MOSQUES

THE 100 MOST ICONIC ISLAMIC HOUSES OF WORSHIP

For Andrea and Brian

Endpapers: Herat, Friday mosque, 15th century Timurid stucco inscription, Quran, Sura 48, verses 9-10: "...and exalt God morning and afternoon. Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you (O Muhammad)—they are actually pledging allegiance to God."

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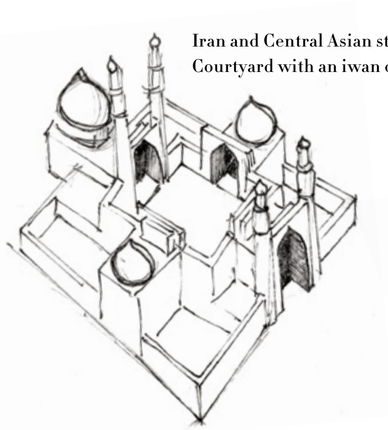
ASSOULINE

INTRODUCTION

Many great civilizations have reserved their most sublime creations for their places of worship, and Islam is no exception. Mosques are the ultimate expression of faith, on which patrons, architects, and artists have lavished their wealth and creative powers for nearly fourteen centuries. Muslims have spread to all corners of the globe, making the selection of just one hundred—from the hundreds of thousands of existing mosques—no small task. Places in which to pray are among the most versatile of Islamic structures, and this versatility demands to be represented, from modest neighborhood mosques to monumental congregational mosques and sprawling shrines. The extraordinarily rich historical legacy of these edifices needs to be covered, as well as the exciting new developments that are taking place in mosque architecture in the modern era, pointing the way toward the future.

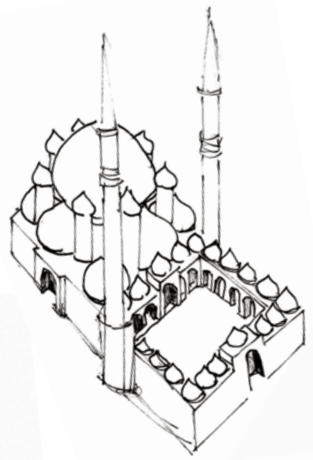
The geographical spread ranges over four continents, from the plains of Indiana to tropical Java. Apart from the necessity of including the foundational mosques in Arabia, quality has been my main guide. Of course, there is a subjective factor involved in all of this—and my estimation of a building's aesthetic qualities may not necessarily reflect that of others. While the acknowledged exemplars of the classical canon are all there, there is room for debate about those on the margins (n°s. 79, 82, 84-5, 89 and 99 were selected by the publishers). I hope our selection will encourage readers to explore further.

The morning sunlight illuminates the entrance to the mosque (1643) adjacent to one of Islam's greatest shrines, the mausoleum of Taj Mahal at Agra. *Following pages*: View of the citadel in Cairo showing the Mosque of Muhammad Ali (1848) in the center and that of al-Nasir Muhammad (1335) to the right.

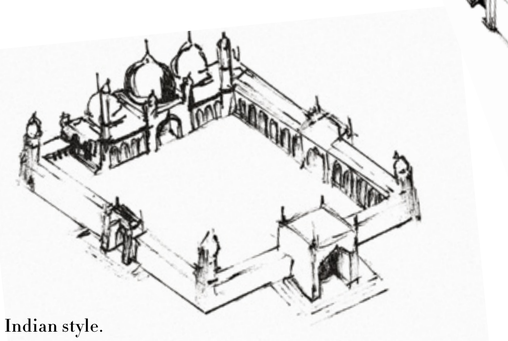


Iran and Central Asian style.
Courtyard with an iwan on each side.

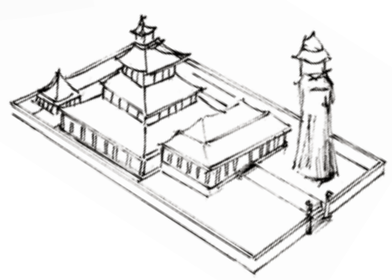
West African Style.
Hypostyle hall, rammed earth or mud.



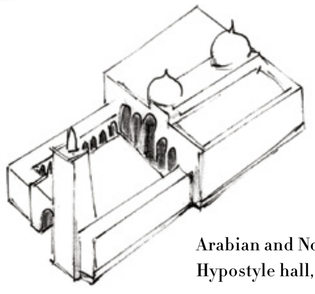
Ottoman style.
Spacious with central dome.



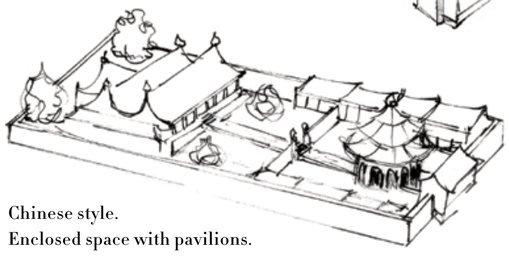
Indian style.
Spacious courtyard with three domes.



Southeast Asian style.
Pyramid roofs.



Arabian and North African style.
Hypostyle hall, flat roof, and domes.

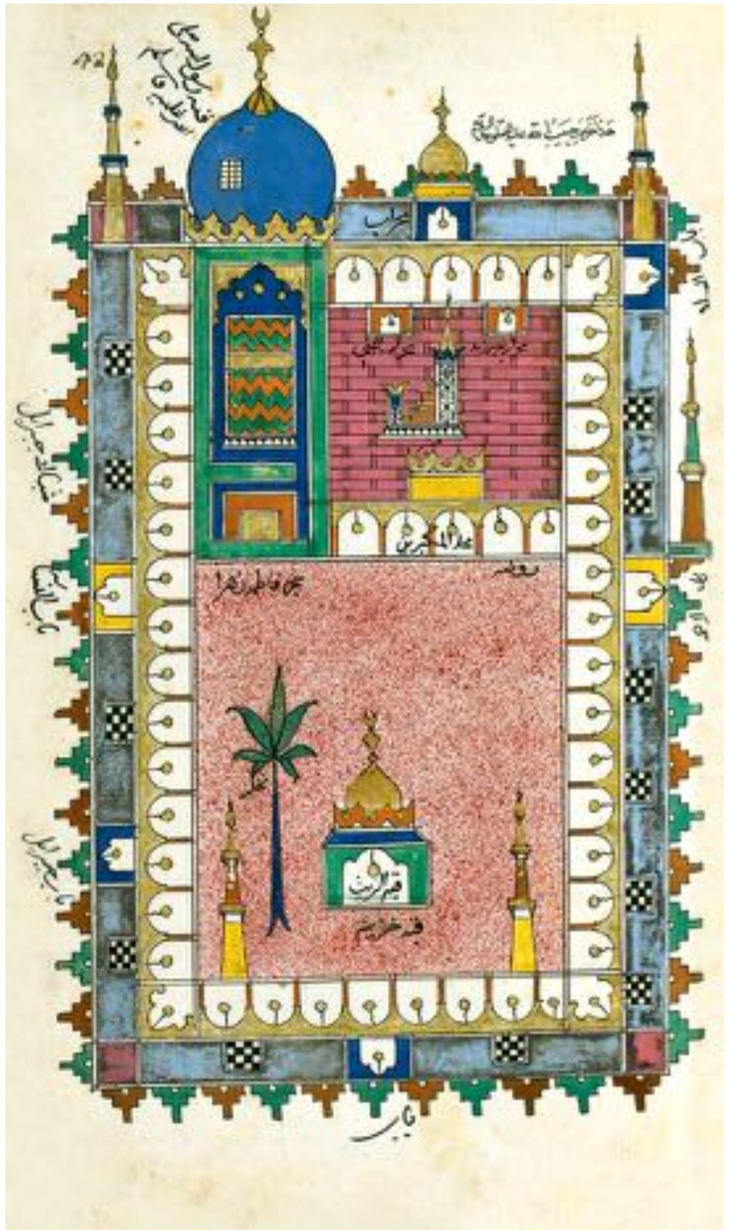


Chinese style.
Enclosed space with pavilions.

These five distinctive styles of mosques span across seven regions and contribute to the cultural diversity and unique beauty of mosque architecture.

What is a "mosque?" The architects of one recent example (Vali-e-Asr, Tehran, Iran, mosque nº. 100) argued that "our biggest source for this project was the Koran itself. We tried to design this mosque with modesty, simplicity, and good faith." This was a shrewd distillation of the holy text, which actually says nothing about what specific form mosques should take. Traditionally, the Prophet Muhammad is reputed to have said, "Whenever the time of prayer comes, pray there, for that is a mosque," thereby making any architectural definition impossible. The word mosque itself is derived from the Arabic masjid, meaning a place of prostration. The other main word used in Arabic is *jami'*, which refers to a Friday or congregational mosque, as that is the day of the week that worshipers are called for communal prayer.

Prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam; its centrality to the faith is reflected in the fact that the community is obliged to pray five times a day and, for males, communally at noon on Fridays. When the Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca with his followers to Medina in 622, his new dwelling was attached to what became the first mosque. This was a large courtyard building with a shaded area supported on columns on the qibla side (that is to say, the side facing the sacred shrine in Mecca). This was a multifunctional space used not only for prayer but also as a community center. In fact, throughout the Islamic world until recent times mosques have served a multiplicity of functions, offering, besides places for worship, a center where pupils could be educated, business transactions carried out, food consumed, and the poor provided with shelter.



A painting from an Ottoman pilgrimage guide showing al-Masjid al-Nabawi.
Opposite page: A Muslim man touching the Kaaba while praying at the Great Mosque of Mecca.

The prestige of this first mosque in Medina, al-Masjid al-Nabawi, helps explain why it became the prototype for so many that followed, and why a great number in the early days adopted the plan of a courtyard building with a roof supported by columns on the side facing Mecca. The extension of the Medina mosque in the early eighth century by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid also underlines an important aspect of the mihrab. The mihrab is the niche in the qibla wall that is usually the easiest way to recognize a mosque, or at least a space where prayer is encouraged. Al-Walid's extension was unequal, but instead of moving the mihrab to the middle of the qibla wall, it was retained where the Prophet had previously led prayers. Its subsequent appearance not only in congregational mosques, but also in all neighborhood mosques suggests that it served to commemorate the Prophet in his role as the first imam, the leader of the community in prayer. Al-Walid's refurbishments also contained two other elements that were often copied in later mosques: a shell-shaped dome over the mihrab bay, a special emphasis on decoration and a higher roof on the arcade leading up to the mihrab. The caliph also added towers at the corners of the buildings. The call to prayer was sounded by the cry of the human voice, originally made from the rooftop. The benefit of tall towers for this purpose—both to aid in the dispersion of the call and to advertize the presence of the mosque—soon led to the creation of minarets as standard features on larger mosques; although nowadays, thanks to loudspeakers, their presence has become more symbolic than functional.

A boy stands under the horseshoe arch of the Great Mosque of Algiers in the early 20th century.
The façade of the Great Mosque of Algiers, originally built in 1097, was remodeled in 1840 when the street was realigned.

From top: The dome of the Great Mosque of Cordoba displays a unique system of intersecting arches; detail of a door of the Great Mosque of Cordoba from the 10th-century exterior wall.
Previous pages: The Umayyad al-Hakim II extended the Great Mosque of Cordoba towards the qibla with these arcades in 966.

The Arab World

The rapid spread of Islam meant that many pre-existing buildings were called into use as mosques. In Syria many of these structures were churches, so it is hardly surprising that a basilican plan (a rectangular hall with a nave and aisles) also was used for mosques, but with one major difference: The axis of prayer, or the qibla, was shifted ninety degrees so that the broad side faced Mecca on the south of the building. Al-Walid's new Umayyad Mosque (n°. 5) incorporated this concept, and added a transept with a dome and sumptuous glass mosaic decoration, which made the mosque a model for centuries to come in Syria and adjacent areas.

The hypostyle plan continued to dominate in the Arab world as a whole, possibly because the most prestigious first mosque, that of the Prophet at Medina, was of this kind. However, refinements were continually added. The wider central nave continued to dominate. An aisle parallel with the qibla wall was added, resulting in the popular T-plan that was first seen in Abbasid Samarra and eighth-century Tunisia. Some Tunisian examples (Great Mosque of Qayrawan, n°. 9; Zaytuna Mosque, Tunis, n°. 7) in turn emphasized the crossing of the T by adding a dome over the antemihrab bay. This became a regular addition to later mosques, most notably in the Great Mosque of Cordoba (opposite), where the three adjacent domes in the enlargement by the Umayyad ruler al-Hakam were partitioned by polylobed arches in 961. These were ornamented with exquisitely carved stone decoration, and each dome was supported by intersecting arches (the central

unique) and had an arched doorway on the qibla wall that had been partially decorated in glass mosaic. The mosaic cubes, together with a mosaicist to train apprentices, were a gift from the Byzantine emperor, who was glad to make an ally of one of the enemies of his enemy, the Fatimids. Arguably, the gifts may have actually been solicited, because it is commonly believed the Syrian Umayyad ruler al-Walid had also asked the emperor for help in decorating the Umayyad Mosque (nº. 5) with mosaics.

In addition to the necessary congregational mosque for each city, numerous neighborhood mosques (masjids) were also built. One type stands out as being unusually popular, namely the nine bay, which was found in early Umayyad examples, appeared in later mosques from Spain to Afghanistan and beyond, and was even employed in the earliest congregational mosques in Malaysia and Indonesia. There was no particular link between all of these examples—it simply represented harmonious symmetry.

Although the most common building material in the western and eastern extremities of the Arab world was brick, in central Egypt and Syria limestone was more easily quarried. This encouraged both building on a larger scale, and the substitution of carved stone as decoration instead of tilework. This does not mean that their buildings were any less colorful, since the main decorative elements of inscriptions and carved friezes would have originally been brightly painted. Sadly, however, these proved less weather-resistant than other forms of decoration and are now rarely visible.

Iran

Although most early mosques in Iran were also hypostyle, the domed mosque was also significant from the beginnings of Islamic architecture. This is most likely because the dome played a prominent part in pre-Islamic architecture there, and as a result many pre-Islamic fire temples were easily transformed into mosques. This led to the emergence of single dome chamber neighborhood mosques in the Seljuk period (1040–1194). It was not until the changes made to the Isfahan Jami' in the eleventh century that the dome really became important (nº. 16). Until then, this feature was the size of a single bay in a hypostyle or basilical plan, but here, the dome took up the space of sixteen bays. This was the largest masonry dome in the Islamic world at the time, showing how radical this change was. It also probably represented a more monumental version of the maqsura, a wooden enclosure near the mihrab that had served to protect rulers in early Islam (and finds its parallel in the three domes in the Great Mosque of Cordoba). The fame of the Isfahan dome lead to it being emulated not only in Iran, but later in Anatolia, Egypt, and Syria, where it became a favorite and usually took up the space of exactly nine bays in the hypostyle plan of Mamluk congregational mosques.

It is not known exactly when in the Seljuk period that the ayvans (halls closed on three sides and open on the fourth) of the Isfahan Jami' were introduced, although it is possible they were added after a fire took place in 1121. Of greater significance is the question, why they were needed? Four-

Top: The minarets in the background are a composite of Cairo's many Mamluk minarets.
Bottom: Despite differences in the decoration, this scene is based on the architecture of the Rüstem Pasha Mosque (nº. 62).
Following pages: A local man praying inside Khiva Great Mosque (nº. 23).

ayvan courtyards had been featured earlier in Parthian and Ghaznavid palaces, but there they primarily served as flexible spaces for assembly, with the climate determining which one would be used on any particular occasion. Since mosques are primarily designed as places for prayer, it makes sense that they should be as open and unencumbered as possible, so the faithful can easily line up for prayer and be able to see the imam. The ayvans nullify both these objectives, so there must have been a very good reason for making them a part of the mosque. One possibility is that they would have served to provide a more defined space for an activity that was already taking place regularly within the building, namely teaching. Another reason might have been purely aesthetic—the ayvans break up the repetitive nature of the hypostyle courtyard façade by introducing a much larger accent of solids and voids that created a different rhythm, one that stressed the cross axes of the ayvans facing each other. In any case the four-ayvan courtyard mosque quickly became the norm in Iran and also spread rapidly from there west to Turkey and Arab lands as far away as Egypt.

Given the scarcity of stone in Iran, brick was initially the medium of decoration, as well as the means of construction. The brick core often provided a base on which more carefully finished bricks were laid in an astonishing variety. But Iran is even more famous for the variety of tile-work employed. Initially monochrome glazed tiles simply provided colorful accents, but the skills of the potters soon spilled over into the more complicated techniques of luster tiles, underglaze-painted blue and white

tiles, and overglaze-painted. The latter came in two main varieties: lajvardina, where, in fourteenth century examples, cobalt provided a dark-blue base on which red, white, and gilding were overpainted in a second firing; and *cuerda seca* (colorless line), popular from the late fourteenth century onwards, where white was the base and a great variety of colors, including light and dark blue, lime green, yellow, and red, were added, separated by a black line (used at the top of the drum on nº. 46, and on the mihrab in nº. 53). The finest tilework technique was possibly tile mosaic (nº. 43), where monochrome squares were fired at the optimum temperature to bring out the depth and luminosity of the individual glaze colors, which were then cut and placed together like a jigsaw puzzle.

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Turkey

In 1071 at Manzikert in eastern Turkey, the Seljuk Turks inflicted a major defeat on the Byzantine army, thereby opening up Anatolia for the incursion of many Turkish tribes. But in the second half of the twelfth century Anatolia slipped from the control of the Great Seljuks of Iran, and architecture in Anatolia took a very different turn from that of Iran. For a start, the building materials were different and included a wealth of locally available stone and wood (the climate has much more rain here than in Iran). Many Iranian craftsmen seem to have sought refuge from the Mongol invasions in Anatolia, bringing with them expertise in tilework that is exemplified not

The interior of Haghia Sophia, built as a Greek Orthodox basilica and converted into an imperial mosque in 1453.

only in the Alaeddin and Eşrefoğlu mosques (nº. 33 and nº. 36, respectively), but also in contemporary thirteenth century madrasas in Konya such as the Karatay and Sirçali. Medieval Anatolia was an interesting mix of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic strains, and thanks to the area's free access to stone sculptures from earlier Greek sites, mosques were decorated with more figural imagery than anywhere else.

The legacy of the Ottomans, who at the height of their power in the reign of Sultan Suleiman (1520–66) ruled over an empire stretching from Hungary to the Caucasus in the East, and from Iraq to Algeria to the South, can still

“Everything that is made beautiful and fair and lovely is made for the eye of one who sees.”

Rumi

View of the Shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad,
with the Mosque of Gawhar Shad in the background.

be felt. Two tendencies characterize major Ottoman mosques. One was to set them within a complex or a multifunctional set of buildings. Although complexes were found earlier in Seljuk, Anatolia, and Ilkhanid Iran, the Ottomans varied and increased the components of complexes, marshalling them within urban settings with greater unity or symmetry than ever before. This can also be seen as part of a trend that continues to this day, where the multi-functionality of mosques has declined. The second tendency was an ever more frequent and expanding use of the dome as the main unit of construction. From the Üç Şerefeli (1437–47) at Edirne onwards (nº. 50) the prayer hall of major mosques is dominated by a dome of greatly increased size, preceded by an arcaded courtyard.

Under the great architect Sinan, the apogee was reached in such masterpieces as the Şehzade (nº. 60), Sülemaniye (nº. 61) and Selimiye (nº. 63) mosque complexes. Sinan had traveled with the army in campaigns from Hungary to Iraq, acquainting himself with a wide range of building styles, when he was appointed chief architect, from 1522 to 1538. His mosques are characterized by thickening the supporting walls with buttresses at regular intervals, thus enabling the opening of the intervening spaces with many more windows than were previously found. He also treated the roofline in new ways, enlarging the turrets that supported the main domes, thereby obtaining a pyramidal effect by aligning the four lower corner domes with the diagonal axis created by the central dome and the turrets. Sinan's period of activity also coincided with the rise of Iznik tiles, the

finest underglaze-painted examples in the Islamic world, which show a new mastery in combing light and dark blue, tomato red, and green under a translucent glaze without the colors running together.

India

Arab traders had earlier built along the coast of the country, but the first major Islamic monument in Delhi was the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque (nº. 25). Its most striking feature was not the materials from Hindu temples that were used extensively for its original construction, but the virtuosity of the stone carving of the inscriptions and the vegetal bands in the arched screen added slightly later. Such intricate handling of stone is a hallmark of Islamic architecture in India, and makes it clear that local craftsmen were responsible.

The subsequent development of architecture was a fascinating amalgamation of Persian, Central Asian, and indigenous themes and forms. The hypostyle form was initially favored as a way to reuse columns taken from Hindu temples. The dome was one of these imported elements, and appeared almost invariably in mausoleums and frequently in the prayer hall of the major mosques. It was used earlier in corbelled form, like those of Hindu and Jain shrines, and later in true arched form. The Mughals, descended from Timur (Bibi Khanum, nº. 46) brought an increased emphasis on Persian forms during the sixteenth century, but these were permeated, as their superb illustrated manuscripts indicate, with unique local tastes.

Unlike their forebears in Iran, the Mughals favored stone for their most prestigious buildings, marble being the most desired and sandstone the next favorite. Louis Kahn's parliament complex in Dhaka in red brick and white concrete is sometimes cited as a reflection of the colors of marble and sandstone favored by the Mughals, although in fact it was only a lack of funds that necessitated the use of brick for the lesser buildings there.

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China and Southeast Asia

Islam reached China through two quite separate ways. The first contact was made along the coast, spread by Arab merchants. The earliest mosque in China may be the Huai-Sheng Si Mosque in memory of the Holy Prophet in Guangzhou, where a substantial Muslim community flourished as early as the eighth century. Its freestanding minaret, which dates to the 10th century, is not pagoda-shaped like later examples, but in the form of a round brick tower almost 120 feet tall.

The advent of Mongol rule brought further significant developments. Kublai Khan's conquests of China (r. 1260–94) were made with armies consisting of great numbers of Muslims who had been recruited from earlier Iranian and Central Asian campaigns. Kublai Khan founded the Yuan dynasty in China, and appointed several Muslims to major positions in the government. It is from the period shortly after this time that we have the first significant mosques that still exist today, such as the mosques of

A man standing before the beautifully tiled wall and carved portal of the Bu 'Inaniyya Madrasa.

Xi'an (nº. 47) and Beijing (nº. 57). These are almost unique in the Islamic world in their reliance on a local style of architecture that bore absolutely no relation to any other style from the Islamic world.

"Almost" unique, because the earliest mosques of Malaysia and Indonesia show a similar disregard for earlier Islamic precedents. There, the lead taken by rulers in conversion to Islam is symbolized by the frequent juxtaposition of mosques with palaces. The similarity of both can be explained by their common derivation from vernacular architecture. Like Chinese architecture, indigenous buildings were made of locally abundant wood with elaborate roofs supported by post and lintel construction. These allowed for walls that were not load-bearing. Thereafter the similarities often end. The halls of Southeast Asian structures were usually square rather than rectangular, and had vertical tiers of pyramidal roofs (Great Mosque of Banten nº. 59) rather than just one for each hall, which indicated the symbolic importance of the space below. One Chinese borrowing is the use of large ceremonial drums for the call to prayer. These could be beaten at ground level, as at Demak, the earliest extant mosque in the archipelago, or sounded at a gate pavilion or tower, as at the Menara Mosque at nearby Kudus. The latter's early sixteenth century minaret, which was built in the form of a brick tower (inlaid with Chinese ceramics), is also the oldest in Java. The interiors of early mosques were usually devoid of ornament, but what little there was consisted of carved wood and reflected earlier Buddhist and Hindu styles.

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The astonishing stucco decoration, identical to that produced in contemporary Abbasid Samarra, is a remarkable feature of the Nuh Gunbad Mosque (9th century) at Balkh, Afghanistan.

Mosque furniture

Most of the discussion until now has centered around the formal development of mosques. But we should also note some of the objects that were used to furnish and enhance them. Essential for congregational mosques was the minbar, a pulpit with stairs leading to a platform often covered by a canopy, from which the sermon was given at Friday prayers. Like the earliest surviving example (dated 862), in the Great Mosque of Qayrawan (nº. 9), many are masterpieces of wood, whether in carving or marquetry; carved stone examples, particularly in Ottoman mosques, are also found. Carved wooden stands for the sacred Koran were also plentiful, ranging from smaller folding units to benchlike podiums with inlay work to hold the monumental Korans made by the Mamluks.

In large hypostyle prayer halls, the light diminished rapidly as one advanced from the courtyard. An extreme example of this can be seen at the Great mosque of Cordoba, where medieval authors were struck by the abundance of artificial lights within the building: an estimated 200 polycandela (hanging chandeliers lit by oil-filled glass lamps), of which the largest held up to 1,000 lamps, and the smallest twelve. During the fasting month of Ramadan, the mosque was kept illuminated all throughout the night and the expenditure on oil alone accounted for half of the annual expenses. The building's highly decorated mihrab is a windowless room, so it must also have been artificially illuminated. The most spectacular lamps were the Mamluk vase-shaped glasses, which

were decorated with brightly colored enamels. Some were over 16 inches in height, and together form a corpus unparalleled not just in Islamic art, but in the world of glassware.

Carpets have long been valued as among the outstanding works of art from the Muslim world, and some of the finest, such as the famed Ardabil carpet (dated 1540), were made for shrines or mosques. The practice of laying new carpets on top of older ones in Turkish mosques led to the preservation of many of the earlier examples, and they are now among the most splendid works of textile art displayed in the museums of Istanbul. The vivid colors of pre-modern carpets are a reminder of how different mosque interiors

The Persian inscription on the carpet above gives the date equivalent to 1540 and informs us it was made for a holy place. This may well have been at the shrine of the Safavid dynasty in Ardabil, northwest Iran, although it is not certain.

would have looked originally. When we also realize that much of the original color has faded from painted wooden roofs and friezes, as well as from the painted stucco and stone decorative bands and inscriptions, we can begin to imagine the blaze of colors that would have greeted visitors to most earlier mosques.

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19th Century to the Present

With the international spread of printed books during the nineteenth century, architects were no longer restricted to basing their designs on what they had seen personally, but could look for inspiration in plans, drawings, and photographs that had been published worldwide. This practice had, of course, started earlier, but with the reduction in price, the incorporation of the new technique of photography, and the greater distribution of printed materials, books now had a much more widespread influence.

Mosque styles remained, nevertheless, conservative well into the twentieth century. One of the earliest developments was the revivalist movement. This had different meanings for different cultures, but at the neo-Mamluk al-Rifa'i Mosque at Cairo (1869–1912; nº. 76) it signified the local Khedives turning away from their Ottoman overlords to promote a nationalist identity for themselves. In the Mughal-inspired Jamek Mosque at Kuala Lumpur (1908), the style reflected the British colonial power's

The Sultan Qabus Grand Mosque (1995-2002) at Muscat, like the Kuwait Grand mosque, was designed by Mohamed Makiya. It also features a centralized dome at its apex.

main dominions in the area. In the Timurid-influenced Great Mosque of Saint Petersburg (nº. 79) we see an Uzbek leader's sensibility set within an urban European context. And the Moorish style of the Grand Mosque of Paris (1926; nº. 84) clearly reflects France's involvement with its colonial subjects at the time.

After Turkey became a secularist republic in 1923, there was a temporary halt in the building of state mosques, but by the 1980s, religion had once again become part of the public sphere. The Kocatepe Mosque at Ankara (1989) was a larger scale reinterpretation in concrete of Sinan's Şehzade Mosque (nº. 60), and has become the emblem for a new kind of cultural imperialism: Turkey had not only exported something similar to Egypt in the early nineteenth century (with the Muhammad 'Ali Mosque, 1831–57) but it was seen again more recently in 2008 in neighboring Grozny in Chechnya as well. Its style reappears farther afield in the Turkish-speaking former republics of the USSR such as Ashgabat in Turkmenistan (Ertuğrul Gazi Mosque, 1998) where it serves to reinforce linguistic and economic links. It was similarly adopted as far away as Zahedan in southeastern Iran (Makki Mosque, now nearing completion), reflecting its status as the largest mosque for Sunnis in Iran. Its ubiquity as a type is even represented in the United Arab Emirates at Sharjah (al-Noor Mosque, 2007), where its selection seems to have been simply on aesthetic rather than ideological grounds.

