

AHST 2331-001 (21626)

Understanding Art

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Spring 2020

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45

ATC 1.102

Tuesday February 18, 2020

Mosque of Cordoba: Spolia and Repetition of Forms

- Palimpsest
- Adaptive Reuse
- The tides of time
- The sublimity of time
- Andalusia
- Moorish Math
- Spolia
- Accretive development

- Romans
- Visigoths
- Umayyad (or Omayyad) Caliphate



The Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba, also known as the Great Mosque of Córdoba (in Spanish, Mezquita de Córdoba), whose ecclesiastical name is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, is the Catholic cathedral of the Diocese of Corodoba dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and located in the Spanish region of Andalusia.



Temple/Church/Mosque/Church

ARCHITECTURAL PALIMPSEST

RELIGIOUS PALIMPSEST

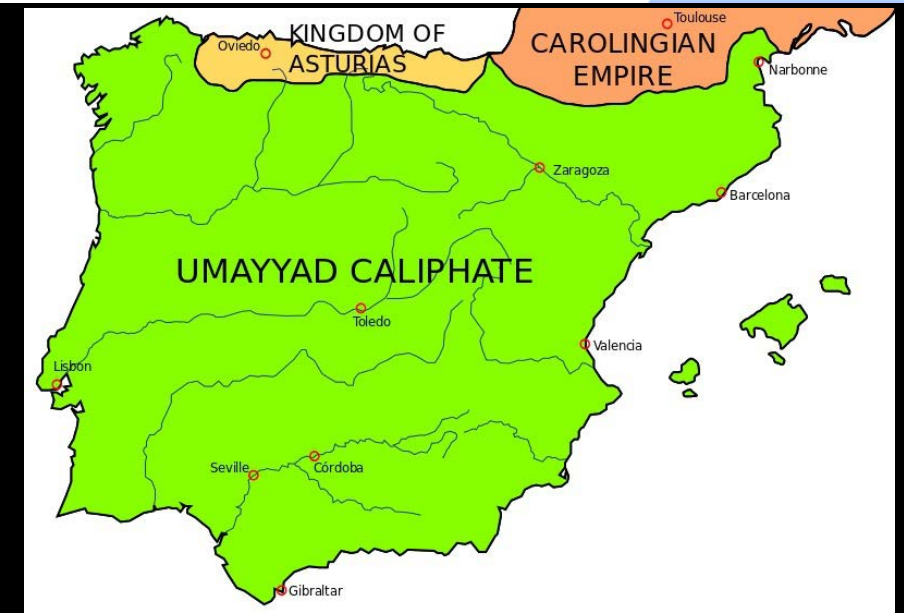


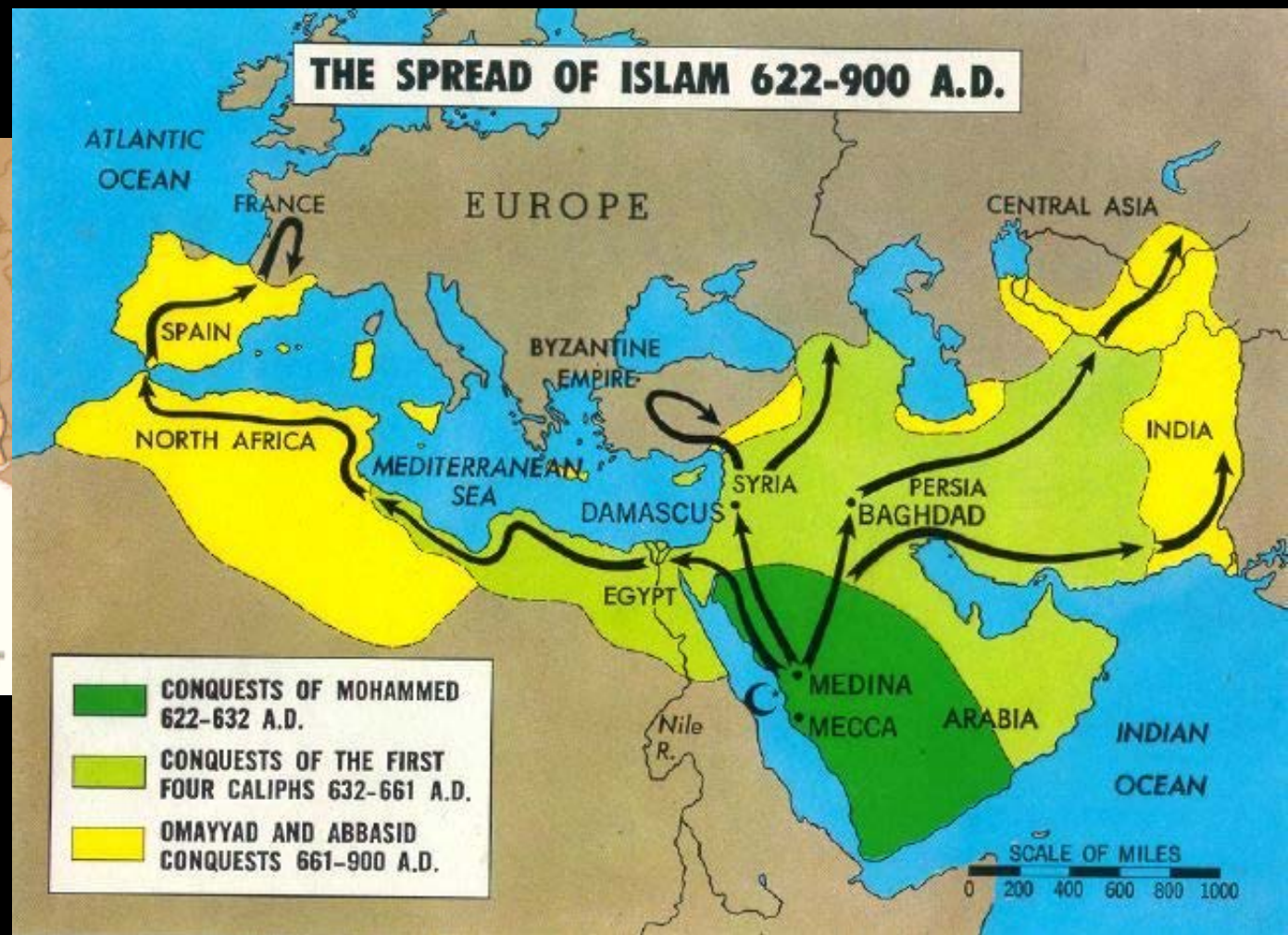
Umayyad Caliphate 8th Century



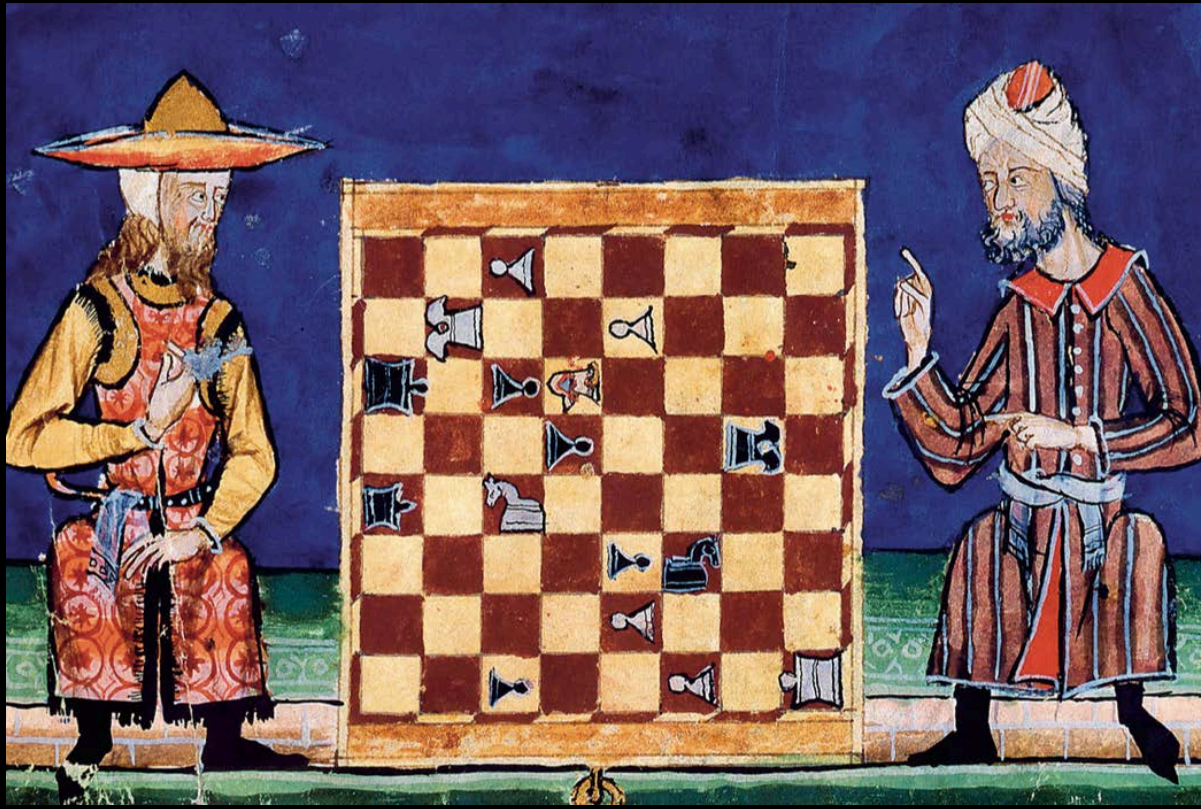
Mosque of Córdoba, 987 CE

The Great Mosque of Córdoba was the most important public project of Abd al Rahman I the last surviving Umayyad. Córdoba was the capital of the Spanish Muslim dynasty of the Ummayads (756-1031). Córdoba's period of greatest glory began in the 8th century after the Moorish conquest, when some 300 mosques and innumerable palaces and public buildings were built to rival the splendors of Constantinople, Damascus and Baghdad. In the 13th century, under Ferdinand III, the Saint, Córdoba's Great Mosque was turned into a cathedral and new defensive structures were erected. The cathedral at the center of the mosque was built in the 16th century.





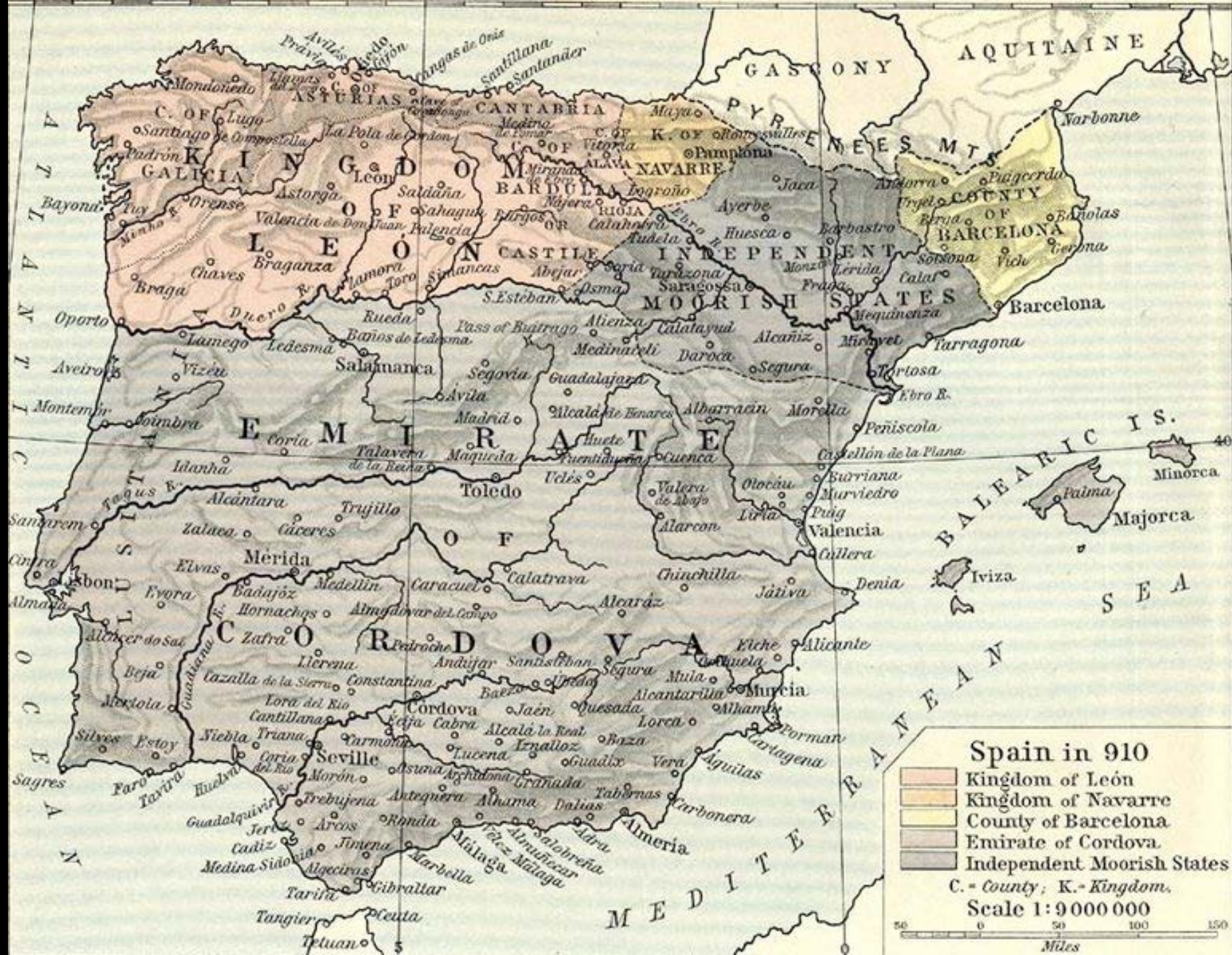
Medieval Convivencia [711 to 1492], is a period of Arab domination and intellectual ferment in Spain. The concept of Convivencia refers to the way in which Christians, Muslims and Jews lived together in Medieval Iberia, or Spain.



A Jew and a Muslim playing chess, The Book of Games, commissioned by Alphonse X of Castile, thirteenth century.



Muslim and Christian women play chess. The Book of Games, commissioned by Alphonse X of Castile, thirteenth century.



