Islamic Architecture
Islam arose in the early seventh century under the leadership of the prophet Muhammad. (In Arabic the word Islam means "submission" [to God].) It is the youngest of the world’s three great monotheistic religions and follows in the prophetic tradition of Judaism and Christianity.

Muhammad leads Abraham, Moses and Jesus in prayer. From medieval Persian manuscript
Muhammad (ca. 572-632) prophet and founder of Islam. Born in Mecca (Saudi Arabia) into a noble Quraysh clan, he was orphaned at an early age. He grew up to be a successful merchant, then according to tradition, he was visited by the angel Gabriel, who informed him that he was the messenger of God. His revelations and teachings, recorded in the Qur'an, are the basis of Islam.

Muhammad (with vailed face) at the Ka'ba from Siyer-i Nebi, a 16th-century Ottoman manuscript. Illustration by Nakkaş Osman
Kaaba - the shrine in Mecca that Muslims face when they pray. It is built around the famous Black Stone, and it is said to have been built by Abraham and his son, Ishmael. It is the focus and goal of all Muslim pilgrims when they make their way to Mecca during their pilgrimage – the Hajj.

Five pillars of Islam:
1. The profession of faith in the one God and in Muhammad as his Prophet
2. Prayer five times a day
3. The giving of alms to the poor
4. Fasting during the month of Ramadan
5. The *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca
Muslims believe that the "black stone" is a special divine meteorite, that fell at the foot of Adam and Eve. It is presently embedded in the southeastern corner of the Kaba.

•  https://youtu.be/q7q_LcqbvKI
By the mid 7th c., Arab armies won control of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt from Byzantium and conquered Iraq and Iran, the heart of the Persian empire. Later, the Umayyads conquered North Africa and Spain and, to the east, penetrated Central Asia and India.
Early Islamic Architecture
7th to 13th c.
The Umayyads were the first Islamic dynasty and ruled from their capital at Damascus in Syria. The first monumental Islamic building is the Dome of the Rock.
Dome of the Rock (7th c.)
and Western Wall (1st c.)
al-Haram ash-Sharif (Sacred Noble Sanctuary) /Temple Mount, Jerusalem
According to tradition this is the place where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac/Ishmael.

Also it is the spot from which Muhammad journeyed to heaven and at the same night returned to Mecca.
Comparison: Byzantine. Plan of Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.

Oldest surviving Koran verses, and first use of monumental Koranic inscriptions in architecture.


**Aniconism**
Opposition to the use of visual images to depict living creatures or religious figures.

Detail of a mosaic in the courtyard arcade of the Great Mosque, Damascus, Syria, 706–715.
Islamic belief in Aniconism and the doctrine of unity/oneness (al-twaḥid) demanded a rich vocabulary of abstract, geometric forms.

Artists reiterated these forms in complex decoration that covered the surface of many works of art from large buildings, to rugs, paintings and small objects.
Frieze of the Umayyad Palace. Mshatta, Jordan, ca. 740-750. Limestone, 16’17” high. Staatliche Museum, Berlin

- No animals appear on the exterior wall of the palace’s mosque
Comparison: Persian. **Rosettes flower and geometric pattern.** *Terrace of the royal audience hall (apadana), Persepolis, Iran, ca. 521–465 BCE.* Louvre. Paris

_Frieze of the Umayyad Palace._ Mshatta, Jordan, ca. 740-750.
**Minaret:** mosque tower with projecting balconies from which a muezzin summons the people to prayer.

**Qibla:** The direction Muslims face when praying (toward Mecca)

**Mihrab:** Semicircular prayer niche in the qiblah wall, reserved for the prayer leader (imam).

**Hypostyle Hall:** Communal worshipping hall with roof supported by many columns

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_Schematic of a generic Arab Hypostyle mosque_
can you find the Minaret, Hypostyle Hall, Dome over mihrab?
The first mosque was built by Muhammad next to his house in Medina. It had a square court with rows of palm trunks supporting the roofs and a raised platform for the reading of the Qur'an.


Early Christian churches were oriented east toward Jerusalem.
Aerial view of the Great Mosque, Kairouan, Tunisia, ca. 836–875.
Minbar. From the Kutubiya Mosque. Marrakesh, Morocco. 1125-1130. Wood and Ivory, 12’8”X11’4”X2’10”. Badi Palace Museum, Marrakesh

Minbar
A pulpit in the mosque where the imam (leader of prayer) stands to deliver sermons. The minbar is situated to the right of the mihrab

Minbar and Detail. From the Kutubiya Mosque. Marrakesh, Morocco. 1125-1130.
Wood and Ivory

Finely cut wooden pieces framing small panels of inlaid ivory to create the appearance of interlacing ribbons.
Islam in Spain
When the Umayyad were toppled in 750 by the Abbasid, Abd al-Rahman I, the only survivor, fled to southern Spain, where he established himself as the ruler, or emir. The Christian reconquest of Spain began in the 11th century and ended with the Moors' final defeat in 1492.