In some countries, tastes were so conservative that medieval mosque styles were replicated with little change until the present. This reached its apotheosis with the monumental King Hassan II Mosque at Casablanca (nº. 82), which, at the time of its erection, was the second largest mosque in Islam after Mecca Grand Mosque. It was one of the state mosques that

The Adina mosque (1374) in Bengal, India. Both its monumental stone iwan and brick arcades show an outstanding variety of carved ornamentation. *Following pages:* Mixing styles from all over the Islamic world,the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi is an example of eclecticism in mosque design.

resurfaced after the independence of many countries during the second half of the twentieth century, but a number of these structures—particularly those in Arabia—had little in the way of monumental traditional precedents. Some of them, such as the King Abdullah Mosque in Amman or the Great Mosque of Kuwait (nº. 85), incorporate distinctly modernist tastes. Others, like the Great Mosque in Riyadh (nº. 81) modeled themselves on vernacular architecture. Still others favored an eclectic approach, which could range from conservative (as typified by Bahrain's Al Fateh Grand Mosque, 1987, nº. 89) to approaches that would fit a characterization described as Arabian Nights fantasy (Sheikh Zayed Mosque, Abu Dhabi, 2008; as seen on pages 40–41).

A purely modernist approach appeared as early as 1980 in the White Mosque at Visoko in Bosnia, and its significance was rewarded with the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. But the danger of the desire for modernity at all costs is aptly characterized by Gulzar Haidar, the Muslim architect of the Plainfield Islamic Center (nº. 90), as resulting in the appearance of "flying saucer domes and rocket minarets." The ideal could be best described as a balance between modernity, quality, and relevance to cultural heritage.

One cannot ignore a new practice in mosque design over the past fifty years: the provision of a separate space for women. Previously women were not obliged to participate in congregational prayer, or, if they did, it was

usually at the rear of the prayer hall. But in many of the modern mosques, balconies in the main prayer hall, or even separate (always smaller) prayer halls, have been preserved for women. In the larger mosques, the addition of the balconies usually does not detract from the overall feeling of spaciousness, but in smaller buildings (such as the Juma'a Mosque, Doha, nº. 92, and the Penzberg Mosque, nº. 94) the resulting low ceiling can be somewhat claustrophobic.

Because of all the above, one can argue that there has never been a more difficult or a more exciting time in which to be a mosque architect. The spread of internationalism and the availability of extensive visual resources have made it possible to access information on past and present mosques from anywhere in the world. But bringing together all these disparate elements and creating an attractive structure that combines both a modern aesthetic and unassailable historical integrity is a delicate balance. The examples included in this volume are a continuing testament to the qualities of renewal and inspiration that have characterized mosques over the centuries.

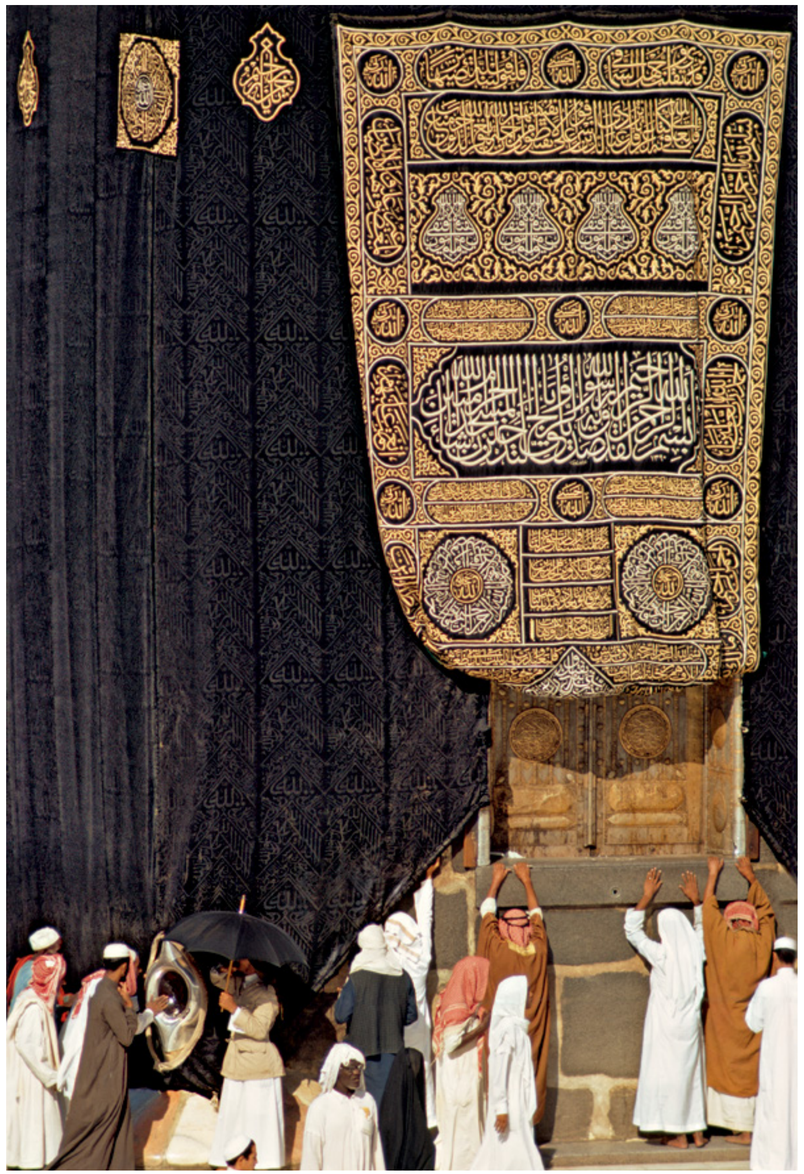
1. Al-Masjid al-Nabawi

Medina, Saudi Arabia, Arabia | 7th Century

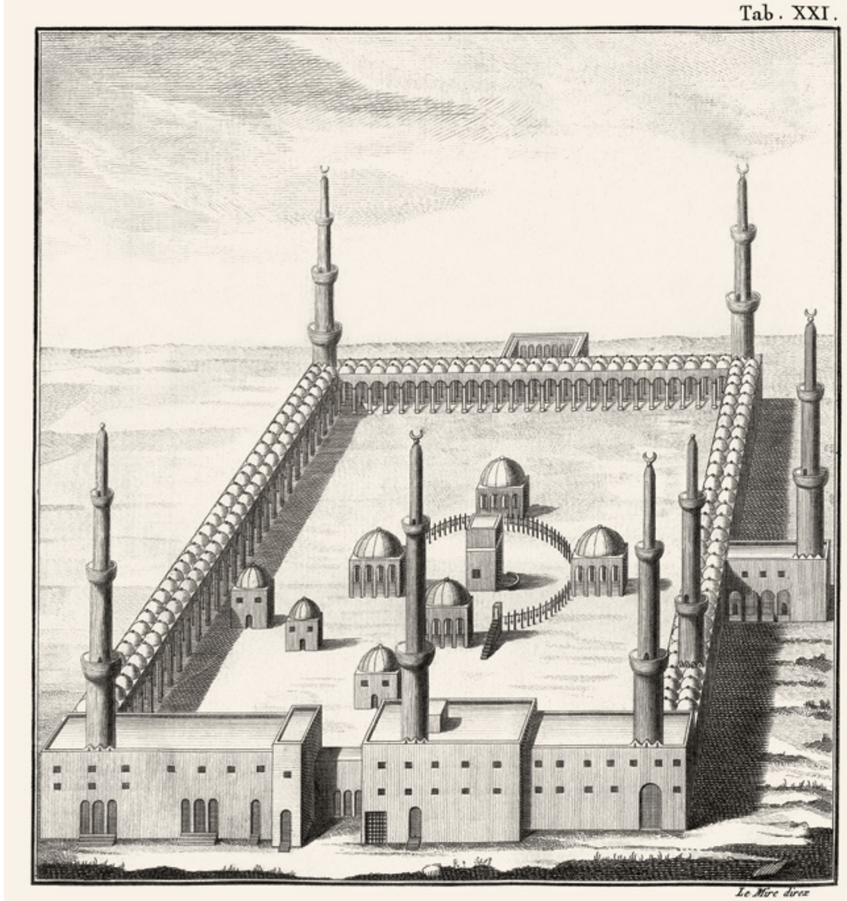
Originally believed to be the Prophet's house, scholars have only recently recognized that this was designed to be a mosque from its inception in 622. After Mecca, it is considered the second holiest mosque in the world. This explains its prestige and the fact that the hypostyle plan became the model for so many early mosques. Renovations by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid (r. 705–715) introduced a niche where the Prophet had previously led prayers, establishing the mihrab as a commemorative device that subsequently was incorporated into all mosques. Increased modern pilgrimage to this enormously important place of worship (also encouraged by the presence within it of the tomb of the Prophet, above which is now the green dome) has led to its enlargement beyond all recognition.

2. Great Mosque of Mecca

Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Arabia | 7th Century



The House of God, the mosque where the worth of prayers is multiplied, has been the focus of the Muslim community since the Prophet's conquest of Mecca in 630. All able-bodied Muslims are obliged, financial circumstance permitting, to perform the Hajj pilgrimage there once in their lifetime. At its center is the Ka'ba, the cube that is the direction of prayer for Muslims worldwide, and around which circumambulation is performed on pilgrimages. While the Ka'ba has changed little since the time of the Prophet (despite having been burnt and rebuilt after the Umayyad civil war), little else has remained unaltered since the necessity to accommodate millions of pilgrims annually has resulted in a series of expansions (still ongoing) that make it the largest mosque in the world. Responsibility for the magnificent textile covering of the Kaaba (the kiswa), renewed every year, was long the pride of Egypt, but in modern times has been provided by Saudi Arabia.



La grande Mosquée à la Mekke

2. Great Mosque of Mecca

Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Arabia | 7th Century

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3. Great Mosque of Sana'a

Sana'a, Yemen, Arabia | 8th Century

The basic form of this mosque is composed of a courtyard surrounded by arcades—most likely introduced at the time of the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid (r. 705–715). The building has been significantly modified since then, notably in the 11th century when Queen Arwa rebuilt the eastern arcades and renovated the ceilings of the western and northern arcades. The Ottomans added the domed Bay al-Mal in the courtyard in the early 16th century, possibly replacing the rare survival of an Umayyad dome. During the course of repair work in 1972, a cache of parchment pages from Koran manuscripts was discovered above the ceiling of the mosque. Many of these are among the earliest surviving in the Islamic world, including some with unique frontispieces with paintings of mosques. The UNESCO heritage city can be seen behind the mosque's minarets in the foreground.

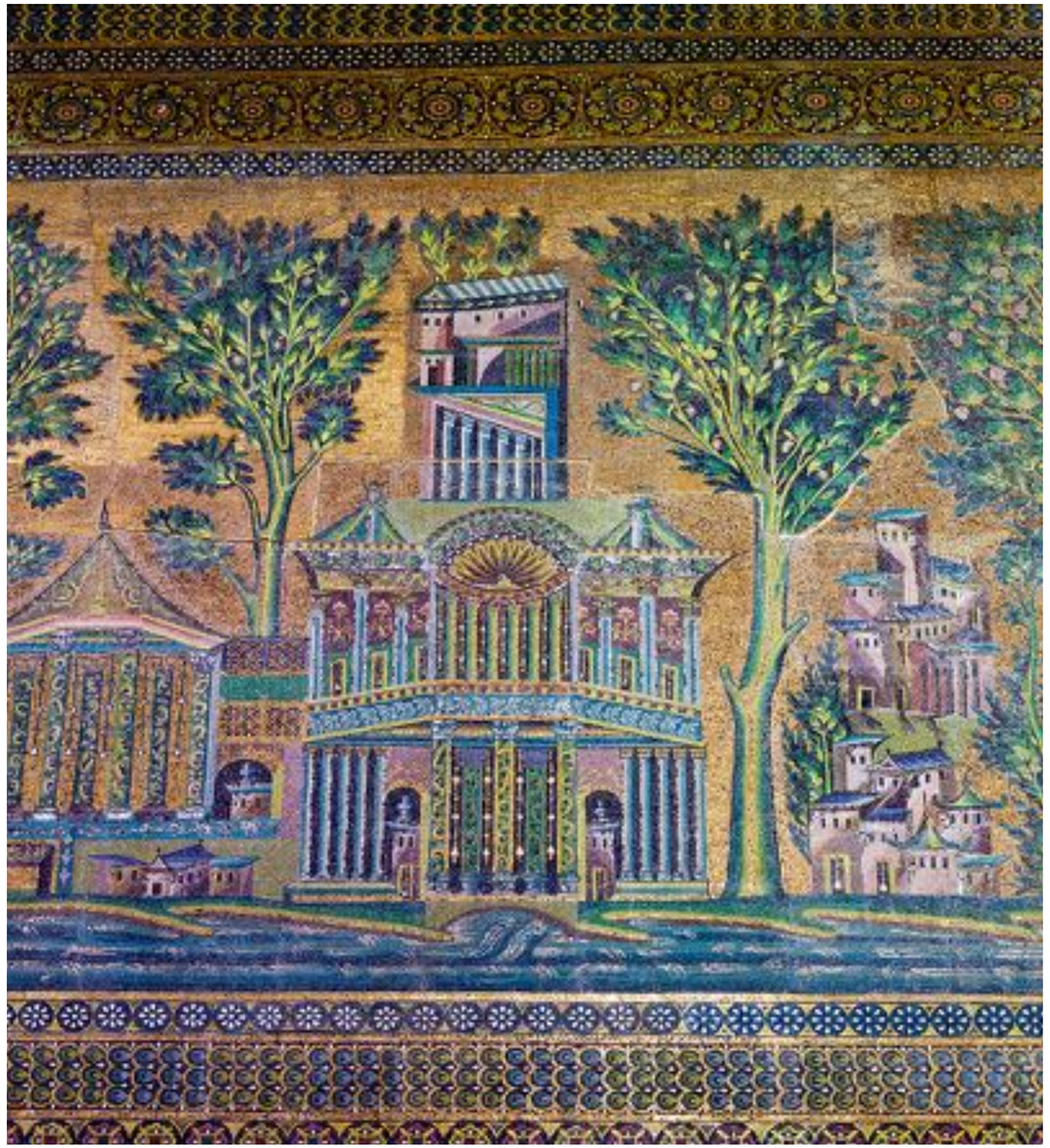
4. Al-Aqsa Mosque

Jerusalem, Israel, West Asia | 7th–8th Century

The complicated building history of this mosque, situated on one of the most sacred sites of Islam, remains yet to be determined. Most scholars agree that the Umayyad caliphs 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) and al-Walid (r. 705–715) completed most of the work at the turn of the 7th-8th century. Its earlier form was, quite surprisingly, more extensive than today's building, featuring fifteen arcades of eleven columns each plus a wide central nave, but Fatimid and Crusader interventions resulted in the current, reduced appearance. Visible at the top right is the contemporary Dome of the Rock, a shrine that adds to the sanctity of the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) on which both buildings are situated.

5. The Umayyad Mosque

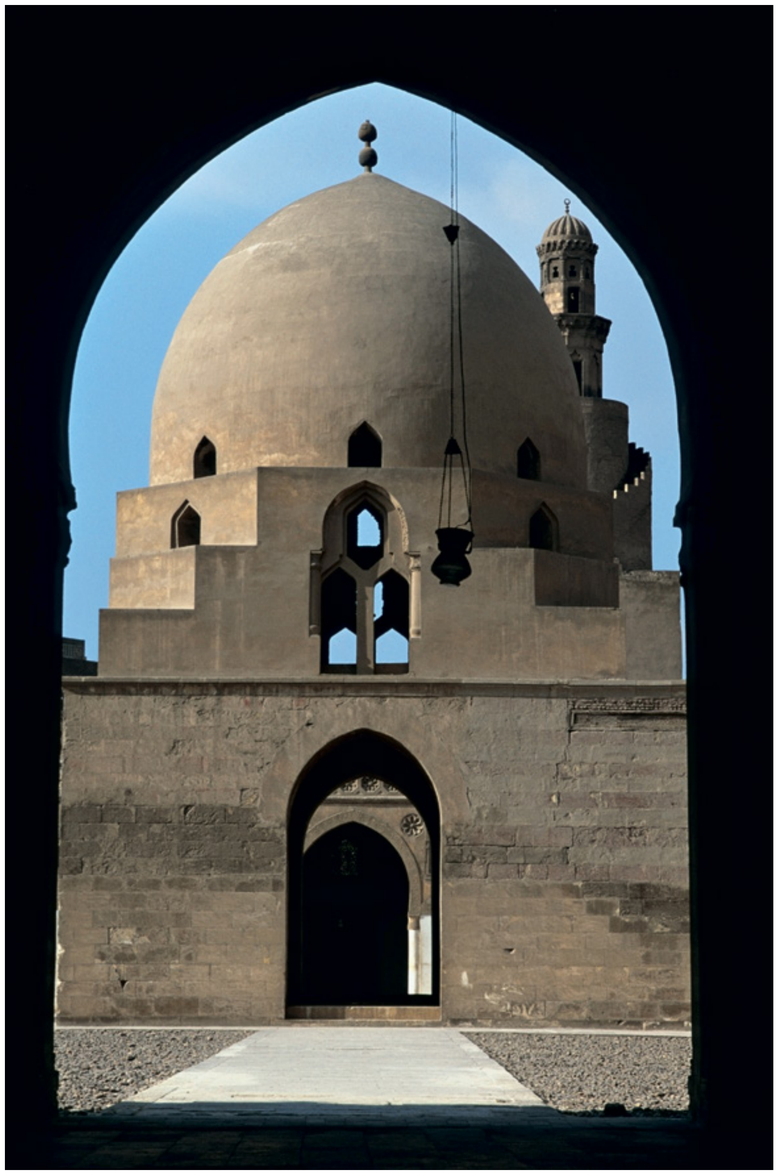
Damascus, Syria, West Asia | 8th Century



This is a rare example of an Umayyad building that survives in a state comparable to its original construction in 715. First created as a Roman temple, the exterior walls were retained for the mosque, but within them, unlike most earlier plans, the Caliph al-Walid built a structure which had a basilical, rather than hypostyle, plan. The building's prestige comes not only from its monumental size but from its decoration, most notably from the quartered marble and mosaics that formerly covered almost all of the interior walls. The glass mosaics depict riverside landscapes filled with tall trees and interspersed with palatial structures alongside more humble dwellings. These were most likely representations of paradise, a notion that is reinforced by the presence of Koranic verses mentioning heaven and the Last Judgment, which historians note were originally present in the mosque.

6. Mosque of Ibn Tulun

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 9th Century



Within this large building, visitors are dazzled by the endless vistas through its myriad arcades that seem to spring up simultaneously in multiple directions. The structure's basic form, from 879, is derived in many ways from the mosques that have now fallen into ruin in Samarra (the Abbasid capital in Iraq), where Ibn Tulun (r. 868–884) grew up before being sent to Egypt as governor. He quickly became an independent ruler, and the mosque was the cynosure of his new capital. Like the Samarra models, this one has a *ziyada*, a corridor on three sides forming a buffer between the prayer halls and the outside world. Even today this isolates the prayer area from the noise of the surrounding urban area, and the resulting stillness enhances the sense of quiet contemplation that permeates the building.

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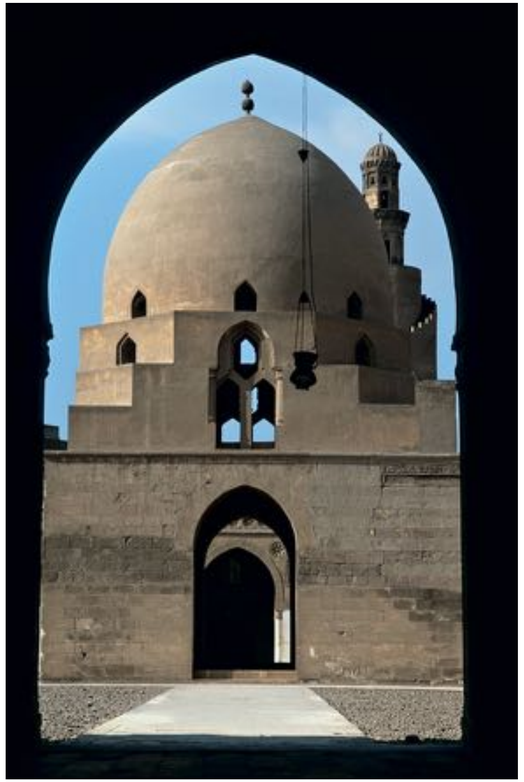
Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 9th Century



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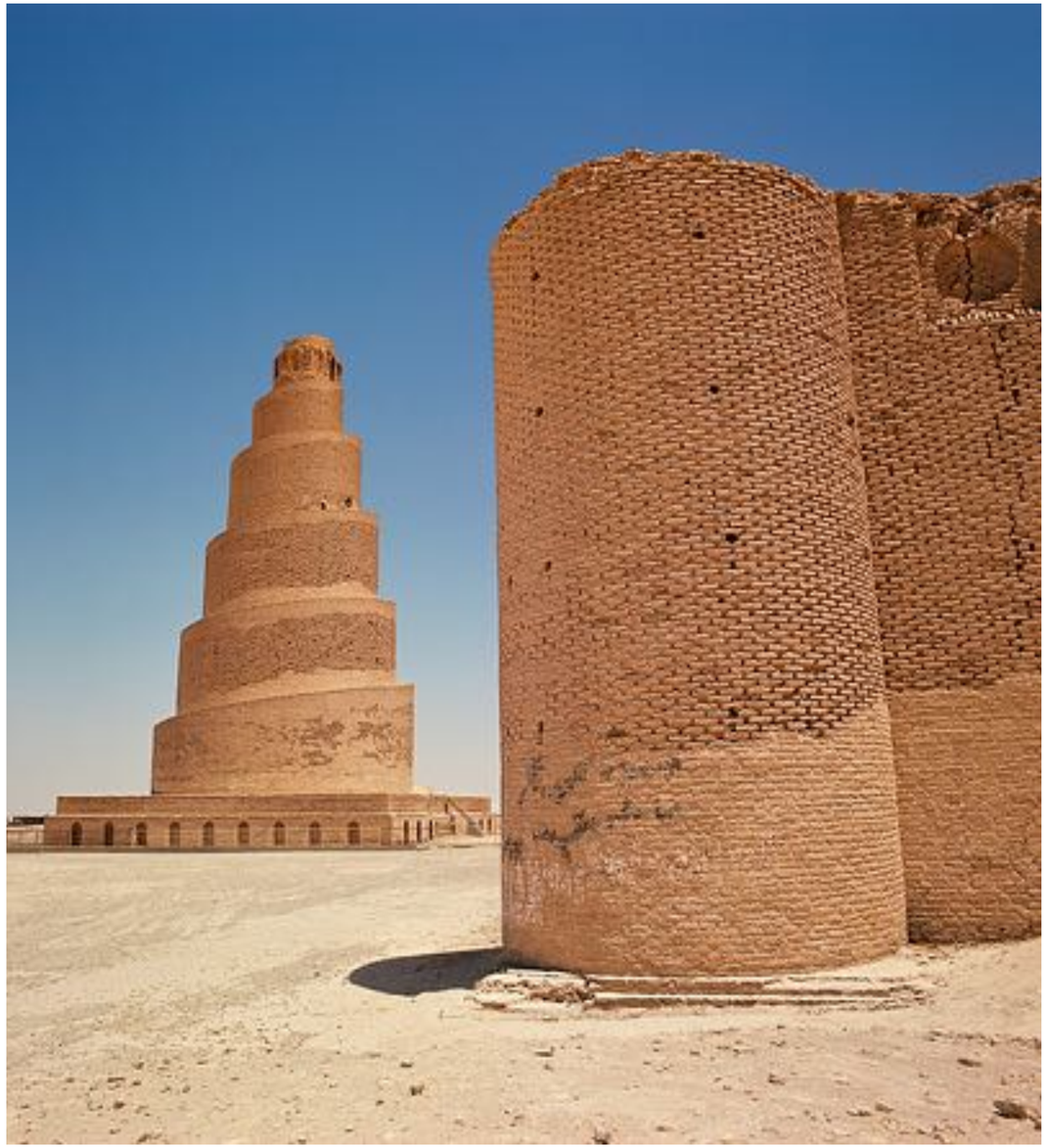
7. Zaytuna Mosque

Tunis, Tunisia, Africa | 9th Century

The history of the Zaytuna mosque in Tunis in many ways follows that of its model, the Great Mosque of Qayrawan. Both were originally early Islamic foundations, both were entirely rebuilt in the 9th century (the Zaytuna in 964) with a hypostyle T-shaped plan, and both had a domed narthex added at the front of the prayer hall (in 991 for the Zaytuna). The foundation inscription in the splendid dome above the mihrab bay mentions the Abbasid caliph, his client Nusayr, and the builder, but not the ruling Aghlabid amir, Abu Ibrahim Ahmad, surprisingly demonstrating Nusayr's independence of Aghlabid control. The minaret at the corner of the courtyard dates from 1894, when it replaced an earlier one that had collapsed.

8. Great Mosque of Samarra

Samarra, Iraq, West Asia | 9th Century



At the time of its completion in 852, this mosque was the largest in the Islamic world. Its patron, the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861) authorized the use of his three elephants to speed up the transportation of the materials for its construction. It was built entirely of brick and was hypostyle in a plan, including a large courtyard. Only the outer walls and minaret are now intact, but we know from excavations and historical sources that the interior was richly decorated in glass mosaic. The spiral minaret, which the caliph used to ascend on the back of a donkey, was an innovation that may have been adapted from pre-Islamic ziggurats in the area.

9. Great Mosque of Qayrawan

Qayrawan, Tunisia, Africa | 9th Century

This mosque is revered as one of the oldest and largest on the African continent. It was founded in 669 by the Arab general Uqba ibn Nafi (r. 635–683), the Muslim conqueror of the region, although it was almost completely rebuilt by the Aghlabid emir Ziyadat Allah. A fortress-like building with massive walls composed of stone and baked bricks, the mosque contains several outstanding features: a marble-paved courtyard, a hypostyle prayer hall, a mihrab niche made of twenty-eight panels of carved marble, luster tiles from Baghdad arrayed around the mihrab, and the earliest surviving minbar. Its towering minaret has a stepped form that is remarkably similar to a Roman mosaic of a lighthouse that once stood on a Tunisian coast.

10. Great Mosque of Sousse

Sousse, Tunisia, Africa | 10th Century

The core of this mosque was erected by the Aghlabid amir Abu'l-'Abbas Muhammad (r. 841–56) in 851, at which time it was located next to the unprotected harbor of the city, opposite the *Ribat* (a building housing those fighting for the faith). This may explain why the mosque is fortified with rounded crenellations and corner towers facing the sea. The original mosque was only three bays deep on the qibla side and had a dome above the mihrab bay. The mihrab was removed when the building was extended towards the qibla in 973, but the bay retains on the sides two highly decorated tympanums with carved stone lozenges. The mosque is one of the first to have had an inscription encircling its courtyard. It has no minaret, the call to prayer being given from the corner towers.

11. Al-Azhar Mosque

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 10th Century

The variety of building periods within the mosque makes it almost a museum of Cairene architectural styles. Besides adding to its central Fatimid core of 972, Mamluk patrons sponsored the construction of minarets and madrasas around the perimeter, and Ottoman governors further extended its prayer halls. However, despite the interest this has for most visitors, the mosque is presently renowned primarily due to its academic stature. It has served, almost without interruption, as a teaching institution from the year 988, when an endowment was first created, down to the present day. The name of the mosque is now synonymous with that of the adjacent university.