SPAIN

Political Map

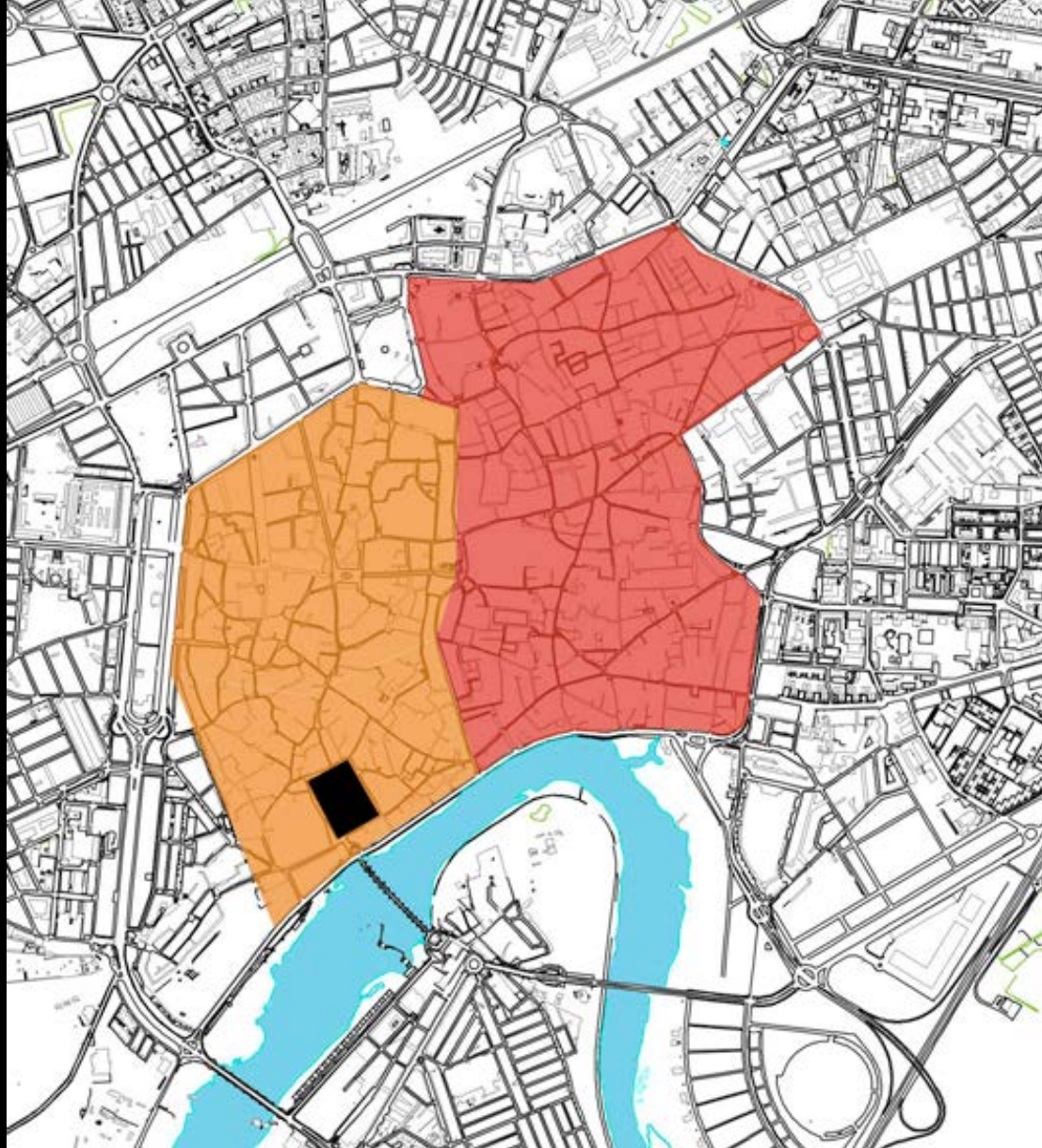


| LEGEND | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| ----- | International Boundary |
| ----- | Autonomous Community Boundary |
| ■ | National Capital |
| ■ | Autonomous Communities Capital |
| ● | Other City |

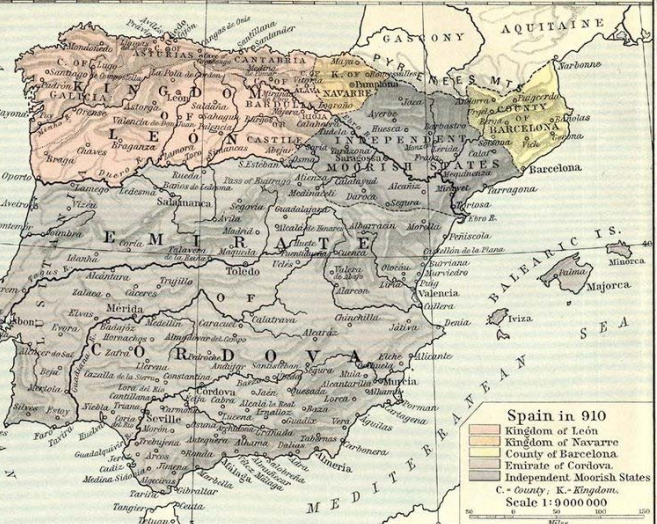
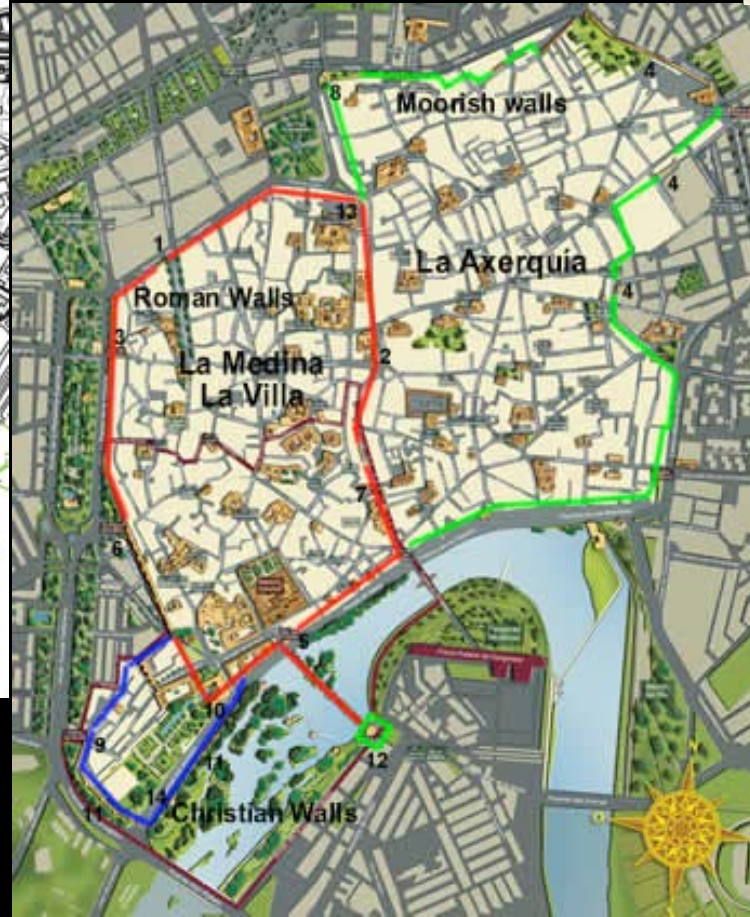
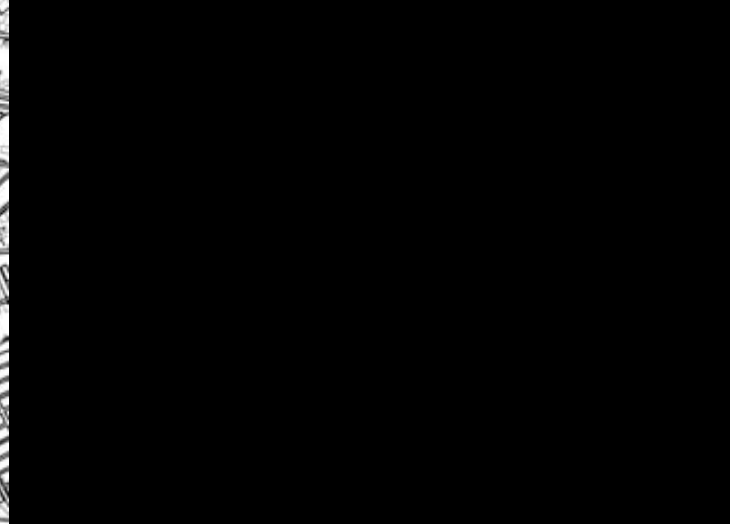


Note : Melilla & Ceuta are Autonomous Cities of Spain

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(Updated on 17th October, 2014)



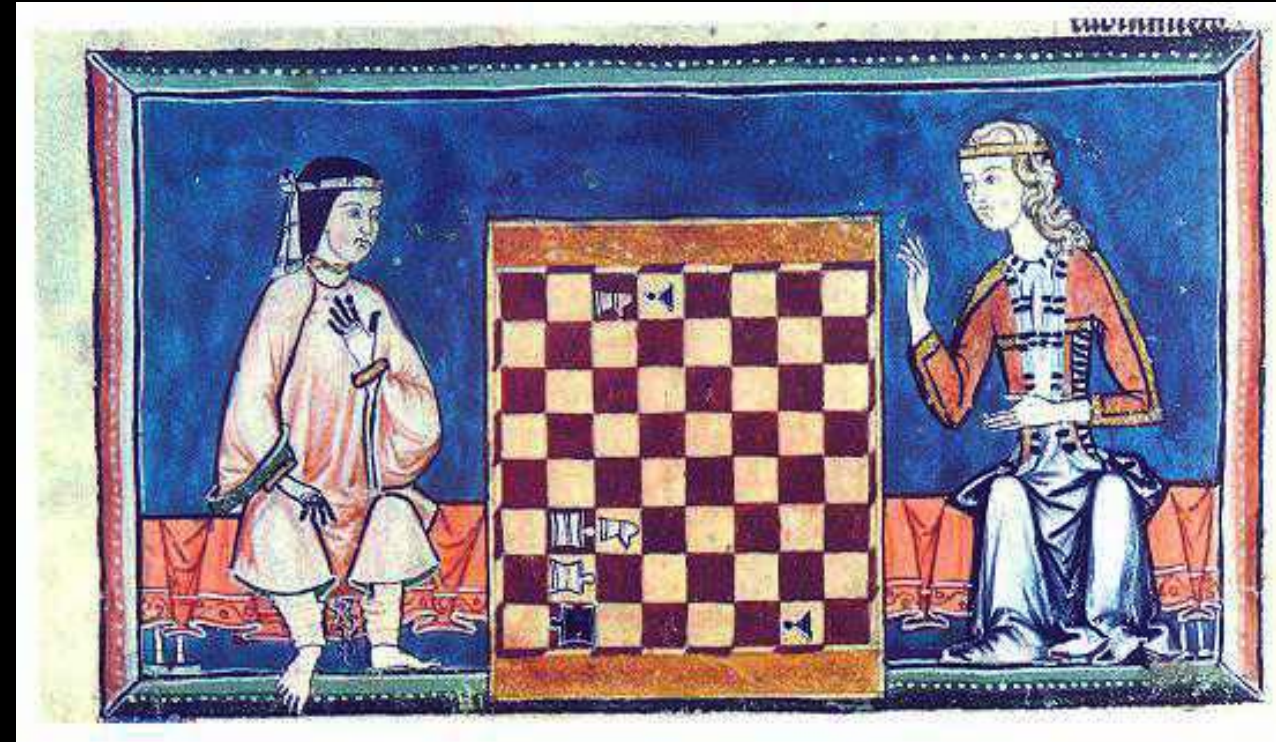
Orange: limits of roman city
Red: Muslim enlargements
Black: Great Mosque



By 800 Cordoba supported over 200,000 residents. During the apogee of the caliphate (1000 AD), Córdoba had a population of about 500,000 inhabitants. In the 10th and 11th centuries Córdoba was one of the most advanced cities in the world, and a great cultural, political, financial and economic center. The Great Mosque of Cordoba dates back to this time.

The economy of the caliphate was diverse and successful, with trade predominating. Muslim trade routes connected al-Andalus with the outside world via the Mediterranean. Industries revitalized during the caliphate included textiles, ceramics, glassware, metalwork, and agriculture. The Arabs introduced crops such as rice, watermelon, banana, eggplant and hard wheat. Fields were irrigated with water wheels.

Medieval Convivencia [711 to 1492], is a period of Arab domination and intellectual ferment in Spain. The concept of Convivencia refers to the way in which Christians, Muslims and Jews lived together in Medieval Iberia, or Spain.



Muslim and Christian women play chess. The Book of Games, commissioned by Alphonse X of Castile, thirteenth century.

Cosmopolitan Cordoba

Ziryab was Chief Entertainer of the Court of Cordoba in 822 CE and started a musical conservatory. He revolutionized medieval music, lifestyle, fashion, hairstyles, furniture and even tableware. He transformed the way people ate, socialized, and relaxed. Born 789 AD, Ziryab was a significant personality in Islamic culture but remains anonymous in European history in spite of his single-handedness in laying down the groundwork for traditional Spanish music. He was an educated North African slave.



Ziryab
playing oud.



Cosmopolitan Cordoba

The caliphate had an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse society. A minority of ethnic Muslims of Arab descent occupied the priestly and ruling positions, another Muslim minority were primarily soldiers and native Hispano-Gothic converts (who comprised most of the Muslim minority) were found throughout society. Jews comprised about ten percent of the population: little more numerous than the Arabs and about equal in numbers to the Berbers. They were primarily involved in business and intellectual occupations. The indigenous Christian majority were Catholic Christians of the Visigothic rite, who spoke a variant of Latin close to Spanish or Portuguese with an Arabic influence. The Christians were the lower strata of society, heavily taxed with few civil rights and culturally influenced by the Muslims.



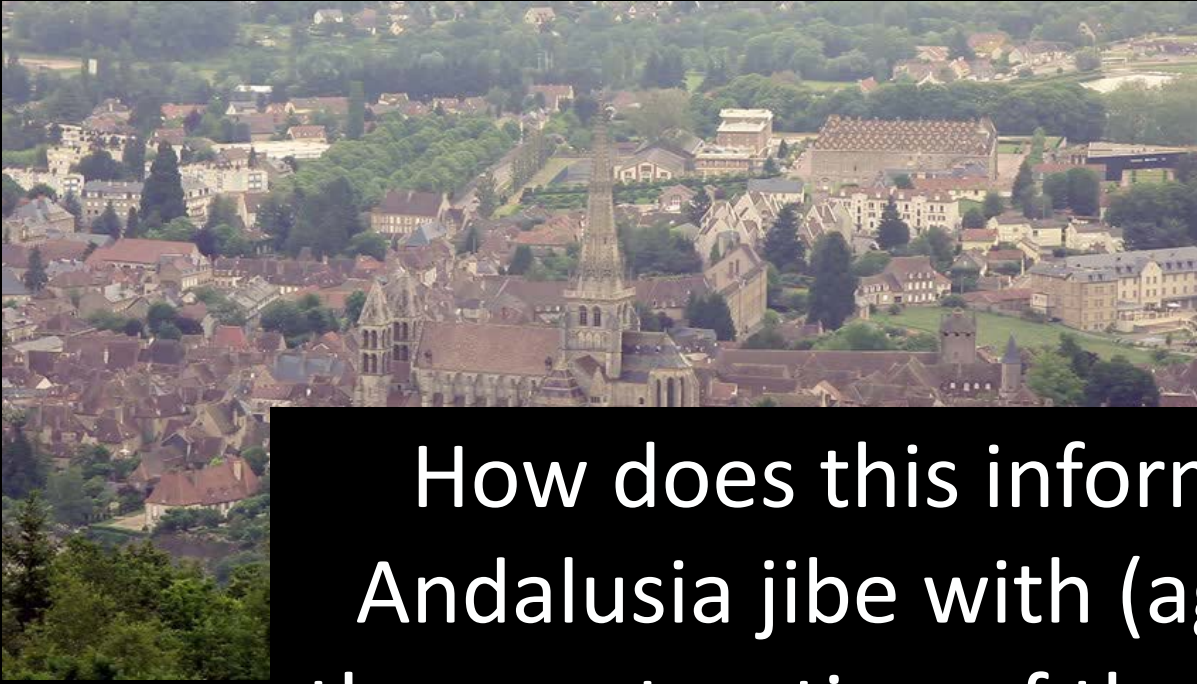
Andalusian art depicting a Muslim and a Christian playing together



A page from the Kitab al-Diryaq, or Book of Antidotes, from the late 12th century AD



Above and below: Pilgrims and Last Judgment Tympanum,
Central Portal, West Facade, St. Lazarus Cathedral, Autun,
France, c. 1120-35



How does this information about Al Andalusia jibe with (agree with or not) the construction of the “Middle Ages” by Western scholars? [Middle Ages: 1,000 years of darkness, c. 400-1400, between fall of Rome and Renaissance]



Above and below: Pilgrims and Last Judgment Tympanum, Central Portal, West Facade, St. Lazarus Cathedral, Autun, France, c. 1120-35





Guadalquivir River: Its name comes from the Arabic wadi al-kabir, meaning “great river”, and it is 408 miles long.



