

Mosques

Islamic Architecture

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Introduction

- The first problem facing studying the mosques is, what is a mosque?
- The answer is quite simple, a wall correctly oriented to Qibla.
- The wall of Qibla, is the line facing Makkah, more correctly the Kaaba.
- Some theorists argue that even the wall is not necessary.
- Mainly there are two types of mosques, the Masjid and the Jami.
- Masjid is a small mosque, usually serving the neighborhood, where the five time prayers are attended only.
- Jami is the congregational mosque, where the Friday prayer is also performed, and usually serves the city.
- The city would contain a lot of Masjids but one Jami (or very few).

Definition

- The mosque was the first building to construct in any city.
- It represents the basic Islamic building (like churches in Europe).
- They are religious buildings, and serve as symbolic and spiritual nodes.
- At its simplest form, they mostly consist of a courtyard, surrounded by an arcade, and a covered prayer hall (Musalla).
- Other elements for a complete mosque include: the main dome, Mihrab, Minbar and sometimes a Maqsura.
- According to some, since most of the previous elements are not essential, the mosque is not even a building, but a space.

Origins of the Mosque

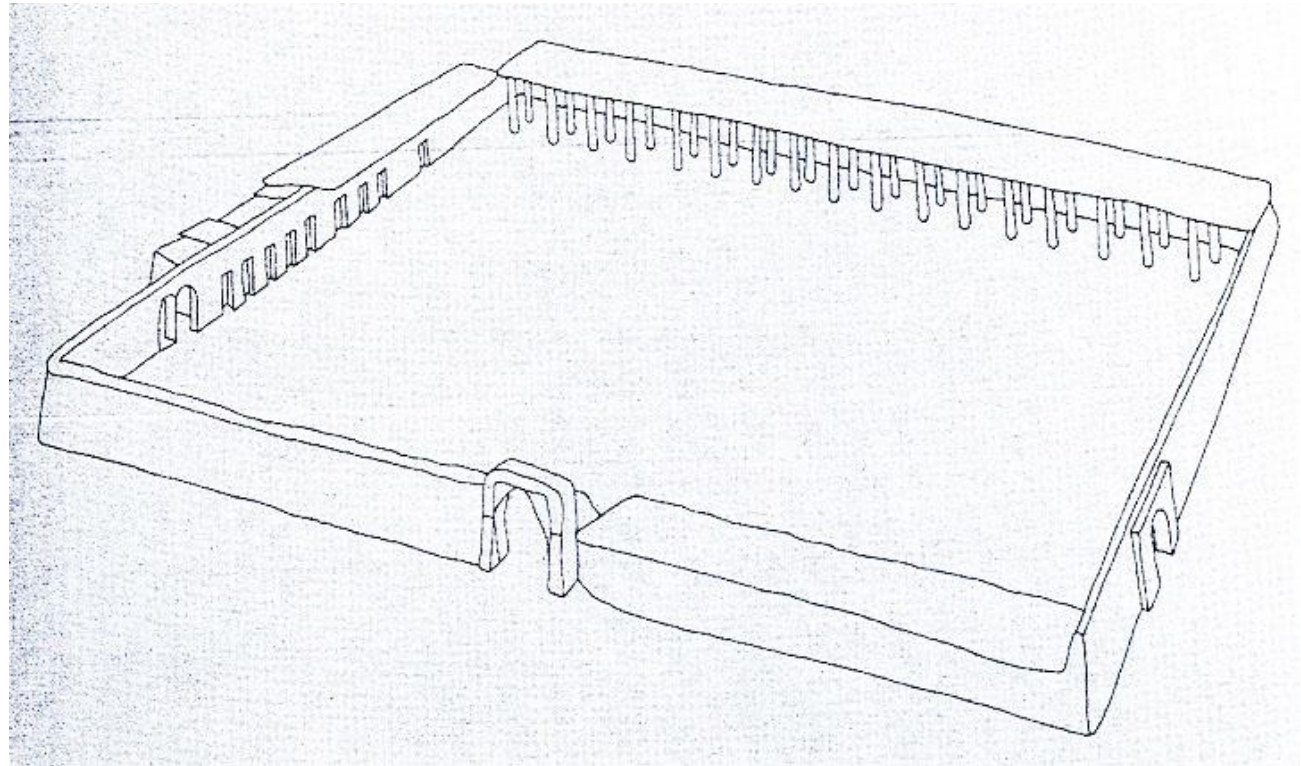
- Early mosques were either built, or were re-used previous religious buildings.
- Churches, fire temples or even Hindu temples were used for prayers, and though this was never a long term policy, the effect of these buildings on the mosque was very obvious.
- The simplicity of the idea of mosques, and its mergence with previous cultures, created much more varied forms than churches.

Spatial Structure

- In the mosque, prayers were held individually or as a group, where people follow one person, the Imam (prayer leader) or listen to Khutba.
- The worshippers follow the Imam in immediate movement, this is why the visibility of Imam was important in large spaces.
- This is why the mosque's arrangement was in the shape of long lines parallel to the Qibla wall.
- Unavailability of raising the Imam, like the altar in the church, led to a small number of rows.
- This is why the early Muslims rejected the Basilica form, and the Zoroastrian temple form too.