12. Bab Mardum Mosque

Toledo, Spain, Europe | 11th Century

Built in 1000, shortly after the extension of the Great Mosque of Cordoba by al-Hakam II in 966, this small mosque further develops many of Cordoba's features, such as the brick façades with intersecting and polylobed arches, and the novel variety of domes with intersecting arches in the interior. The mosque's plan is a square composed of three by three domed bays, an extremely popular plan due to its simplicity and symmetry, found contemporaneously at the other end of the Islamic world at the Nuh Gunbad Mosque in Afghanistan.

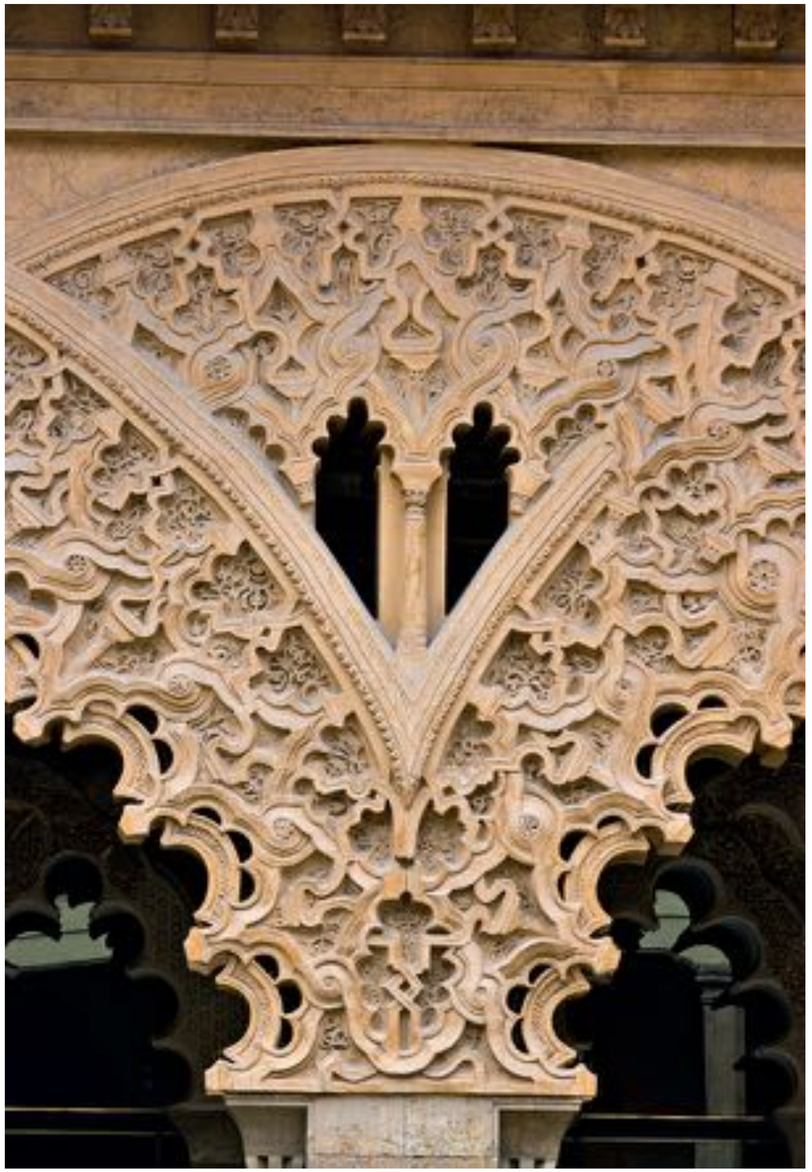
13. Jami‘ Mosque of Na’in

Na’in, Iran, Iran/Persia | 10th Century

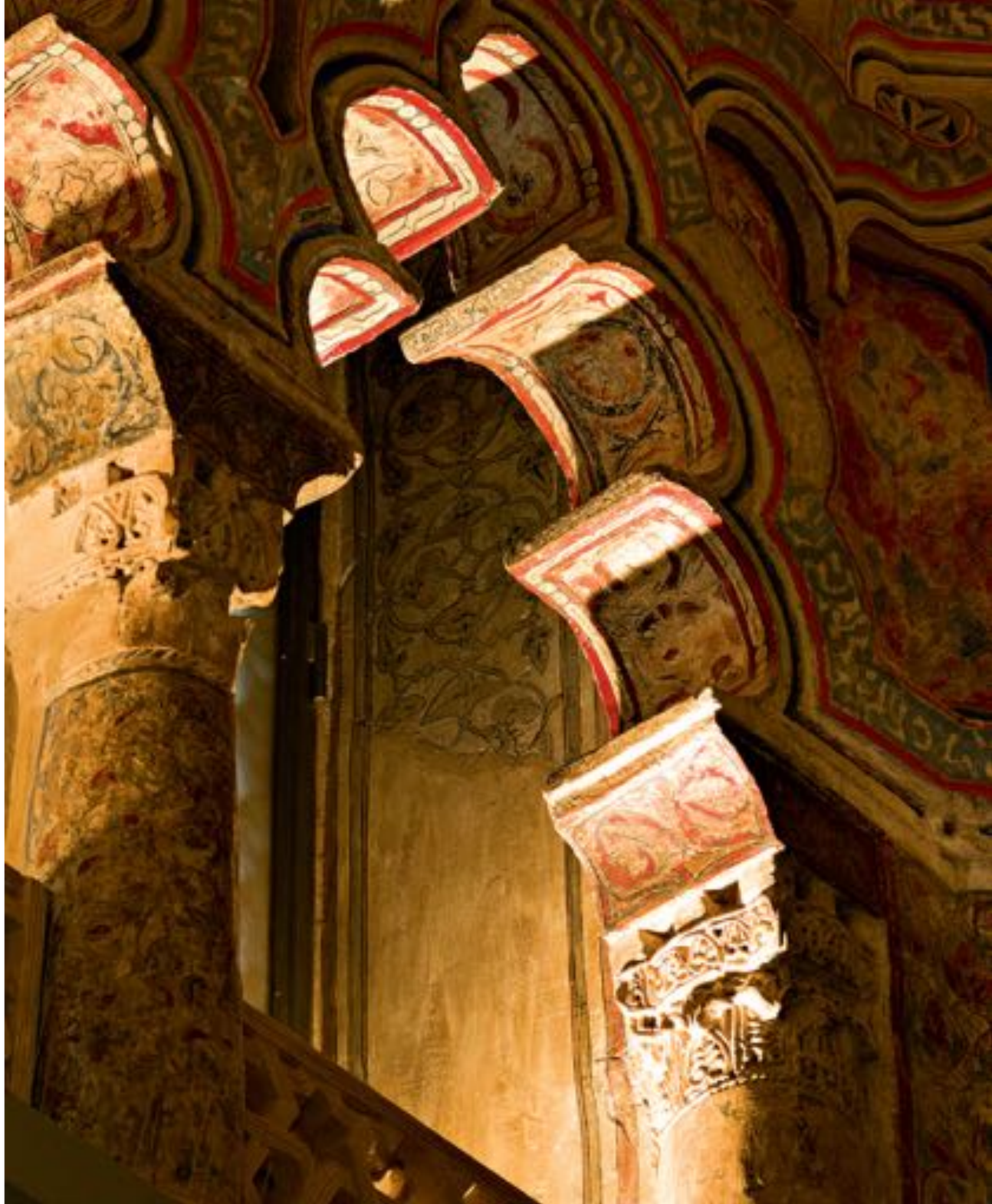
One of the oldest mosques in Iran, this edifice is still in use and owes its fame to the rare survival of the sumptuous stucco decoration from the 9th-century mihrab bay. Even though they have lost most of their former color, the vine scrolls of the mihrab and the pillars in front still convey a sense of the luxuriant growth that would clearly be prized in a town that stands at the border of Iran’s great central desert. Above the rectangular mihrab bay is a vault made from a combination of brackets and quarter domes. This is very likely the first sophisticated use of *muqarnas* in the world, the vaulting technique that is virtually unique to Islamic architecture.

14. Aljafería

Zaragoza, Aragon, Spain, Europe | 11th Century

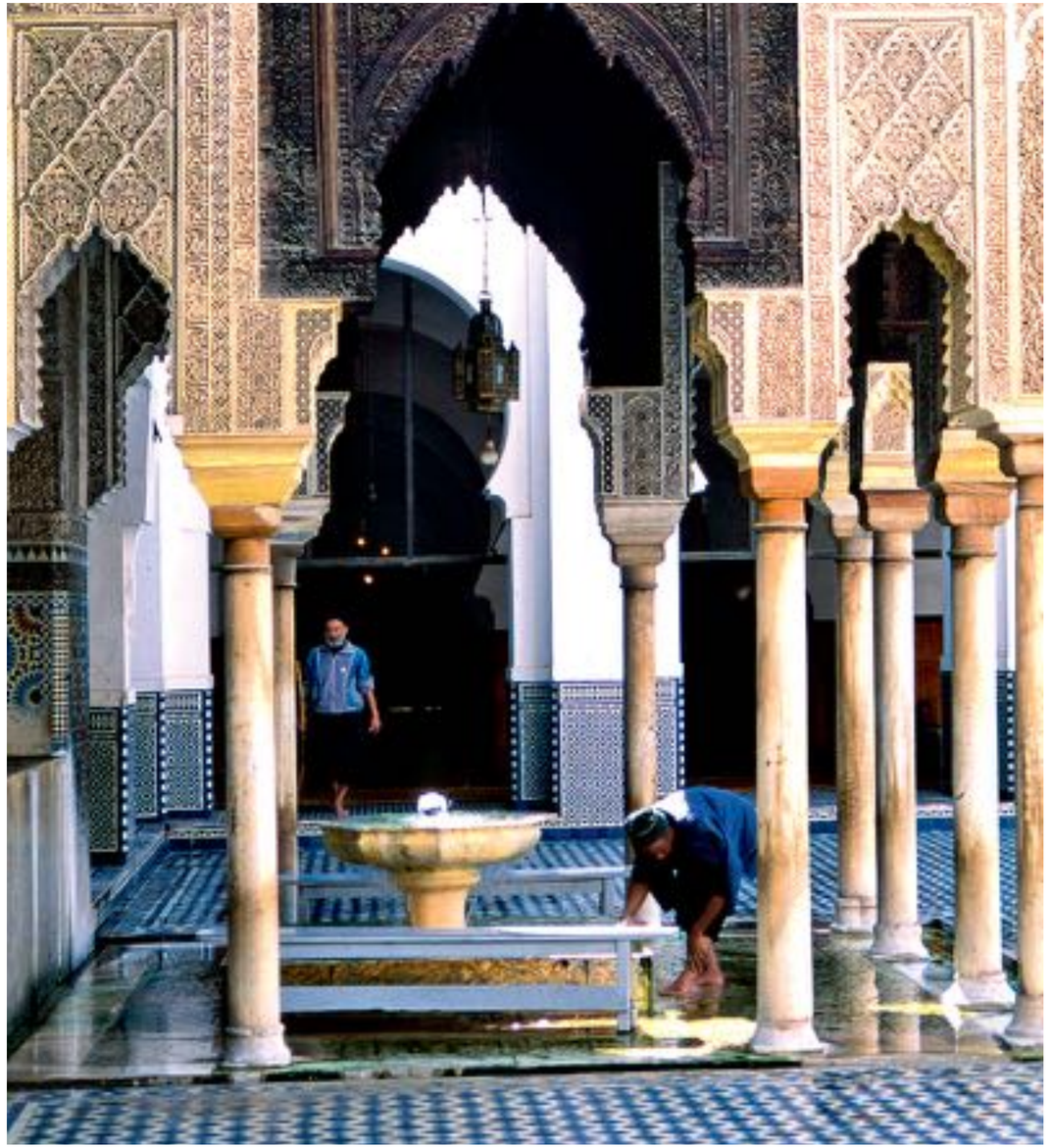


Built by the local ruler Abu Ja'far al-Muqtadir circa 1082, the interior of this fortified building in northeast Spain was close to what at the time was the frontier of the Islamic world, and takes the style of interlacing polylobed arches first pioneered at Cordoba to dizzying new heights of intricacy. The arches of the mosque (on the right), an octagonal room adjoining the main reception hall, are slightly more sedate than the exuberant logic-defying arcades around the courtyard (on the left). But the delicate tracery of the stucco that ornaments every surface of the edifice would have satisfied even the most fastidious taste for luxury.



15. Jami‘ al-Qarawiyyin

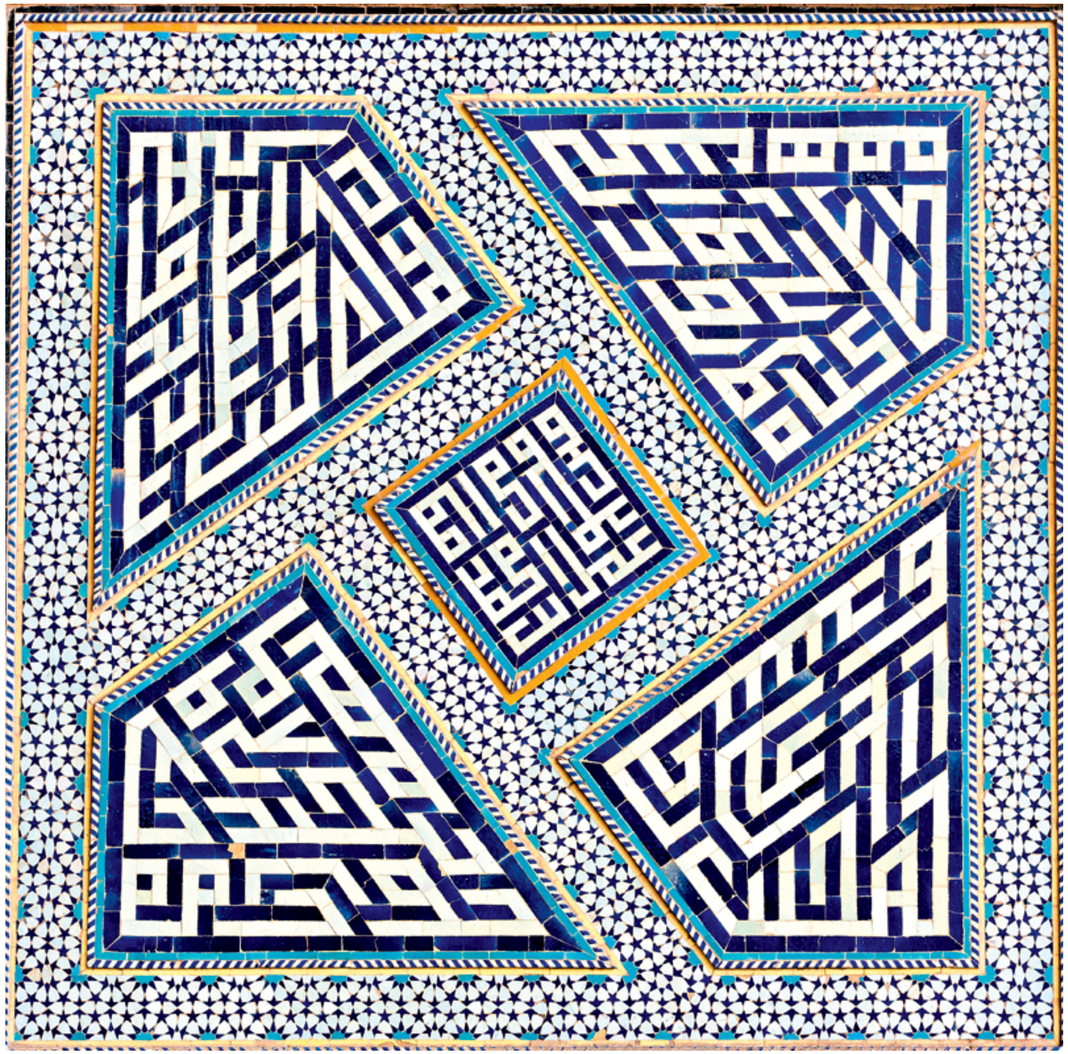
Fez, Morocco, Africa | 11th Century



It was under the patronage and ingenuity of the Almoravids that the vaulting system of *muqarnas* was introduced to the Islamic west—first seen in their rebuilding of this mosque in 1143. Although this technique had been seen earlier in the eastern Islamic world, its use here concentrated in the nave is astonishing in its variety, further embellished by stucco inscriptions and vegetal ornament. It was in this particular area that North African Islamic architecture excelled, as later dynasties (such as the Nasrids, as can be seen in the Alhambra) pushed the concept to the limits of technical expertise and visual expressiveness. The fountain pavilions added in the courtyard in the early seventeenth century also provide a link to the Alhambra.

16. Jami‘ Mosque of Isfahan

Isfahan, Iran, Iran/Persia | 11th Century



So important was this monument to Iran's main medieval city that successive dynasties over the centuries rarely failed to leave their mark on it. In the 1080s, the vizier Nizam al-Mulk added what was then the largest masonry dome chamber in the Islamic world in front of the mihrab, to honor the ruling Seljuq sultan, Malikshah. In 1088, a rival vizier built another even finer dome chamber opposite it, and in the 12th century, four ayvans were added to the courtyard, introducing what would become known as the classical Iranian mosque plan. In 1310, the Ilkhanid Sultan Uljaytu (for his funerary mosque, see nº. 42) inserted a magnificent stucco mihrab to announce his recent conversion to Shi'ism. The Safavids continued by renovating the tilework of the ayvans in the 16th and 17th centuries.

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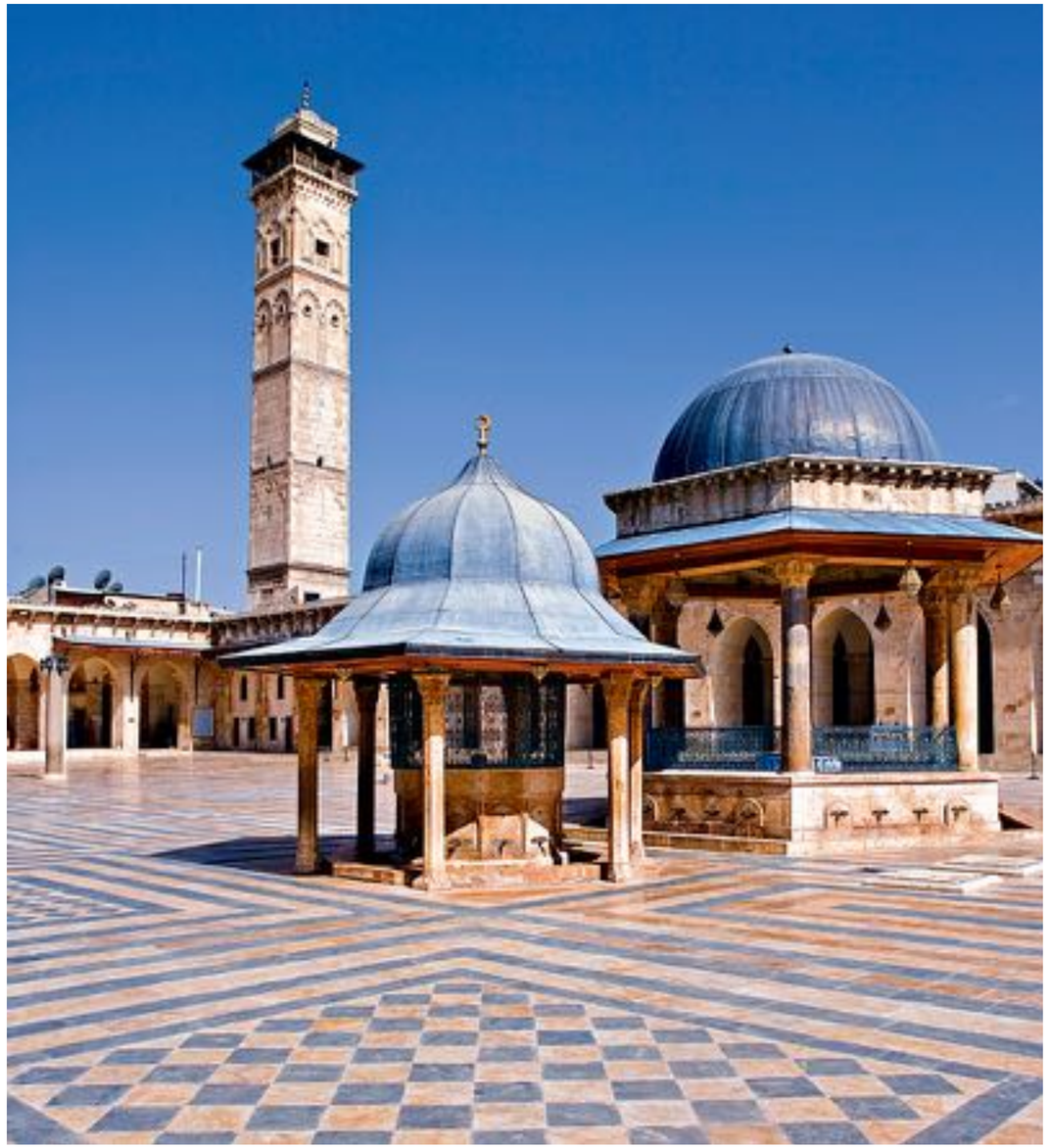
17. Great Mosque of Aleppo

Aleppo, Syria, West Asia | 11th Century



Although some arcades may remain from its early Umayyad foundation in the 8th century, most of the mosque's current structure is the result of many periods of rebuilding from the 11th–14th centuries. Highlights of these additions include the Mamluk carved stone mihrab and inlaid wooden minbar, but its greatest treasure was the stone minaret from the Seljuq period, which was only recently destroyed in the Syrian civil war. Construction of the minaret was ordered by a *qadi* (judge) of Aleppo in 1090 and completed four years later. It was famous for its classicizing elements of blind arcades and moldings which complemented its highly ornate Kufic inscription bands and *muqarnas* vaulting. Within the qibla prayer hall is the supposed tomb of Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist.

“The greatest of wealth is the richness of the soul.”

Prophet Muhammad

18. Great Mosque of Tlemcen

Tlemcen/Tilimsan, Algeria, Africa | 12th Century

This mosque is one of the oldest and best-preserved examples of the Almoravid Dynasty. It was built by the sultan ‘Ali ibn Yusuf in 1163 following the usual T-plan of North African mosques, derived from that of the Great Mosque of Qayrawan. The wider nave is enlivened by polylobed arches outlined with dense stucco decoration. The climax of the building is the bay in front of the mihrab, roofed by a dome with twenty four intersecting ribs whose interstices are filled with a delicate tracery of arabesques. Elaborate stucco also adorns the wall to either side of the deep mihrab, another feature that shows the building’s indebtedness to the Cordoba Great Mosque.

19. Tinmal Mosque

Tinmal, Morocco, Africa | 12th Century

Although located in a relatively uninhabited area on an impregnable mountainous site, the town of Tinmal was established by the religious leader Ibn Tumart (r. 1121–30), founder of the Almohad dynasty, as his capital. The construction of a mosque here in 1153 by the Almohad sovereign 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 1130–1163) was not just an act of homage, but the consecration of a landscape to which he and other Almohad sovereigns had made pilgrimages and were later interred over a period of many years. The building follows the form of earlier Almoravid T-shaped plans, but includes extra *muqarna* domes at both ends of the qibla wall. The mihrab is notable for its sober ornamentation, arguably a religious response to the excesses of the dynasty's predecessors, the Almoravids.

20. Zavareh Friday Mosque

Zavareh, Iran | 12th Century

This is the earliest dated mosque (1135) to have a four-ayvan plan with a qibla dome chamber, one almost certainly inspired by the Friday Mosque of Isfahan. Built on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir, the great central desert of Iran, its monumental scale dominates the town. As seen in the majestic Kufic inscription laced with arabesques that encircles the dome chamber, elaborate stucco enlivens the brickwork. The *muqarnas* elements of the squinch of the qibla dome chamber are also an exact copy of those of the Isfahan mosque.

21. Koutoubia Mosque

Marrakesh, Morocco, Africa | 12th Century

The largest mosque in Marrakesh, this building is the second of two adjacent and very similar structures. Both were built by the Berber Almohad Sultan 'Abd al-Mu'min (r. 1130–63), with the first mosque completed in 1157 and the second in 1162. Why the second was constructed at all is not certain, since its qibla orientation is only slightly different from that of the first. It has been suggested recently, however, that this could have been a way of creating a new space of worship for the ruling class, with commoners relegated to praying in the old mosque. The minaret was one of the earliest to include tilework, and its design featuring a square tower with a smaller domed top provided the model for almost all subsequent examples in the area.

22. Mosque of Queen Arwa

Jibla, Yemen, Arabia | 12th Century

One of the few buildings by a female ruler in this book, this mosque (dated to 1088) was begun by the Sulayhid Sultana Queen Arwa (r. 1099–1138) shortly after she moved the capital to Jibla from Sana'a. Relations with the Fatimids in Egypt were close, and this shares the raised central nave with the Fatimid examples, although unlike them,it was not provided with windows. Stucco is used extensively on the mihrab, the capitals of the columns and on the queen's tomb, which is situated in a corner of the main prayer hall. These elements have been repainted, enabling the delicacy of the original designs to be seen.

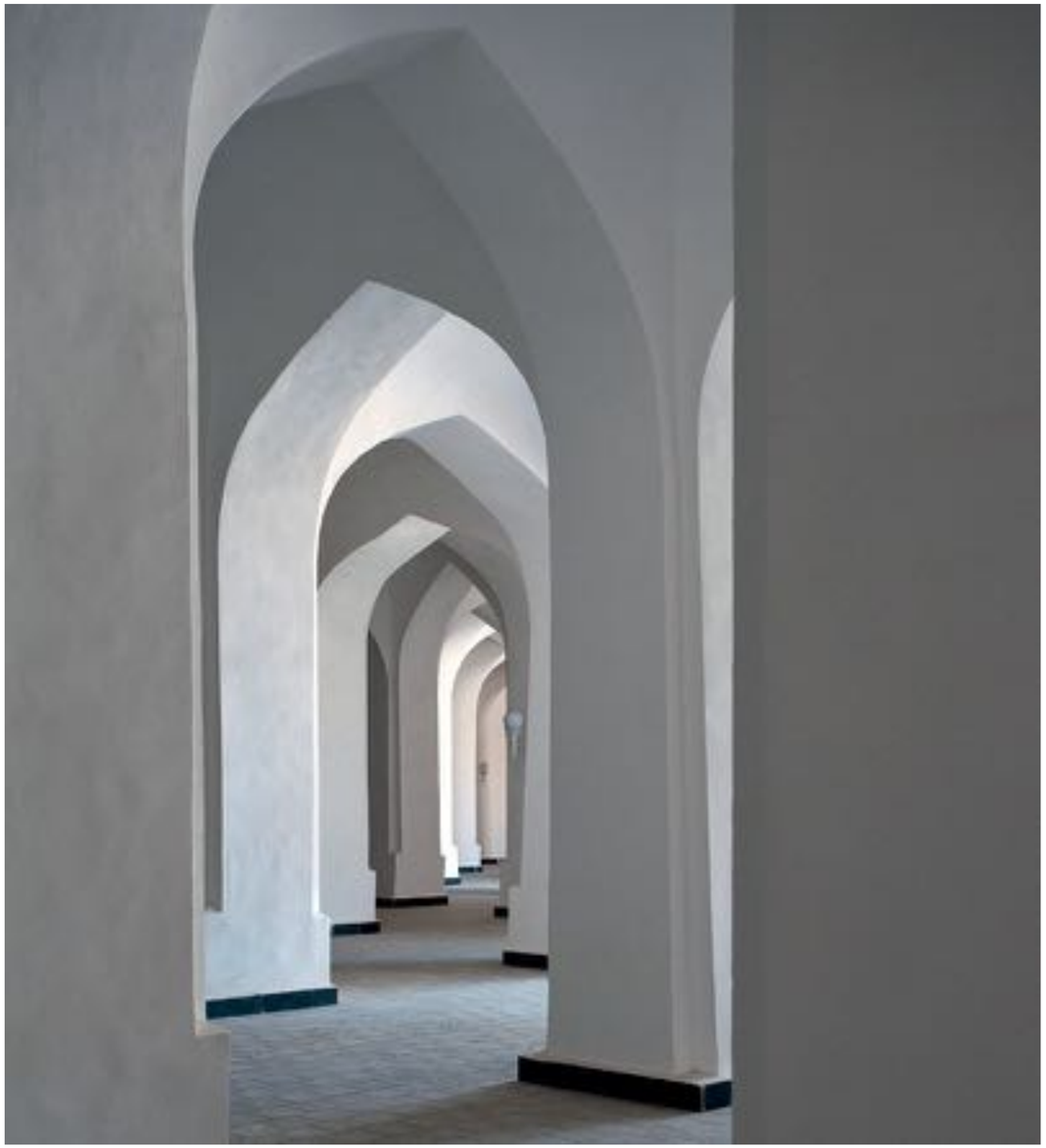
23. Khiva Great Mosque

Khiva, Uzbekistan, Central Asia | 12th Century

Fires have devastated what was once a much more common mosque design in the Islamic world: those made with wooden columns. This is probably the oldest one that is similar to its original, 10th century, form. The earliest columns of the building, which featured bulb-shaped bases, have been transported to a museum in Tashkent, but the mosque still retains seventeen original columns from the 12th century and an impressive number from later periods. Open light wells bring outside illumination into the building, creating extensive vistas in every direction. The outer walls and minaret were most recently renovated in the 18th century.