Temple/Church/Mosque/Church

ARCHITECTURAL PALIMPSEST

RELIGIOUS PALIMPSEST

TEMPLE



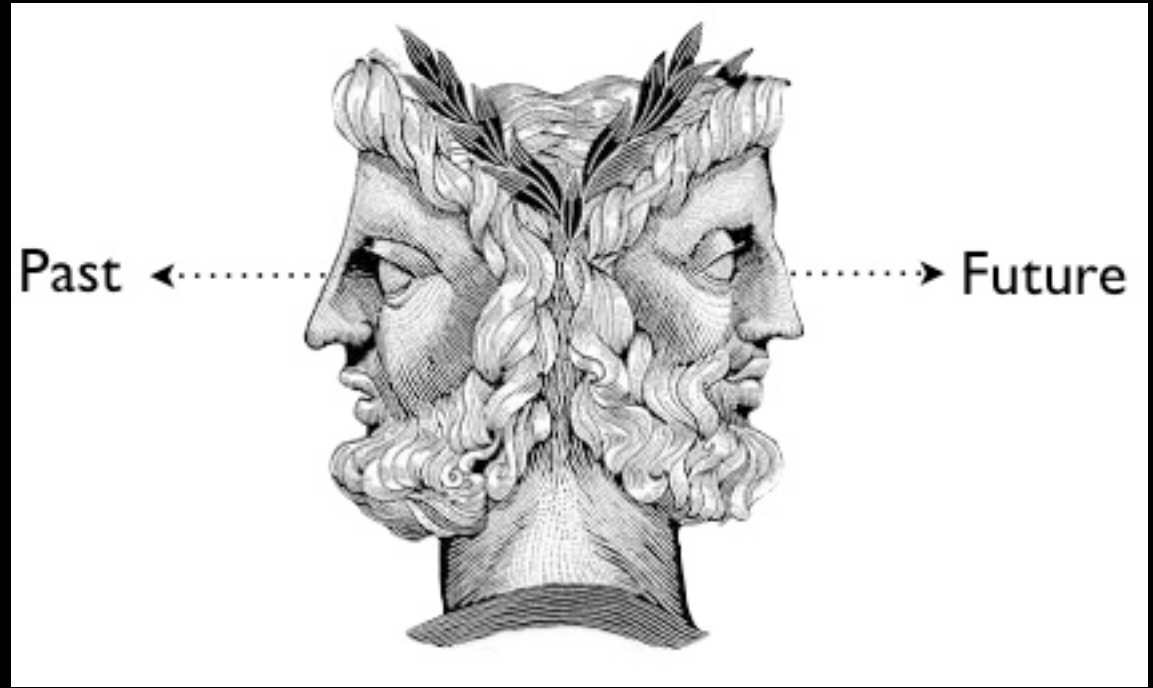
THE GUADALQUIVIR RIVER ON THE ANCIENT ROMAN BRIDGE: Cordoba is an ancient dwelling place, settled long before the Romans built their monumental city.



MASSIVE GATEWAY TO HONOR THE ROMAN GOD JANUS: The Romans built their temple to Janus, the god of beginnings and endings and doorways, near this ancient doorway opposite the bridge on the mighty Guadalquivir.







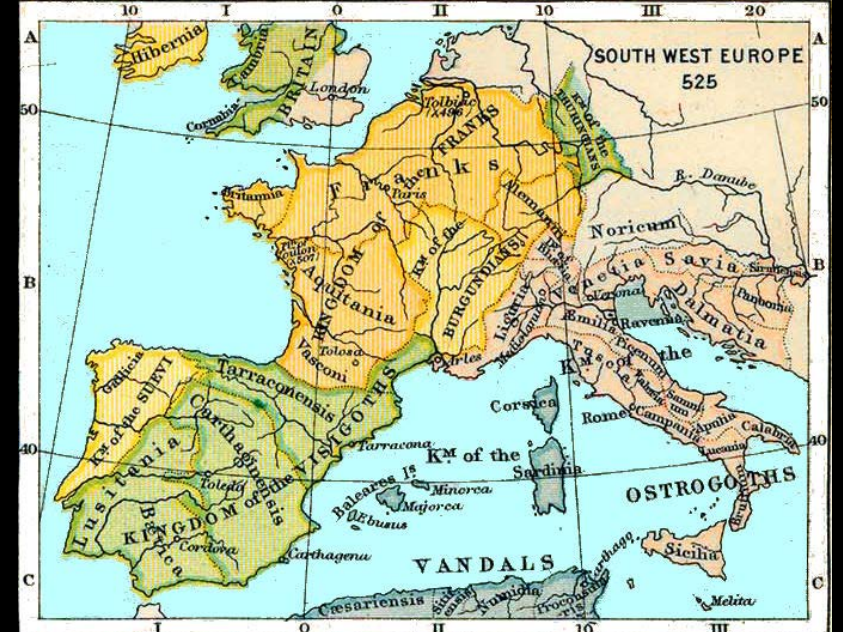
In ancient Roman religion and mythology, Janus is the god of beginnings and transitions, thence also of gates, doors, doorways, endings and time. He is usually a two-faced god since he looks to the future and the past. The Romans dedicated the month of January to Janus. His most apparent remnant in modern culture is his namesake, the month of January.

CHURCH

The Basilica of Saint Vincent the Martyr was the original seed that was later transformed into the Umayyad Mosque, as the Moors built the original Alhama Mosque over its foundations. It is estimated that the church was built in the mid-6th century and subsequently became the main place of worship for Christians in the city. After the Saracen invasion of Cordoba, Muslims needed a place to pray and worship, so they came to an agreement with the local Christians to share the temple. It was decided that they would respect the sanctity of the original church while, in return, the Catholic congregation would pay a certain amount in tributes. Towards the end of the reign of Abd ar-Rahman I, the need to extend the Alhama Mosque became apparent due to an increase in size of the Omeyan city of Cordova, which led to the need of a more spacious temple in order to satisfy the spiritual needs of the Muslim community.

Right: Map of Visigothic Kingdom, 525

Below: Visigothic pieces from San Vicente in the Great Mosque of Córdoba, 6th-8th c.



Visigoths: the branch of the Goths who invaded the Roman Empire between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD and ruled much of Spain until overthrown by the Moors in 711.



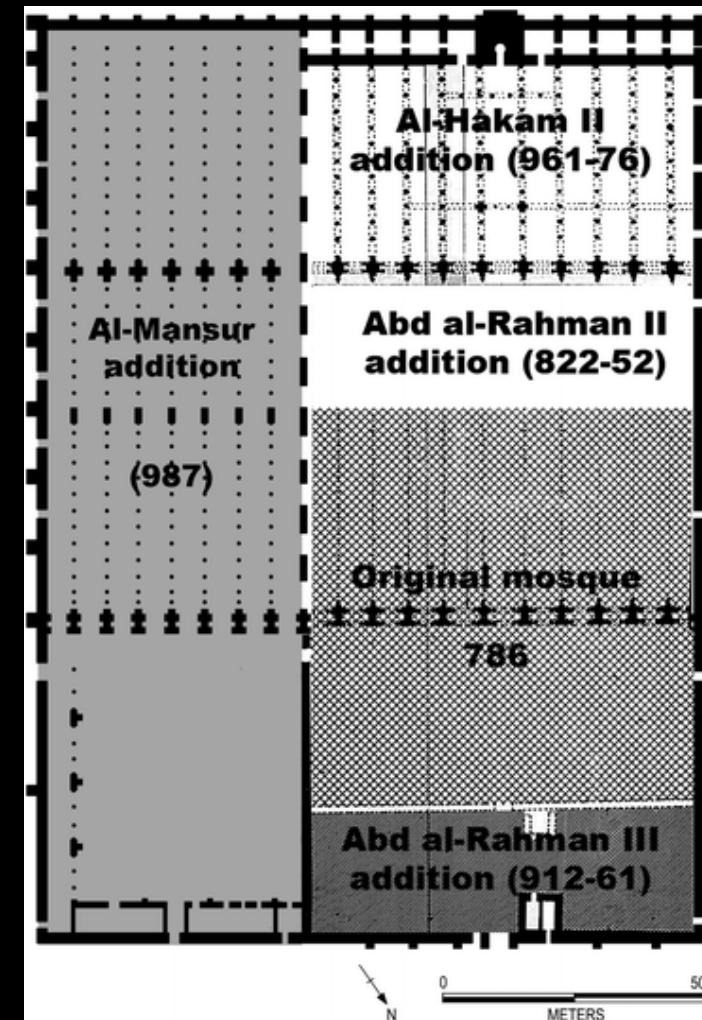
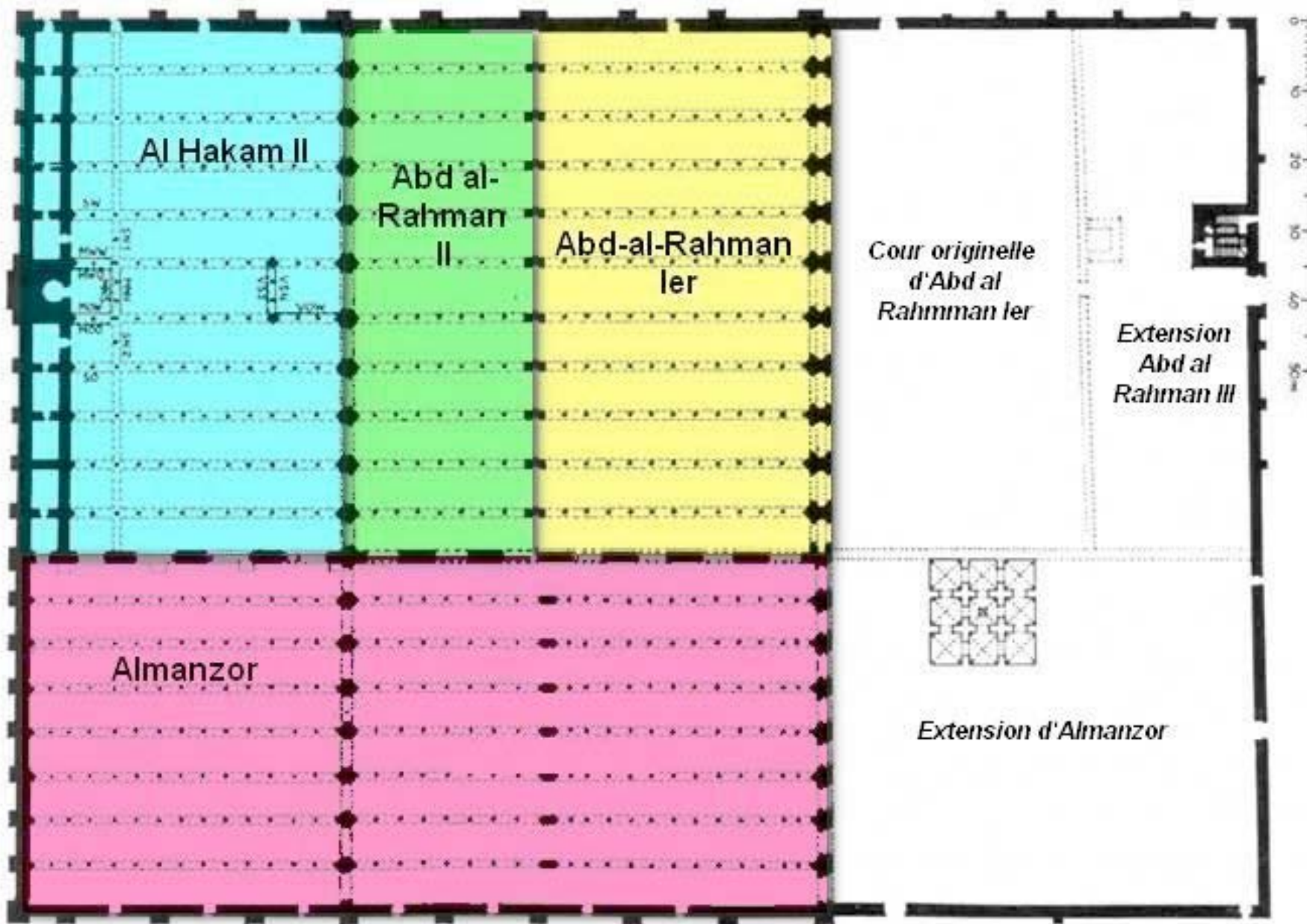
MOSQUE



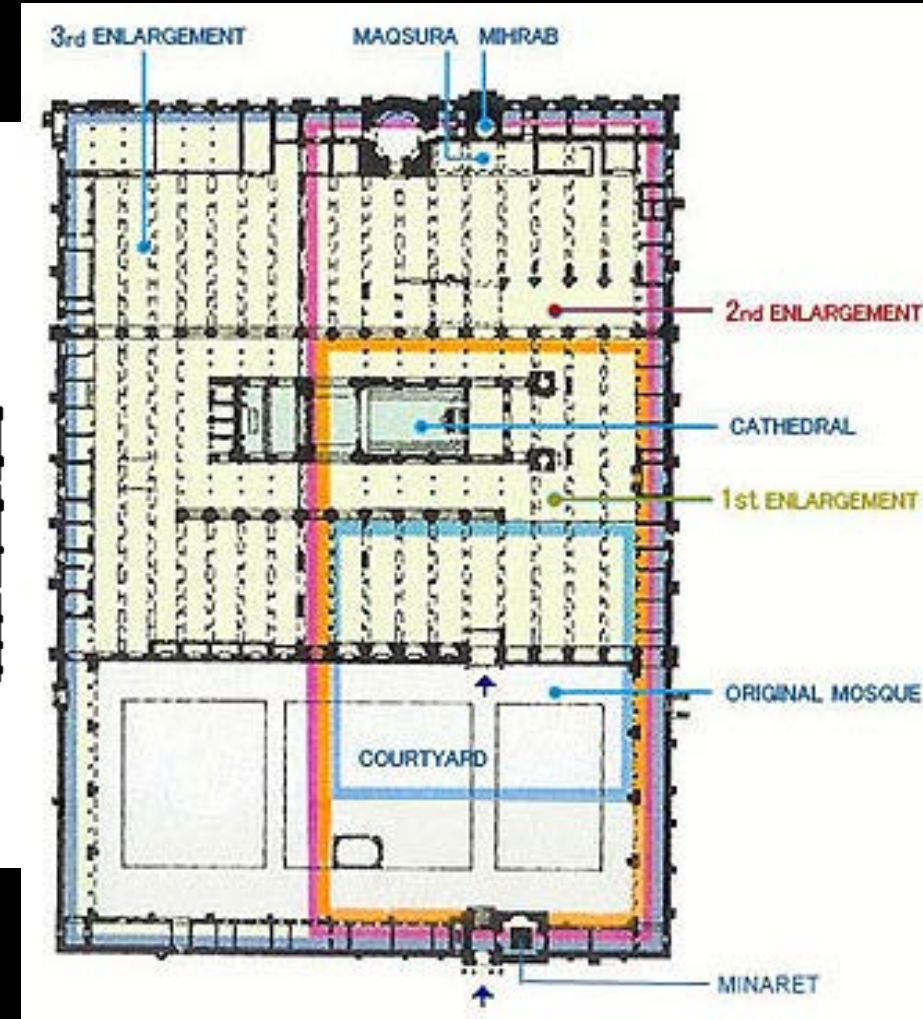
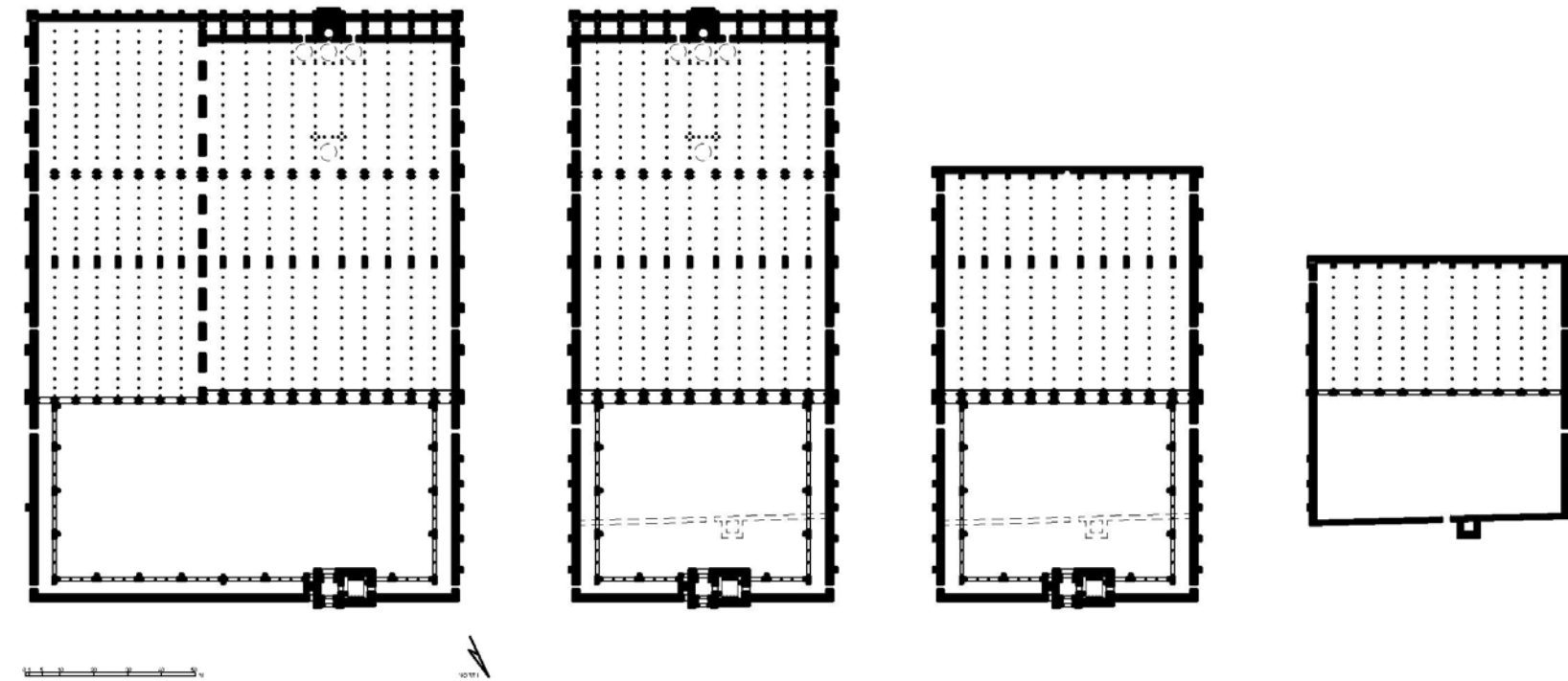
Left: Hypostyle hall: The hypostyle hall was a large room with columns.