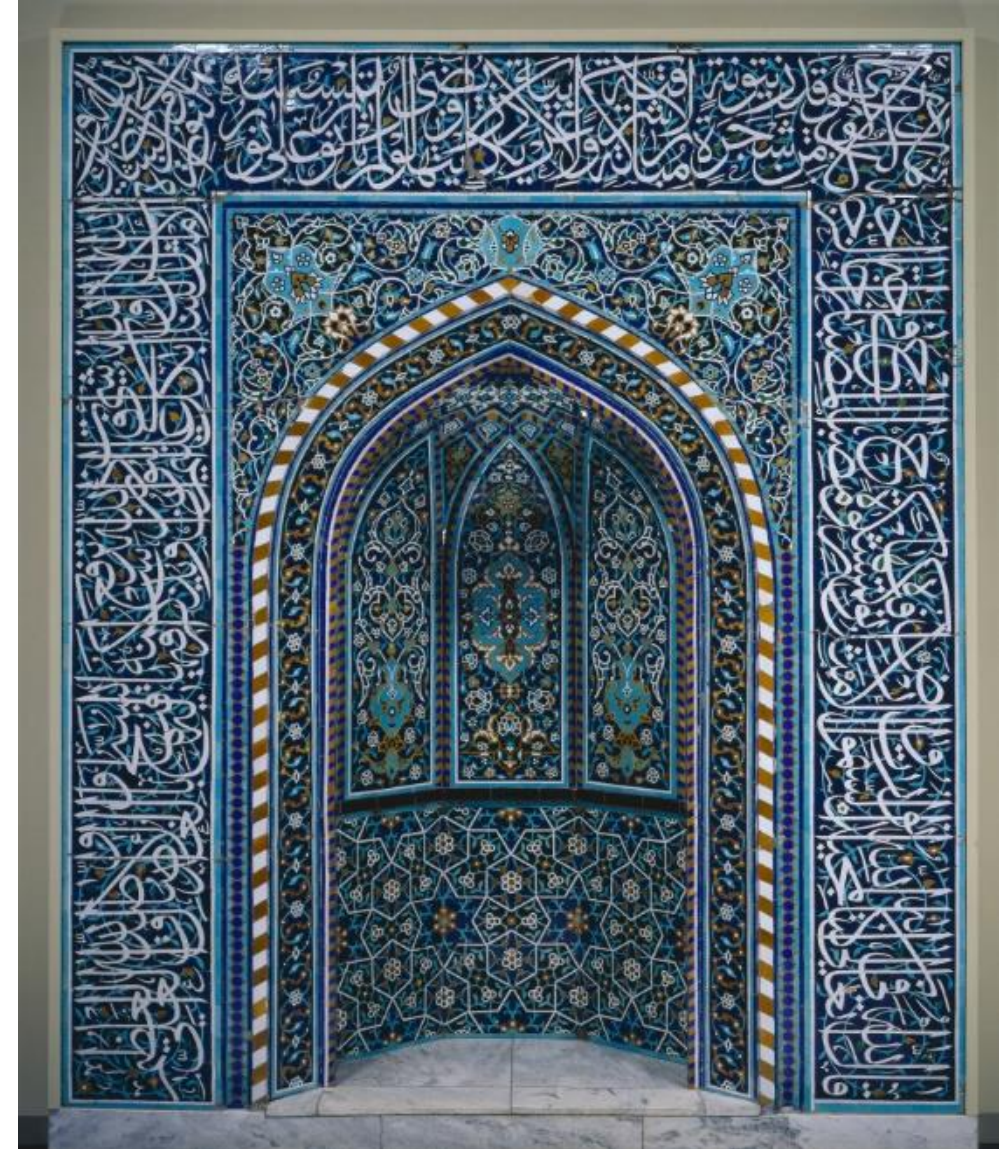
Prophet Mohammad's Mosque

- This was the first mosque to be built by the Muslims.
- It was also the prophet's house.
- The first character is its extreme simplicity.
- Another character is its substantial size.
- The mosque at the prophet's time had different functions, and this feature will continue through the later Islamic states.



Elements in Mosques

- The Mihrab:
- It is a deep recessed niche or sanctuary. It shows the direction of prayer.
- The first mihrab was added to prophet Mohammad's mosque in 86/705.



Elements in Mosques

- The Minbar:
- It is available only in the Friday mosques.
- It is an element of certain height to help the orator (khatib) be visible.
- Minbars were made of different materials.
- Some of the minbars were wheeled.
- The minbar of Qairawan mosque (Tunis) is the oldest known minbar.
- In Fez and Marakesh the decorations were floral, while mostly they were geometric.
- The Ottomans even used tiles and marbles to build minbars.



Elements in Mosques

- The Maqsura:
- Maqsura refers to the presence of a ruler.
- It is square, enclosed, close to the minbar and covered with lattice work.
- In Cordova it even had a special passage connecting with the palace.
- Many focus on its non-Arabian origin.
- After the 11th century in eastern Muslim world, the maqsura started to have a dome over it (the great mosque of Isfahan).



Elements in Mosques

- The gabled transept:
- This element had no symbolic significance.
- It was used to give importance to the Qibla axis, through a different roofing system.
- There are two theories of its origin, a functional origin or a Christian effect.
- This effect is seen in Egypt, Anatolia and west-African mosques.
- It was also related to vaulting system.



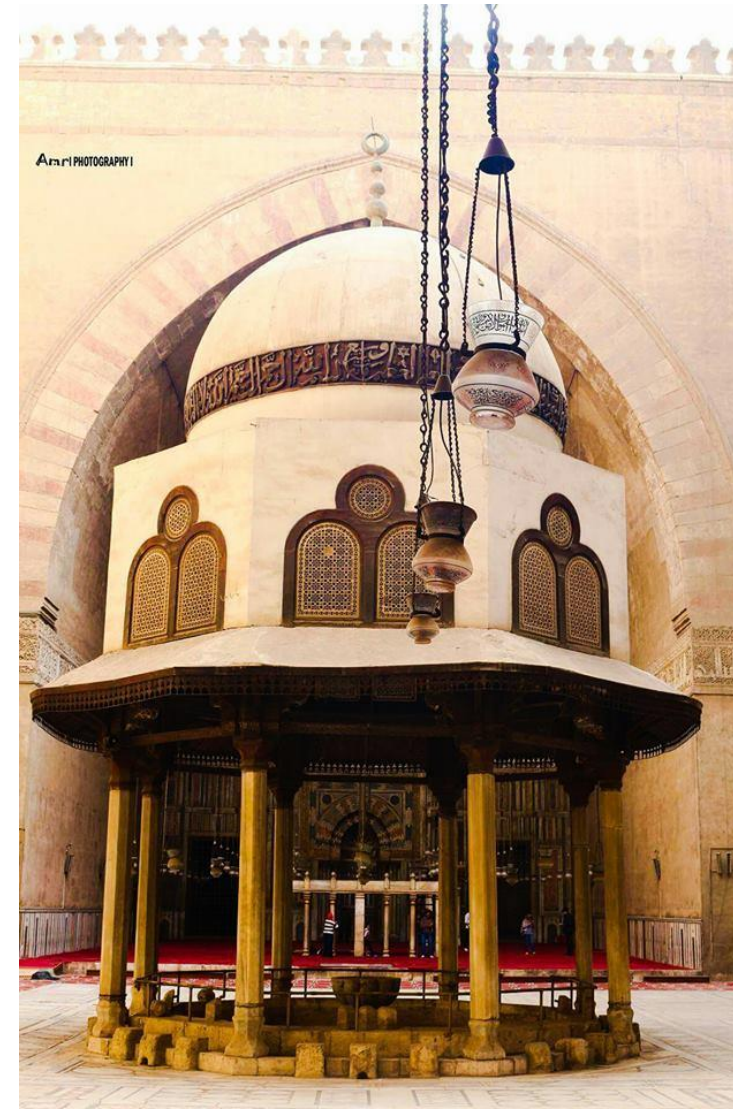
Elements in Mosques

- The dome over transept:
- This element was used also to emphasize a certain direction.
- Sometimes, there were two domes, to identify the two ends of the transept.
- When the aisles were parallel to Qibla, the height of transept and the domes would show the emphasis.