24. Kalan Mosque

Bukhara, Uzbekistan, Central Asia | 12th Century



This building has two main components: a Qarakhanid minaret dated 1125, erected by the ruler Arslan Khan, and an Uzbek rebuilding of the adjacent mosque by patron 'Abdallah Khan dating from 1514. The minaret, which replaced an earlier wooden example, is of special interest as it provided a model for others in central Asia for centuries to come. The steep sloping sides are decorated with bands of brick ornamentation, leading to a towering lantern ceiling topped by a *muqarnas* cornice decorated with stucco (of which now only a few traces remain). This minaret gained notoriety during the nineteenth century as the place from which condemned criminals were cast to their death.

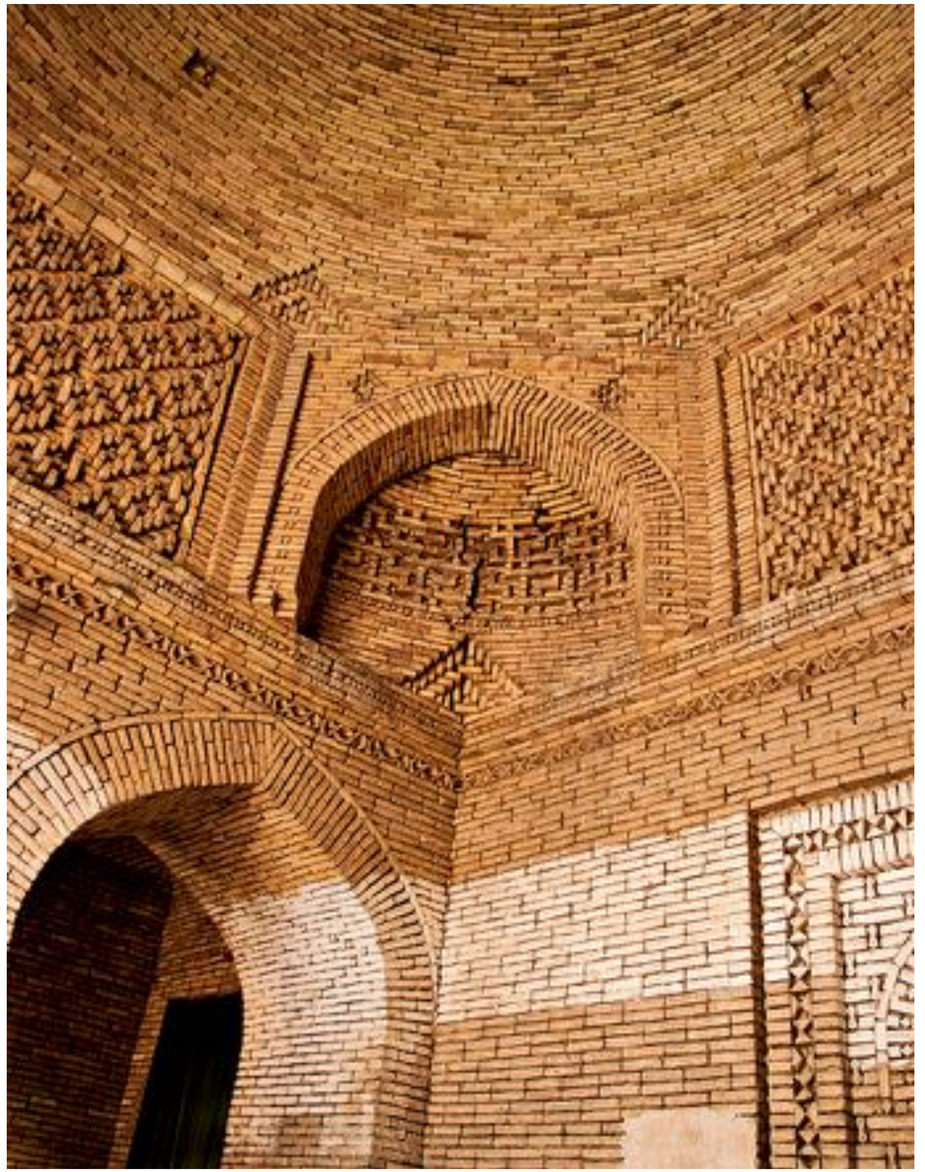
25. Quwwat al-Islam

Delhi, India, East and Southeast Asia | 11th Century

Construction of the first major Islamic monument in Delhi commenced under the reign of Sultan Aybak in 1193. It was substantially enlarged by his successor and son-in-law Iltutmish (1210–20). The most striking feature of the mosque is not that materials from Hindu temples were extensively reused during its first construction, but the virtuosity of the stone carvings displayed in the inscriptions and vegetal bands in the arched screen added by Iltutmish. This makes it clear that local craftsmen were involved in the construction process, and such intricate handling of stone remains a hallmark of Islamic architecture in India. Similarly, the soaring Qutb minaret (as seen above) that adjoins the mosque delivered a highly visible message of the domination of the new faith.

26. Talkhatan Baba

Talkhatan Baba, Turkmenistan, West Asia | 12th Century



The erection by the Seljuks of the large dome chamber in the Isfahan Friday mosque spurred the construction of individual smaller domes as mosques and shrines. This is a rare isolated and unrestored example striking in its purity. Its central dome chamber is slightly enlarged by flanking bays, giving it a façade of three arches. It lies near the important medieval town of Merv, beside the pilgrimage site of the grave of the Sufi saint Talkhatan Baba (1020–1093). It exemplifies the virtues of unadorned fired brick, used here without stucco in myriad patterns to create interest through variety in depth and alignment.

27. Qalawun Complex

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 13th Century

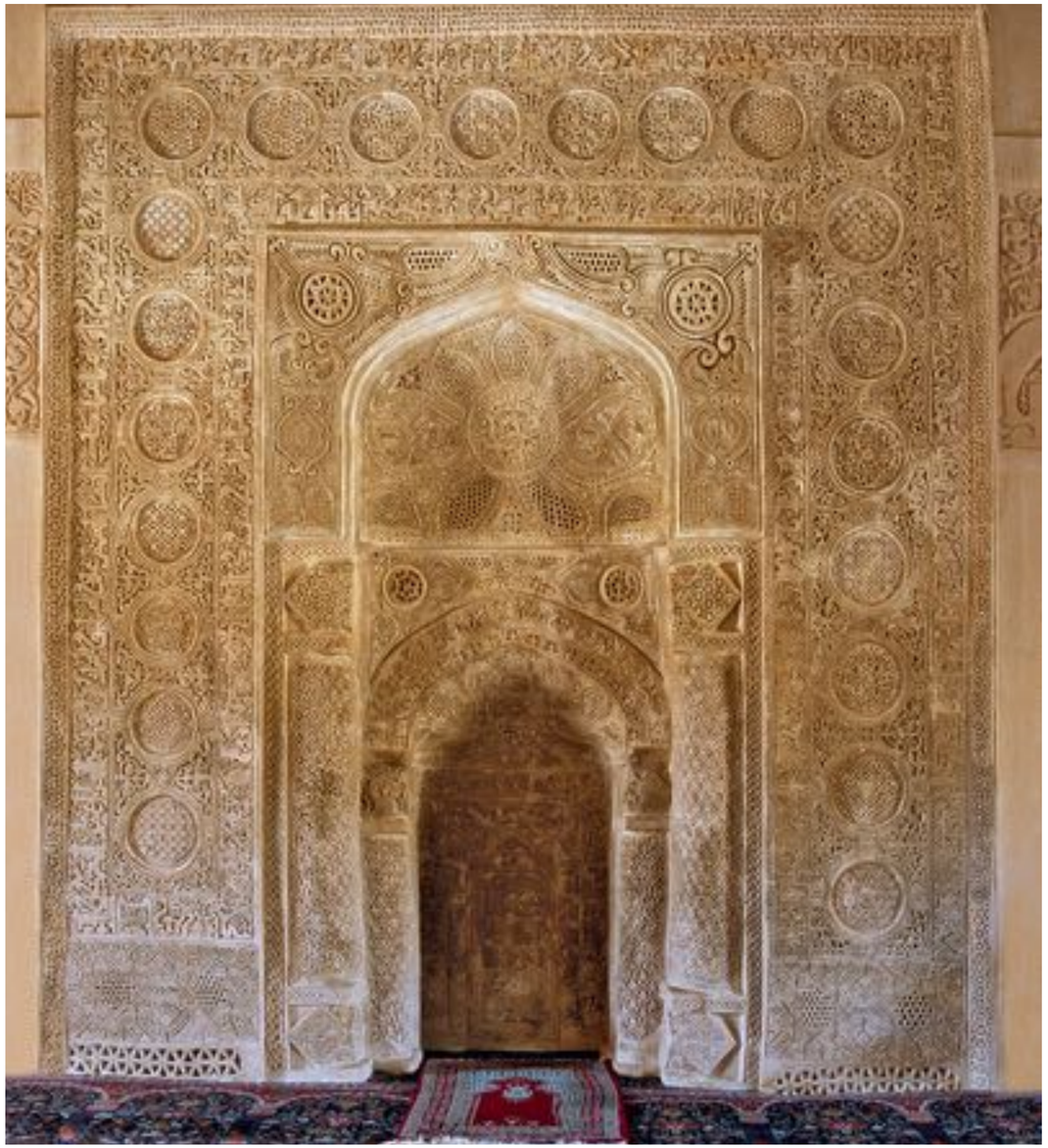
The military successes of the Mamluk Sultan Qalawun against the Mongols and Crusaders provided the funds for this magnificent complex, and the forced labor of Crusader prisoners helped to finish its construction in record time, completed by 1284. The most splendid element is the mausoleum, whose magnificent mihrab and adjacent minaret, indicate it was intended as a place of prayer. Commoners were excluded, except at time of prayer, when a breathtaking sight was in store. The stucco-decorated entrance wall leads to a more dimly-lit interior, where the light from the dome is filtered through variegated glass windows, dappling on multicolored marble and inscriptions of gold and azure.

“He who
builds a mosque
for God,
God will build
a home like
it for him in
the paradise.”

Saying (*hadith*) of Prophet Muhammad

28. Great Mosque

Nizwa-Saal, Oman, Arabia | 13th Century

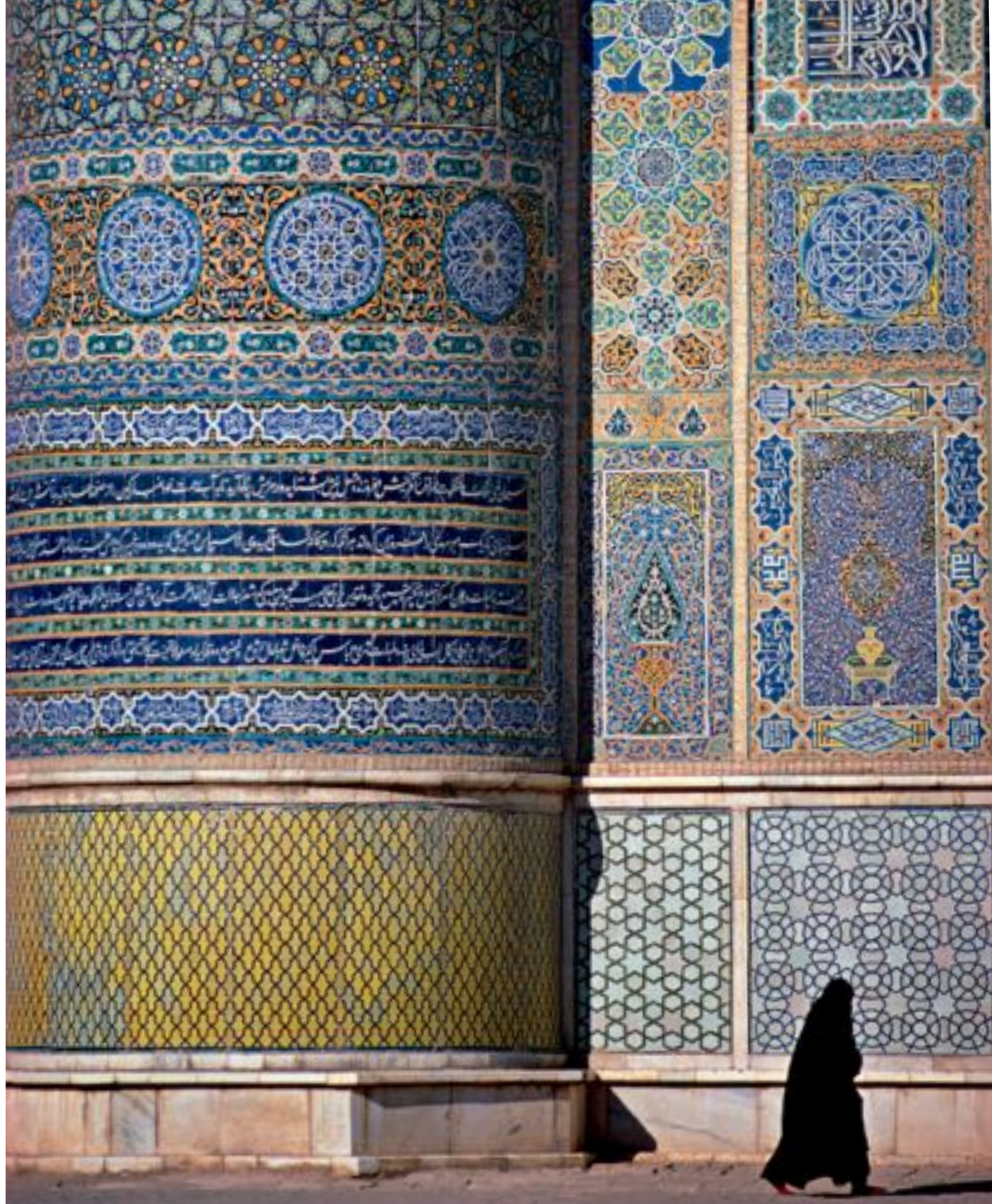


This is the earliest dated example (1252) of a magnificent series of small mosques with highly decorated stucco mihrabs from the highlands of Oman. The name of the patron, Ahmad b. Ibrahim al-Saali, inscribed on the mihrab, is otherwise unknown. The exterior is heavily fortified with buttresses, but the interior is a simple rectangle filled with four arcades. In addition to the splendid mihrab, which is double arched like earlier Iranian examples, the qibla wall is distinguished by a majestic Koranic inscription. Its bold letters, in Kufic script with lobed finials, stand out strongly against the dense scrollwork of the interstices.

29. Great Mosque of Herat

Herat, Afghanistan, Central Asia | 13th Century

The Ghurid Sultan Ghiyath al-Din was at the height of his power when this funerary mosque was completed in 1200. Major restoration work occurred in the Timurid period at the end of the 15th century, and again in the middle of the 20th century when the mausoleum of Ghiyath al-Din was unfortunately demolished. There remains a magnificent tiled gateway from the original hypostyle building, as well as many fragments of decorative brickwork that have recently been exposed under its plaster. A rare stucco inscription from the Timurid period still graces the south ayvan.



30. Pir-i Bakran Shrine

Linjan, Iran/Persia | 13th Century

This shrine, built from 1302–12, is an excellent example of the way in which a Sufi community could create a place of worship. The earliest part of the complex is a simple beehive hut in which the Sufi master lived. His followers built an ayvan where he could teach, but after his death the entrance was closed off by a mihrab so that the whole structure could be used for prayer. The building is a testament to the virtuosity of stucco techniques, combining surprisingly archaic styles with the most up-to-date refinements such as the multilevel complexities of the mihrab.

“The past resembles the future more than one drop of water resembles another.”

Ibn Khaldun

31. Madrasa al-Mustansiriya

Baghdad, Iraq, West Asia | 13th Century

Early mosques were used for teaching, so it should come as no surprise that madrasas, in turn, frequently incorporated mosques as part of their structures. This building was founded by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustansir in 1234, at a time of the dynasty's renewed self-confidence. Owing to the ruler's personal interests, a private garden was added as well as a balcony from which he could listen to the lectures below. The entrance portal, not unusually, had a foundation inscription, but the biggest departure from the norm was that almost the whole 300 foot length of the river façade boasted another large foundation inscription at mid-height, a conspicuous advertisement of the ruler's power and munificence.

32. Divriği Great Mosque and Hospital

Divrigi, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century

Built by a minor dynastic neighbor of the Seljuks known as the Mengujukids in 1228, this mosque has some of the most breathtaking examples of stone carving in the world. The large rectangular complex contains a hospital and a basilical mosque. While the interior is relatively restrained, the northern portal of the exterior juxtaposes elements in a way that at first seems bizarre. The column framing the composition starts out in the usual manner by rising from a large base, suddenly expanding into a much larger eight-sided pier, then mutating into a cluster only to abruptly diminish once again. Within this framework are fragments of giant arabesques in high relief carved in many layers of vegetal ornament, adding depth and intricacy to the overall composition. This is a deconstructionist masterpiece ahead of its time, one of those rare works of art that flouts every rule and gets away with it.

33. Alaeddin Mosque

Konya, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century

The irregular plan and façade of this building on the citadel in Konya attest to its construction over several building periods. Many spolia have been incorporated from an earlier building on the site, most likely a church. The superb wooden minbar that dates to 1155 is the earliest known Anatolian Seljuk artwork. The accompanying tilework on the adjacent mihrab is also outstanding. The remaining inscriptions assign most of the work to the two brothers who ruled consecutively as Seljuk sultans: Izzeddin Keykaus (r. 1210–1219) and Alaeddin Keykubad (r. 1219–1236). The tomb tower in the courtyard, containing many fine tiled cenotaphs, was built by Kiliç Arslan II (r. 1156–1192) and became the dynastic mausoleum of the Seljuks.

34. Dar al-Şifa

Sivas, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century

Like Qalawun's slightly later complex (nº. 27) in Cairo, this building was established by the Seljuk sultan Kaykavus (r. 1211–20) as a hospital with teaching facilities and a tomb for the founder with a mihrab, demonstrating the expectation of prayer within it. Rulers often created public health facilities to promote learning and to benefit from prayers offered to them in return. But the finest decoration is reserved for the founder's tomb, which is faced with superb tilework in various techniques; equally fine tiled cenotaphs were placed in front of the stone carved mihrab within the mausoleum. The inclusion of a crypt emphasizes the fact that prayer was permitted on the ground floor of the mausoleum.

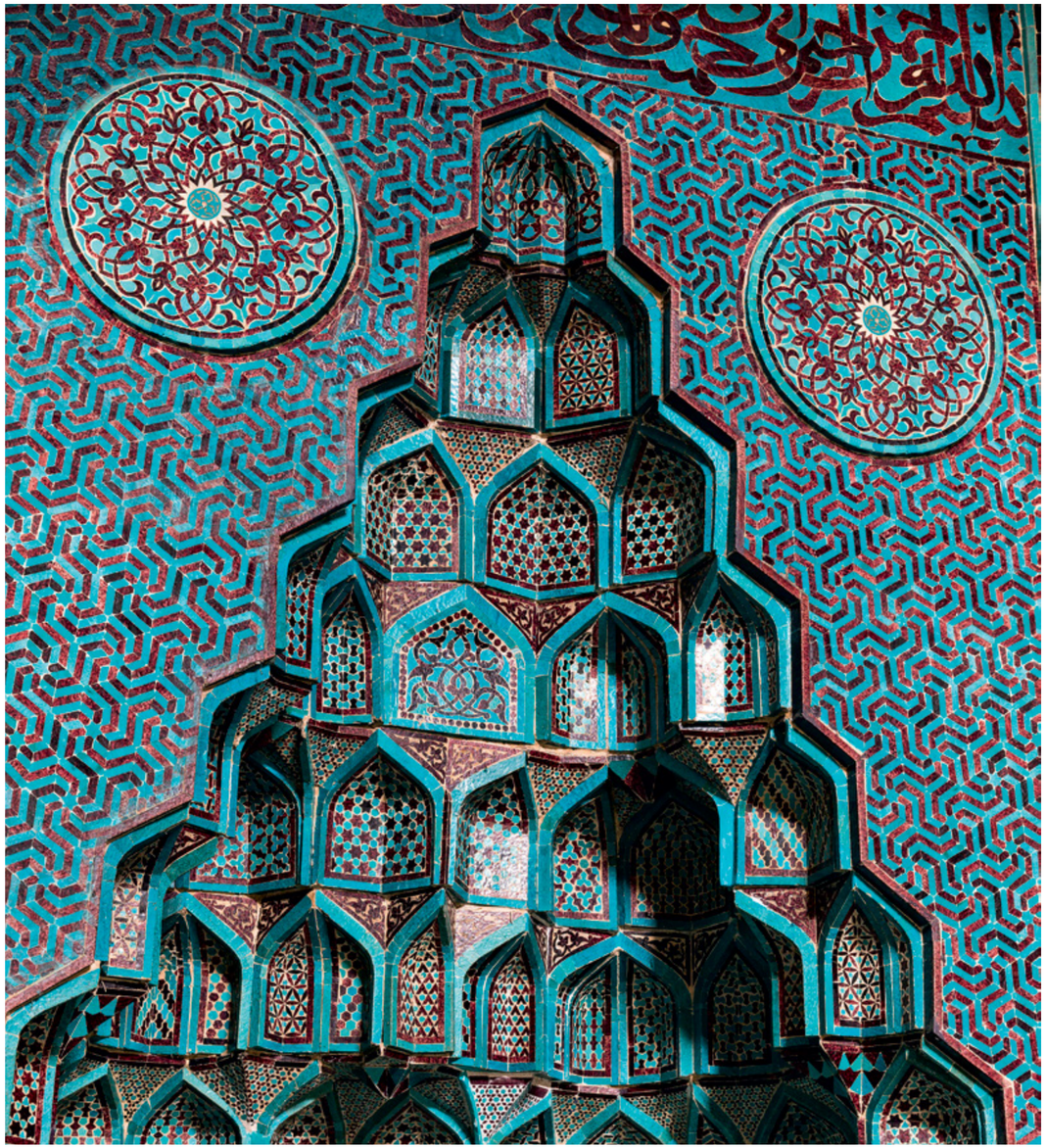
35. Great Mosque of Diyarbakır

Diyarbakir, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century

The Seljuk sultan Malik-Shah (r. 1073–1092) erected the main prayer hall, closely modeled after the Great Mosque of Damsacus, which had been restored in his name earlier in 1084. The other courtyard façades were reworked in the 12th century. The two-story western arcade (built between 1117 and 1125) is particularly notable for its superb carvings and partial reuse of classical spolia. Two madrasas, the Mesudiye (1193) and Zinciriye (1189), were also built adjoining the northern wall of the courtyard in the 12th century, adding to the overall prestige of the building.

36. Eşrefoğlu Mosque

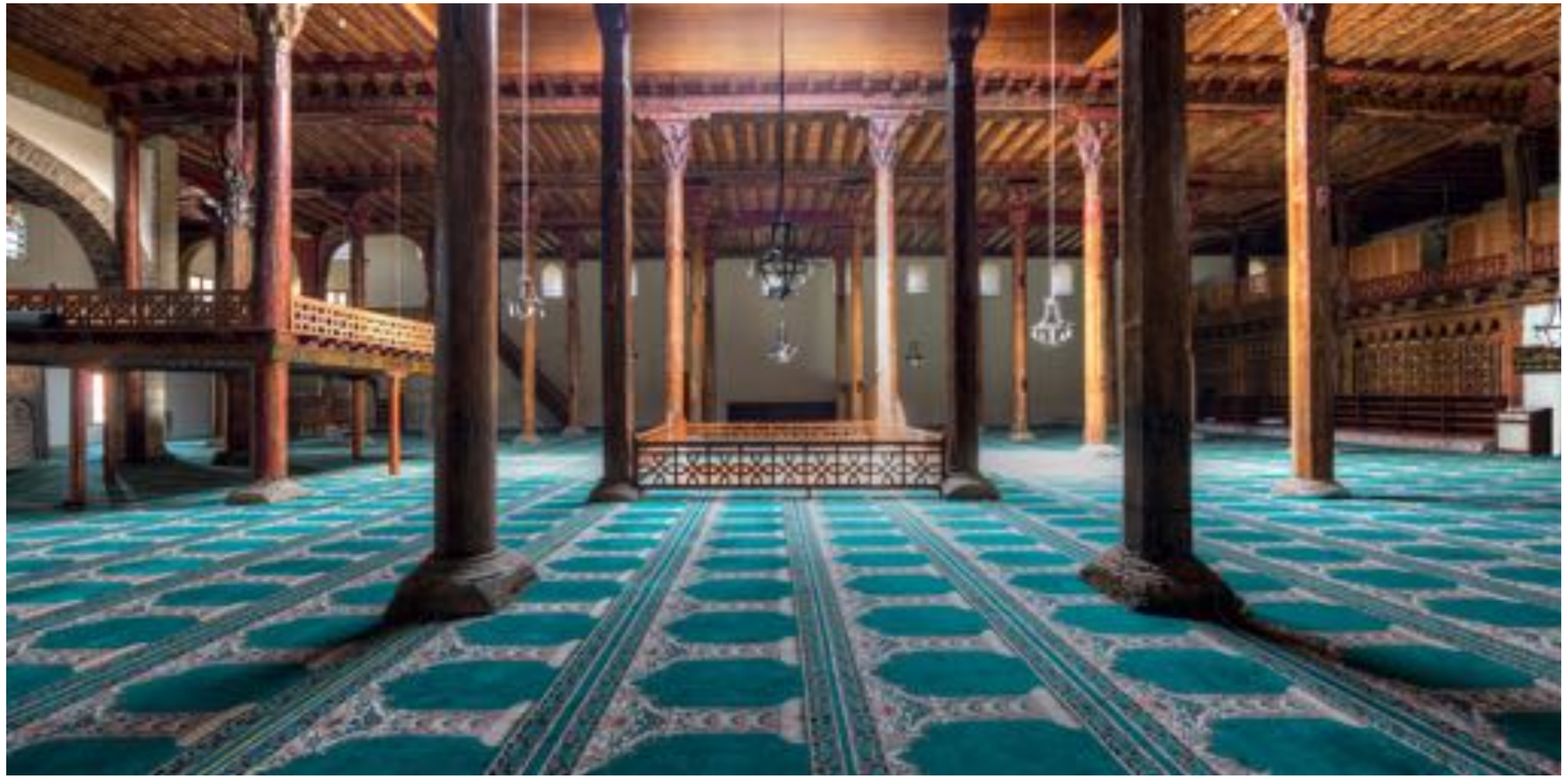
Beyşehir, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century



Of the very few wooden-columned mosques that have survived to this day, this one is the best preserved.
It was founded in 1927 by Suleyman, the ruler of a short-lived independent principality, the Eşrefids, who made Beyşehir his capital.
The restoration of the painting of the wooden capitals and ceiling is a little overdone, but the original wooden minbar
and the tile mosaic of the mihrab and dome are among the finest of their kind. The exterior has the pyramidal-roofed tomb of the founder
on one side and on another a magnificently decorated marble portal that has been angled to fit the street axis.

