

in which it is exclusively used are rare (a characteristic example is the Mausoleum of the Sāmānids at Bukhārā, where the arrangement of the bricks is particularly stylistic); in fact, it is generally combined with other materials (e.g. the Kaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī [q.v.] consists of a wall of limestone, fired brick and unfired brick at the top); it is used for certain parts of the building (arches, vaults, staircases, etc.) and put to good use by architects to vary the decoration of their works. From the 6th/12th century, the glazed block has offered the possibility of obtaining similar effects to those of mosaic.

Bibliography: Apart from the sources cited, see the various works on Islamic architecture, the bibliography of the sections related to the monuments of the towns, countries and dynasties, and the articles ARCHITECTURE and BINĀʾ.

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⊙ **LABLA**, the name given by Arabic authors to NIEBLA, ancient Ilipla, which was the seat of a bishop in the Visigothic period and which is situated about 40 miles to the west of Seville in the right bank of the Rio Tinto (in the modern province of Huelva). Certain authors, notably Yāqūt, also call it al-Ḥamrāʾ because of the reddish colour of its walls and of its environs. It was the main town of one of the *kūras* of the Gharb al-Andalus [q.v.]; it must have been integrated within the great division of Ishbiliya [q.v.], and separated from it in the course of the administrative reorganisation. The *kūra* was bounded, at 40 miles to the west, by the plain of Ukshunūba; at 20 miles to the east, by the Aljarafe of Seville; at 50 miles to the north, by the *kūra* of Bādija [q.v.] (Beja); and at 6 miles to the south, by the Atlantic. According to al-ʿUdhri, it contained eight districts (*aḥālīm*), including that of the town itself, and the total tax revenue in the time of al-Ḥakam I went as high as 15,627 *dīnārs*. The town's population included a certain number of Arab families, amongst whom the Yaḥṣubīs were dominant, some Berbers and the descendants of the Hispano-Romans and the Hispano-Visigoths, both Christian and Islamicised.

The soil of Labla favoured all sorts of agricultural exploitation, thanks to its fertility and to the waters which the three river sources of the Sierra d'Aracena brought down; one of these gave sweet drinking water, another contained alum and the third copper sulphate. The district produced cereals and a wide variety of fruits, with fig trees, numerous olive trees and vineyards which yielded high-quality raisins. Excellent safflower (*ʿuṣṣūr*, *carthamus tinctorius*) was grown which, together with other dyestuffs like cochineal (*ḥirmiz*), was used for dyeing leather and skins. Bovines and horses were reared, and these, plus hunting and fishing, were sources of wealth. It was also a lively commercial centre.

Niebla still retains ancient remains and solid walls from its original foundation. There were dependent on the *madīna* towns and a fortress, notably for a certain period, Huelva (Awbābā, Ūnaba or Wānaba), Tejada (Talyāta) and Gibrleón (Djabal al-ʿUyūn) on the Odiel.

According to Ibn al-Shabbāt, it was conquered in 93/712 by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr or, more feasibly, by his son ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz in the next year. Niebla was the seat of a part of the *djund* of Hims. In 149/766 there was the rising of Saʿīd al-Maṭarī al-Yaḥṣubī. In 240/844, after having occupied Ishbiliya for some days, the Northmen or Madijūs [q.v.] went on to Labla, sacked it and carried off the inhabitants.

In 284/897 occurred another rising, whose suppression the *amir* of Cordova entrusted to his son Abān. Between this date and 304/916 it must have risen yet again, for on 20 Ramaḍān 304/17 March 917 the *hādījib* Badr b. Aḥmad occupied it when it was in the power of a certain ʿUṯmān b. Naṣr. At the fall of the caliphate, it became a *fāʾifa* principality, actually set up in 414/1023-4 when Abu ʿl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Yaḥṣubī, Tādīj al-Dawla, rose up and was proclaimed ruler, this being recognised by the people of Gibrleón. His brother and successor (in 433/1041-2) had difficulties with al-Muʿtaḍid of Seville. For some time, al-Muzaffar of Badajoz provided the ruler of Labla with help, but in the end the latter had to shelter under the protection of Abu ʿl-Walīd Ibn Djaḥwar [see DJAHWARIDS], with whom he sought refuge in 433/1052-3. Labla remained under the rule of his nephew, Faṭḥ b. Khalaf b. Yaḥyā, Nāṣir al-Dawla, who made a treaty with al-Muʿtaḍid; but the latter ravaged his territories and in 445/1053-4 Faṭḥ b. Khalaf had to flee to Cordova, where he died.

In the middle of the year 484/1091, Labla passed into the hands of the Almoravids. In ca. 538/1144, the doctrines of Ibn Kāṣī [q.v.] of Mértola caused a certain amount of anxiety. Being hostile to Almoravid power, Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Bitrūdī defended the town against Ibn Ghāniya until the time when it submitted, in 540/1146, to the Almohad Barrāz al-Masūfī. Eight or nine years later, the latter rebelled, and Labla had to be taken in 549/1154 by Yaḥyā b. Yaḥmūr, who conducted a great massacre of the populace. The Infante Don Sancho of Portugal and Portuguese troops passed by Labla in 574/1178 and 578/1182. Under Ibn Maḥfūz, it came to form, in the 7th/13th century, an independent principality comprising Huelva, Saltés and part of the Algarve, and recognised the suzerainty of Ferdinand II of Castile. It was besieged for several months by Alfonso X, and capitulated in 660/1262.

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