Other Elements

- Other elements of the mosque include: the courtyard, the covered sanctuary, the minaret and the facilities for ablution (Wudhu') .
- Courtyard's impact was due to its huge size. A large empty space of a spiritual effect. It was also surrounded by arcades.
- Facilities for ablution were on the side, or in the shape of a fountain. They had very unique shapes, in the central open space, sometimes covered by a dome.
- Light was also an important element, and different elements were used to add more spirituality to the mosques atmosphere, like colored glass and light fixtures (Qandeel).
- Brilliant Carpets were used to cover the floor.



Multi-Function mosque

- One of the problems facing mosques studying is the number of functions these buildings held.
- The first function of the mosque is prayer.
- Mosques were also used for education and scholarship. Religious sciences like (fiqh) and (tafseer) were taught in mosques in the form of (halaqa), where every halaqa was for a specific science or scholar.
- Till this day some mosques transformed into grand educational institutions like: Al-Azhar university in Cairo, Al-Qarawiyyin mosque in Fez and Zaituna in Tunis.

Multi-Function mosque

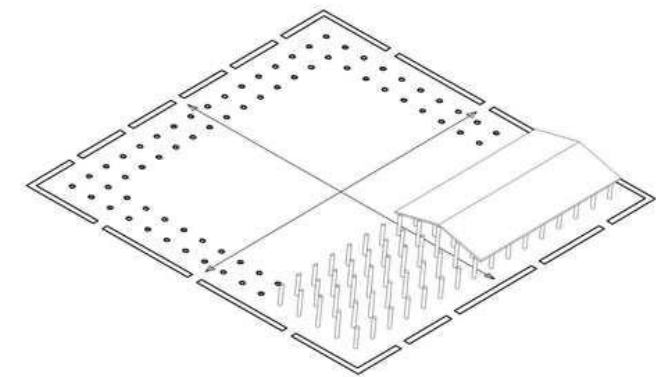
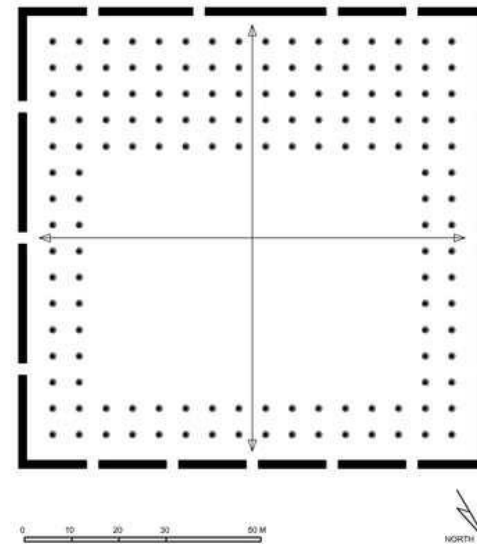
- The mosque was also a justice department or the court house. The Qadhi (judge) used to sit in the mosque and give judgements, even though in some cities a special building was erected for this reason.
- Mosques were not far from politics either. The Friday khutba was not only a religious event but a political statement. The mosque was the place where the crowds would gather in times of protests. The government also used the mosques for important announcements and declarations.
- Mosques also hosted the homeless. There were daily free meals given to the hungry people.
- The idea of waqf, an endowment under the Islamic law where certain institutions were endowed for the mosque's use only, improved the abilities of the mosques to become rich institutions.

Problems of Classification

- The vast geography, large time span and a huge number of mosques and their varieties, adds difficulty to the classification of them.
- Mainly we can define three main types of mosques: the Arab, the Persian and the Turkish.
- These types are not bound by geography, so for example, we might find the Arab mosque in India, or a Persian effect in Egypt.