Below: Map of Andalusia in 10th c.





Accretive
development



Floor plans showing four phases of development

The plan at the right shows the addition of the 14th-century cathedral.

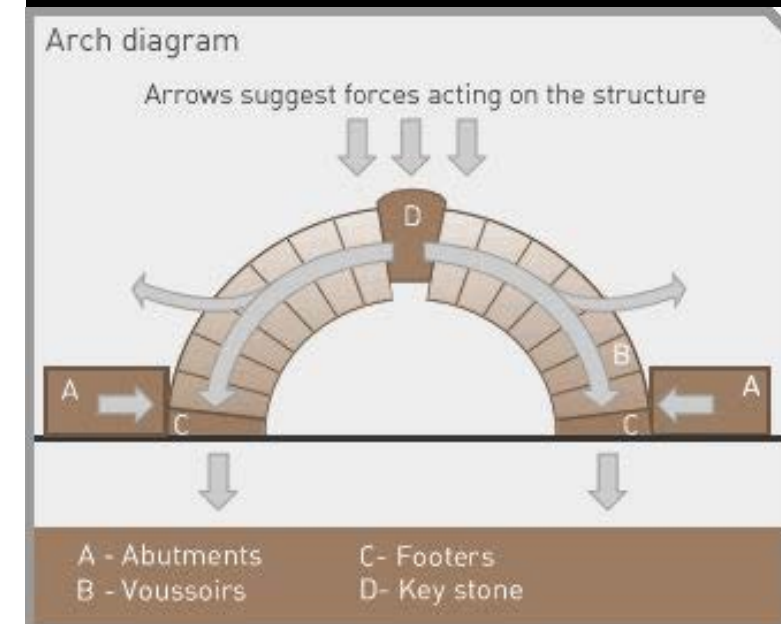
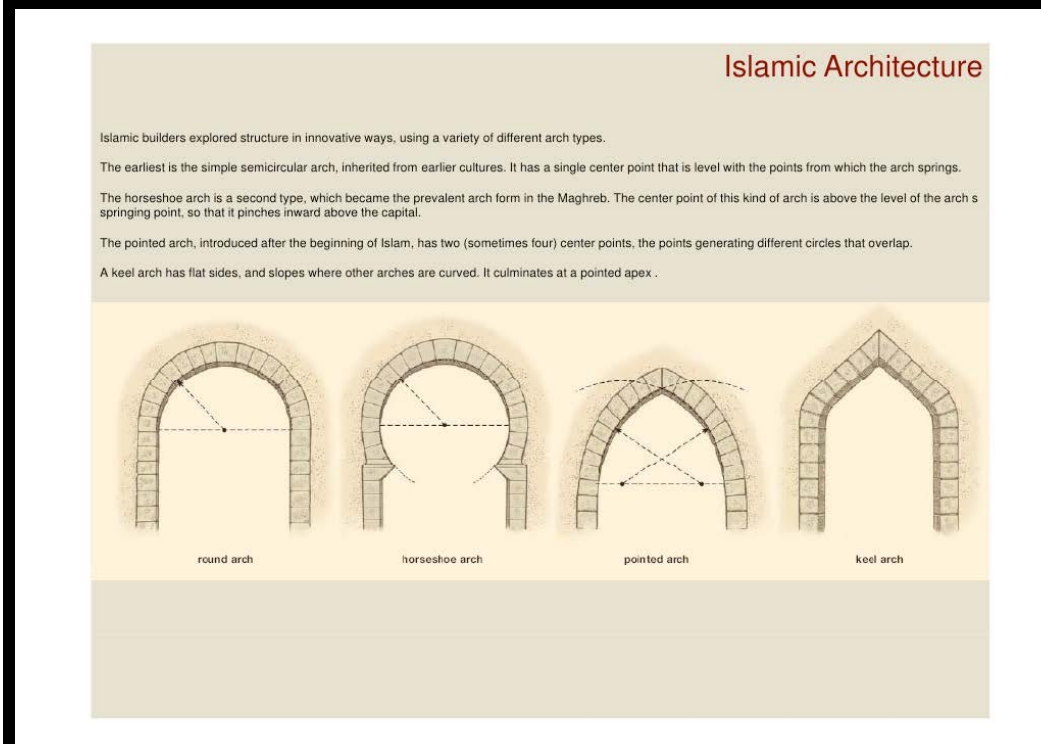


Hypostyle Prayer Hall

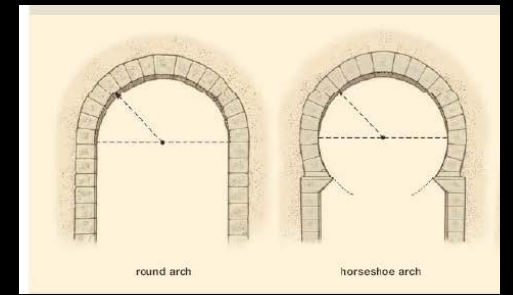
There are 856 columns of jasper, onyx, marble, and granite.



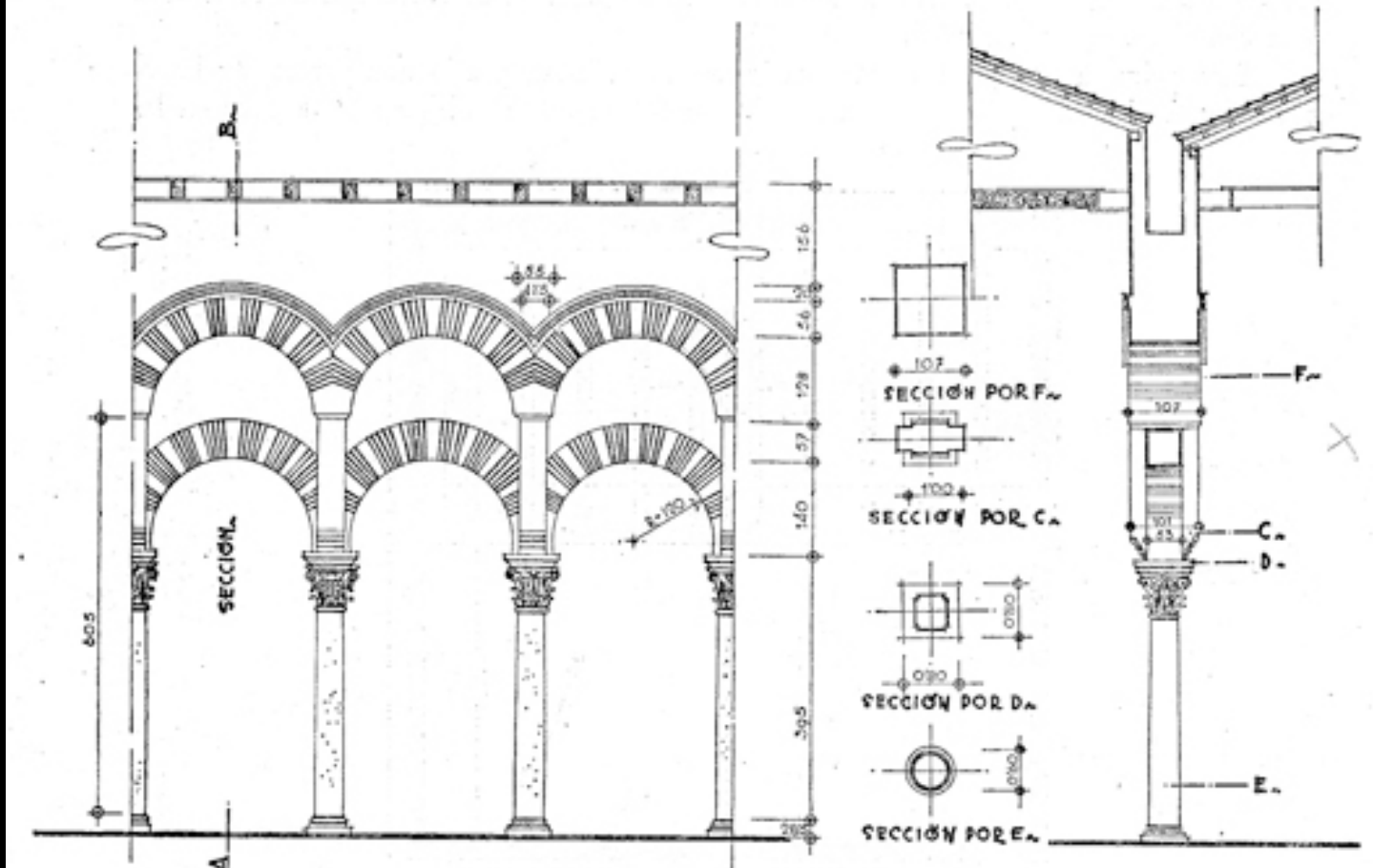
Arcades in Mosque of Córdoba



At left, the upper arch is semicircular, but the bottom is a horseshoe, following Spanish-Visigoth tradition, probably late Roman, like the alternating two colored stone blocks and brick voussoirs. The structure thus combined the new with a familiar, indigenous language of forms. Horseshoe arches were fashioned or painted with alternating voussoirs. Pillar and corbels load onto the cornice, with no Roman architectural moldings, which transmit their weight to capital and shaft, which uses buried basis as foundation.



The double arches were a new introduction to architecture, permitting higher ceilings than would otherwise be possible with relatively low columns. The double arches consist of a lower horseshoe arch and an upper semi-circular arch.

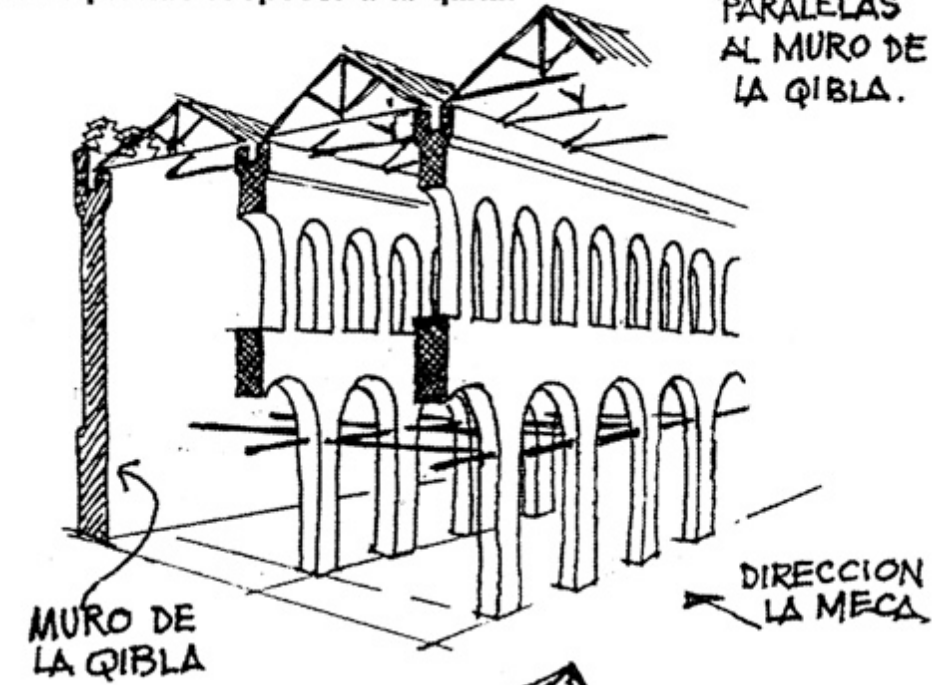


Above: Elevation and section of arcades in Mosque of Córdoba

The walls in the mosque have double arcades. This way height can be increased without breaking proportions. The Cordoba arcades are directly inspired by the Milagros Aqueduct in Mérida, an ancient Roman aqueduct. From its ruins columns and capitals were taken **[SPOLIA]** as basis and inspiration for the successive enlargements. In this context (the reuse of materials and types), the Mosque is understood as a system composed of wall-and-aqueduct that run perpendicular to the qibla and are responsible for the spatial experience. The only perceptible direction would then be perpendicular to qibla.

La Mezquita. Formas en que se orientan las arquerías respecto a la qibla.

ARQUERIAS PARALELAS AL MURO DE LA QIBLA.



MURO DE LA QIBLA

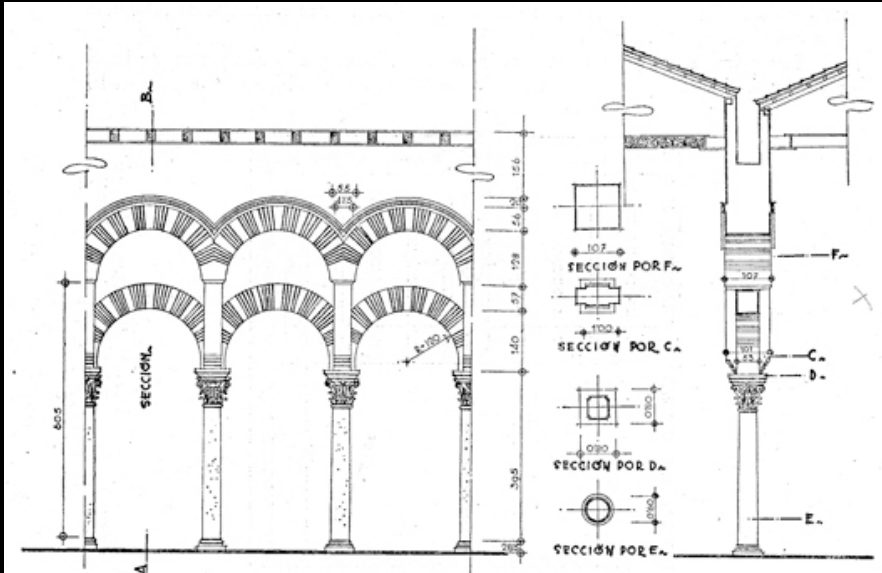
DIRECCION LA MECA

MURO DE LA QIBLA

ARQUERIAS PERPENDICULARES A LA QIBLA.

DIRECCION LA MECA

Milagros or Miraculous Aqueduct in Mérida, Spain from
Ancient Rome, 1st century CE



double arcades of the
Mosque/Cathedral of
Cordoba





Spolia



The 856 columns were made from pieces of the Roman temple which had occupied the site previously, as well as other destroyed Roman buildings.