36. Eşrefoğlu Mosque

Beyşehir, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century



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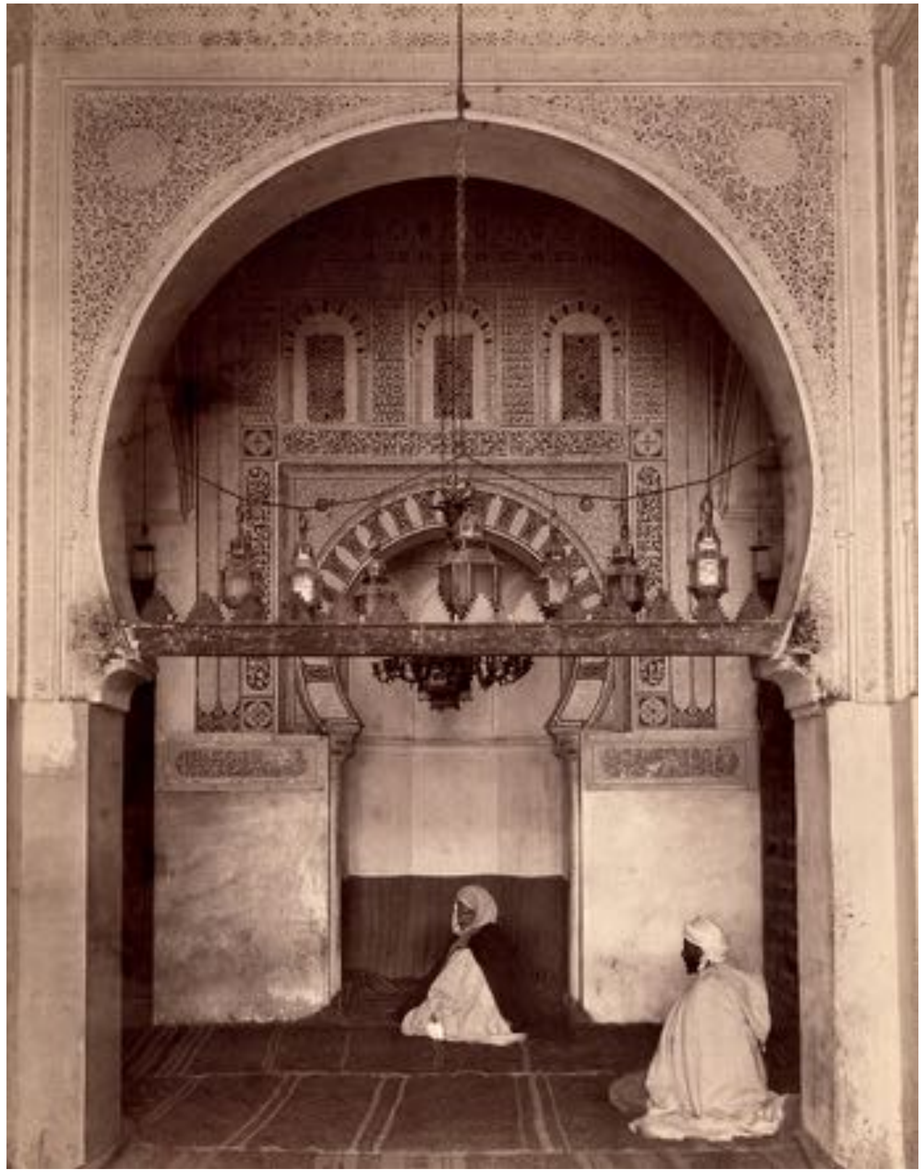
37. Sultan Han

Kayseri–Konya, Turkey, West Asia | 13th Century

Some of the finest caravanserais were built by Sultan 'Ala al-Din Kay Qubadh (r. 1220–37), in particular two on the Konya–Kayseri and Konya–Aksaray roads. Exceptionally, both have a small mosque in the center of the courtyard, raised on four arches to prevent the interior from being soiled by animals. The superb stone carving on the main entrance is also found on the mosque. Additionally, a serpentine motif ending in dragon heads decorates the southern arch. Dragons were a popular subject in Anatolian carving, and they had a multiplicity of meanings. The simplest was as a talisman for protection. The dragon was also related to darkness or light through its connection with the heavenly bodies. They were believed to devour the sun or moon during eclipses, but pairs of dragons could also have the opposite meaning as providers of light—after the belief that two dragons were responsible for the cycle of day and night.

38. Sidi Abu Madyan Complex

Tlemcen/Tilimsan, Algeria, Africa | 14th Century



This mosque, completed in 1339 in the suburb of al-'Ubbad, is part of a shrine complex built by the Marinid Sultan Abu'l-Hasan (r. 1331–48). It emphasizes its elevated portal, embellished on the outside with some of the finest tile mosaic in the Maghrib, and an impressive carved wooden cornice. This in turn leads to a vestibule decorated with stucco panels on the walls and a *muqarnas* vault whose delicacy and complexity is matched only by those of the Alhambra. The mosque also has some unusual features in its interior decoration, notably a grilled dome over the ante-mihrab bay that, instead of the more common ribs, has a naturalistic design of flowering shrubs. In addition, the arcades on the qibla side feature barrel vaults decorated with plaster coffers that imitate the similar designs in *artesonado* (coffered wooden) ceilings.

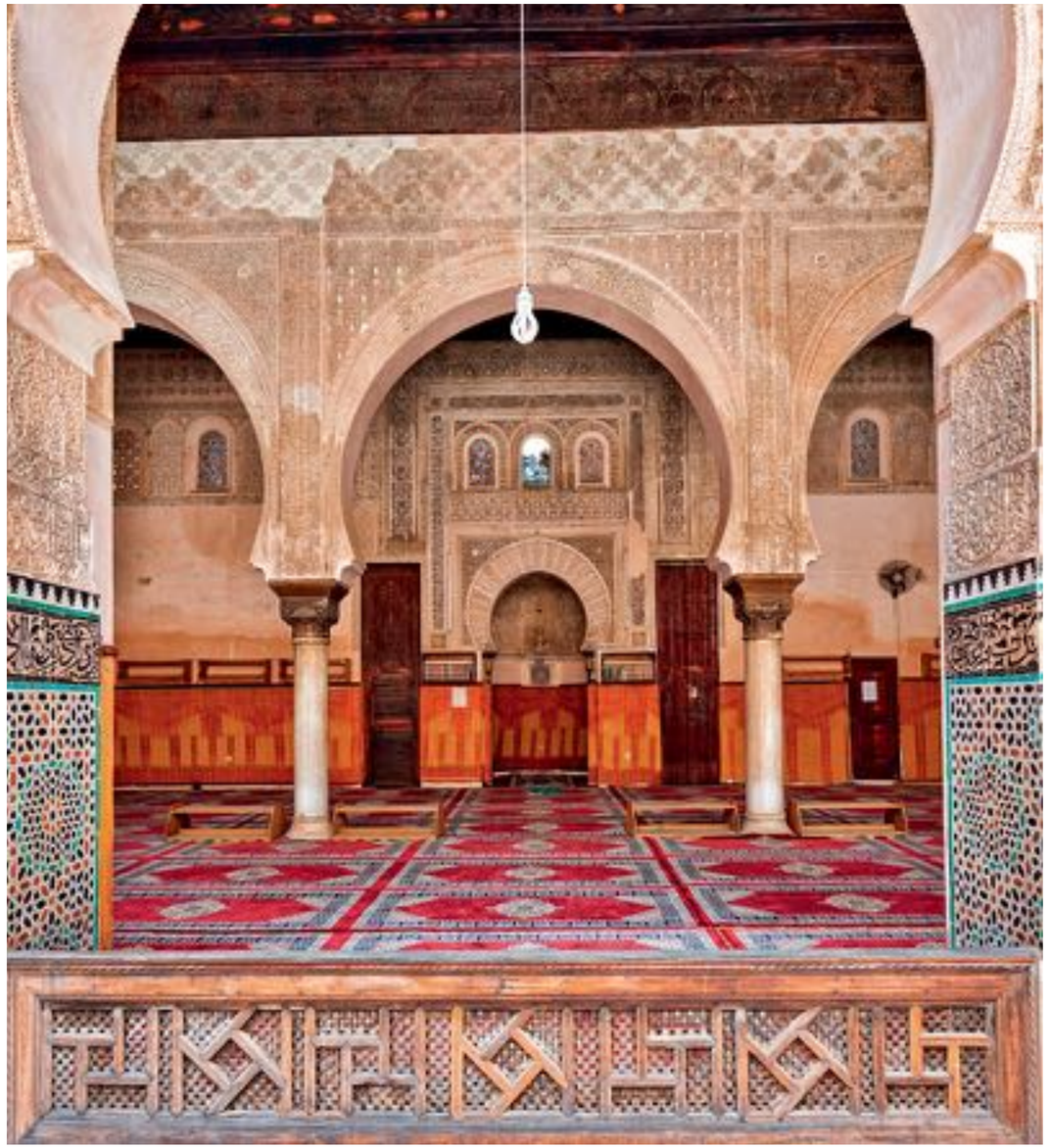
39. Sultan Hasan Complex

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 14th Century

This, completed in 1361, is the largest and most impressive of Mamluk complexes.
At the center is a four-iwan congregational mosque, which was also used for teaching in addition to the four madrasas that are situated at the corners.
The qibla iwan, the largest in Egypt, was originally fitted with magnificent enameled glass lamps that can now be found in the
Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. The mausoleum is situated behind this iwan as a way to ensure that prayers might be offered for the founder.
This was also encouraged by designating the mausoleum as a masjid with its own prayer leader (imam) in the endowment deed.

40. Bu ʻInaniyya Madrasa

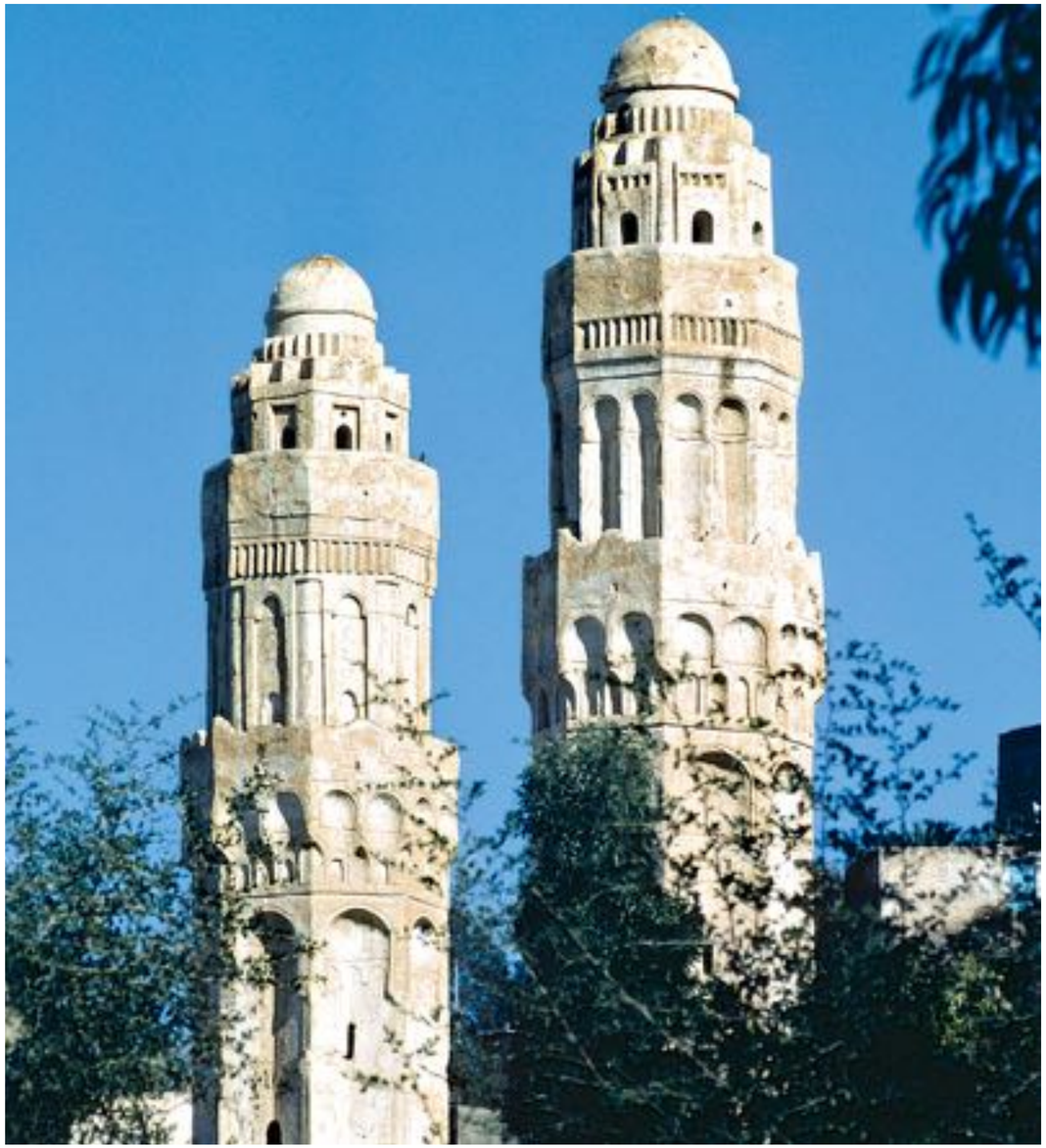
Fez, Morocco, Africa | 14th Century



This madrasa, finished in 1355, was the finest of several built by the Marinid sultan Abu ʻInan. The indefatigable medieval Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta, claimed that "this madrasa has no rival in size, elevation, or the decorative plasterwork in it." He was of course mistaken in terms of its size and elevation, but he was right to emphasize the quality of its ornamentation, which includes equally intricate tilework and carved wood. In terms of its plan, it is exceptional in its inclusion of a two-aisled prayer hall with a minbar. This is an indication of the madrasa's dual character, for its foundation inscription mentions that this mosque was also designed as a venue for the obligatory Friday prayer.

41. Ashrafiyya Madrasa Complex

Taiz, Yemen, Arabia, | 14th Century



Like their counterparts in Egypt, Rasulid madrasas in Yemen functioned as congregational mosques.
This structure was named after one of the most energetic Rasulid rulers, al-Ashraf Isma'il ibn Dawud (r. 1400–24). The outstanding feature of the building is the painting that adorns the domes of the prayer hall; the main dome is flanked by eight smaller ones.
The large central dome has squinches painted with arabesques. There is also a magnificent composition on the dome of polylobed arches, medallions with pyrotechnic whirling decoration, and lower and upper cursive inscriptions with a knotted Kufic inscription between them.
The closest parallels can be found in 14th-century Khurasan, suggesting that the work of Iranian craftsmen might be present here.

42. Uljaytu Mausoleum Complex

Sultaniyya, Iran, Iran/Persia | 14th Century

This 165-foot-high tomb was the highlight of the new capital city that the Ilkhanid Sultan Uljaytu (r. 1304–16) founded in 1305. After its completion in 1313, the ruler ordered that the interior decoration be changed from tile to painted plaster. This was probably because Koranic inscriptions could now be added, which the sultan hoped would further his ambitions—abetted by a contemporary military campaign—to be the protector of the holy shrines at Mecca and Medina. Uljaytu also added to the main octagon a rectangular room both with crypts underneath and a mihrab, all the better to encourage pilgrims to visit the shrine and pray for him. Today, only the tomb remains of this overly ambitious capital city.

43. Jami‘ Mosque of Yazd

Yazd, Iran, Iran/Persia | 14th Century

Although a much earlier mosque existed at the same location, the main portal, qibla ayvan, and dome chamber of the current mosque are mostly the result of building campaigns by the Ilkhanids in 1324 and the Muzaffarids in 1365. Some tiled decoration was also added by the Timurids in the 15th century. The much plainer structures around the courtyard date from the late 18th and 19th centuries. The building has three important innovations; the first being the enlarged opening at the back of the ayvan, which permits a full view of the interior of the qibla dome chamber from the courtyard. The second is the incorporation of galleries on the upper story of both the dome chamber and the ayvan which led to it. The third, the vastly increased use of tiled decoration, reflects a trend characterized by other monuments of the period. Particularly attractive is the tile mosaic on the mihrab spandrels, which are exquisitely decorated with the entwined names of “Ali” and “Muhammad.”

44. Complex of Sultan al-Ashraf Qaytbay

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 15th Century

Qaytbay (r. 1468–96) had the second longest reign of any Mamluk sultan, and was famous for his patronage of architecture. His complex dates to 1474, and is notable for its wealth of detail and balance between its parts, rather than its monumentality. The carved stone dome is the finest of the many in Cairo, with its decorative pattern interweaving foliate arabesques and eight-pointed stars. The main prayer hall has the typical late Mamluk madrasa plan, with the two side iwans reduced in size. The decorative interior is even more elaborate than the exterior, with painted and gilded coffered ceilings alongside windows featuring stucco grilles inlaid with colored glass. The recent repainting of the carved stone of the mausoleum mihrab restores its former richness, similar to that of inlay work.

45. Mazar-i Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi

Turkestan City, Kazakhstan, Central Asia | 15th Century

The ruler Timur (r. 1370–1405) illustrated his penchant for the grandiose here by replacing the original 12th-century mausoleum with an impressive double-shell dome chamber. An even larger dome chamber, the centerpiece of the shrine, was added and used as a meeting hall for Sufis. An equally monumental metal basin, used exclusively for sherbet on feast days, adorns the center of the room. The massive entrance ayvan was never finished, but all of the other sides of the buildings were completely faced with tilework. The mosque adjoins the tomb chamber, which was beautifully decorated with tile mosaic.

46. Bibi Khanum Mosque

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Central Asia | 15th Century

Upon its completion in 1405, this mosque was one of the largest and most important in the Islamic world.
Construction began when its patron, the Turco-Mongol conqueror Timur, was campaigning in India, but he was so dissatisfied with its appearance on his return that he ordered the height of the structure to be increased radically—and the two supervisors in charge to be executed.
Apart from its monumentality, the mosque's exterior, which was decorated on every side, is especially impressive. This was most likely achieved by the demolition of surrounding buildings, showing Timur's total disregard for other's property rights. The mosque boasts an unusual amount of carved stone, which was possibly the work of captive Indian craftsmen. Indian elephants were also used to transport the stone.

47. Great Mosque of Xi'an

Xi'an, China, East and Southeast Asia | 15th Century

This extraordinary building, which was founded by Ming China's greatest admiral, Zheng He, is the most important mosque in China. It was originally built during the early Ming dynasty but now houses more than twenty buildings and five successive courtyards that could easily be mistaken for a Chinese temple. The open gateways of the first two courtyards lead to a third that has a two-storied pagoda, probably too short to have served as a minaret as has been claimed. The imposing prayer hall in the adjoining courtyard could hold more than 1,000 worshippers. The wooden mihrab is richly carved with bands of Koranic inscriptions that make a striking contrast to the mandala-like square that is filled with large Chinese lotuses above the niche itself.

"Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground."

Rumi

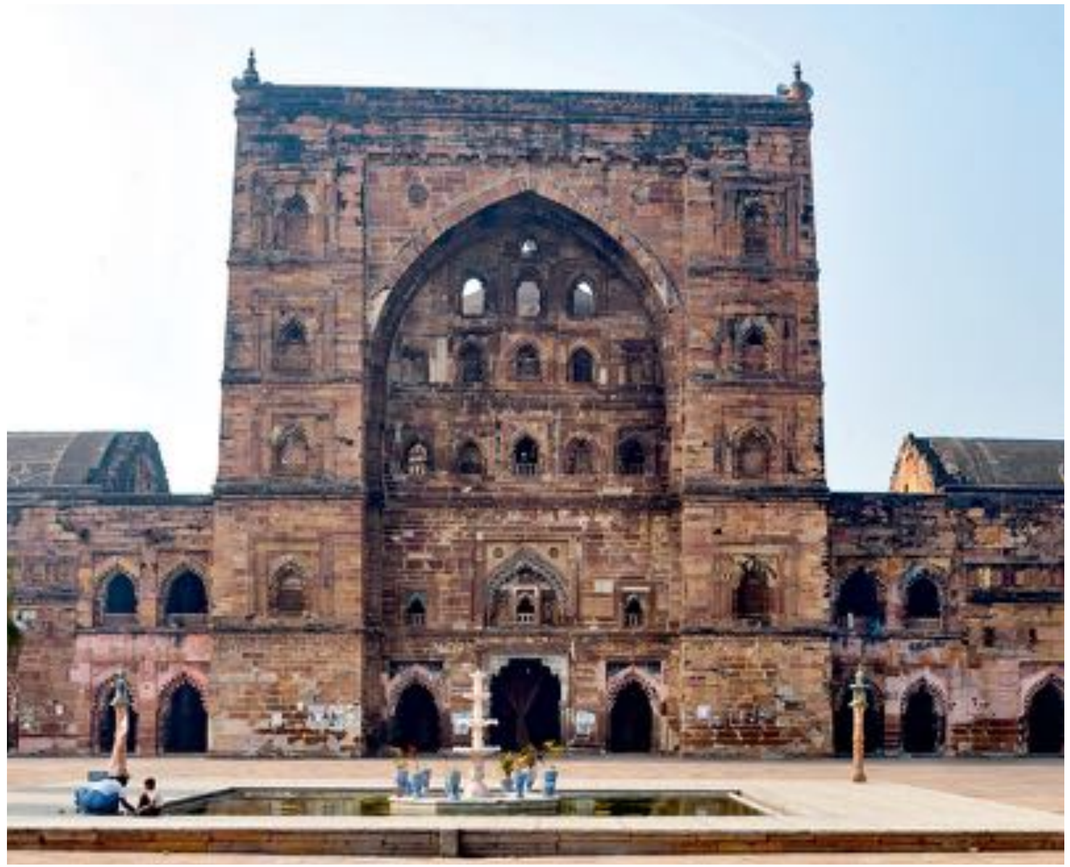
48. Jami‘ Mosque

Ahmedabad, India, East and Southeast Asia | 15th Century

This building is the culmination of the urban planning of the Bahmanid Shah Ahmad (r. 1411–1442) for his eponymous city, serving as the end of a processional promenade that encompassed the palace in the citadel and a large public square. The expansive courtyard has simple arcades lining three sides, with the massive qibla prayer hall located on the fourth. This was an even more impressive sight before its two minarets, flanking the central arch, collapsed in an earthquake in 1819. Nevertheless, the façade is carefully varied to alleviate monotony, with single-arched lower domed bays giving way to a dome over a group of five arches. Particularly outstanding is the exquisitely detailed Hindu-inspired stone carving, which is part of a continuing tradition since the earliest Islamic monuments in India, as seen in the Quwwat al-Islam Mosque in Delhi (no. 25).

49. Jami‘ Mosque

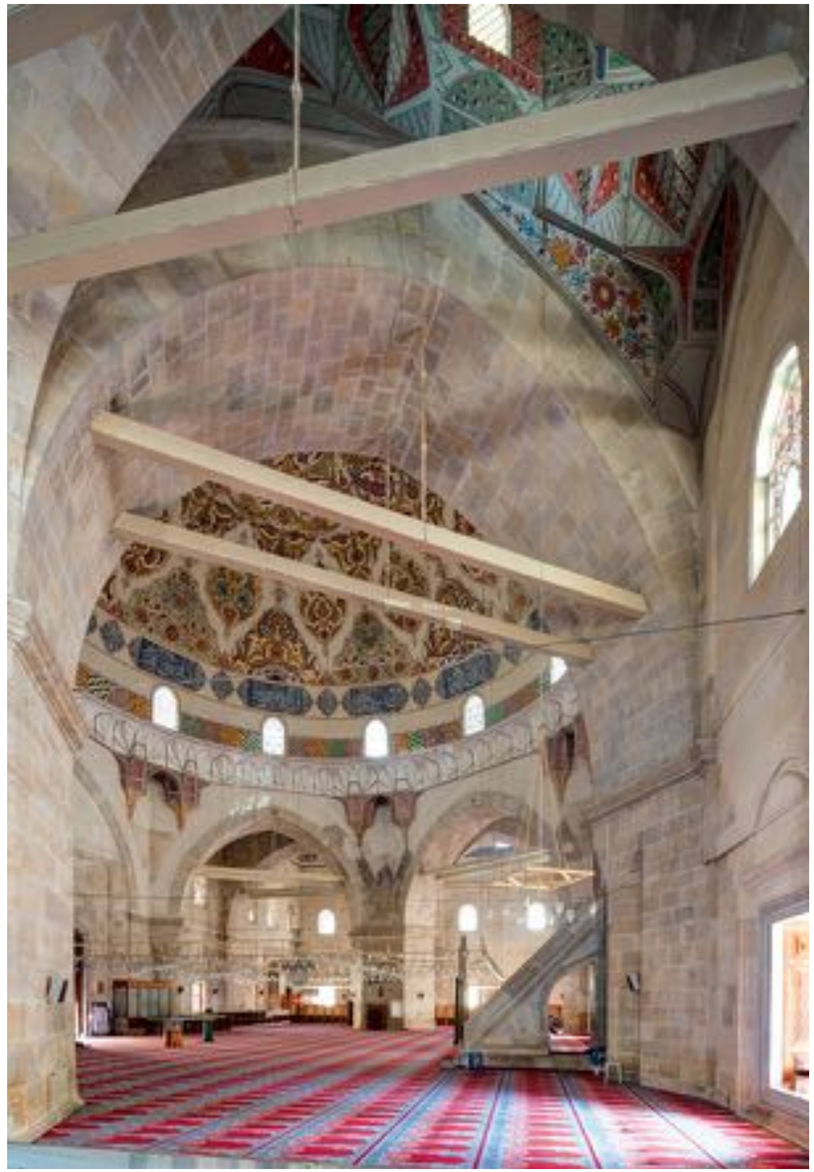
Jaunpur, India, East and Southeast Asia | 15th Century



The short-lived Jaunpur, or Sharqi, dynasty (1394–1483) ruled from this city. Its last sultan, Husyan Shah (r. 1458–83), was the patron of this mosque erected in 1470. Like earlier mosques of the dynasty, it features a large courtyard with a domed entrance in the middle of arcades on three sides, and a much more impressive qibla side. The latter is divided into three parts, a towering central 85-feet-high propylon that eclipses the dome behind it, and two lateral barrel-vaulted halls. Although the transition between these is clumsy, the repeating motif of polylobed arches and stone screens provides a unifying aspect.

50. Üç Şerefeli Mosque

Edirne, Turkey, Europe | 15th Century



The name of this mosque refers to the three balconies of its highest minaret, which at the time of its construction in 1447 was an unprecedented 220 feet tall. The dome, at 80 feet in diameter, was likewise previously unmatched. The mosque, commissioned by the Ottoman Sultan Murad II (r. 1446– 51), is of great interest for its rare preservation of another common Ottoman decorative technique, painted plaster. The domes around the arcaded courtyard each display surprisingly well-preserved variations on arabesques and inscriptions. A later whitewash of the interior has recently been removed, revealing that the main dome was similarly decorated. Sadly the naturalistic trees—glimpses of the paradise thought to be awaiting the believer—that originally graced the walls below the smaller side domes were obliterated in the course of the restoration.

51. Gawhar Shad Mosque

Mashhad, Iran, Iran/Persia | 15th Century

The patron of this mosque (dated 1418), was the wife of the sultan, Timur's son Shah Rukh, and a powerful political figure in her own right.
Originally nestled within surrounding bazaars, the mosque exemplifies a novel Timurid approach, that of façade architecture, as seen in the two-story galleries around the courtyard. The prayer halls located below are only one story in height, so the upper arcades are merely for show.
They are also convenient bases for the superb tilework which envelops the courtyard and gives the whole mosque its distinction. The open qibla ayvan is a feature borrowed from the Yazd Friday mosque (nº. 43); its magnificent foundation inscription is the work of Gawhar Shad's talented son, Baysunghur.