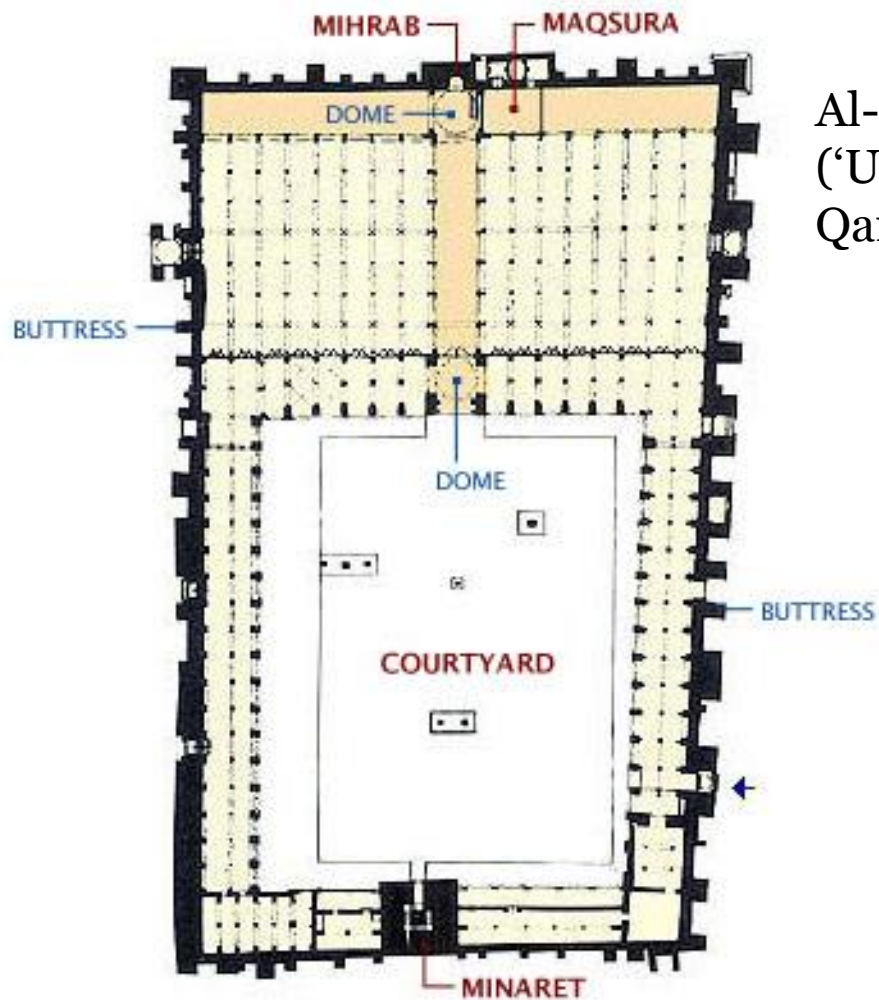
Arab Mosques

- Most of the surviving mosques of the 7th and 8th century are of this type regardless of the geographical location.
- This type does not only precede the other types in time, but also claims the pre-eminence to them, since all of them were derived from it.
- The earliest Arab mosques were of this type, like the great mosques of Kufa, Basrah, Fustat and Qairawan.
- The basic elements in these mosques:
 - the enclosing walls
 - the courtyard
 - the sanctuary.
- Usually only one minaret.

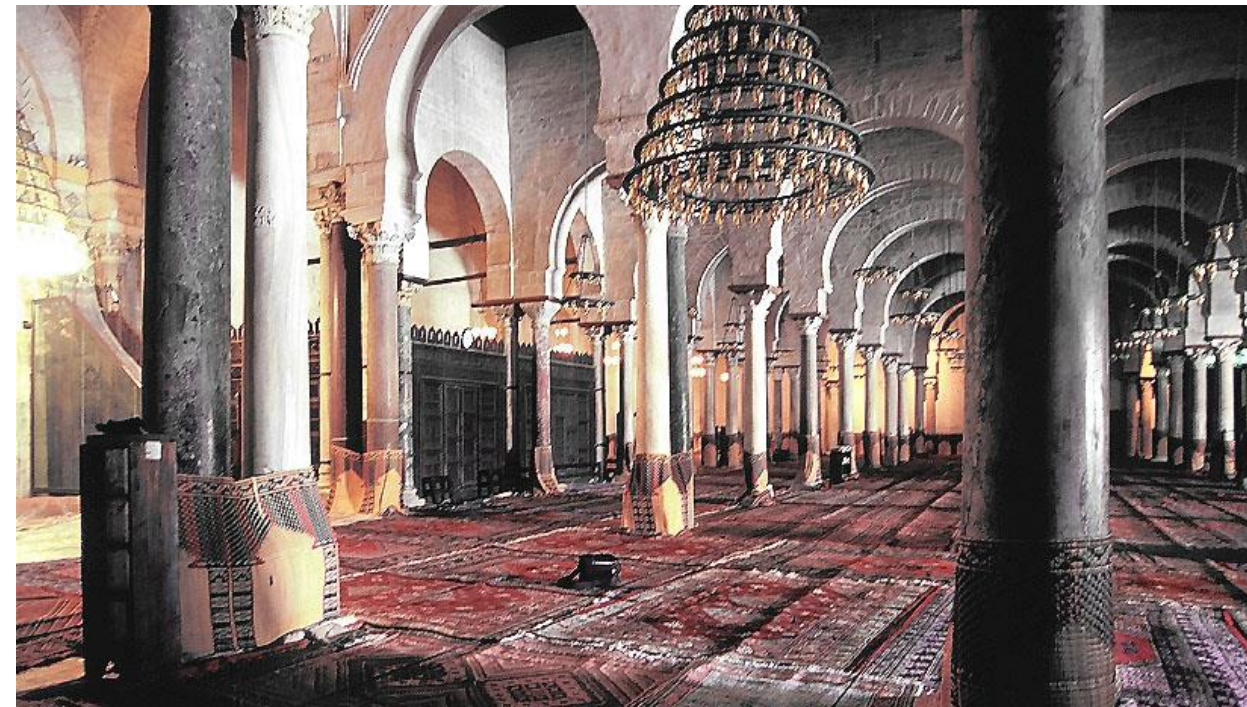


Kufa Mosque, Kufa

Arab Mosques (Early)



Al-Qairawan Mosque
(‘Uqba bin Nafi’ Mosque),
Qairawan

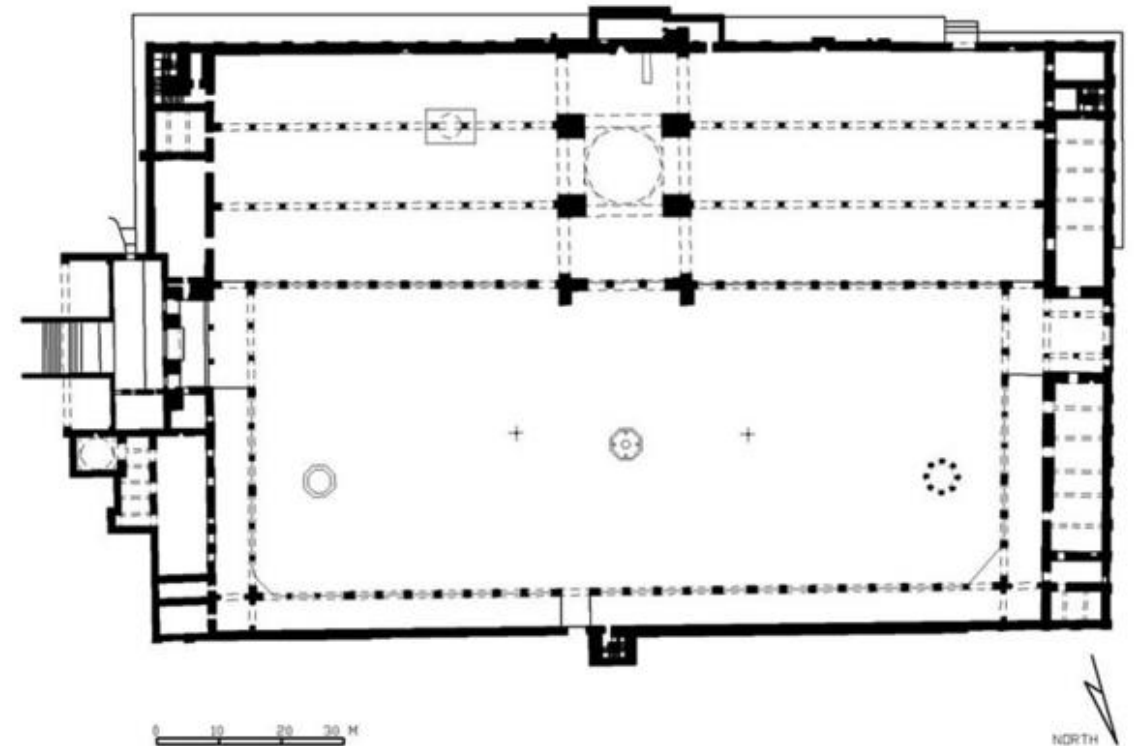


Arab Mosques (Umayyad)