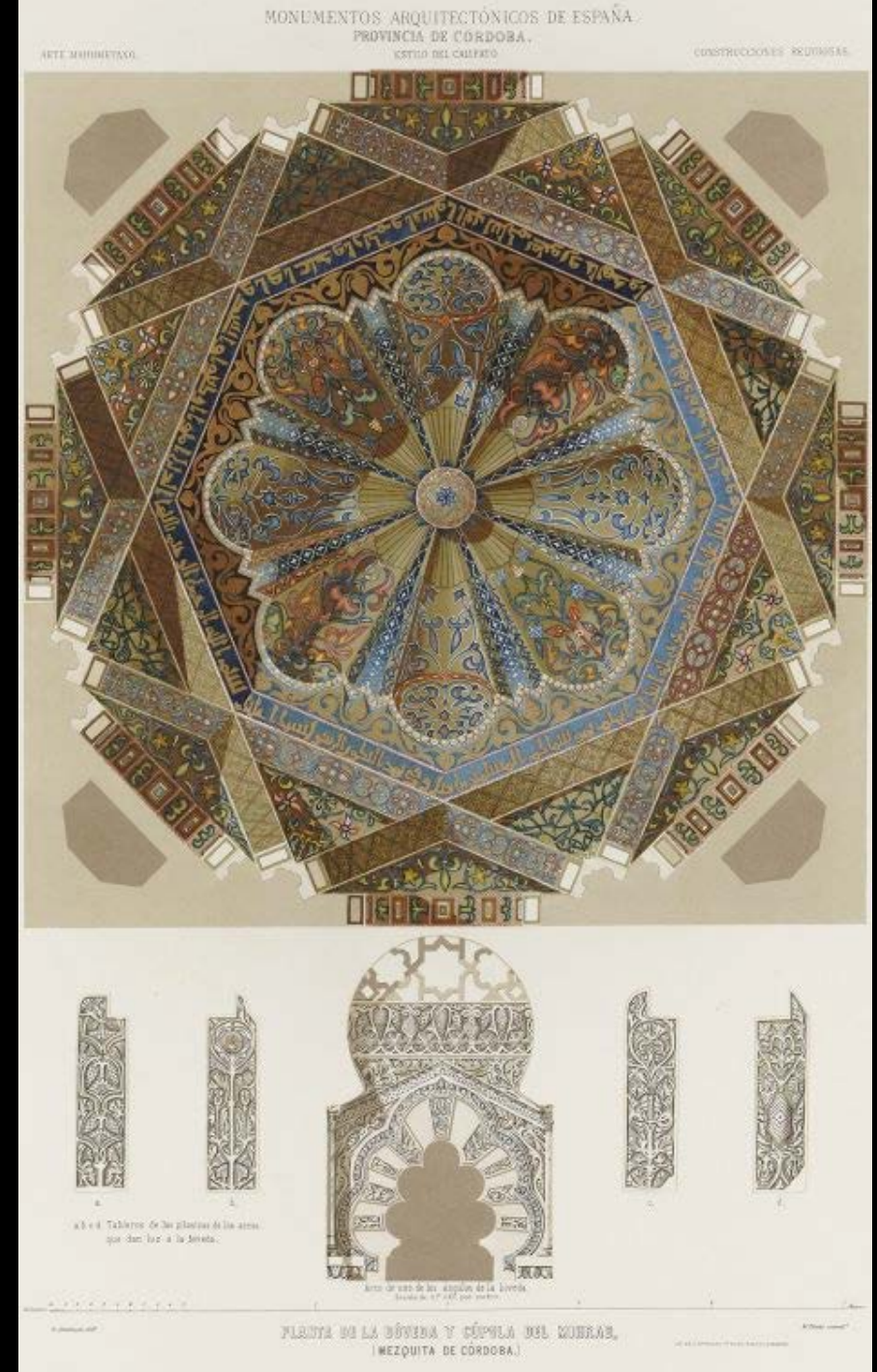


Above: Dome Over Mihrab Chapel
Right: View of Mhirab



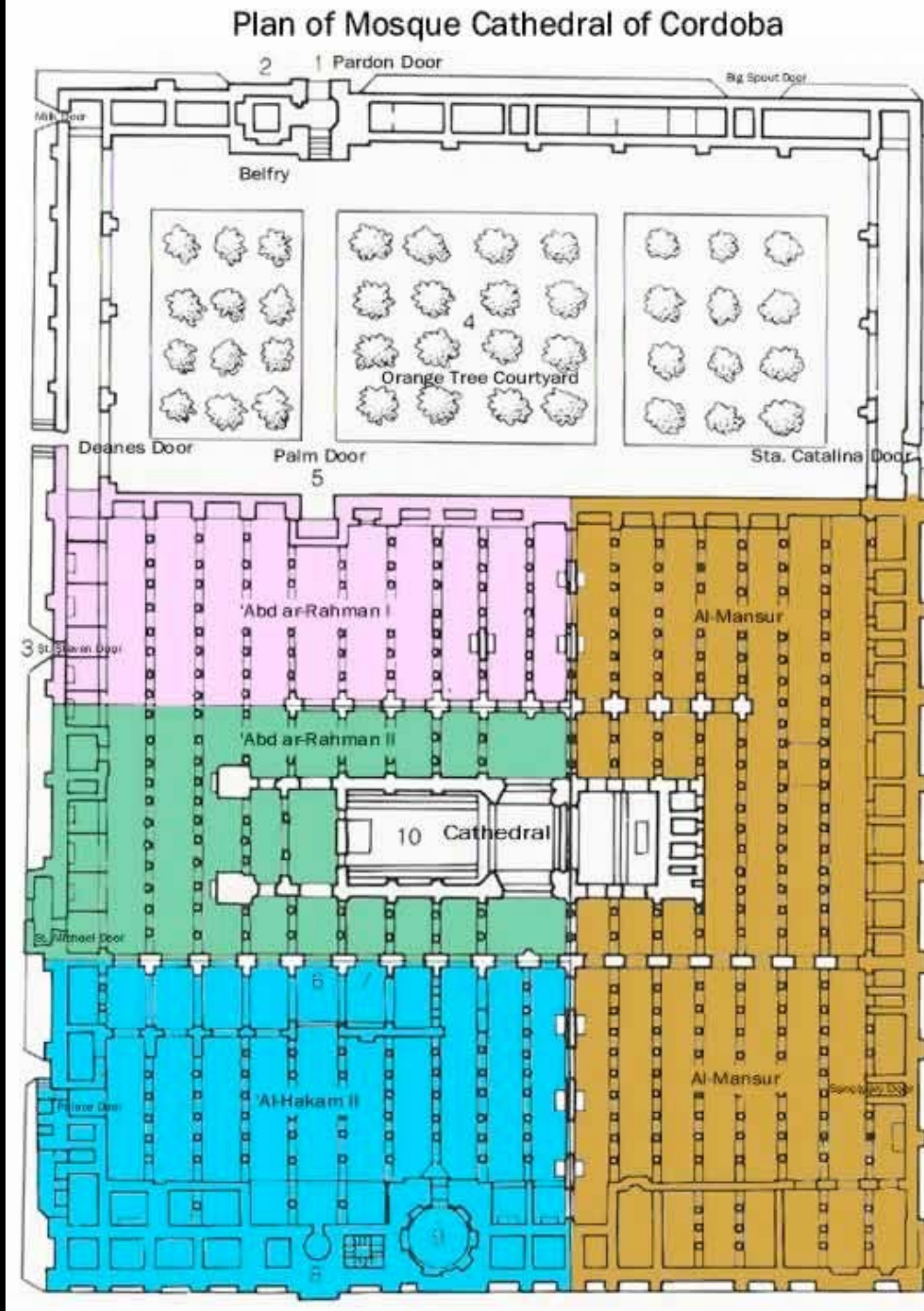


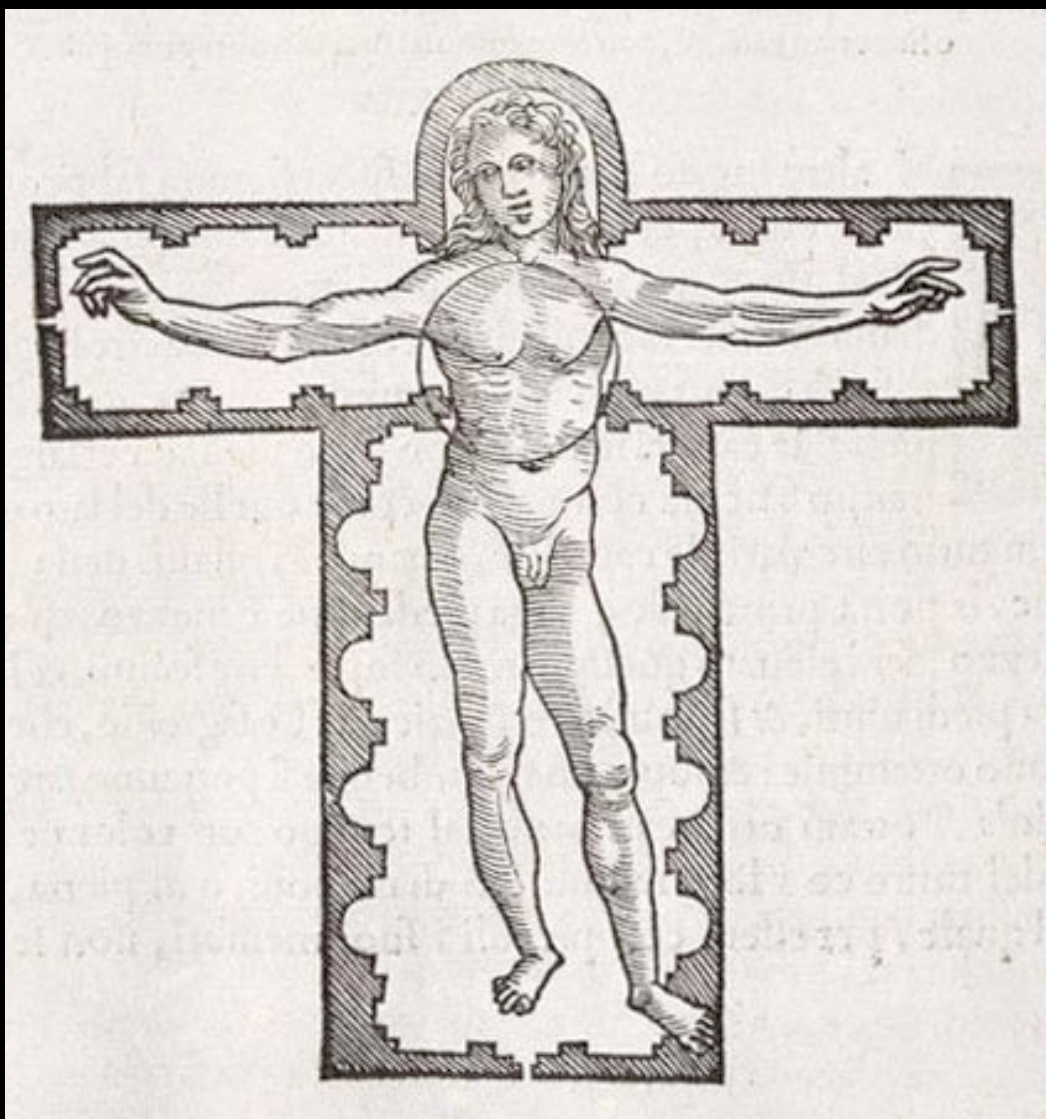
- crisscrossing ribs
- create pointed arches
- covered with gold mosaic
- a radial pattern



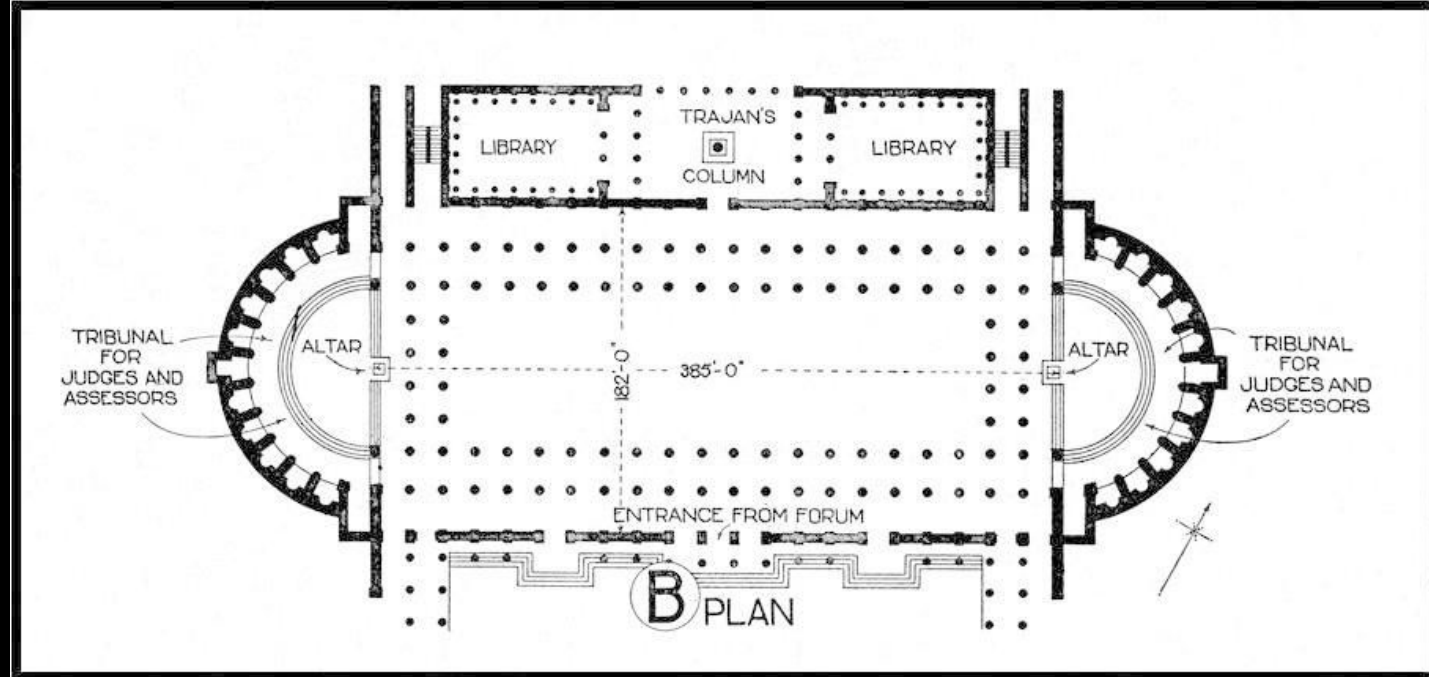
CHURCH

After conquering Cordoba in 1236, Ferdinand III king of Castile consecrated the Great Mosque as the city's cathedral. The Christian population of Cordoba used the former mosque with relatively minor changes for the next three hundred years. In the early 16th century the Bishop and Canons of the cathedral proposed the construction of a new cathedral, and proposed to demolish the mosque in order to build it. The opposition of the townspeople to the proposed destruction of the building led to the unprecedented decision, endorsed by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, to insert an entire Gothic "chapel" into the very heart of the former Great Mosque. The result is an uneasy and controversial juxtaposition: the soaring forms of a Gothic cathedral rise from the very center of the comparatively low, sprawling prayer hall whose architectural vocabulary is rooted in the forms of classical antiquity.