52. Madrasa-yi Ghiyathiyya

Khargird, Iran, Iran/Persia | 15th Century

The architect of the Gawhar Shad mosque in Mashhad (n°. 51), Qavam al-Din of Shiraz, also designed this building (dated 1444), although it signaled the end of his career as he died during the course of its construction. The founder, the vizier Pir Ahmad Khvafi, hailed from the adjacent town, which may explain why its location is remote from the Timurid capital of Herat. The entrance incorporates a mosque and lecture hall, which are both topped by a lantern. The accompanying axial recesses in these rooms lend interesting ambiguities to their spatial quality, the whole leading to an innovative blending of the older tripartite division of cube, zone of transition, and dome.

53. Yeşil Jami‘

Bursa, Turkey, West Asia | 15th Century

This is the finest mosque of Bursa, the Ottoman capital from 1335–63. It remained unfinished after the death of its patron, Muhammad I (r. 1403–21). It is known as the Yeşil Jami‘ (the Green Mosque) on account of the color of its tiled dadoes. An inscription on its mihrab tells us that it was the work of an atelier from Tabriz in northwest Iran. The superb overglaze-painted tiles that it displays were first used extensively in Timur's Samarkand. Since almost nothing from central Iran has survived from this period, these tiles are invaluable in filling a gap in our knowledge of the development of tile decoration.

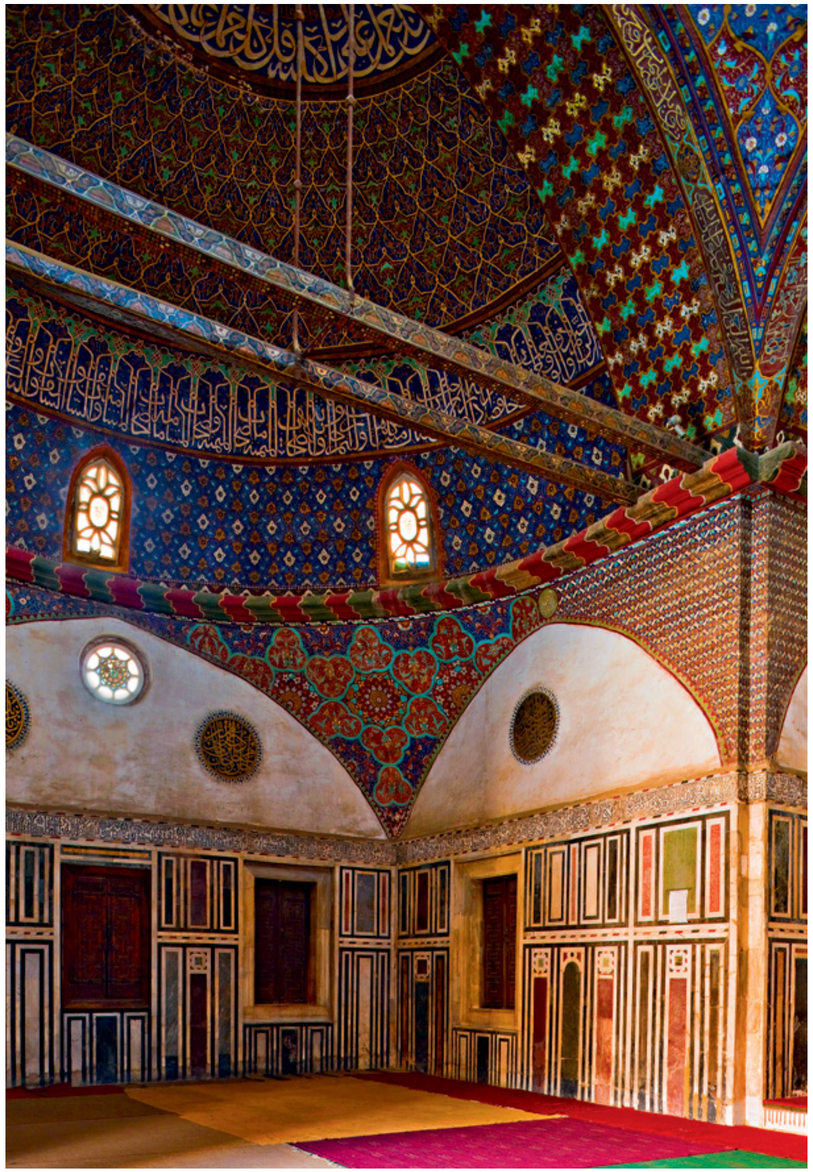
54. Blue Mosque

Tabriz, Iran, Iran/Persia | 15th Century

The mosque and its funerary rear dome chamber are the only remaining parts of the complex built by Khatun Jan Begum, the wife of Jahan Shah (r. 1449– 67), the ruler of the Kara Konyunlu dynasty whose capital was Tabriz. Its plan, unusual for Iranian architecture, is close to Ottoman prototypes such as the Bursa Yeşil Jami' (n°. 53). The outstanding tilework used many techniques, raised unglazed brick with tile mosaic on inscriptions on the entrance ayvan, underglaze-painted blue and white for majestic raised arabesques at the base of the corner minarets, and, a unique example in 15th century Iranian architecture, luster tiles at the base of the engaged columns at the entrance. Although severely damaged in an earthquake in the 18th century, the building has recently been thoroughly restored.

55. Sulayman Pasha Mosque

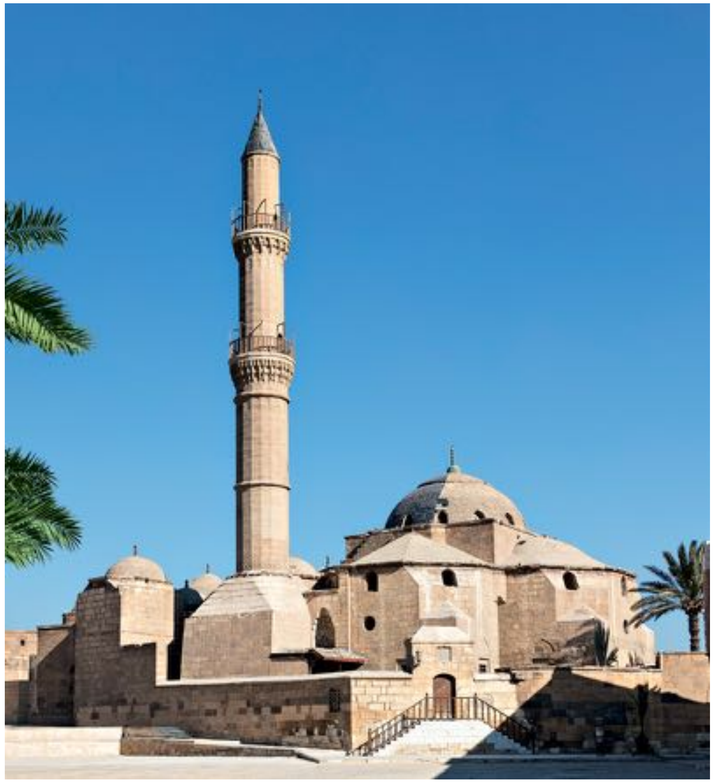
Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 16th Century



Sulayman Pasha (r. 1524–34) was one of the earliest Ottoman governors of Cairo. His mosque is located within the city's citadel and contains one of the finest surviving painted interiors of any Ottoman mosque in either Egypt or Turkey. The original decoration of most Turkish mosques from this period are usually hidden beneath nineteenth-century additions, but here, even if there might have been light restorations in the past, we still have essentially the initial decorative scheme. The T-shaped plan, consisting of a dome flanked by three semidomes, is derived from earlier Anatolian models. The interior, featuring a tall marble dado inlaid with colored glass pastes, was built in the Mamluk style, the dynasty that directly preceded the Ottomans in Cairo.

55. Sulayman Pasha Mosque

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 16th Century



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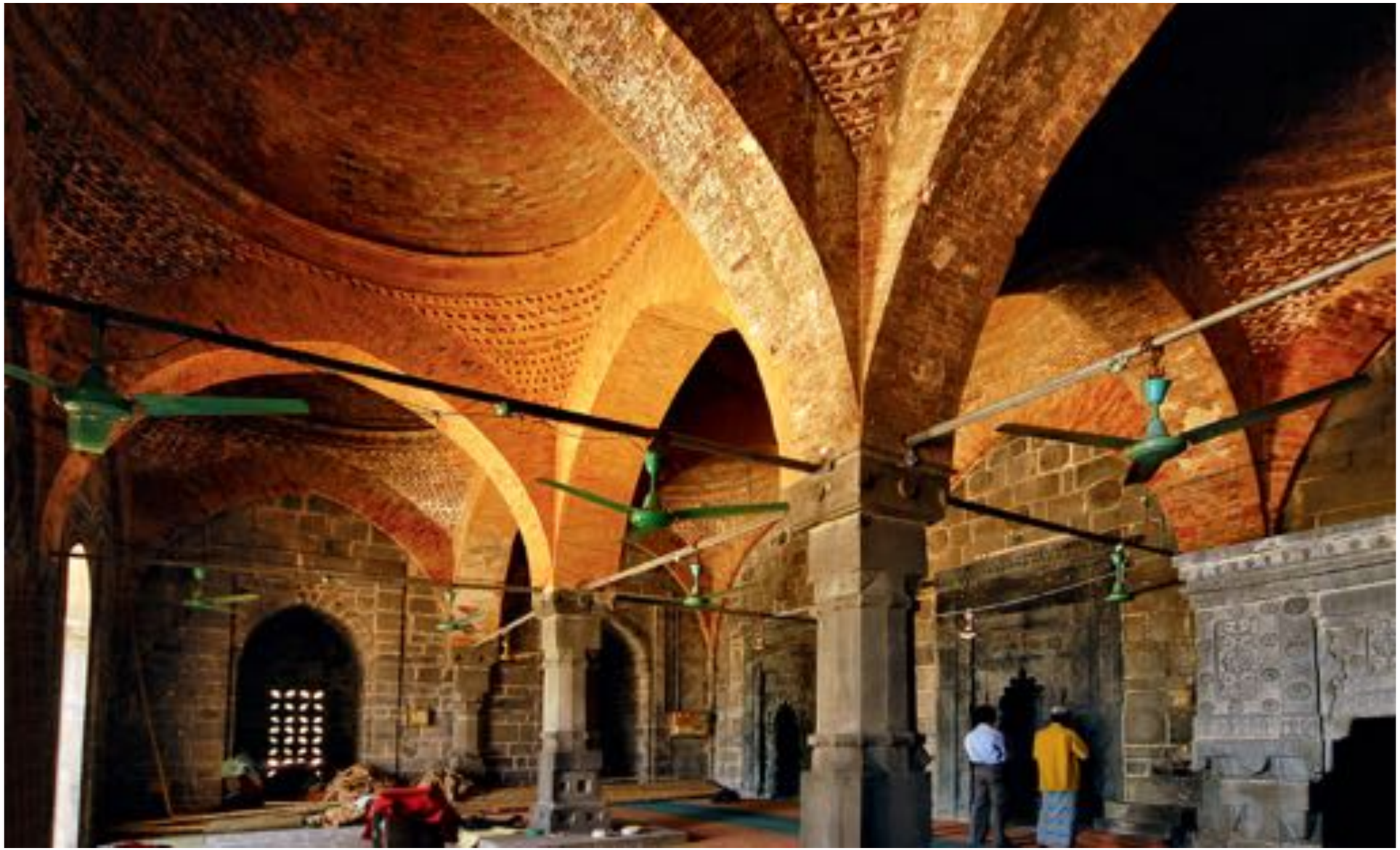
56. Kusumba Mosque

Kusumba, Bangladesh, East and Southeast Asia | 16th Century



Although this mosque was built in 1559 by Sulayman, a general of the short-lived Surid dynasty who ruled over northern central India, its plan and decoration are firmly rooted in the Bengali tradition. It is rectangular with six bays, three on the qibla side, each with a mihrab. A raised platform accessible at the north end of the qibla wall indicates that not only royalty, but high-ranking officials like the patron, were separated from commoners during prayer. Especially outstanding are the carved stone mihrabs, with polylobed arches supported on intricately carved stone pillars, and frames elaborately decorated with Hindu motifs such as the kalasha (vase) and sinuous fruit-laden vines.

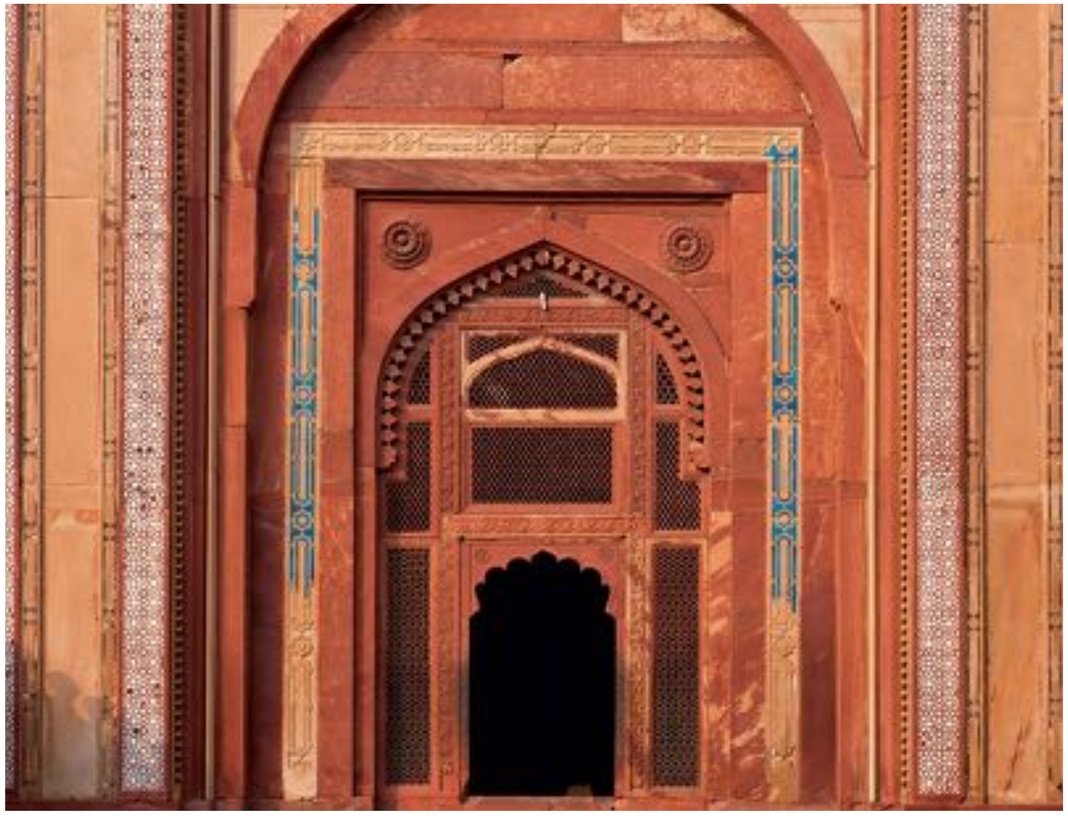
57. Niujie Mosque

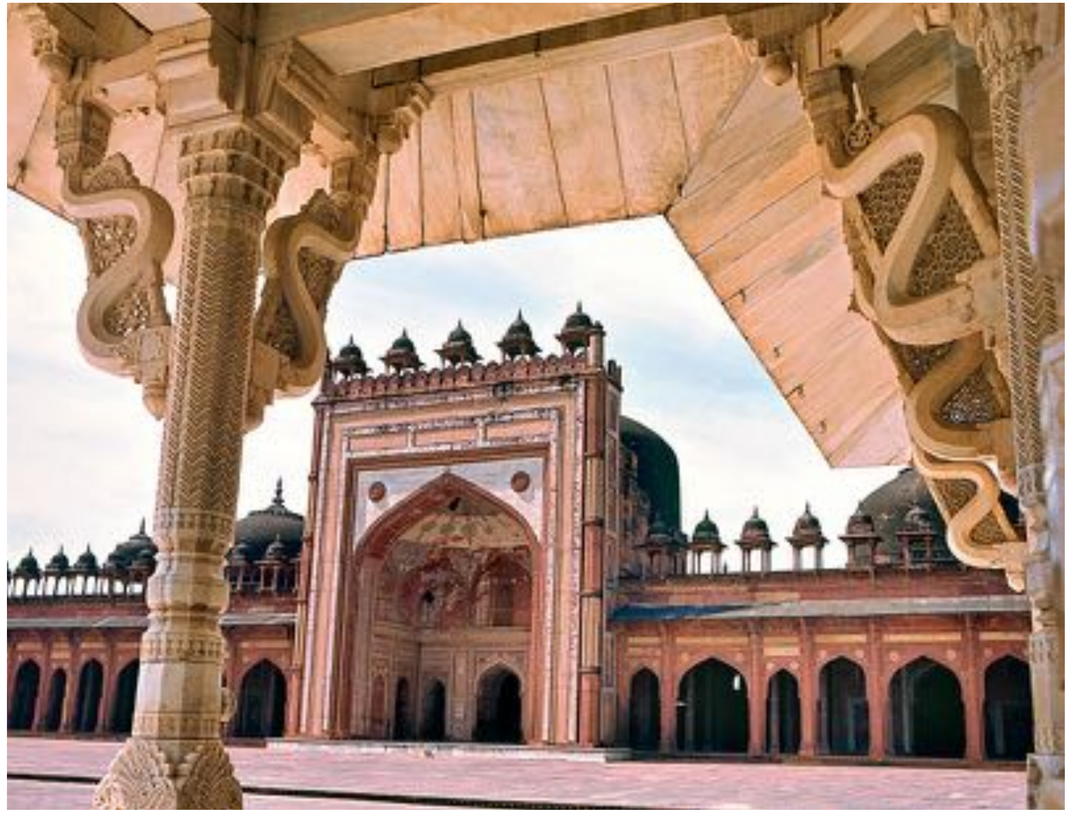
Beijing, China, East and Southeast Asia | 16th Century

This mosque, the oldest and largest in the capital, was greatly expanded from 1442 onward, and had its interior repainted as recently as 1978. The resulting riot of color, however, may not be too different from its original state. Like the Xi'an Mosque (nº. 47), it has a succession of courtyards which contain a multistory building that ostensibly served as a minaret. The mihrab, now painted in gold on a striking black background, is remarkable for the density of its calligraphy amidst typical Chinese chrysanthemums, also seen to great effect in the painted wood on the octagonal pyramidal dome above it.

58. Jami‘ Mosque

Fatehpur Sikri, India, East and Southeast Asia | 16th Century





High above the neighboring village, this mosque built in 1572 is entered through a towering gateway. A vast arcaded courtyard and a typical Iranian dome chamber are then preceded by an ayvan. The pride of place is occupied by the tomb of Salim Chishti, a Sufi sheikh frequented by the Mughal emperor Akbar, who had predicted the birth of Akbar's son. Built entirely of white marble, the tomb features a small central dome surrounded by an ambulatory, a plan of Gujarati origin. The outer walls consist of jalis, carved stone screens of extraordinary delicacy, which are linked to the deep eaves by serpentine brackets of equally fine workmanship.

59. Great Mosque of Banten

Banten, Indonesia, East and Southeast Asia | 16th Century

This mosque, built in 1565, is notable for its harmonious proportions, namely the balance between its five-tiered roof and the lower tiers which extend over 30 feet in diameter. This unusual width is owing in part to the inclusion of graves of local saints and members of the ruling family. The simplicity of its silhouette gives it a timeless elegance. The unusual minaret, which may also have doubled as a lighthouse, was probably designed by a Dutch adventurer and convert, Lucazoon Cardeel, who in 1680 was employed by the king to fortify his new palace adjacent to the mosque.

60. Şehzade Mosque

Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 16th Century

The death of Sultan Suleyman's son, Şehzade Mehmed, in 1543 gave the famed architect Sinan his first major commission. He deepened the supporting walls of the main dome chamber with buttresses at regular intervals to open up the intervening spaces and allow the use of many more windows than usual—an approach reminiscent of the principles of Gothic architecture, and one especially appropriate for the often cloudy climate of Istanbul. Another stylistic novelty was the treatment of the roofline. By increasing the height and diameter of the turrets that support the main dome, he created a smooth pyramidal-like ascent to the apex of the building.

61. Süleymaniye Mosque

Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 16th Century

Sultan Süleyman I (r. 1520–66), aptly named Suleyman the Magnificent, built the single most ambitious Ottoman complex, comprising some fourteen buildings of various functions. These buildings include four madrasas, a hospital, and a caravansaray, all accommodated ingeniously on the sloping site around the mosque. Set on a hill overlooking the harbor, this mosque, completed in 1557, still dominates the skyline of the city. Its architect, Sinan, reproduced the vaulting scheme of the Greek Orthodox basilica Haghia Sophia (p. 23) with its two axial flanking domes. At ground level, however, the vast interior was adjusted to accommodate the requirements of Islamic ritual, offering the maximum uninterrupted space possible for the faithful to line up in prayer. Unlike the more dimly lit Haghia Sophia, light floods the interior of this mosque through the myriad windows on every side.

62. Rüstem Pasha Mosque

Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 16th Century

The complex of the Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha was finished not long after his death in 1561. In the past, the Ottoman mosque's relatively simple architectural lines—characterized by a dome on an octagonal base—seemed to be compromised by the very thing that had given rise to the building's fame: the lavish revetment of Iznik tiles. Now, thanks to the recent removal of the European Baroque–style painting from the building's interior, the tiles provide an effective contrast to the plain walls of the upper structure, their underglaze tomato-red and vibrant blue arabesques gleaming with intensity against the pristine white background.

63. Selimiye Mosque

Edirne, Turkey, Europe | 16th Century

Commissioned by the Ottoman Sultan Selim II (r. 1577–74), this mosque is the culmination of Ottoman architecture, with its 105-foot-wide dome crowning the city of Edirne and the legacy of its great architect Sinan. In his autobiography, he specifically mentions that the dome of the Haghia Sophia (p. 25) had been cited by "the architects of the infidels" as one that Muslims could never surpass. Here he indeed succeeded in building one of greater diameter. The soaring minarets at the corners of the mosque give the structure a crown-like appearance, but the surprise of the interior is not so much the impressive size of the dome as the astonishing influx of light at every level.

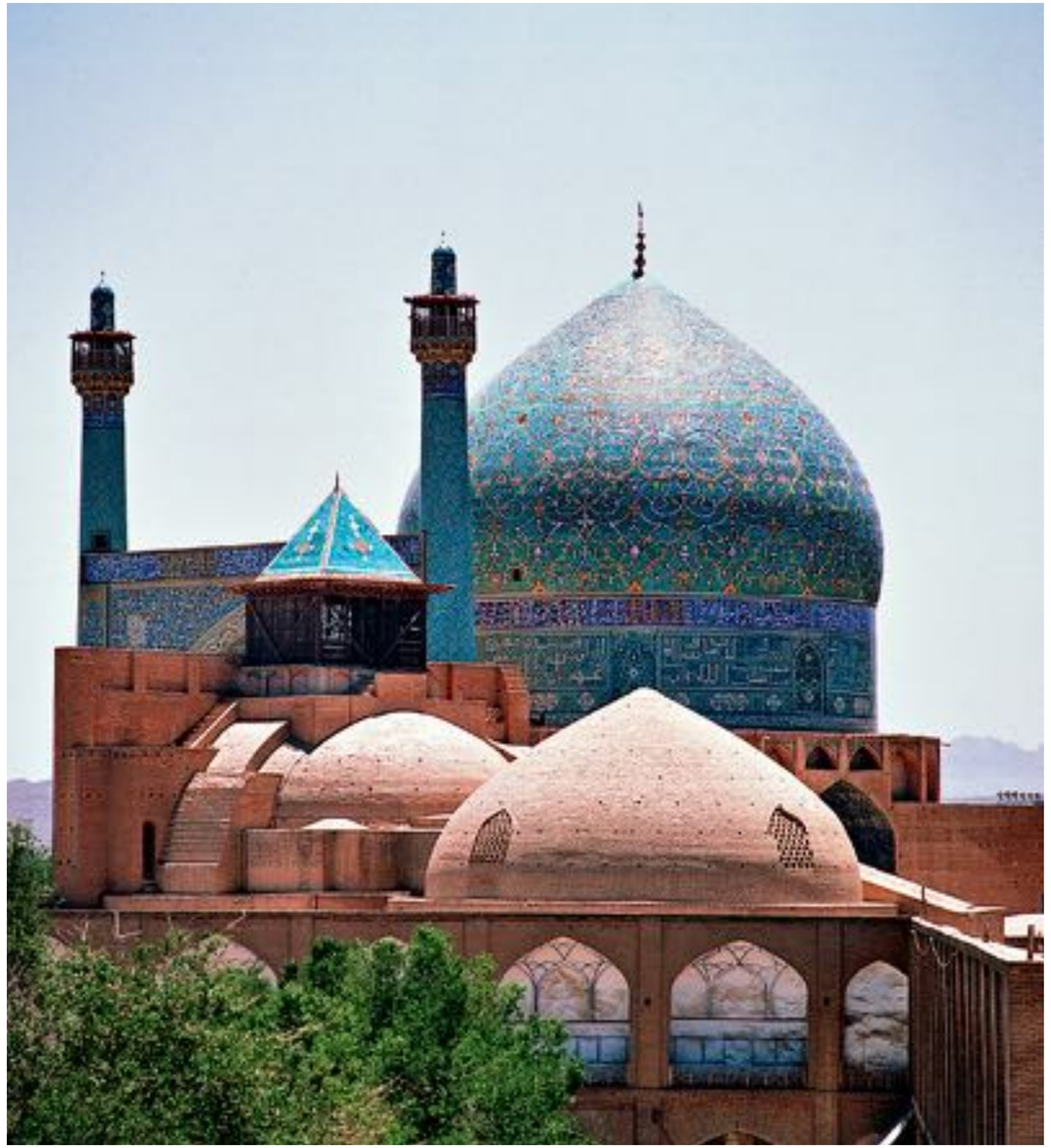
64. Sheikh Lutfallah Mosque

Isfahan, Iran, Iran/Persia | 16th Century

Tiled as it is both inside and out, this is arguably the ultimate refinement of the Iranian dome chamber. Built from 1593–1618 to adorn Shah Abbas's new maidan, it emphasizes the square's deviance from the direction of the qibla by placing the dome to one side of the entrance ayvan. The dome's exterior is the first example where tiles feature decorative arabesques instead of the previously popular geometric patterns. By the time visitors have negotiated the dark and twisting entrance passage, the burst of color that awaits them is even more striking.The twisted turquoise ribs that frame the squinches blend the cube and zone of transition into one. The diminishing lozenges of the dome accentuate its verticality and culminate in a brilliant tiled sunburst at the apex.