- Three mosques will be discussed here, and the three were built or expanded greatly by the same Caliph, Al-Walid I 96/715.
- The three mosques are, the great mosques at Madina, Jerusalem and Damascus.
- The Umayyad state was surrounded by Roman and Byzantine architecture, which affected theirs too.
- The Umayyad mosques witnessed a development in terms of quality of columns, arches, the fancy mosaic decoration, details and the increase in budget spent on these buildings.
- These mosques were declaration of power, symbol of competition and victory.

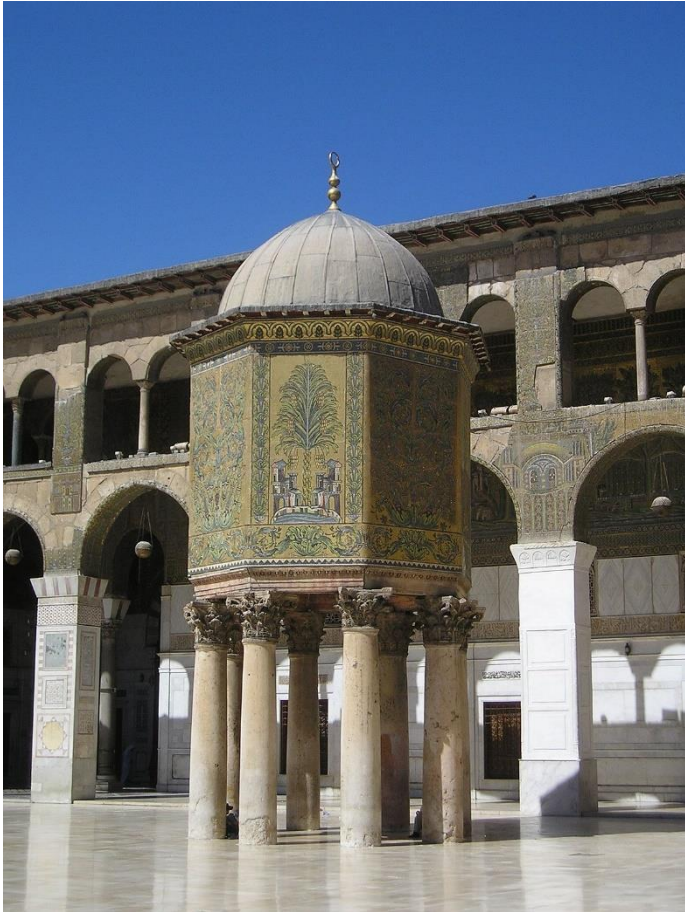
Arab Mosques (Umayyad)

The Great Mosque (Umayyad Mosque), Damascus



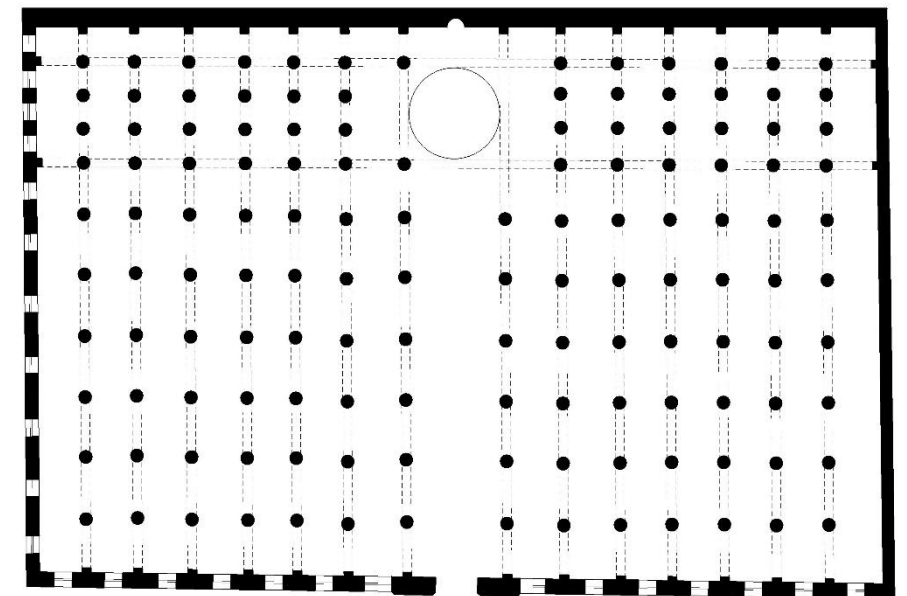
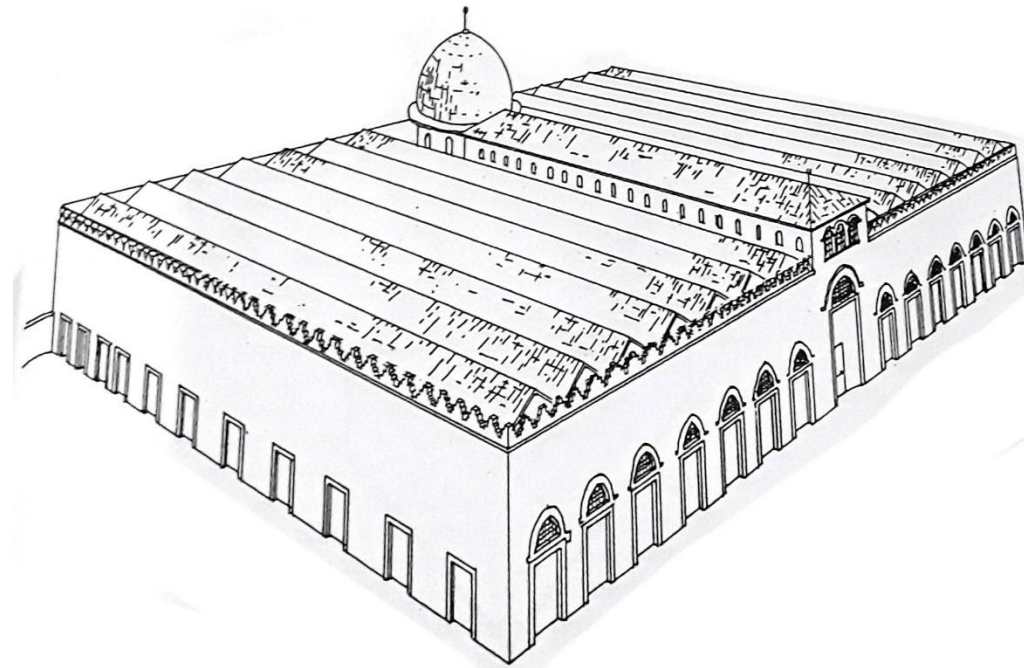
Arab Mosques (Umayyad)