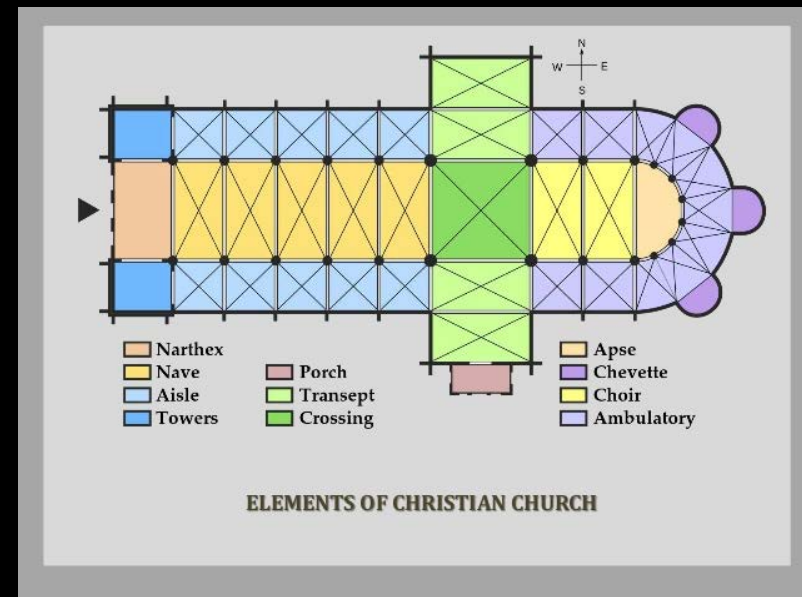


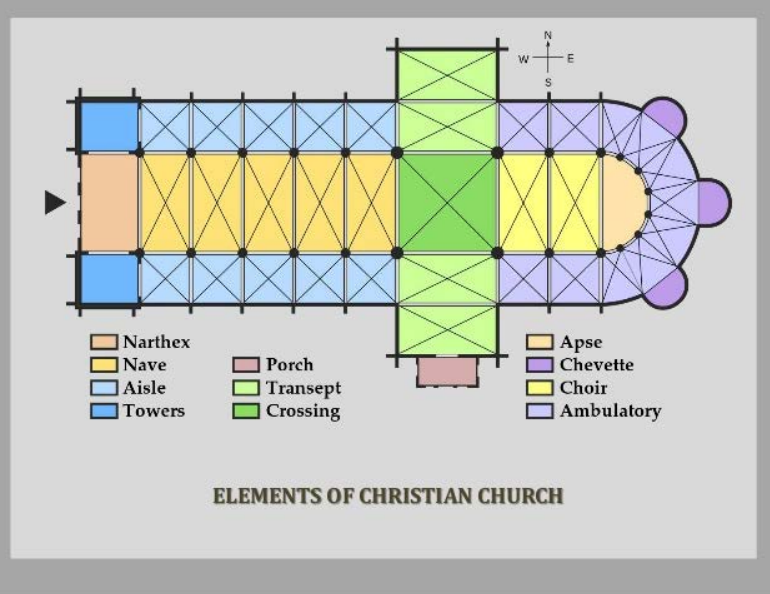
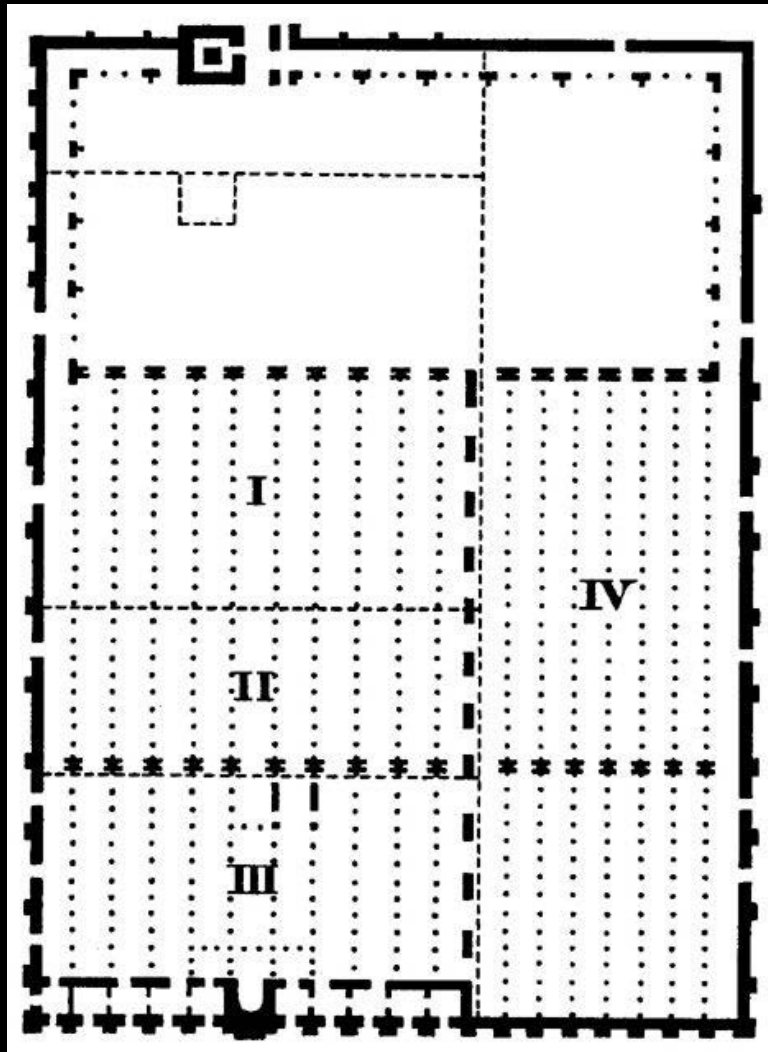


Pietro Cataneo, "Vitruvian Man" (1554)

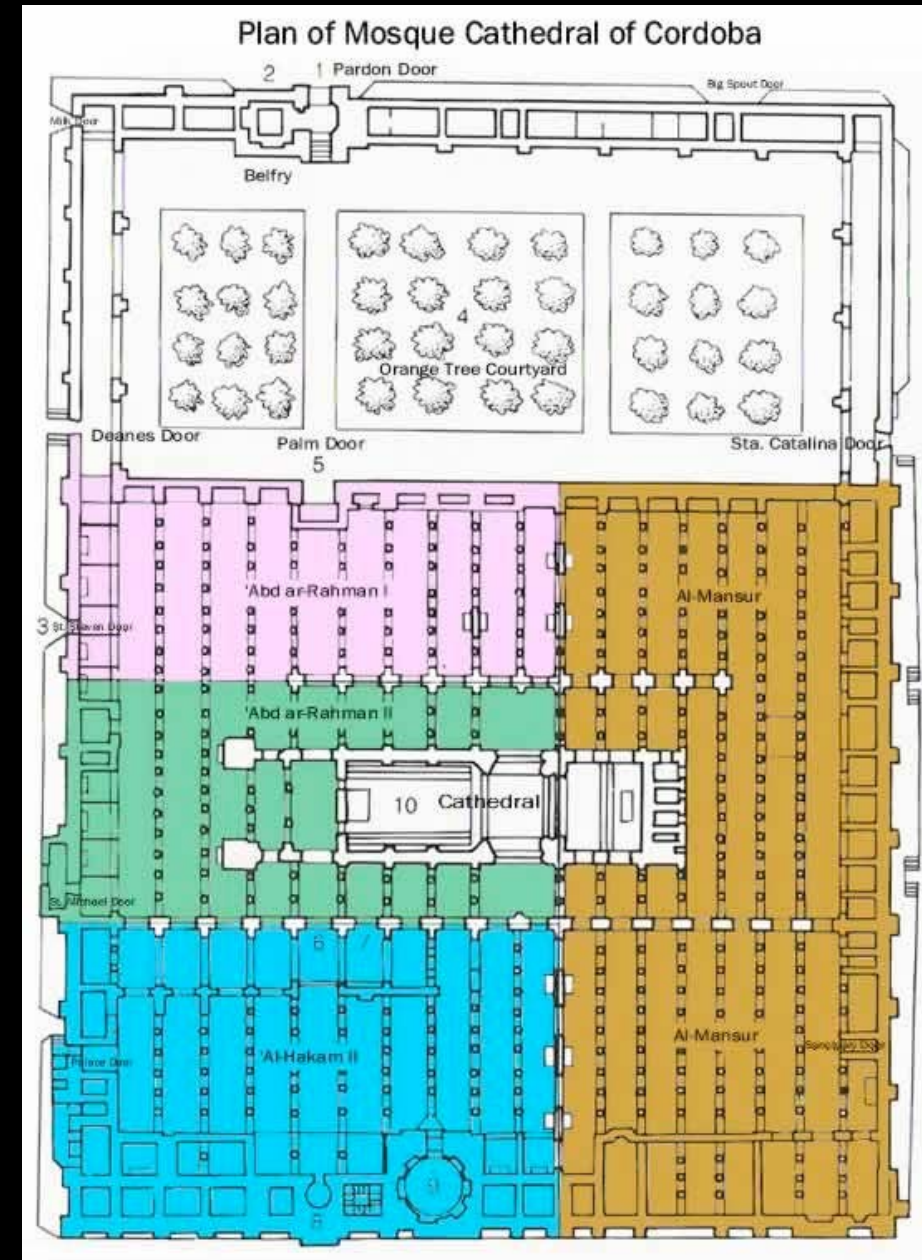


Plan of Basilica Ulpia in Trajan's Forum, 106-112 CE





How does the plan of the original mosque compare with the cathedral?







A view of Cordoba Cathedral's renaissance high altar, its gothic ceiling, the baroque lectern and pulpit, and the renaissance walls of the north and south transept, which blend into Islamic arches from Almanzor's final expansion of the Mosque at the end of the 10th century.



The Sagrario
Chapel Parish
(Capilla del
Sagrario) is in the
southeast corner
of the former
mosque and is full
of frescos.

TROMPE L'OEIL



Contrast between Almanzor's last expansion of the Mosque and Christian architecture, in the row of columns adjacent the 16th-century cathedral.



Front view of intertwined, multi-lobed arches in Villaviciosa Chapel, looking toward Al-Hakam II's mihrab.





Photo by: mbell1975 / Flickr



INTERIOR VIEW OF THE MOSQUE AT CORDOVA.

Approximating the
spirituality of
infinity
through
architecture

ABSTRACTION OF FORM

ICONOCLASM, MATH, OR BOTH?

MOORISH MATHEMATICS

0, algebra, algorithm

Zero was invented independently by the Babylonians, Mayans and Indians (although some researchers say the Indian number system was influenced by the Babylonians) some 4,000 to 5,000 years ago. Over the next centuries, the concept of zero caught on in China and the Middle East. By 773 CE, zero reached Baghdad where it became part of the Arabic number system, which is based upon the Indian system.

A Persian mathematician, Muhammed ibn-Musa al-Khwarizmi, suggested that a little circle should be used in calculations if no number appeared in the tens place. The Arabs called this circle "sifr," or "empty." Zero was crucial to al-Khwarizmi, who used it to invent algebra in the ninth century. Al-Khwarizmi also developed quick methods for multiplying and dividing numbers, which are known as algorithms — a corruption of his name.



Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi [780-850]

Left: Khwarizmi statute in Amir Kabir University, Tehran, Iran

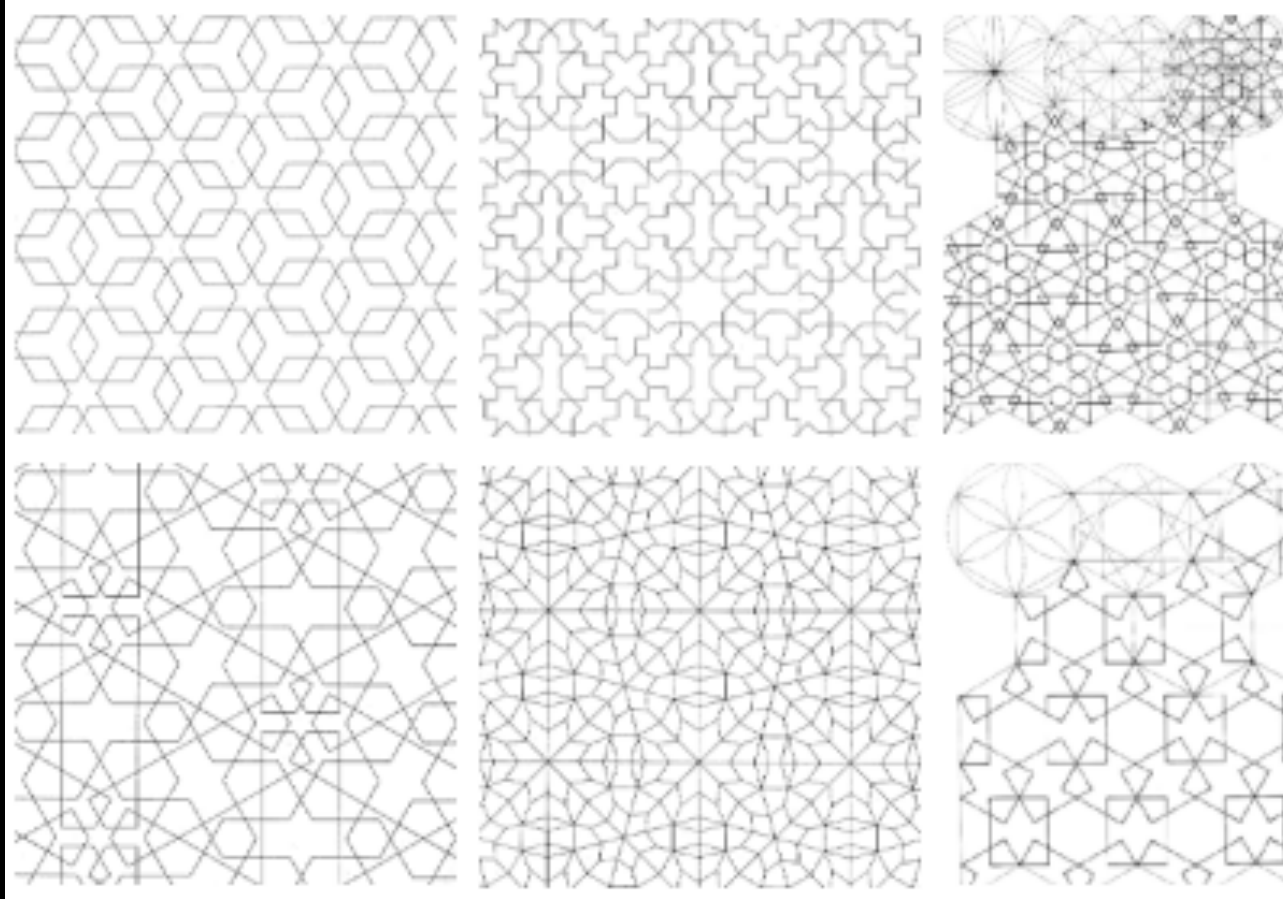
Algebra doesn't have one single origin point -- it developed over time and in multiple places, with many mathematicians contributing. One of those contributors was an 8th-century scholar from Baghdad named Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi.

Etymology of “algebra”

late Middle English: from Italian, Spanish, and medieval Latin, from Arabic *al-jabr* ‘the reunion of broken parts,’ ‘bone setting,’ from *jabara* ‘reunite, restore.’ The original sense, ‘the surgical treatment of fractures,’ probably came via Spanish, in which it survives; the mathematical sense comes from the title of a book, *‘ilm al-jabr wa'l-muqābala* ‘the science of restoring what is missing and equating like with like,’ by the mathematician al-Ḳwārizmī



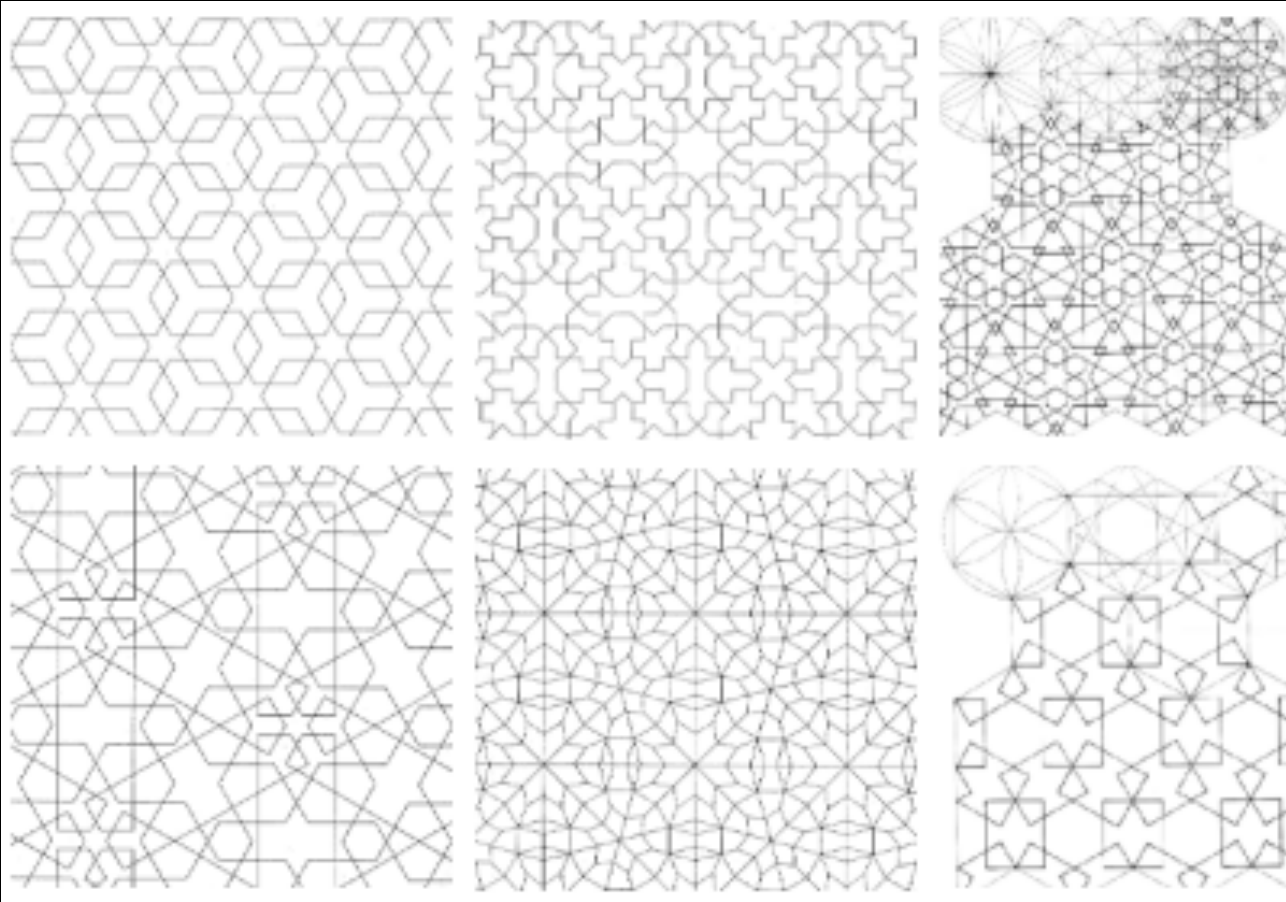
A stamp issued in honor of al-Khwarizmi by the former USSR post in 1983. The text in Cyrillic reads: 1200 Years, Mukhammad al-Korezmi.