65. Shah Mosque

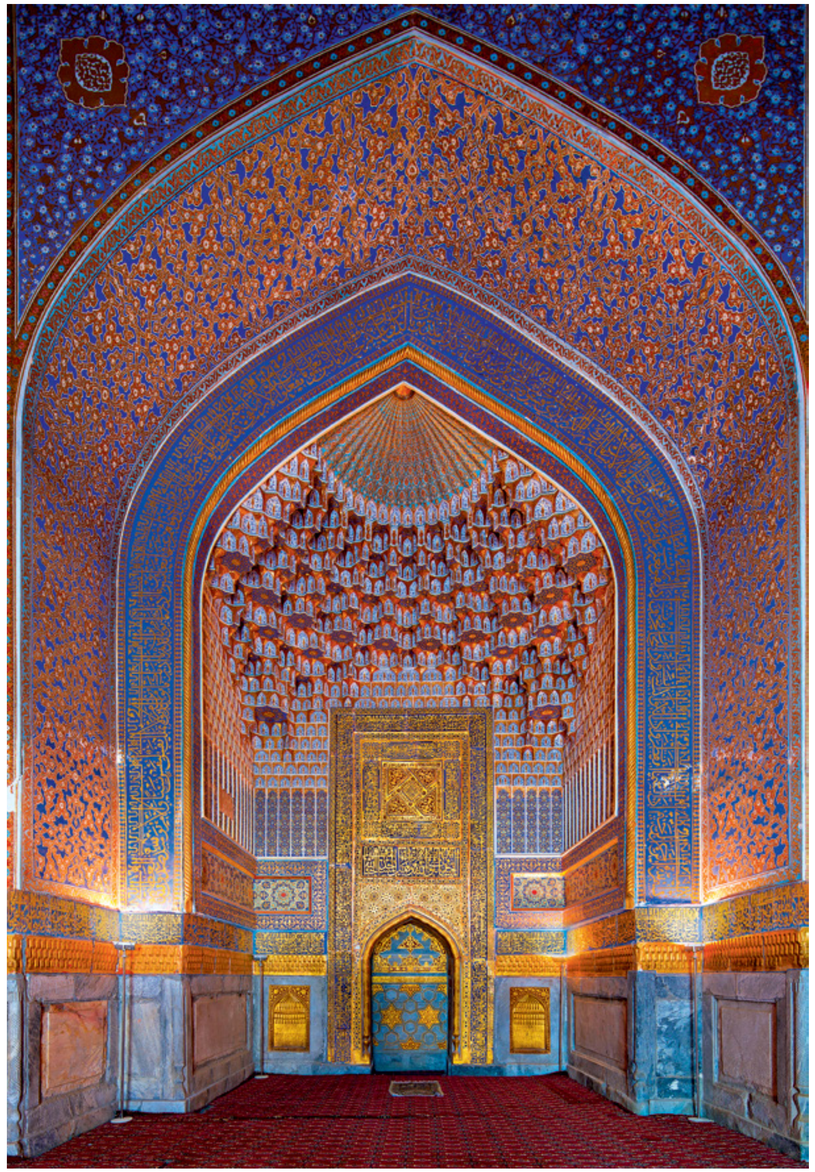
Isfahan, Iran, Iran/Persia | 16th Century



This ambitious project was the culmination of the royal square ordered by the Safavid Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629). His mosque, begun in 1611 and still uncompleted on his death in 1629, is the pinnacle of Safavid architecture. Its difference in orientation to the adjacent square may have even been an advantage, as the twist in axis ensures that views of the soaring qibla dome chamber (right) with its spectacular tiled arabesques were not blocked by the towering entrance ayvan. The unusual scheme of placing dome chambers behind the side ayvans was borrowed from Timur's Bibi Khanum mosque (nº. 46). The central courtyard contains a large pool (left) whose tranquility permits reflections of the surrounding arcades. The revetment of this enormous space with overglaze-painted tiles was one of the reasons delaying completion of the building.

66. Tila Kari Madrasa

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Central Asia | 17th Century



This multifunctional complex was commissioned in 1660 by the Uzbek general Alchin Yalantush Bahadur, the same patron of the Shir Dar madrasa which stands adjacent in Samarkand's most famous public square, the Registan. The portal is just as grand as that of its predecessor, but much of the interior, apart from the domed mosque, is less exciting and features only one story of cells around three sides of the courtyard. The building became Samarkand's congregational mosque after the Bibi Khanum (nº. 46) had fallen into ruins. The name Tila Kari, worked with gold, refers to the lavish gilt painting on raised stucco that is located within the dome chamber. The painting was recently restored, which permits the richness of the original designs to be seen once again.

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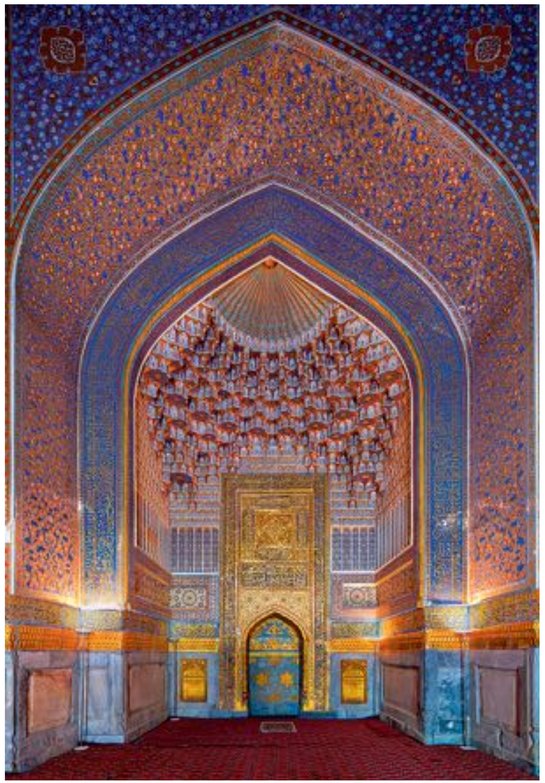

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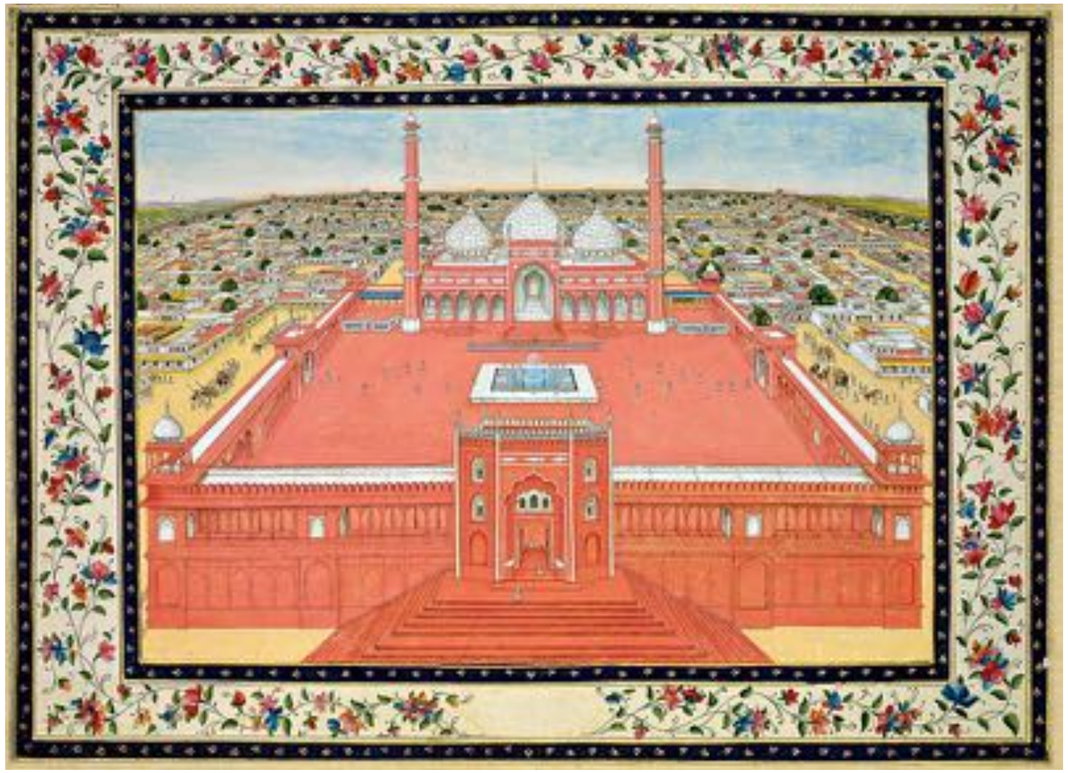
67. Jami‘ Masjid of Delhi

Delhi, India, East and Southeast Asia | 17th Century

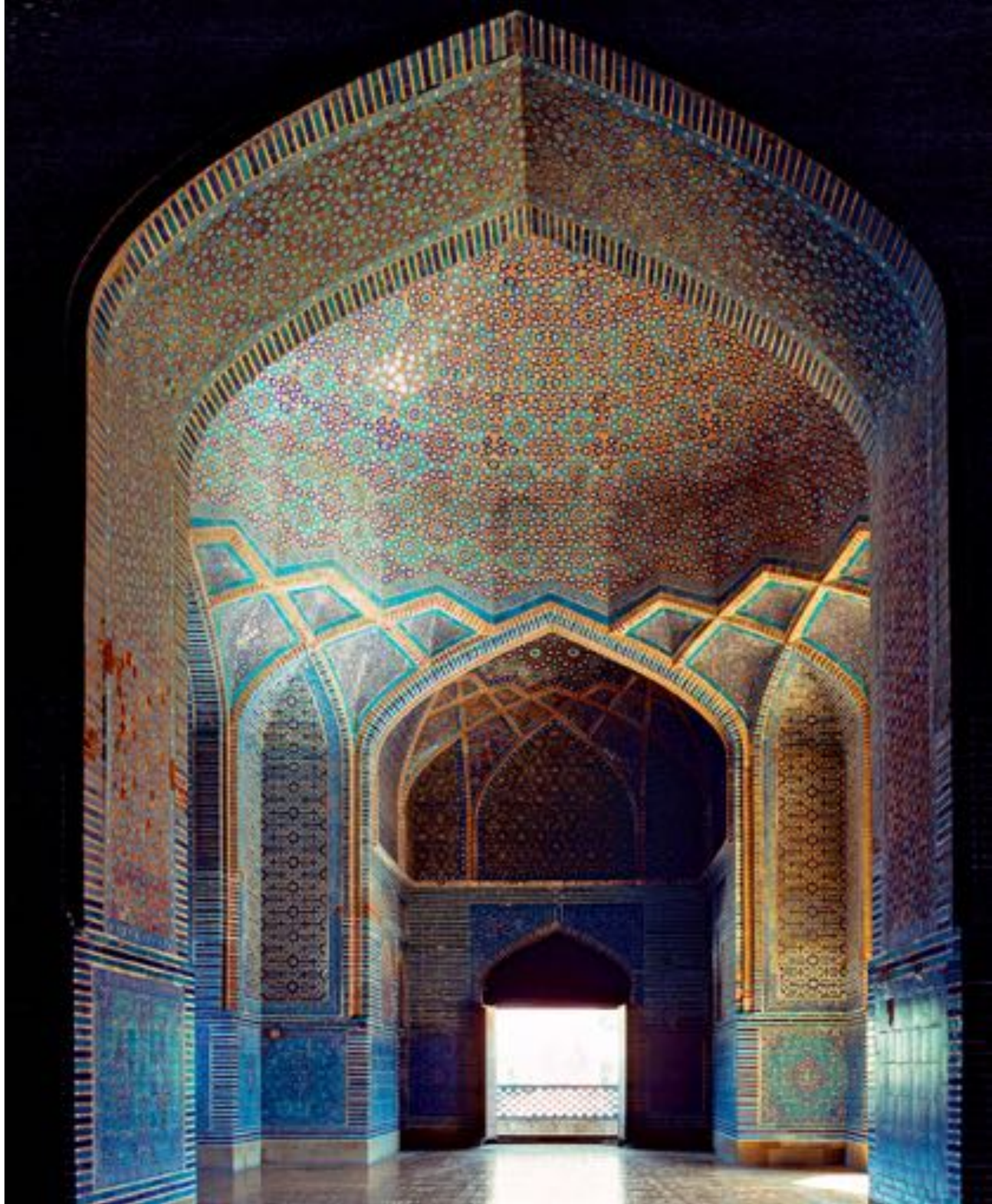


The new capital of the Mughal emperor in Delhi, Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57), was first concentrated on his imperial residence, the Red Fort, whose walls encompass the Moti Masjid, or "Pearl Mosque" (n°. 69), and later from 1650–56, on this imposing new mosque. Like the Jami‘ Masjid of Fathepur Sikri, the former Mughal capital, the structure has a grand entranceway that is approached by multiple flights of stairs leading to a raised platform. The prayer hall is flanked by imposing minarets and capped with three bulbous marble domes. Inlaid marble panels at the top of the smaller entrances to the prayer halls contain Persian verses lauding the emperor's generosity and the magnificence of his construction.

68. Jami‘ Mosque

Thatta, Pakistan, East and Southeast Asia | 17th Century

The Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–577) may never have visited this splendid courtyard mosque, dated 1647, but it is believed he ordered it to be built in thanks for the city having sheltered him during his earlier exile. Its plan is modelled on Timurid prototypes, as is its extensive use of tiling, but the tiles themselves are far removed from Timurid examples. The extensive use of underglaze-painted blue and white tiles combined with brick drew on the pre-Mughal architecture of the Punjab, where stone was rare and where this decorative technique enlivened such masterpieces as the tomb of Rukn-i Alam (c. 1335) at Multan.



69. Moti Masjid

Delhi, India, East and Southeast Asia | 17th Century

Auranzeb (r. 1658–1707) had been on the Mughal throne for only five years of his long reign when he ordered this personal oratory to be built beside his residence in the Red Fort. The structure's intimate size, exquisite materials, and decorative beauty justify its nickname as the "Pearl Mosque." Built all of marble, with discreet inlay of precious stones, it features a small courtyard leading into a prayer hall of three domes, each with a delicate bulbous shape. The poylobed arch motif seen at the entrance is echoed throughout, including its use at the prayer niches on the floor and on the blind arches on the walls.

“I love you when
you bow in your mosque,
kneel in your temple,
pray in your church.
For you and I are sons
of one religion, and
it is the spirit.”

Kahlil Gibran

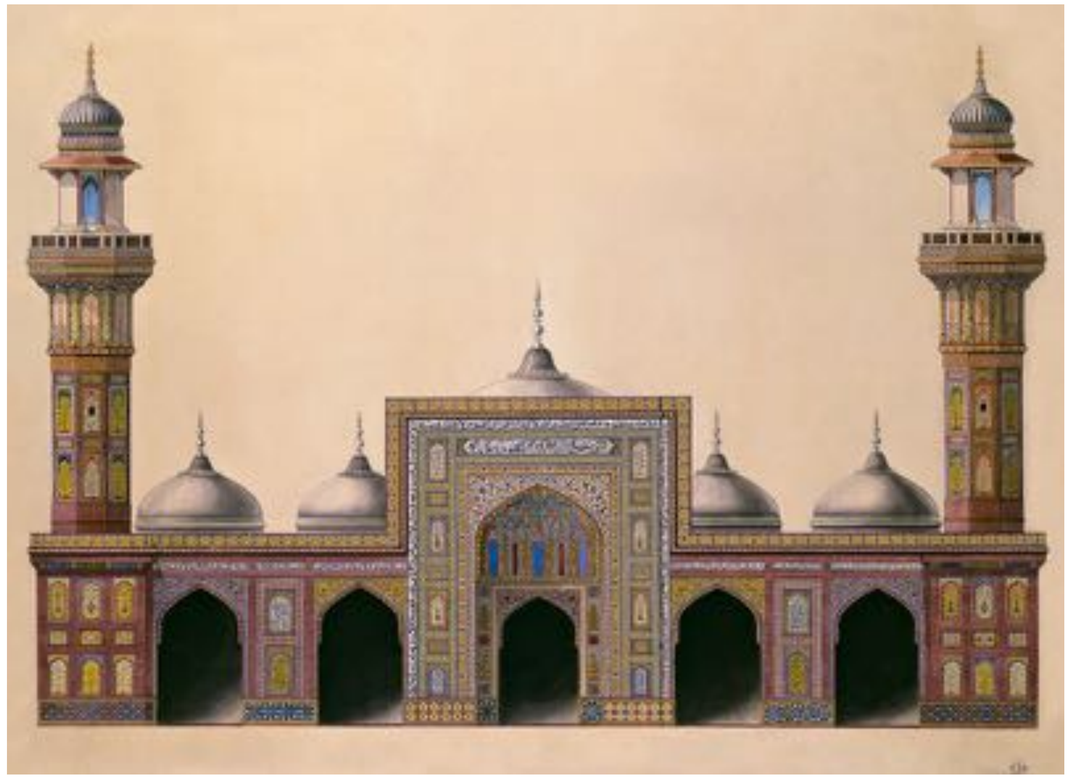
70. Badshahi Mosque

Lahore, Pakistan, East and Southeast Asia | 17th Century

One can hardly imagine a greater contrast to the famed “Pearl Mosque” (nº. 69) than this congregational mosque built for the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1674. It is clearly modelled on Shah Jahan’s Delhi Jami‘ (nº. 67), with a similar three-domed prayer hall and combination of marble and sandstone, but built on an even larger scale. It also adds distinguishing features such as the four tall minarets at the corners of the enclosure, which stand in striking contrast to the shorter ones that frame the prayer hall. It uses carved stucco to great effect in the interior of the prayer hall, instead of the sandstone at the Delhi Jami‘.

71. Wazir Khan Mosque

Lahore, Pakistan, East and Southeast Asia | 17th Century



Not only the governor of Lahore, but a notable physician at the Mughal court, Wazir Khan commissioned this building in 1635 to become the new Friday mosque of the city. Its qibla area encompasses five domes, each elaborately colored with painted plaster in the interior. As with Fathepur Sikri (nº. 58), homage is paid to an earlier holy man at the site—here the saint Miran Badshah—by incorporating his grave within the courtyard. The mosque's status is proclaimed by the four minarets at the corners of the courtyard, but is especially enhanced by the quality of its tile mosaic panels that include naturalistic vegetation in a range of bright new colors.

72. Sultan Ahmed (Blue) Mosque

Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 17th Century

Despite complaints by the authorities that his crumbling Ottoman empire would never be able to finance this vast undertaking, Sultan Ahmad I (r. 1603- 17) persevered with his plans to create the first great imperial mosque in more than four decades and managed to finish the complex after seven years in the last year of his reign. Because of its prestigious location next to the pre-Islamic hippodrome, vaults had to be erected on top of the adjacent former Byzantine palace. The design follows the plan of Sinan's Şehzade mosque in the same city, though greatly increasing its size and the number of its minarets to a total of six. The mosque's nickname comes from the blue stenciled painting on the interior, but more impressive are the Iznik tiles that were appropriated from a number of earlier buildings at a time when their quality was much higher.

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73. Amin Mosque

Turfan, China, East and Southeast Asia | 18th Century

Apart from having a gigantic tower, modeled on that of the Kalan Mosque of Bukhara (nº. 24), this is one of the few mosques in this book to be entirely devoid of decoration. Although supposedly built as a madrasa by Hakim Sulayman to commemorate his father Amin Khvaja, it looks more like a fortified caravansary. This may indeed have been its origin, as suggested by its lack of inscriptions and its location in the countryside beyond the city which is famous for its trade on the Silk Route. The central space, supported by wooden columns, was added after the original construction in 1777 at an undated time, and the conversion of the courtyard into a prayer hall is more evidence of the flexibility of mosques, even if the building was not designed to be one from the beginning.

74. Nuruosmaniye Mosque

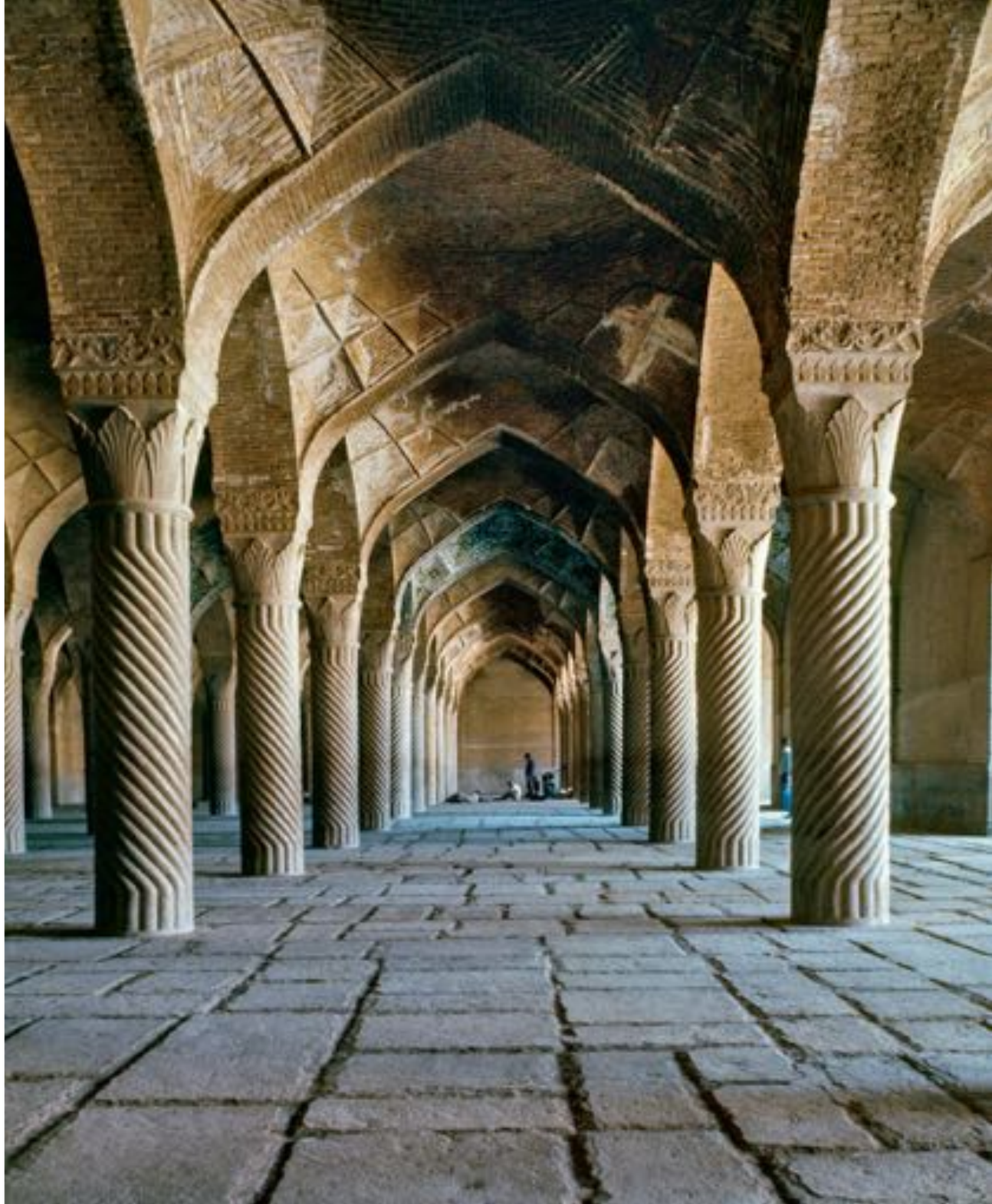
Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 18th Century

This mosque is an interesting fusion of classical Ottoman ideals and Baroque style. It was commissioned under Mahmud I but not completed until the reign of his brother and successor, Osman III, in 1755. A new U-shaped polygonal courtyard precedes the single dome chamber prayer hall. The tradition of lightness in the interior is upheld by providing as many windows as possible, while the encircling inscription in gold on black serves to unite the space as a whole. The use of undulating Baroque moldings on the exterior successfully translates a classical entablature into a more fluid form.

75. Vakil Mosque

Shiraz, Iran, Iran/Persia | 18th Century

Vakil means "regent," which was the title used by Karim Khan (r. 1751-79), who founded both the Zand Dynasty, which barely lasted beyond his death, and this mosque in 1766—the only major one built in Iran during the 18th century. As later inscriptions attest, much of the tilework was replaced after the earthquakes of 1824 and 1853. Unlike most major earlier Iranian mosques, this mosque has only two ayvans instead of the usual four, and rather than containing a dome chamber in the qibla prayer hall, returns to the use of the earlier simple hypostyle form. This prayer hall, five bays deep, is the glory of the mosque, containing forty-eight twisted marble columns which were specially obtained from as far away as Azerbaijan.



76. Al-Rifa'i Mosque

Cairo, Egypt, Africa | 19th Century

Named after the tomb of a Sufi saint enclosed within, this mosque was founded in 1869 by Khushyar Hanem, the mother of Khedive Isma'il, the viceroy of Egypt under nominal Turkish rule. Progress on the construction of the mosque stopped when Isma'il abdicated in 1880, and only resumed again in 1905. The mosque is the earliest major monument built in Egypt in the neo-Mamluk style and symbolizes khedival independence from Ottoman rule. Although the proportions of the buildings are sometimes awkward, it impresses with the superb design and craftsmanship of its decorative details. These include the exterior carved stonework and metal window grilles and, in the interior, the fine inlaid marble dadoes and arch soffits carved with stucco arabesques.

77. Great Mosque of Djenné

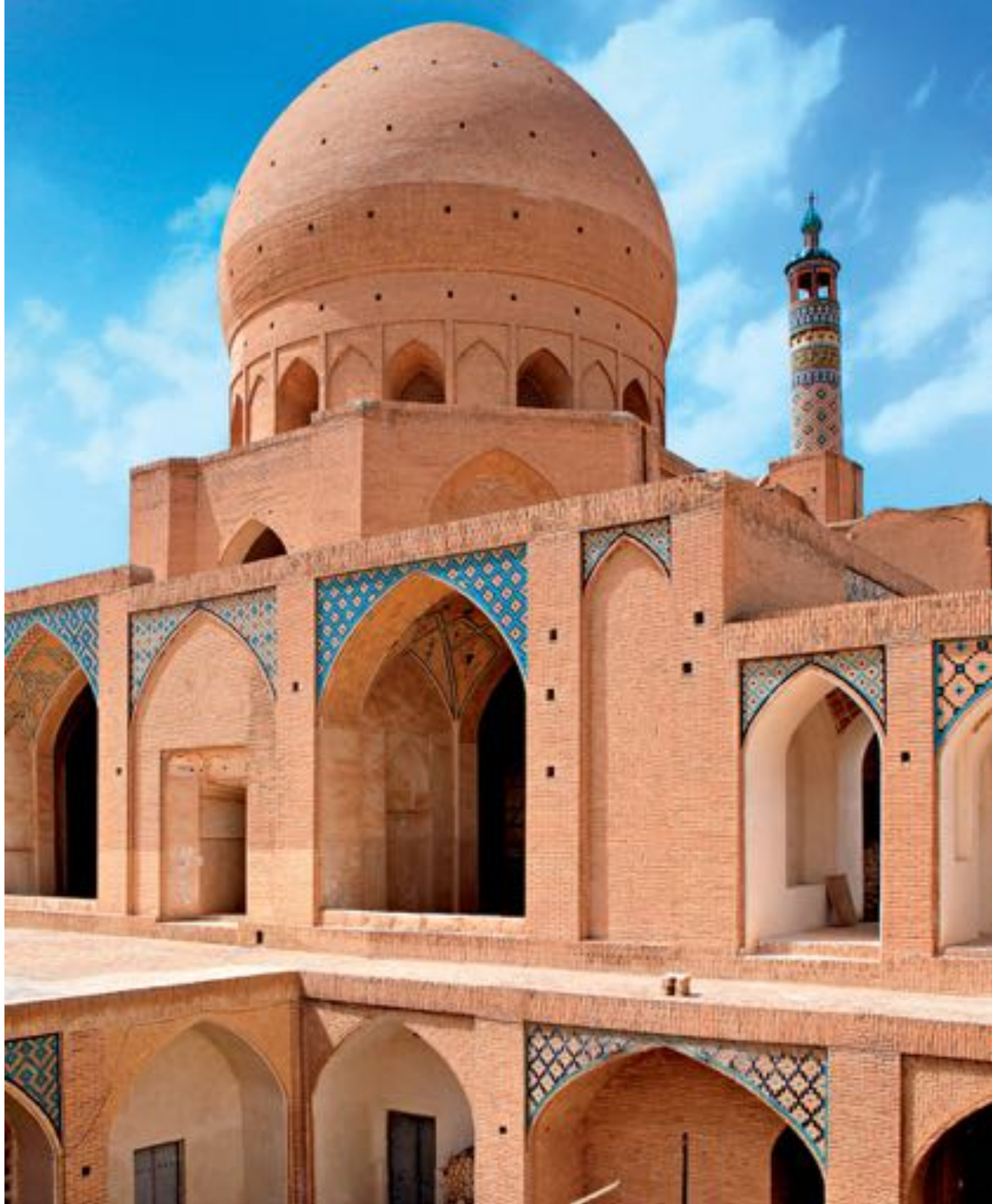
Djenné, Mali, Africa | 19th Century, 1907

One of the most original mosque styles is exemplified by this building. A previous structure is believed to have existed on this spot as early as the 13th century, but the current one, built in 1906, may not be all that different from its predecessors. Its serried ranks of projecting palm beams, crenellations, and pilasters give it the impression of a fortress. Because mud brick is used as a building material throughout, the interior of the prayer hall called for ninety closely spaced piers, which support low pointed arches. This almost claustrophobic space has limited sight lines and little light, but the advantage is that it provides wonderful insulation, keeping the interior cool all year round.