The Great Mosque (Umayy Mosque), Damascus



Arab Mosques (Umayyad)

Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem



al-Aqsa Mosque

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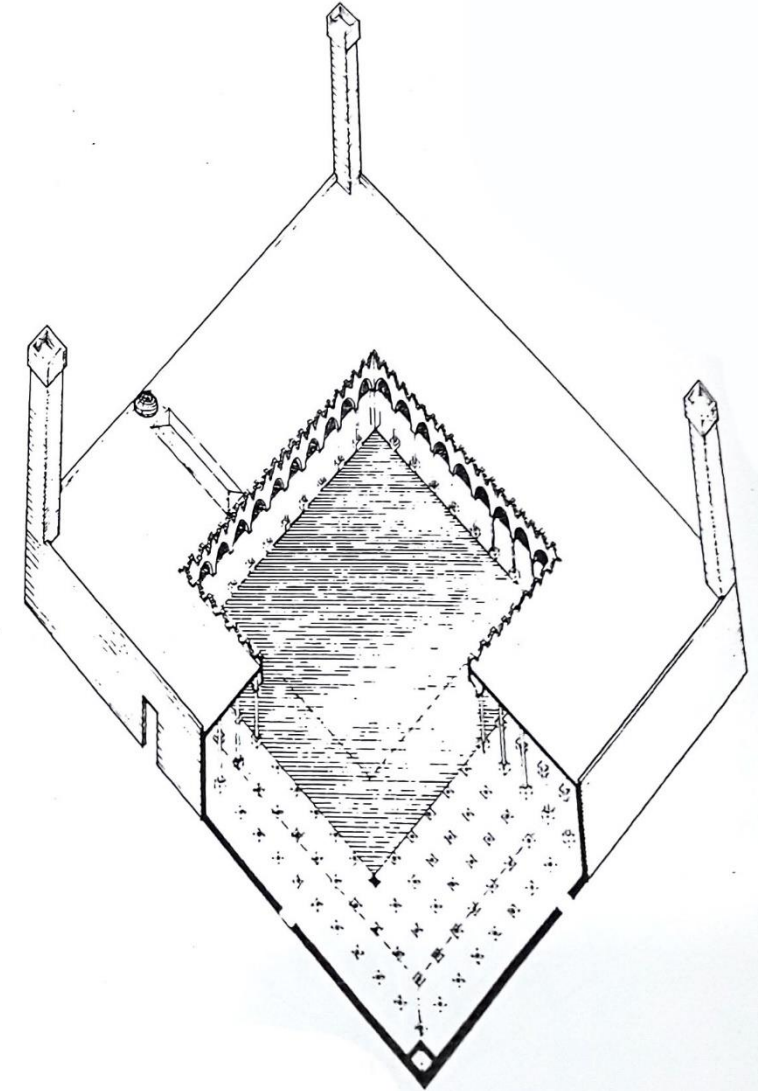


Arab Mosques (Umayyad)

Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem



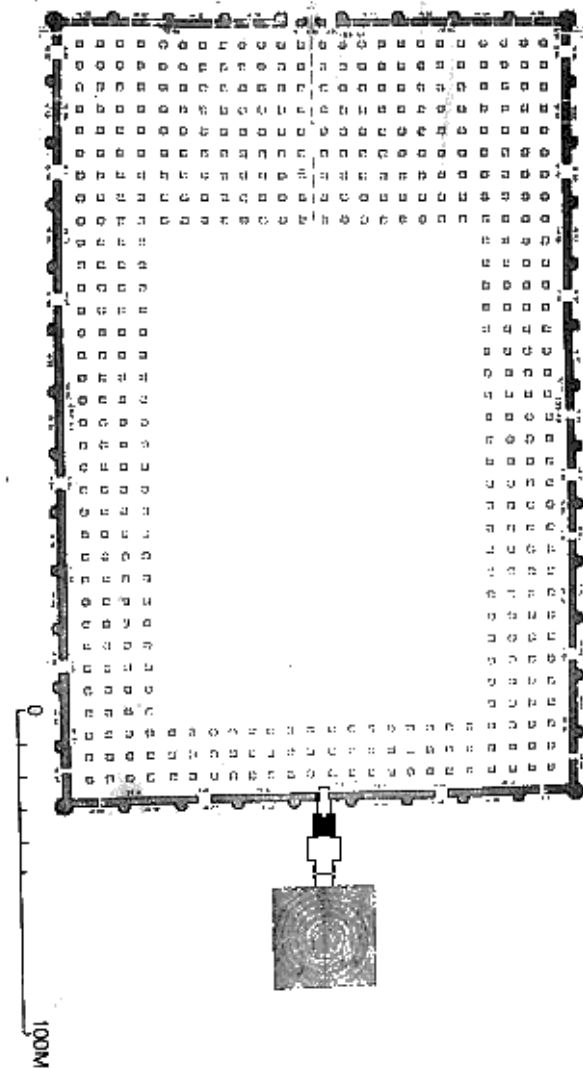
Prophet Mohammad's Mosque
(Expansion of Al-Walid I, Madina)



Arab Mosques (Abbasid)

- The Abbasids moved their attention (politically) towards the east.
- This resulted into the effect of hot climate, which led to a greater role of the courtyards, and the addition of the arcades.
- Arcades would be single, sometimes doubled, tripled and even quadrupled.
- They also gave importance to the mihrab by adding a dome over it. Later the importance will be given to the path leading to the mihrab (transept).
- The exterior walls were still simple, except the Qibla wall in some cases.