Some examples of the complex symmetries used in
Islamic temple decoration

Major Arabic mathematical works were brought to Al-Andalus by the 9th century, along with important Greek translations and commentaries. Together with a translation of Euclid's *Elements*, they became the two foundations of subsequent mathematical developments in Al-Andalus. It is clear from their own achievements that scholars in Al-Andalus followed advancements in other Muslim lands, and contributed their own.

Today, al-Khwarizmi's work exists only as a Latin translation made in Toledo, Spain, by Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187 CE). Europeans did not gain access to the mathematical knowledge found in Spain and North Africa until the 12th and 13th centuries CE. It entered Europe both through scholarly and commercial means. Fibonacci (d. 1250 CE), an Italian mathematician who traveled between Europe and North Africa, transmitted mathematical knowledge from Muslim lands to Europe and made his own discoveries.



Some examples of the complex symmetries used in Islamic temple decoration

A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales.



| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brahmi | ↓ | | — | = | ≡ | + | ୮ | ୯ | ୦ | ୧ | ୨ |
| Hindu | ↓ | ୦ | ୧ | ୨ | ୩ | ୪ | ୫ | ୬ | ୭ | ୮ | ୯ |
| Arabic | ↓ | ٠ | ١ | ٢ | ٣ | ٤ | ٥ | ٦ | ٧ | ٨ | ٩ |
| Medieval | ↓ | O | I | 2 | 3 | ୧ | ୨ | 6 | ୮ | 8 | 9 |
| Modern | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

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Today's numbers, also called **Hindu-Arabic** numbers, are a combination of just 10 symbols or digits: **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 0**. These digits were introduced in Europe within the XII century by **Leonardo Pisano** (aka Fibonacci), an Italian mathematician. L. Pisano was educated in North Africa, where he learned and later carried to Italy the now popular Hindu-Arabic numerals.

ABSTRACTION OF FORM

ICONOCLASM, MATH, OR BOTH?



- Patterns and repetition
- Geometric patterns
- Vegetal patterns



The Islamic Decorative Canon



Calligraphy



Geometric



Arabesque

What might be the relationship between repetitive geometric and vegetal patterns, mathematics (algebra, algorithms, and “0”), and God or infinity?

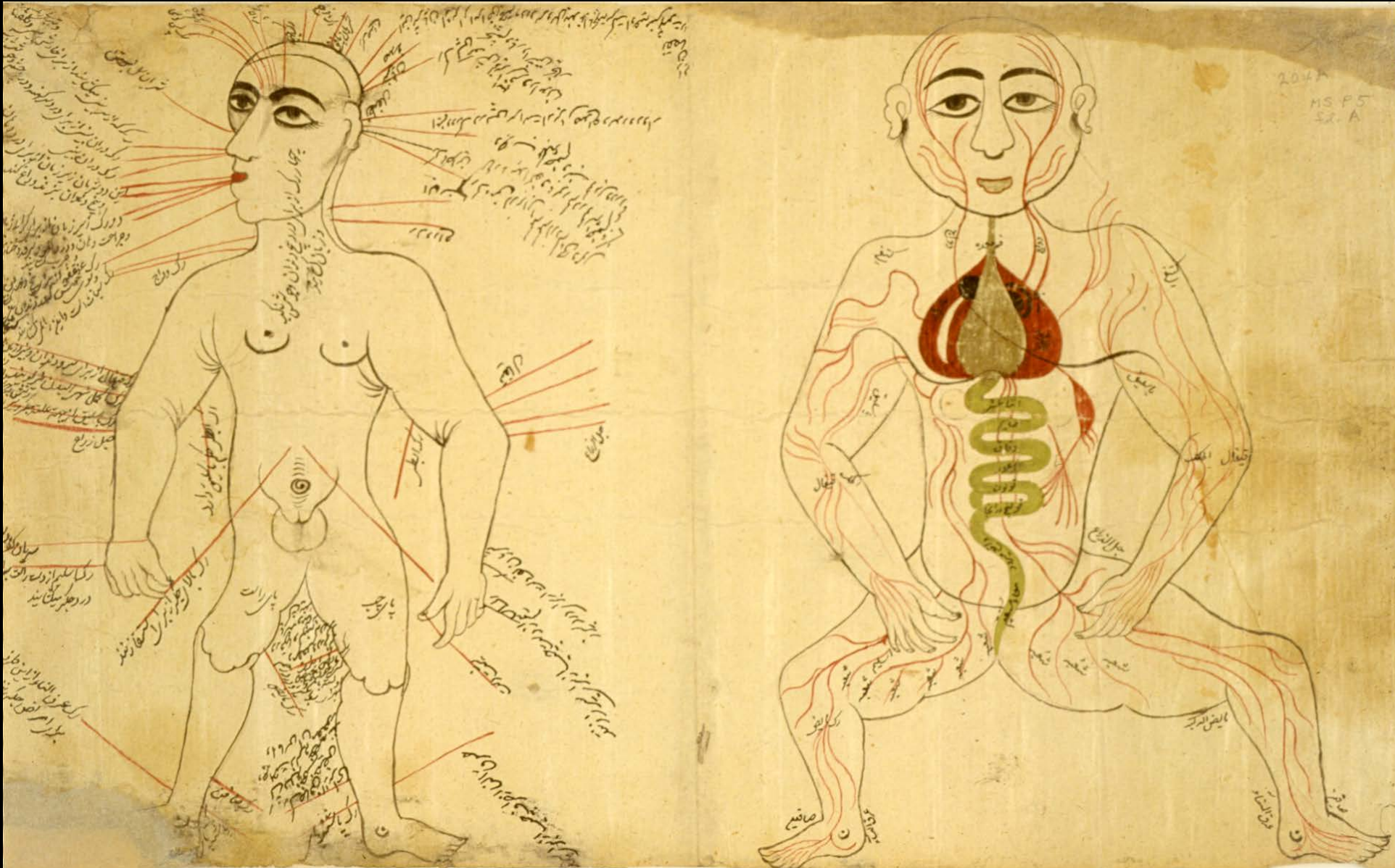


Figures and the Figurative in Islamic Art

Illustration showing Mohammed (on the right) preaching his final sermon to his earliest converts, on Mount Arafat near Mecca; taken from a medieval-era manuscript of the astronomical treatise *The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries* by the Persian scholar al-Biruni, 1000 CE – This is a later copy of the original.



This classic image of Mohammed riding Buraq on his "Night Voyage" to Paradise has been reproduced frequently in the West over the years; this version was taken from the cover of the book *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet* by Marie-Rose Seguy. This illustration is one of several similar Islamic illustrations from the Medieval period showing the same scene; the exact provenance of this one is (as of this writing) unknown.

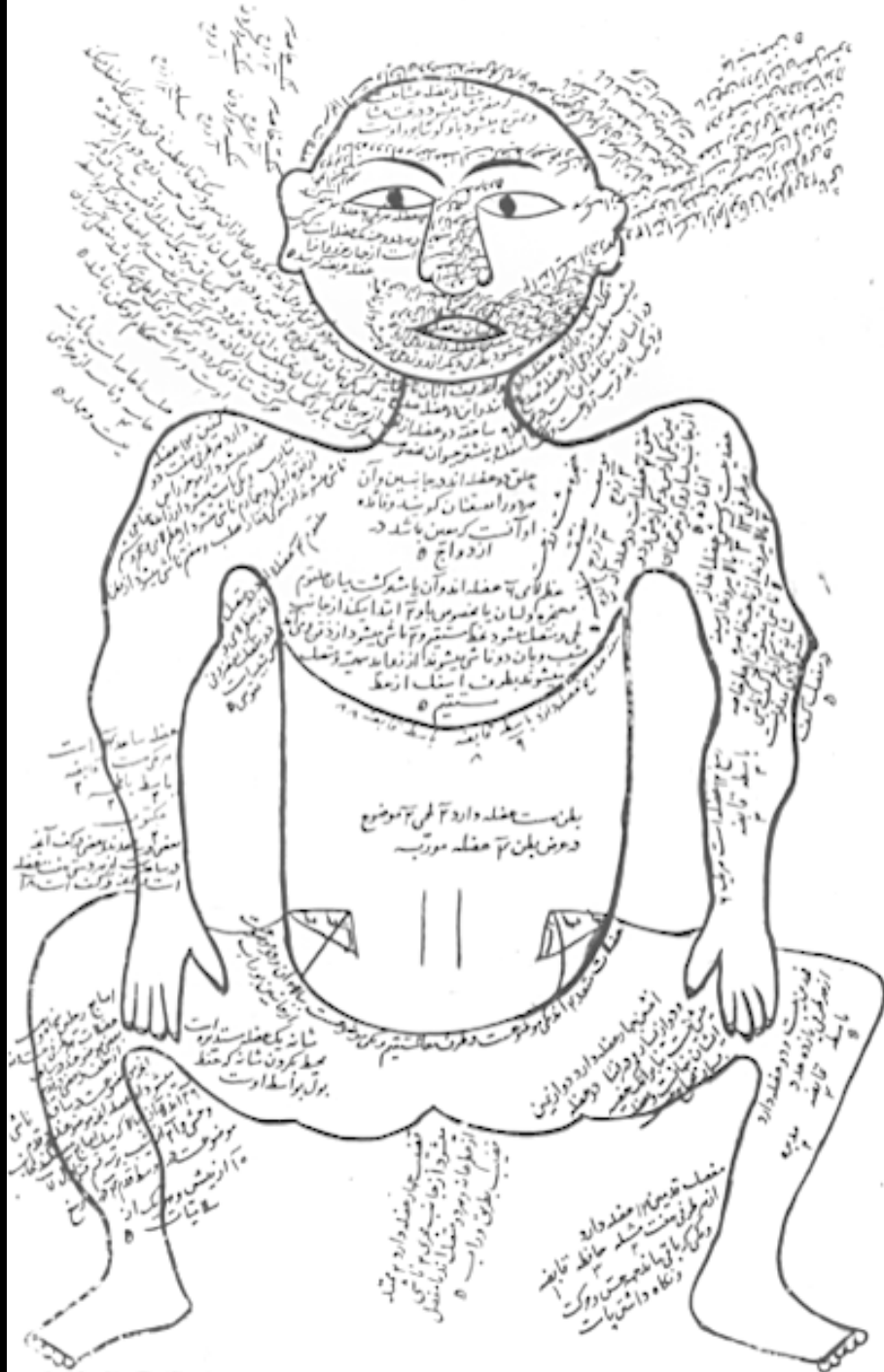


Left: A loose sheet with a bloodletting figure having points labeled that were thought best for phlebotomy. Such figures are derivative from late-medieval European bloodletting figures. Undated, probably 18th century.

Right: A loose sheet with a figure, drawn frontally, showing the venous system. The figure is closely related to those usually associated with the *Tashrīḥ-i Manṣūri* treatise on human anatomy by Ibn Ilyas, who worked in Shiraz in Iran at the end of the 14th century. Undated, probably 18th century.



Illustrations of surgical instruments from a 13th-century Arabic copy of al-Zahrawi's *On Surgery*



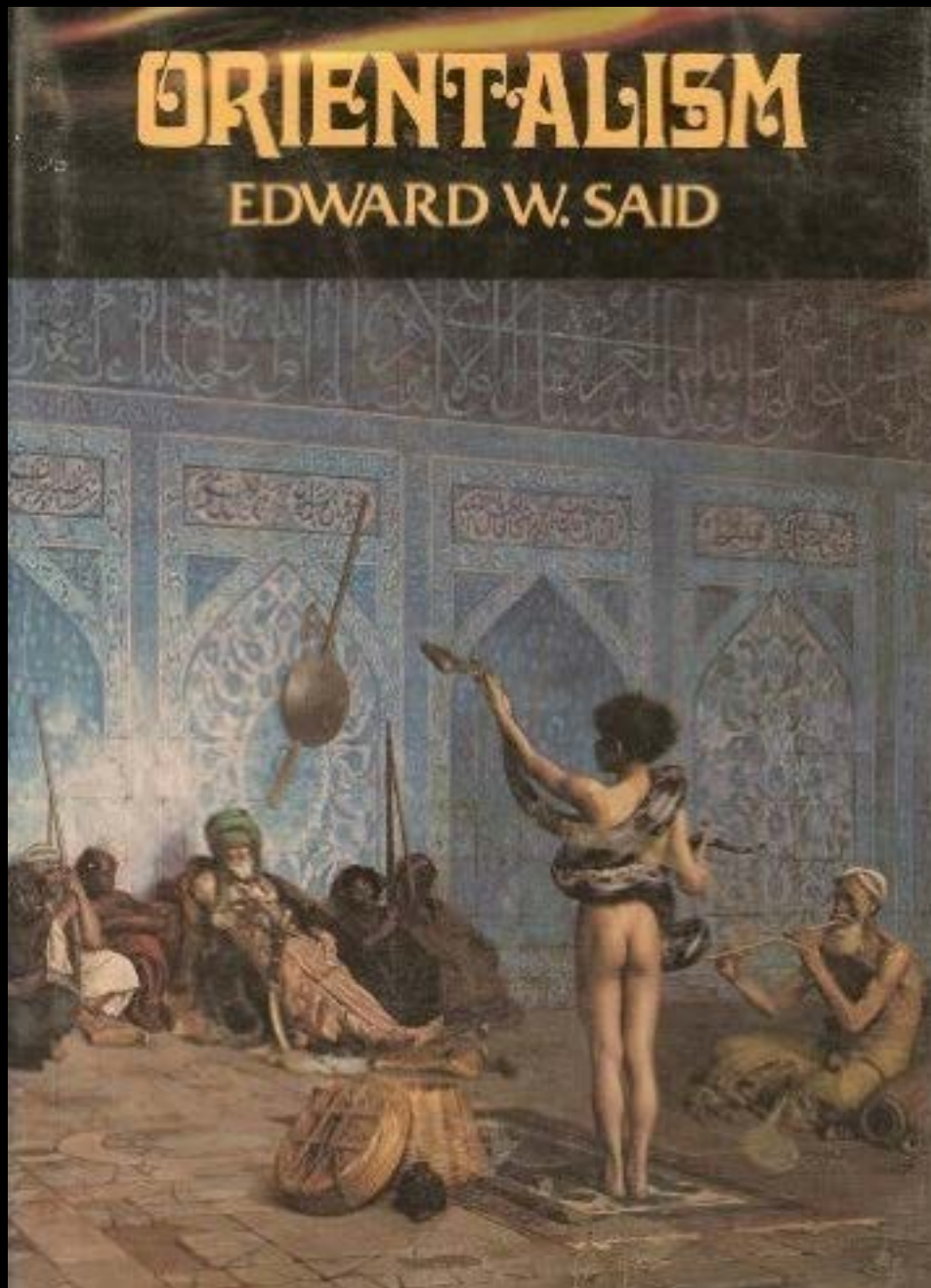
Right: Muscle figure, shown frontally, with extensive text denoting muscles. From *The Anatomy of the Human Body* (*Tashrih-i badan-i insan*) written in Persian at the end of the 14th century by Mansur ibn Ilyas. Copy completed 8 December 1488 (4 Muharram 894 H) by Hasan ibn Ahmad, a scribe working in Isfahan.