78. Agha Bozorg Mosque

Kashan, Iran, Iran/Persia | 19th Century

This building was erected in 1845 for one of the most important religious scholars of the age, Mahdi Naraqi. It is unique not just for combining the functions of madrasa and mosque, but for its unusual plan. An entrance ayvan leads to a large patio overlooking a sunken courtyard for students, at the end of which is a large dome chamber preceded by another ayvan. In addition to being used as a place for prayer, the large dome chamber has an exceptionally open area that might have served as a Husayniyya where Shi'a mourning ceremonies were performed.



79. Great Mosque of Saint Petersburg

Saint Petersburg, Russia, West Asia | 20th Century

Originally planned at the time of the last czar, Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917), this was not completed until 1920, after the Russian Revolution. Many early 20th century mosques featured revivalist styles, and this one is no exception. Since it was financed by the Uzbek emir of Bukhara, the architect Nikolai Vasilyev borrowed heavily from one of the major buildings of Uzbekistan, the Gur-i Mir of Samarkand, for the main dome. The exterior tilework is indeed the most successful aspect of the building, which in other areas contrasts rusticated and ashlar stonework, as on the lozenges of the minaret.

80. Abu'l-'Abbas al-Mursi Mosque

Alexandria, Egypt, Africa | 20th Century

Part of King Fouad's (r. 1922–1936) ambitious urban plan to develop the old Ottoman district of the city, this mosque was created by the Italian architects Valziana and Rossi, who worked for Egypt's Ministry of Endowments. The present building (erected 1929–45) replaced a smaller shrine built in 1775 by a Maghribi merchant in honor of Abu'l-'Abbas al-Mursi, one of the country's most important Sufis. The plan features a dome superimposed on a central octagon surrounded by a larger octagon and was probably inspired by the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (visible in nº. 4). Royal patronage ensured that no expense was to be spared on the building and was reflected in its monumentality. It is distinguished by its immense size, as well as its attention to decorative detail.

“This visible world is a trace of that invisible one and the former follows the latter like a shadow.”

Al-Ghazali

81. Great Mosque of Riyadh

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Arabia | 20th Century

This mosque was erected in 1995 as part of a redevelopment of the old city center of Riyadh. In keeping with this, it is not isolated, but rather integrated into the new urban fabric. The architect took his inspiration from the traditional architecture of the area, maintaining its emphasis on a hypostyle prayer hall preceded by an arcaded courtyard. Although the scale is monumental, decoration is kept to a minimum, employing the triangular arch form on different scales. Thanks to the use of modern material features such as the traditional flat roof, many skylights have been incorporated, greatly reducing the need for artificial light in the interior.

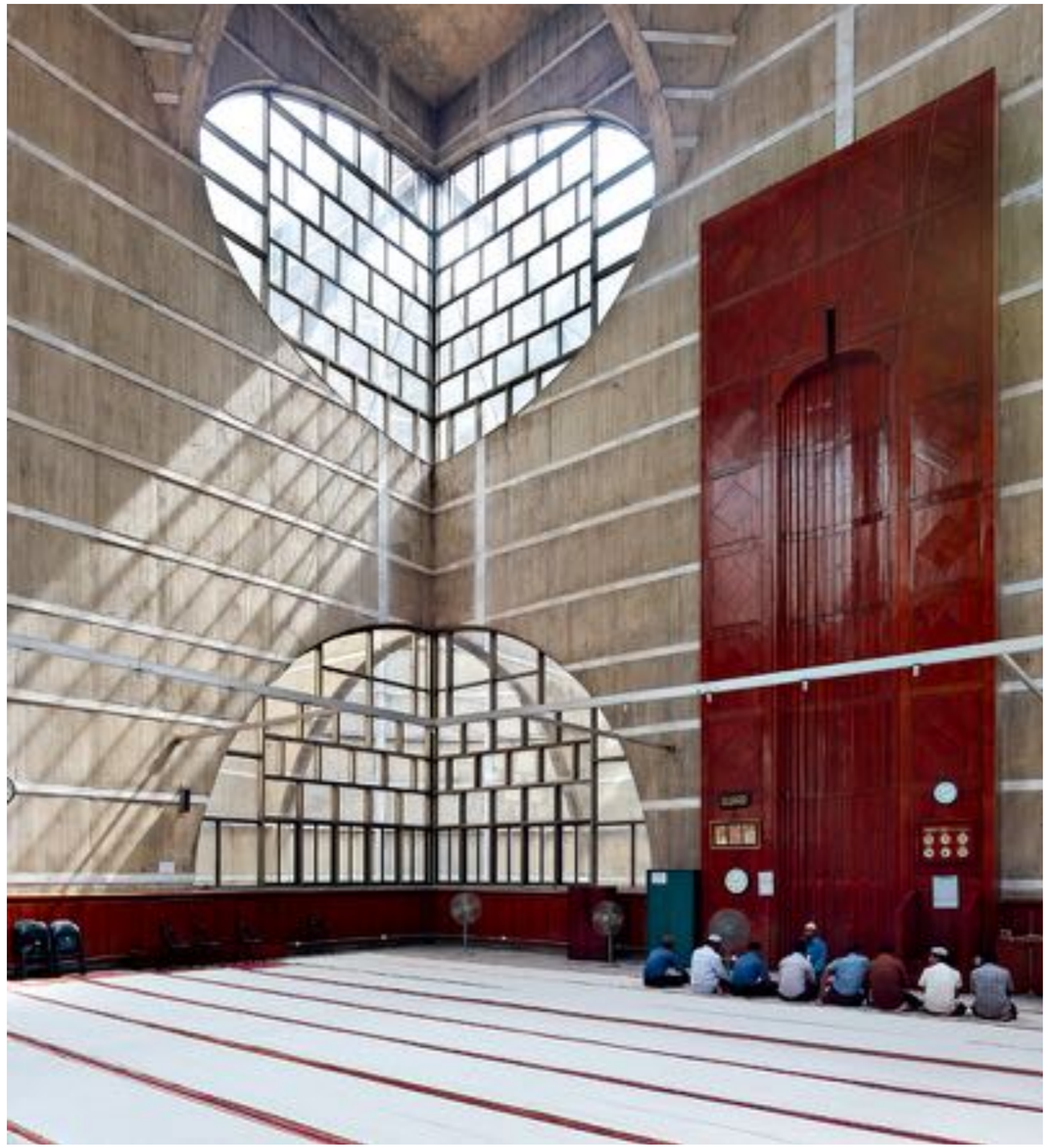
82. Hassan II Mosque

Casablanca, Morocco, Africa | 20th Century

This colossal undertaking on the shore's edge represents two recurring themes in modern state mosques: conservatism and scale. The conservatism expressed in the design reflects a continuation in the design of religious buildings in the Maghreb and the desire of the patron, King Hassan II (r. 1961-1999), to be seen as upholding the traditions of his forebears who ruled the country since the 16th century. The gigantic scale mirror's the patron's wish for prestige and for recognition as the spiritual and secular head of his community. Unfortunately the scale of the hypostyle building, with an interior height of over 210 feet and a 650 foot high minaret, dwarfs the individual into insignificance. The most successful aspect of the building, designed by French architect Michel Pinseau, is arguably the superb detailing of the stucco and tile work which exemplifies the finest traditional Moroccan craftsmanship.

83. National Assembly Mosque

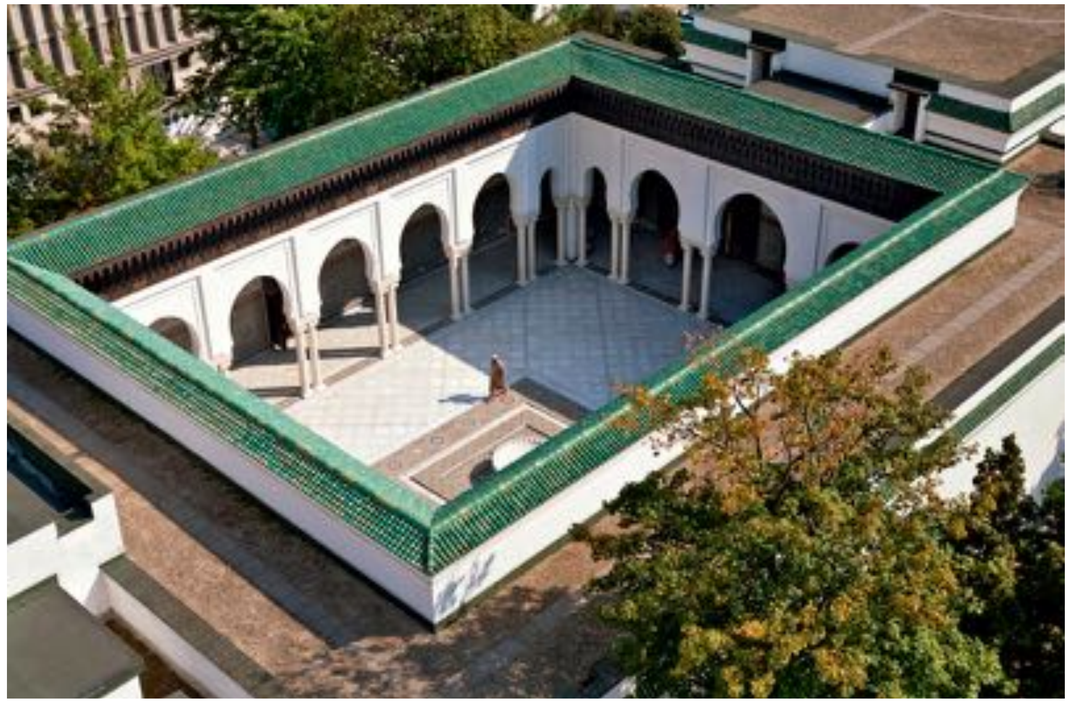
Dhaka, Bangladesh, East and Southeast Asia | 20th Century



This mosque was over twenty years in the making, finally completed in 1982. Its final design conception, by the noted architect Louis Kahn, was as a prayer space for those working within the National Assembly. It is situated above the monumental entrance, slightly askew to the main building to highlight the differing qibla alignment. Its interior repeats the basic semicircular forms of the polylobed entrance bastions, here used at ground and ceiling level to allow abundant natural light. The emphasis on simplicity of form is underlined by the bands of marble separating the reinforced concrete panels, softened by the lofty teak mihrab decorated with with lozenges.

84. Grand Mosque of Paris

Paris, France, Europe | 20th Century



The death of more than 100,000 Muslims fighting on behalf of France during World War I prompted the French government to finance the building of an Islamic center, completed in 1926, at the heart of the nation's capital. Its style is derived from the medieval religious architecture of France's North African colonies, with the main prayer hall at a forty-five-degree angle to the street and other buildings at the center. The architects decided to make a virtue out of a necessity by emphasizing the prayer hall with a dome. This is rarely found in the Maghrib, except in mausoleums or in palaces, as at the Alambra. Here, unfortunately, its central placement leaves the mihrab in obscurity.

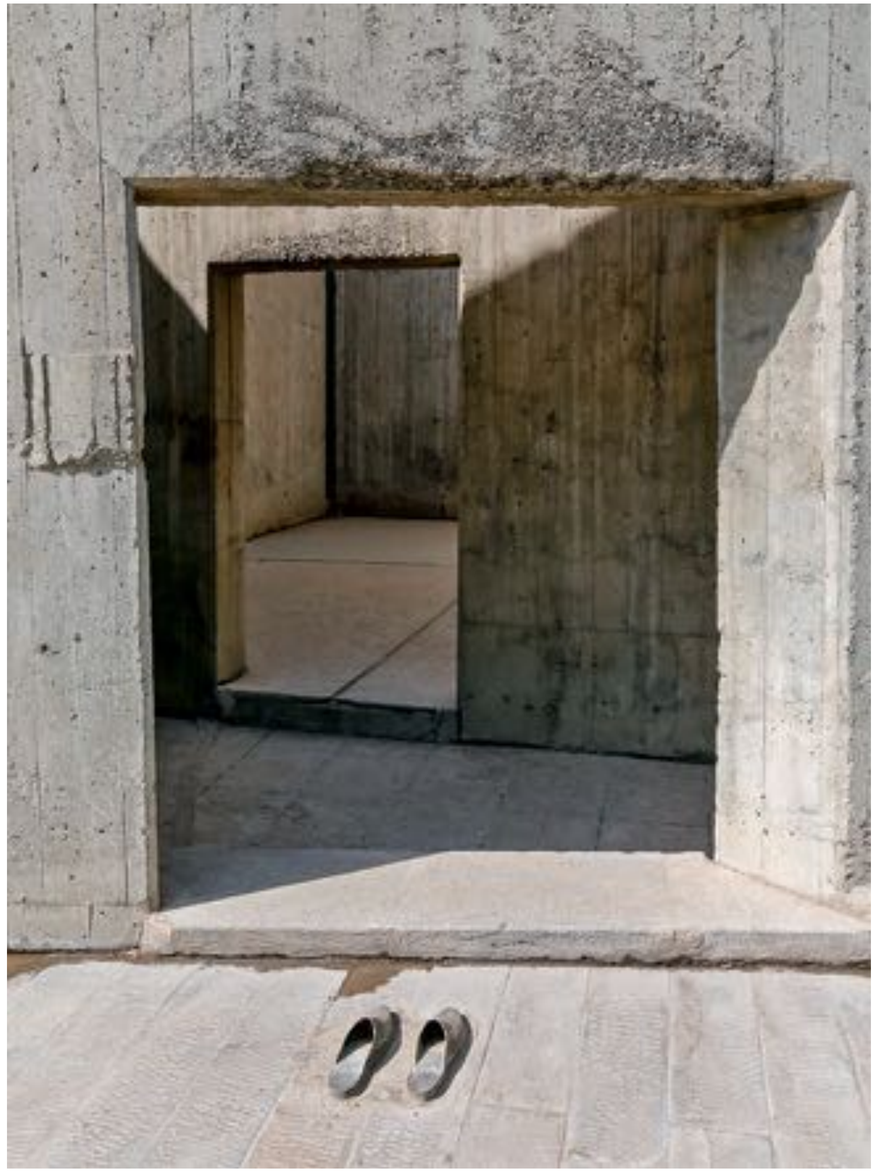
85. Grand Mosque of Kuwait

Kuwait City, Kuwait, Arabia | 20th Century

This mosque was the subject of an international competition in the 1980s, with the brief that its design be in the Arab-Islamic style. The architect, Mohamed Makiya from Iraq, achieved this mainly through the use of ornamentation on the interior of the building, completed in 1986, although the client ultimately overrode the wishes of the architect by adding interior decoration by Morrocan, Egyptian, and Indian craftsmen that he considered excessive. The exterior is more sober, with the domed cube of the prayer hall dominating the preceding portico and courtyard.

86. Namaz Khana

Tehran, Laleh Park, Iran/Persia | 20th Century



This building, which literally means the "house of prayer," was built in 1997 by Kamran Diba, the architect of the nearby Museum of Modern Art, to provide a prayer space in the adjacent park for passersby. The form couldn't be simpler: two cubes, the outer parallel to its access path provides a shield from street noise and adds privacy, while the inner prayer space is oriented at an oblique angle toward the qibla. The traditional mihrab has been replaced by a distant sculpture of a hand mounted on a pole, on which "Allah" is silhouetted, which can be seen through a narrow vertical opening in the cubes. The building's marriage of utmost simplicity, like the unroofed concrete cubes, with a sophisticated rethinking of basic elements such as the mihrab, makes it a landmark in contemporary mosque design.

87. Ghadir Mosque

Tehran, Iran, Iran/Persia | 20th Century

Commissioned in 1980 by residents of the neighborhood in which it sits, the mosque, completed in 1987, and its adjacent Islamic center were created to serve local needs. The complex contrasts strongly with the surrounding buildings by using brick and tile that hark back to earlier Iranian traditions. The variation in its qibla axis from the neighbouring street is expressed clearly in the projecting mihrab niche. However, the dominant and most successful element of the mosque is the large dome chamber, composed of an unusual series of rotated diminishing squares. The prominent use of Kufic inscriptions in unglazed brick and blue tiles reaches a crescendo in the names of God within the nested squares that make up the interior of the dome.

88. Arcapita Mosque

Manama, Bahrain, Arabia | 21st Century

Though a concrete cubic shell is at the core of this award-winning mosque, its severity is tempered by the use of a glass base and internal and external stone cladding. In this contemporary approach to Islamic architecture, completed in 2011, the triangular windows can be seen again on the adjacent 164-foot-high minaret, whose crowning crescent makes the function of the building unmistakable. The mosque incorporates an unobtrusive women's mezzanine prayer space. This does not detract from the spaciousness of the main prayer hall, which is itself illuminated by diffused light from the forty offset windows and a perimeter skylight. The qibla wall, constructed mainly of roughly finished natural stone, preserves the theme of unadorned simplicity.

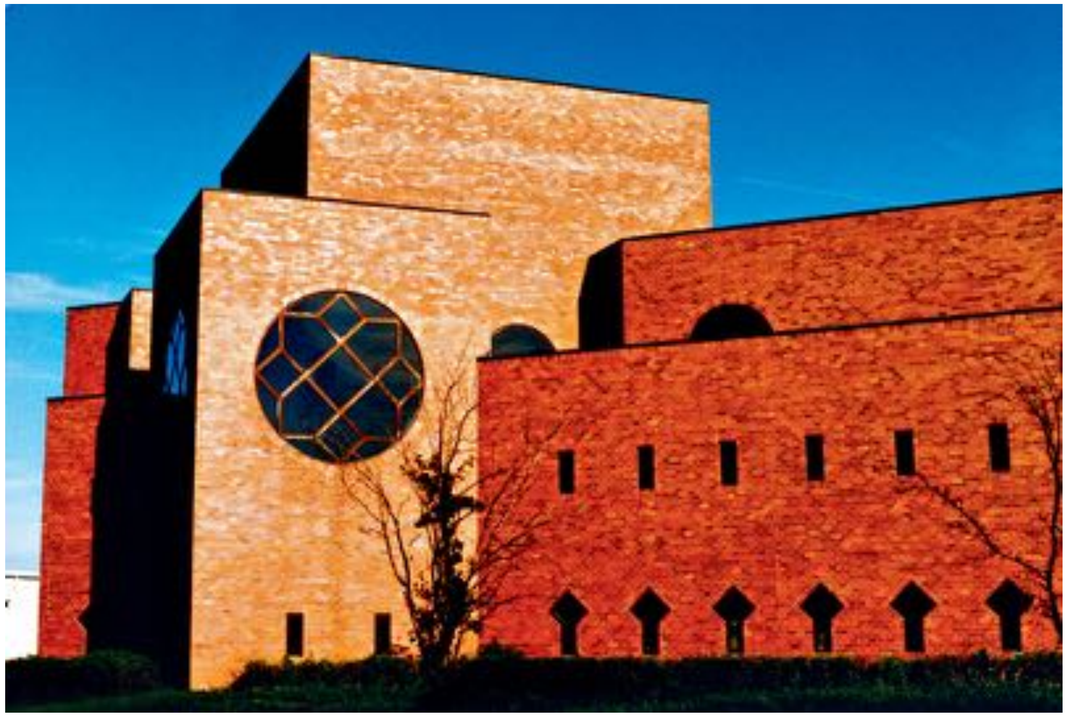
89. Al Fateh Grand Mosque

Manama, Bahrain, Arabia | 20th Century

Like many other state mosques in the Gulf, this features a monumental cubic prayer hall with four piers supporting the dome, preceded by an arcaded courtyard. The decoration of the building, completed in 1988, is mainly of inscriptions in square Kufic, restrained on the exterior, increasing in the courtyard, and dominating the prayer hall. The latter differs from other cubes with four piers in that they are joined by arches that support the main dome(which is actually made of fiberglass) on pendentives. This makes structural sense, although it obscures the view of the qibla wall.

90. ISNA Headquarters Mosque

Indiana, USA, North America | 20th Century



Built in 1982 and sponsored by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), this complex includes a library and offices as well as a mosque. The brick-clad mosque is composed of intersections of essential geometric volumes: cube, circle, and square. Its dome is disguised on the exterior by a brick square, in the same way that I.M. Pei's Islamic Art Museum in Doha conceals its interior dome. Another modernist reference is in the large circular and upper semi-circular windows, echoing those of Louis Kahn's National Assembly mosque (nº. 83). The result is a similar restful space, but here marred slightly by the obscurity of the corner location of the mihrab.

91. Islamic Cultural Center of New York

New York, USA, North America | 20th Century

Sponsored by the Muslim countries represented at the United Nations, this center, completed in 1991, is located in the heart of Manhattan, so trustees favored a modern design that would support the building's prestigious position in the community. The famed Chicago architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill created a prayer hall that consists of a single dome chamber whose aesthetic is carefully tied to light. The proportions of the 89-foot-high chamber are, in fact, attenuated through a series of windows that function perfectly as a brilliantly lit skylight, while the corners of the square below also have apertures that ensure the qibla wall receives appropriate natural illumination. Its modest mihrab reinterprets *muqarnas* in a modern glass idiom.

92. Juma'a Mosque

Qatar, Doha, Arabia | 21st Century

This modest building, erected in 2015 in the midst of a revitalized heritage quarter of the old city, is an intriguing combination of simplicity and complexity. It is simple in the juxtaposition of two squares, one the entrance courtyard and the other the cubic prayer hall, as well as in the many undecorated white walls. It is complex in its use of surface detailing, targeted to specific areas such as the minaret window grilles, the tall multi-layered patterned doors, the metal grilles of the raised women's prayer hall, and the stucco pattern on the qibla wall. Illumination is provided by the perforated patterned roof which filters the natural light and dapples it in ever-changing patterns on the floor and walls below.

93. Chandgaon Mosque

Chittagong, Bangladesh, East and Southeast Asia | 21st Century

This minimalist structure reduces to their essentials some of the most common forms of cube and dome that are found in a mosque. Built in 2007, there are two adjacent squares: the prayer hall with a split dome where light cascades into the space below, and a courtyard in front of it with a circular opening. Unlike some other modern prayer spaces where the central dome monopolizes the attention, the naturally lit qibla wall is still the main focus. Wide rectangular openings in the courtyard cube provide expansive views of the surrounding nature and invite entry to the prayer hall.

94. Penzberg Mosque

Penzburg, Germany, Europe | 21st Century

Designed by the Sarajeven architect Alen Jašarević, this mosque, built in 2007, is remarkable in several ways. The rectangular building, with an upper women's balcony, might at first seem unadventurous, but its most impressive aspect is its integration of light within the prayer hall. The qibla wall is a frosted blue-tinted window that casts a soft glow over the interior. The light from another large window on the street facade is softened by arched openings tilted towards the qibla. The mosque also impresses by its use of large scale calligraphy, seen in the exterior on the modest slender minaret and its base, on the frame of the qibla wall, and inside, on the mihrab.

95. The Ismaili Centre

Toronto, USA, North America | 21st Century

Situated opposite the Aga Khan Museum of Islamic Art in a 16-acre landscaped park, this community center was designed in 2014 by Charles Correa Associates, well-known former recipients of the Agha Khan award for architecture. The dome over the prayer hall has been radically reinterpreted, combining a series of glasslike sails on the interior, and a decidedly more pyramidal shape on the exterior. The architects have likened its overall effects to corbeling or fractal geometry, but whatever the source of inspiration, the building is now bathed with light on the inside. An illuminated central path also brightens the mihrab in what is otherwise a soberly decorated prayer hall.

96. Yeşil Vadi Mosque

Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 21st Century

Many modern mosques in the Islamic world have tried to reduce the main prayer hall to the essentials of a dome, but few have succeeded in successfully integrating the building's interior and exterior. This mosque from 2004 anchors the dome on a large rectangular platform, and, by decreasing the height of the dome on the entrance side, allows for a semicircular crown of windows to illuminate the prayer hall. The sense of space is heightened by projecting the women's gallery unobtrusively on slender piers, while the feeling of lightness in the interior is enhanced by the side illumination of the recessed mihrab, and by the creation of four vertical windows that flank it on either side. The calligraphy, mostly in Kufic, is restrained, other than the gold letter waws that have been liberally sprinkled on the dome interior, symbolizing *huwwa*, He is, meaning God.

97. Sancaklar Mosque

Istanbul, Turkey, Europe | 21st Century

Set amid the rolling hills of a park on the outskirts of the city, this mosque, completed in 2013, is outstanding for the way it blends seamlessly with the surrounding landscape This is achieved not only by the contours, but by its extensive use of rough stone as the principal building material.
The minaret has been successfully reinterpreted as a solid rectangular tower with a calligraphic cartouche at the top of each side. Within the sunken prayer hall, effectively tiered like an amphitheater, natural light is filtered dramatically to emphasize the qibla wall and plain mihrab recess.

98. Bait Ur Rouf Mosque

Dhaka, Bangladesh, East and Southest Asia | 21st Century

This is an intriguing low-cost solution to the problem of creating high-quality contemporary mosques in underprivileged neighborhoods. A local Bangladeshi architect, Marina Tabbasum, raised the structure on land that was donated by her grandmother. She was also the fund-raiser, designer, client, and builder of the project, which was completed in 2012. Its square-within-a-circle-within-a-square design has echoes of the Louis Kahn Parliament mosque (n°. 83), and makes an unobtrusive rotation of the prayer hall to face the qibla. As seen with the Tehran Namazkhana (n°. 86), the mihrab is a vertical slit in the exterior wall. Daylight is filtered through brick screens and randomly patterned small circular openings in the ceiling, thereby underscoring its aura of spirituality.

99. Djamaâ El Djazaïr

Algiers, Algeria, Africa | 21st Century

This project, designed by the German firm Jürgen Engel Architekten and stemming from a concept proposed by Oscar Niemeyer in 1968, envisions the tallest minaret ever built (870 feet) and the ability to house 120,000 faithful. The mosque is relatively restrained in its planning, consisting of three squares placed along the qibla axis: the first a public space; the second a mosque courtyard; and the third the prayer hall. Octagonal columns rising to lotus-like capitals are a recurring motif; in the prayer hall their interstices are used as skylights. The dome, unfortunately, as is usual in modern state mosques, is placed on the lower square with no zone of transition. The regional antecedents of the prayer hall are underlined by the Codoba-like copy of the mihrab and the minbar which, unlike local models that were recessed in the qibla wall, here rises from the floor when needed.

100. Vali-e-Asr Mosque

Tehran, Iran, Iran/Persia | 21st Century

The creation of this mosque and cultural center has been the source of much controversy because of the unmistakable absence of a minaret and an obvious dome. The architects Reza Daneshmir and Catherine Spiridonoff shrewdly justify these omissions by citing the Koran, which doesn't dictate any specific form for mosques. They underscore this by expounding the Koranic virtues of modesty, simplicity, and faith which they claim were the basis of their decisions.
The swooping, dramatic curves of the roofline echo Zaha Hadid's work, but modesty does indeed prevail in its attempt to harmonize with rather than upstage its neighbour, the City Theatre. The ribbon-like windows that grace the exterior, which would be unusual in any architectural setting, are large enough to flood the interior with light and help provide a dazzling contrast to the blue-tiled geometric star pattern of the recessed mihrab.

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