Arab Mosques (Abbasid)

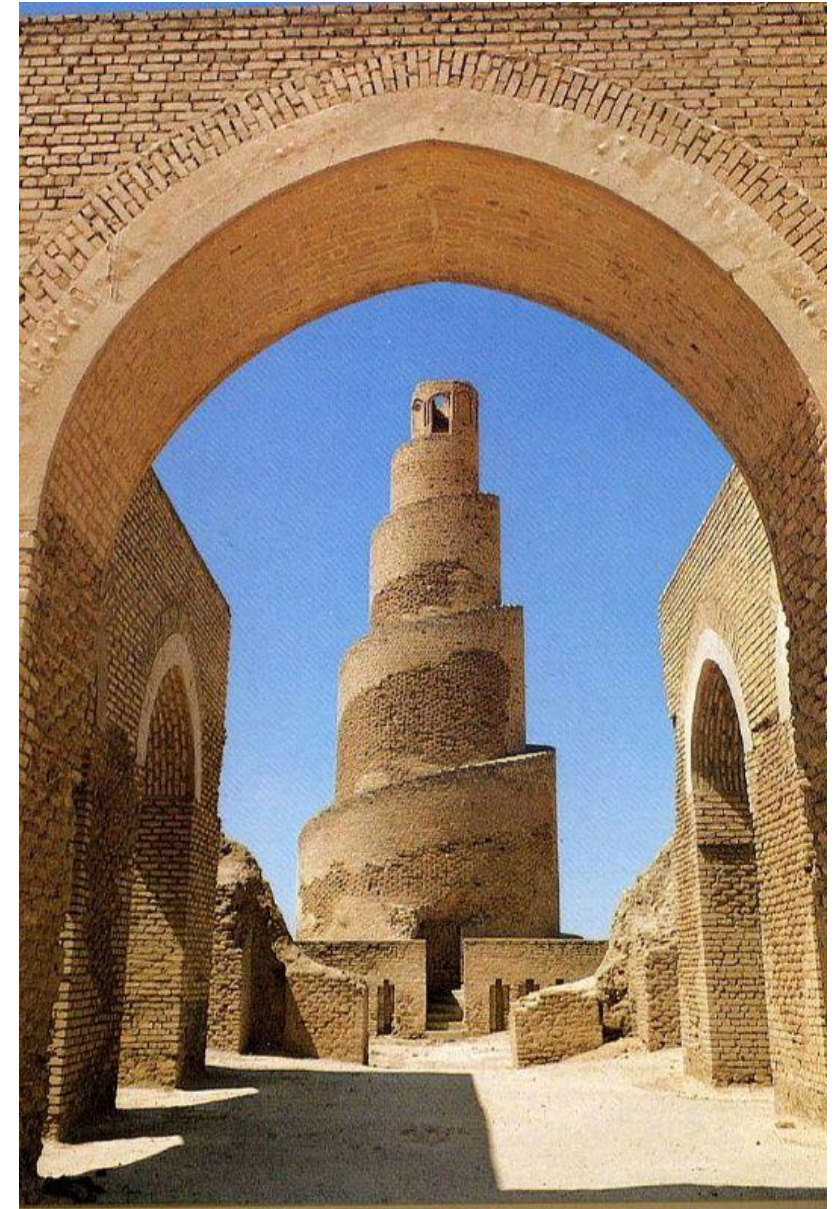


The Great Mosque, Samarra



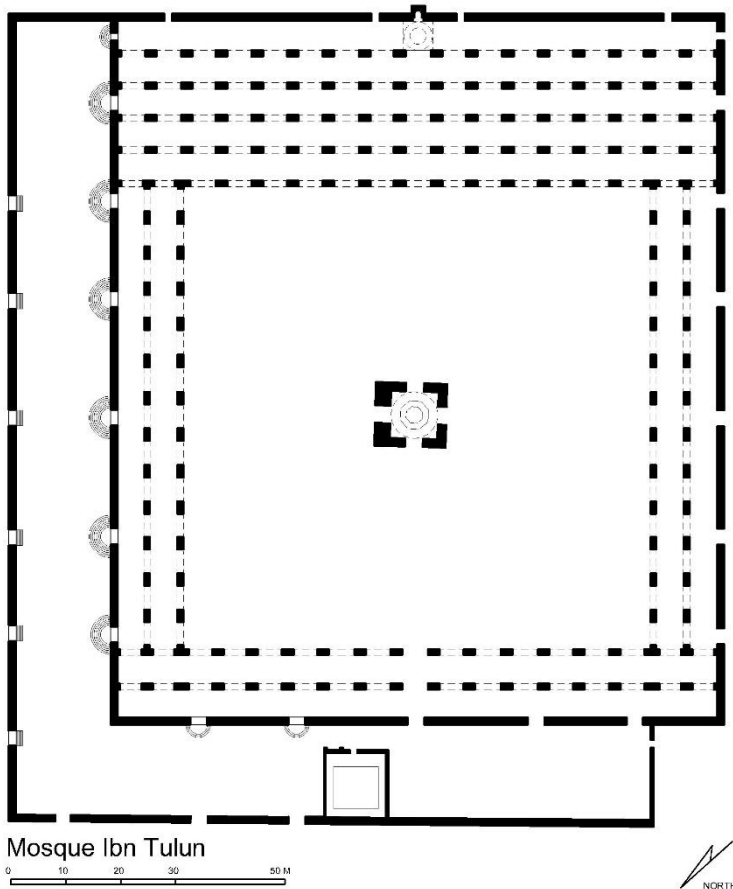
Arab Mosques (Abbasid)

The Great Mosque, Samarra



Arab Mosques (Abbasid)

Ibn-Tulun Mosque, Cairo



Arab Mosques (Abbasid)