Moor
Any member of the Muslim population of Spain, of mixed Arab, Spanish, and Berber origins.
Cathedral–Mosque of Córdoba
7th c. – Christian Visigothic church built on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to Janus
8th- 10th c. – Islamic Mosque
13th - Present – Christian church, the Catedral de Córdoba

Hypostyle Prayer hall of the Great Mosque, Córdoba (capital of the Umayyad dynasty), Spain, 8th to 10th centuries. It has 36 piers and 514 columns made of jasper, onyx, marble, and granite with double arches
Great Mosque,
Cordoba, Spain,
Begun 786 C.E.
Islamic builders used a variety of different arches types:
**Mihrab.** 10th c. Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain

It once housed the Koran and relics of Muhammad.
Mihrab. Detail. 10\textsuperscript{th} c. Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain
Comparison:

Jewish Synagogue. Interior of the synagogue at Dura-Europos, Syria, with wall-paintings of Old Testament themes, ca. 245–256

Comparison:

Christian Coptic
Decorated prayer niche
Tempera Monastery of St. Apollo, 6th / 7th century Bawit, Egypt

Comparison:

Mihrab. 10th c. Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain

Comparison:

Maqsura (enclosure in front of the mihrab reserved for the caliph) of the Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain, 961–965. Mosaics by Byzantine artists
Dome in front of the mihrab of the Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain, 961–965. Mosaics by Byzantine artists
Dome in front of the mihrab, Great Mosque, Cordoba, Spain, c. 961-965

The dome rests on an octagonal base of arcuated squinches
In 1236, Córdoba was captured by King Ferdinand III of Castile in the Reconquista, and the mosque was turned back into a Christian church. The minaret of the mosque was converted to a bell tower and in the 16th c. a cathedral was built in the middle of the mosque.
Discussion Question
What are the typical features of the hypostyle mosque? How do these features support its purpose of creating an Islamic sacred space? Discuss the architecture as well as interior decorations.

*Hypostyle Prayer hall of the Great Mosque, Córdoba*, Spain, 8th to 10th c.

*Mihrab*. 10th c.
Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain

*Minbar*. From the Kutubiya Mosque. Marrakesh, Morocco.


*Dome in front of the mihrab* of the Great Mosque, Córdoba, Spain, 961–965.
Late Islamic Architecture

14th c to 20th c.

The late Islamic period was an age of empires, when the Islamic world was governed by three powerful dynasties:
• the Safavids in Iran
• the Mughals in India
• the Ottomans, who ruled Anatolia, the Arab lands, and much of eastern Europe.
Alhambra Palace, mid. 14th c., Granada, Spain

After the fall of Cordoba to the Christian forces, the Narsids ruled the remaining Muslim territories in Spain from Granada.

Palace of the Moorish monarchs of Granada. The Alhambra is made up of a series of rooms and gardens clustered around three principal courts, with extensive use of fountains and water basins.

https://youtu.be/wBsDDGCIFLQ 4:45
Court of the Lions, Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain, mid. 14th c.
Court of the Lions, Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain, mid. 14th c.
Court of the Lions, Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain, mid. 14th c.
Patio de los Arrayanes (Court of the Myrtles), Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain.
Muqarnas
Stucco decorations in which stalactite-like forms break a structure solidity

Muqarnas dome, Hall of the Two Sisters, Palace of the Lions, Alhambra, Granada, Spain, 1354–1391.
Muqarnas dome, Hall of the Two Sisters, Palace of the Lions, Alhambra, Granada, Spain, 1354–1391.
On April 9, 1609, King Philip III of Spain decreed the Expulsion of the Moriscos. The Moriscos were the descendants of the Muslim population that converted to Christianity under threat of exile from Ferdinand and Isabella in 1502.
**Madrasa** (theological college) - mosque - mausoleum complex of Sultan Hasan (looking northwest with the mausoleum in the foreground), Cairo, Egypt, begun 1356.

**Iwan:** A large vaulted hall having one side open to a court.

Architecture in the Late Period is more complex. Multiple building types are combined in large and diverse complexes.
Ottoman Empire: vast state founded in the late 13th c. by Turkish tribes in Anatolia and ruled by the descendants of Osman I until its dissolution in 1918.

Suleiman the Magnificent (1494-1566) was the Sultan of Turkey under whose governance the Ottoman Empire reached the height of its power.

SINAN, interior of the Mosque of Selim II, Edirne, Turkey, 1568–1575.
Floor plan of the complex showing (1) mosque, (2) madrasa (hadith college), (3) madrasa (Koran recitation school), (4) elementary school, (5) bazaar (arasta).
Sinan. Süleymaniye Mosque, 1557. Istanbul

https://youtu.be/Q48ddBmCjQA