Palaces and Places
The preceding sections have considered issues of institutions and institutionalisation largely through texts and people (Law) and through things and people (Resources). The present section looks again at these aspects, but adds a greater emphasis on space and place. The papers ask how space and place can be used to provide identity and authority beyond the personal. For example, in what different ways, in different places and at different times, could palaces act as impersonal representations of absent rulers? How might routine and memory come to be associated with a specific place or space? What kind of institution was a palace or a monastery? To what extent may they be considered “total institutions,” closed institutional spaces? How did their nature change over time?

Further methodological and historiographical questions are raised. Kaplan considers how far fixing in space is a core feature of institutionalisation, and also the effect of institutionalisation on the marking of territory. MacLean asks whether or to what extent “itinerant kingship” is an institution imposed by historians. He and Airlie explore the degree to which the institutionalisation of palaces and other places associated with rulers relate to broader political development and how interpretation is linked to historical periodisation. MacLean suggest that examination of the functioning and perception of the palace may allow for an integration of the history of institutions and structures with the history of political activity and development more fertile than a focus on the issue of the survival of the “state” or of certain political institutions. The aspect of palaces as places of struggle, and of authority and coercion is also very clear in the Islamic and Byzantine world, as shown by Cheikh, whilst monasteries were similarly affected by struggles, as shown by Kaplan. Partly driven by such struggles, different types of norm developed, governing and identifying behaviour within monasteries and palaces, and in some instances suggesting the type of specialisation often associated with institutionalisation.

The papers introduce further types of source, most significantly archaeology and architecture. And once again the section introduces further methods of analysis, with some individual papers that are explicit comparisons between Western Christendom and Islam or Byzantium and Islam (MacLean and Cheikh respectively), that raise issues of diversity within a particular area (Kaplan on Byzantium), or that consider possibilities of influence from one area to another (esp. Cheikh).