Orientalism

- Orientalist painting, representing "the Middle East" was a genre of Academic art in the 19th century.
- exoticism



Edwin Lord Weeks, Interior of the Mosque at Cordoba, 1880



Orientalism

- ***Orientalism*** is a 1978 book by Edward W. Said which studies the cultural representations that are the bases of Orientalism, which Said defined as the West's patronizing representations of "The East" — the societies and peoples who inhabit the places of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. According to Said, orientalism (the Western scholarship about the Eastern World) is inextricably tied to the imperialist societies who produced it, which makes much Orientalist work inherently political and servile to power



Jean-Léon
Gérôme, *The
Snake Charmer*,
c. 1879



David Roberts, The Interior of the Mosque, Cordoba, 1838

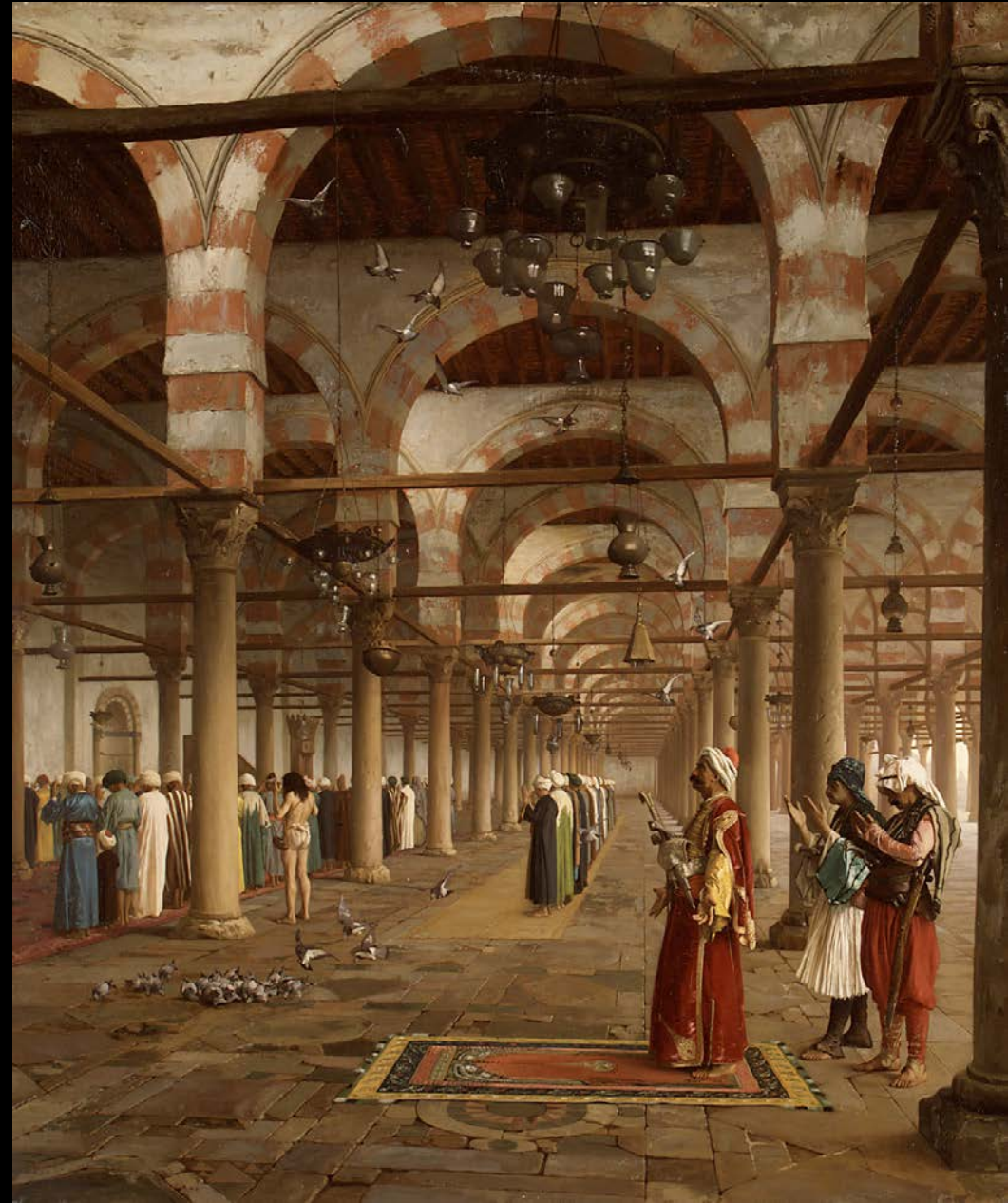


David Roberts, The Sanctuary of the Koran; Mosque at Cordoba, (Scotland, 1849)

Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Prayer in the Mosque*,
1871

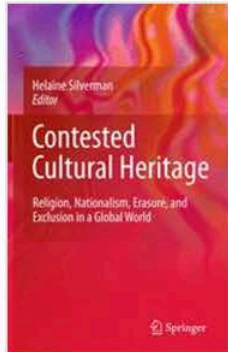
Gérôme painted this scene, which depicts the interior of the seventh-century mosque of 'Amr in Cairo, after his visit to Egypt in 1868.

The rows of worshipers, ranging from the dignitary and his attendants to the loincloth-clad Muslim holy man, face Mecca during one of the five daily prayers. It is unlikely, however, that Gérôme witnessed a service at this particular mosque, which had fallen into disuse by 1868. Rather, the image is probably a composite of sketches and photographs of various sites. Gérôme traveled widely in the Middle East; more than two-thirds of his paintings are devoted to Orientalist subjects.





Jean-Léon
Gérôme,
Interior of a
Mosque, 1870



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The Stratigraphy of Forgetting: The Great Mosque of Cordoba and Its Contested Legacy

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What is the meaning of “stratigraphy”?

What in summary is this essay about?

Abstract

As with any major monument that figures prominently in architectural history, the Great Mosque of Cordoba has a classic architectural “story” that explains it. This story attracts little attention in the USA, where the medieval past is of little interest because our national narrative does not depend on it. But in Europe, where a recent exhibition catalogue on Islamic art concluded with the question, “Que representa hoy al-Andalus para nosotros?” (“What does al-Andalus represent for us today?”) (Cheddadi 2000:270), medieval history plays a powerful role in modern heritage politics. Especially in Spain, the interpretation of the medieval Iberian past, with its intertwining threads of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish culture, is a deeply political act.

Let's review the architectural history of the
structure...

Beyond the Temple of Janus, how does the standing structure of the Mosque of Cordoba relate to the Roman and Byzantine empires?

The Mosque of Cordoba itself shows clear debts to Roman and Byzantine architectural traditions. It is a great basilica whose roof is supported by large marble columns with bases and carved capitals that reflect and reinterpret a classical vocabulary (Fig. [2.1](#)) [Note 2]. While some of these were wrought new for the sanctuary, many others were spolia taken from ruined Roman and Visigothic sites in Cordoba and its surrounding areas. The mosque's roof rises high due to its structure of tiered arches, each arch composed of alternating voussoirs of red brick and white stone, an elegant yet durable configuration for which there is a direct model in the Roman aqueduct built to serve Merida in the first century CE. It also echoes the tiered arcaded

What did the 13th-century Christians do to the structure when they took it over?

In 1236 Cordoba was conquered by Ferdinand III of Castile and the mosque was converted into a church to serve the Christian population. Despite the change in worship, there were few changes to the actual fabric of the building at that time. Although it is rarely written about—lacking the drama of co-option and destruction—this is perhaps the most interesting chapter in the building's history, revealing the degree to which people of different faiths in Cordoba (and elsewhere in al-Andalus) felt comfortable in each other's religious spaces. The Mosque of Cordoba had enormous symbolic status not only as a mosque representing the Muslim faith but also as the historic progenitor of all other mosques in al-Andalus. Yet, despite the clear presence of Arabic inscriptions indicating Quranic verses and the dazzling mihrab that pointed to the conceptual presence of Mecca as clearly as any arrow, the Christians did not hasten to demolish it. Instead, they used it as a church, adding chapels and burial spaces, and in the thirteenth century, a mudejar-style pantheon for Castilian royalty. Jerrilynn Dodds (1992:24) comments, "The Christians who conquered Córdoba understood that there was much more power to be gained from appropriating this extraordinary metaphor of their conquest than from destroying it." In this way, most of its Islamic form and decoration was preserved for the next

When in fact was the cathedral built?

Despite the possibility for such insight into interfaith relations, the architectural story loses its thread here because for the next 250 years cities such as Seville and Granada far outshone Cordoba. In the years following 1492, Spain officially purged itself of its Muslims and Jews, although in actuality there were many people who stayed behind, converts to Christianity but still steeped in Andalusian Islamic culture. But in the sixteenth century, the building suffered dramatic change. In 1523 the architects of Charles V—the first of the Hapsburg kings in Spain—scooped out the center of the venerable mosque and inserted a gothic cathedral choir so that the mosque became the frame for the new cathedral (Fig. [2.4](#)). Ironically, this act of destruction—which Charles himself purportedly perceived to be a terrible mistake—was probably the reason why this mosque still stands, while those of Toledo, Granada, Seville, and other cities were demolished and replaced entirely by huge churches (on the preservation and restoration of the Cordoba Mosque, see Edwards [2001](#)).

According to author D. Fairchild Ruggles, what does this architectural history bely – what religious power struggles?

In the modern West, where Islam is the new Soviet Union, and where al-Andalus figures prominently in the rhetoric and terrorist agenda of al-Qaeda, the mosque is a site of conflict between two world views. One sees the mosque as a historic monument, a relic of a firmly demarcated past that belongs to Spain, now safely converted to Christian use. This group continues to enjoy the celebration of daily mass in the church and welcomes the visits of thousands of daily tourists to Cordoba's major attraction. The other group sees the mosque as a symbol with powerful political currency. For them it represents a lost period of Islamic ascendancy, and Islam itself provides a tool to resist the Catholic Church and to recover a suppressed Muslim identity. In Spain, despite increasing secularism, the Church remains powerful: Spain is nominally 94% Catholic (CIA [2009](#)), and the government still pays the salaries of the church clergy (Simons [2004](#)). However, after the death of Franco in 1975, a small number of Spaniards chose to convert to Islam for motivations that varied from an embrace of the faith, to a desire to reclaim a lost heritage, to a rejection of Catholicism's associations with the repressive Franco regime. Therefore, depending on one's perspective, the Cathedral–Mosque is emblematic of medieval Iberian history (a closed chapter) or a site for prayer and resurgent Muslim identity. A point of clarification: I do not equate these attitudes toward Islam with either al-Qaeda extremism or ultra-conservative Spanish nationalism; nonetheless, those extremes do form part of the *discourse* within which the current claims to the monument are made.

For the author, what type of public religious Islamic 'performance' draws fear and antipathy from those with state power in Spain?

For Muslims, the struggle is not centered on the availability of places to pray, because, although Spain has an insufficient number of mosques to accommodate its growing Muslim population (Burdett [2008](#)), Cordoba has had its own prayer hall and Islamic center for more than a decade. Handsome modern mosques have been built elsewhere in Spain (e.g., Granada and Marbella), although their construction has sometimes sparked resistance and hate acts (as occurred in Seville). Likewise for non-Muslims, the precise cause for alarm is not the occasional diversity of individual religious practice, since in the past high ranking, visiting Muslim dignitaries *have* been allowed to pray in the Mosque of Cordoba. It is not individual worship that provokes worry, so much as the public performance of *difference* realized by large congregations bowing and prostrating in prayer. At stake is the political power of the growing Muslim community that wishes recognition that they have a legitimate claim to this very historic monument. The justification for their request is implicitly grounded on the Cathedral's *prior* identity as a mosque.

On a global stage, how and what does the act of Muslim prayer represent beyond religious piety?

The controversy over the Cathedral–Mosque occurs amidst these palpable changes. Indeed, I think the controversy there is not really about prayer at all, because in actual practice, anyone can utter a quiet prayer in the Cathedral, communing with whatever version of God their religion teaches them to worship. But Muslim prayer, which demands oriented standing, bowing, and prostration, announces its difference visibly and actively. It resists assimilation to any order other than Islam. Therefore, the struggle in the Cathedral–Mosque is a struggle to cope with the changing demographics of Spanish society, to cope with difference, and specifically, with Islam. That the contest is not really between Visigoths and medieval Muslims, but between modern nations and between modern worldviews, is revealed by a brief comparison with another medieval building in Spain.

How do questions of “authenticity” and “original use” come into play in the essay?

However, archaeologists and historians knew that the premise of priority or originality was flawed, because if the Christian cathedral's identity could be challenged by the prior presence of a mosque, then the mosque's identity could be challenged by the even earlier existence of the Church of San Vicente. To make this very point, in January 2005 a selection of the Visigothic and Roman materials found on the site were brought out of storage and placed on display. These include carved column capitals, figural sculpture, fragments of altars, a font with Visigothic geometrical ornament, and especially crosses (Fig. 2.5). The objects are supplemented by photographs showing the excavations of the 1930s and present a floor plan showing the traces of the Visigothic church's aisles and apses revealed through archaeology (Fig. 2.6). Finally, an area of the mosque floor that had been excavated also has been left open, revealing pebble mosaic (believed to pertain to an outbuilding of the Visigothic cathedral) at a depth of approximately 3 m. In short, the curators of the Cathedral–Mosque created the Museo de San Vicente *inside* the Cathedral–Mosque.



Fig. 2.5
Museo de San Vicente, display of Visigothic pieces. (Photo: D. Fairchild Ruggles)

What role does the claim to “Western civilization” play in this quest for origins and authenticity?

Of course the very concept of “Western” is a construction motivated by cultural and political investments. While Spain celebrates its 800 years of Islamic history as a unique feature that enriches its culture, it also sees itself as a Western country, which requires a rejection of Muslim identity. It claims the Western rubric not simply as a post-reconquest phenomenon but in the sense of *originally* Western, which demands the operation of peeling back the layers of Muslim and mosque to reveal that pure, “original” layer of Christian and church. The display of gleaming, white Visigothic fragments in the Cathedral–Mosque of Cordoba accomplishes this (although it conveniently forgets that the sect of early Christianity practiced by the Visigoths was later suppressed by the Catholic Church of Rome). The museum display of tangible archaeological artifacts is essential for this purpose because it offers a factual underpinning to something that is really a political assertion [Note 4].

I have presented the “convivencia” to you as a form of tolerance and cosmopolitanism unique to Muslim Spain from the 8th to the 11th centuries.
How does the author see the “convivencia”?

These treaties were the strategy of conquerors who sought to impose minority rule over a majority of a different faith, knowing that peaceful submission was far preferable to a state of continual war. From the perspective of the Christians and Jews, subordination was a small price to pay for the benefits of a well-ordered and reasonably just government, even if it was run by infidels (Dodds, Menocal and Balbale 2008:17). However, at the time, the emir ʿAbd al-Rahman I had no idea that he was crafting a policy of interfaith tolerance. His actions were simply those of an astute administrator, careful not to destabilize his minority government's rule by threatening its base, a Christian majority. It is only in the modern era that we look back and identify this as *convivencia*, imbuing it with the values of mutual respect and tolerance for difference, and the fact that we do so says much more about the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' conflicts and yearnings than about the contestations and ethnic polyvalence of the eighth century. The modern perspective on Spain's medieval history is an interpretation that emerges from our own political needs. *All* history is an interpretation—a reinterpretation—of the past. It is, after all, a tale told by a human narrator who cares about the storyline.

According to the author, why is medieval Spain important to global politics today?

So, from history we have the satisfying story of al-Andalus, land of interfaith *convivencia*, and from archaeology we have the insistence on material evidence to justify claims to heritage. Both are produced within a political frame. The political frame, however, is not only Spanish heritage and the nation's struggle to assert itself as either pluralistic and liberal or essentialist and Christian. I think the drama of history and the particularity of archaeology distract our attention from the most politically relevant realm of all, which is the powerful realm of *representation*. Spain is a relatively small player in modern Middle Eastern politics but because of its 800 years of Islamic-Christian negotiations, conquest, exile, and diaspora, it provides an important analogue for East–West relations. In this light, medieval Spain serves as a metaphor for the global politics of the modern world, and the Cathedral–Mosque functions as a metaphor for medieval Spain—and hence the intensity of the disputes over its origins and who can and cannot pray there.