 BAHLA (OMAN):** general view of mud-brick fort.

The site was fortified before Islam reached the east coast of Arabia c. 630. The defences were developed by the Nabahina rulers of inland Oman from the 12th century – ostensibly and not without the influence of European trading powers after the 16th century, when the Portuguese arrived.

### FORT AND PALACE

The dissolution of the central Abbasid authority, undermining pan-Islamic security, had prompted the construction of local defences throughout the heartlands of the caliphate and many great citadels and forts survive there, at least in part. Bam provided an unrivalled image of the fortified town which approached its definitive form as an *atabeg* seat in the late-Seljuk era. The type recurs wherever the mud-brick or adobe tradition thrives in the oases of desiccated tracts: a splendid example – one drawn from many – is at Bahla across the Straits of Hormuz in Oman. **1.82, 1.83**