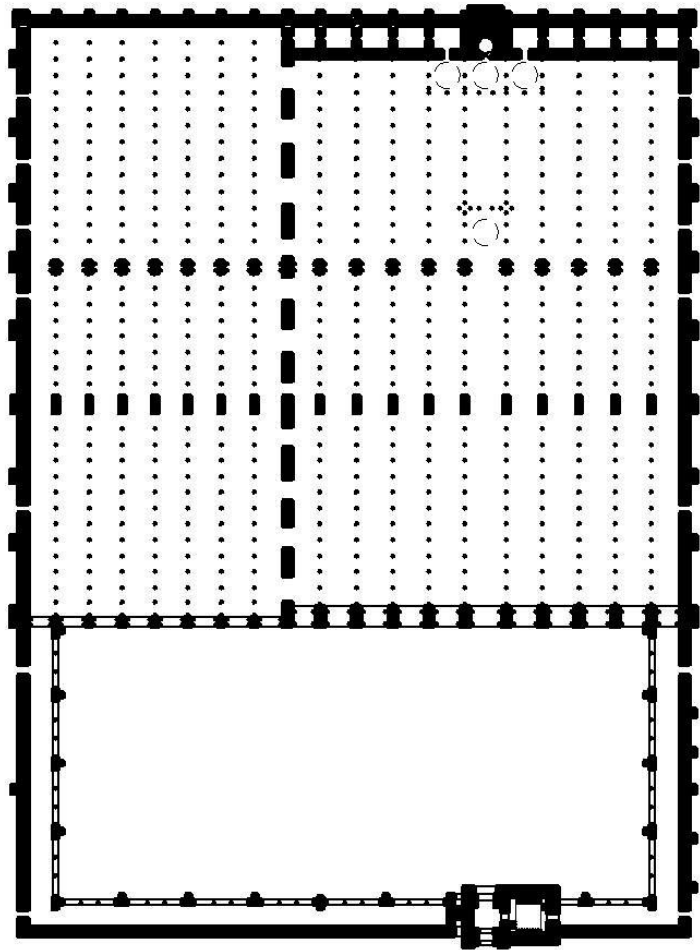
Ibn-Tulun Mosque, Cairo



Arab Mosques (Maghrebi)

- The majority, if not all, of the mosques built in Maghreb are Arab mosques.
- These mosques were affected by the architecture of Damascus.
- The impact of transept on the interior became stronger than exterior.
- They also used the domes in ribbed or fluted fashion and new types of arches, especially in Spain.
- They altered the size of the courtyard for other functional advantages.
- The gabled roof is more emphasized.

Arab Mosques (Maghrebi)



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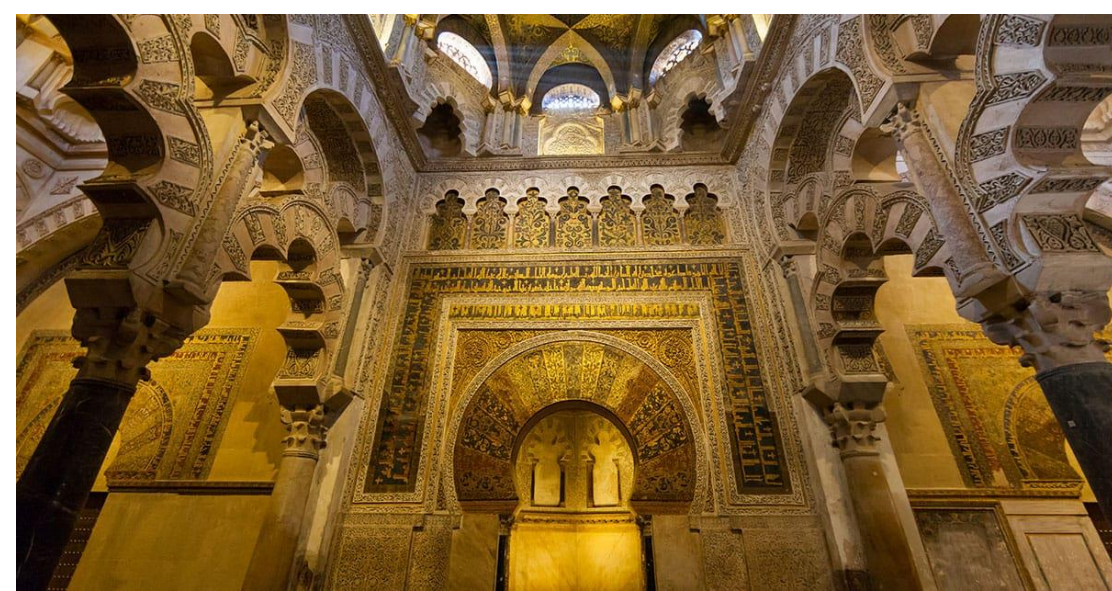


The Great Mosque, Cordoba



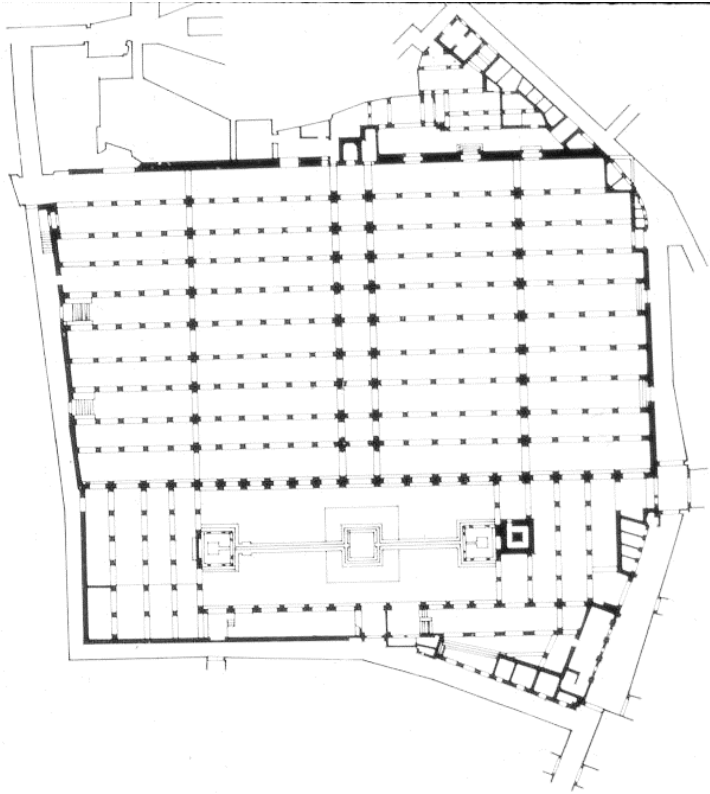
Arab Mosques (Maghrebi)

The Great Mosque, Cordoba



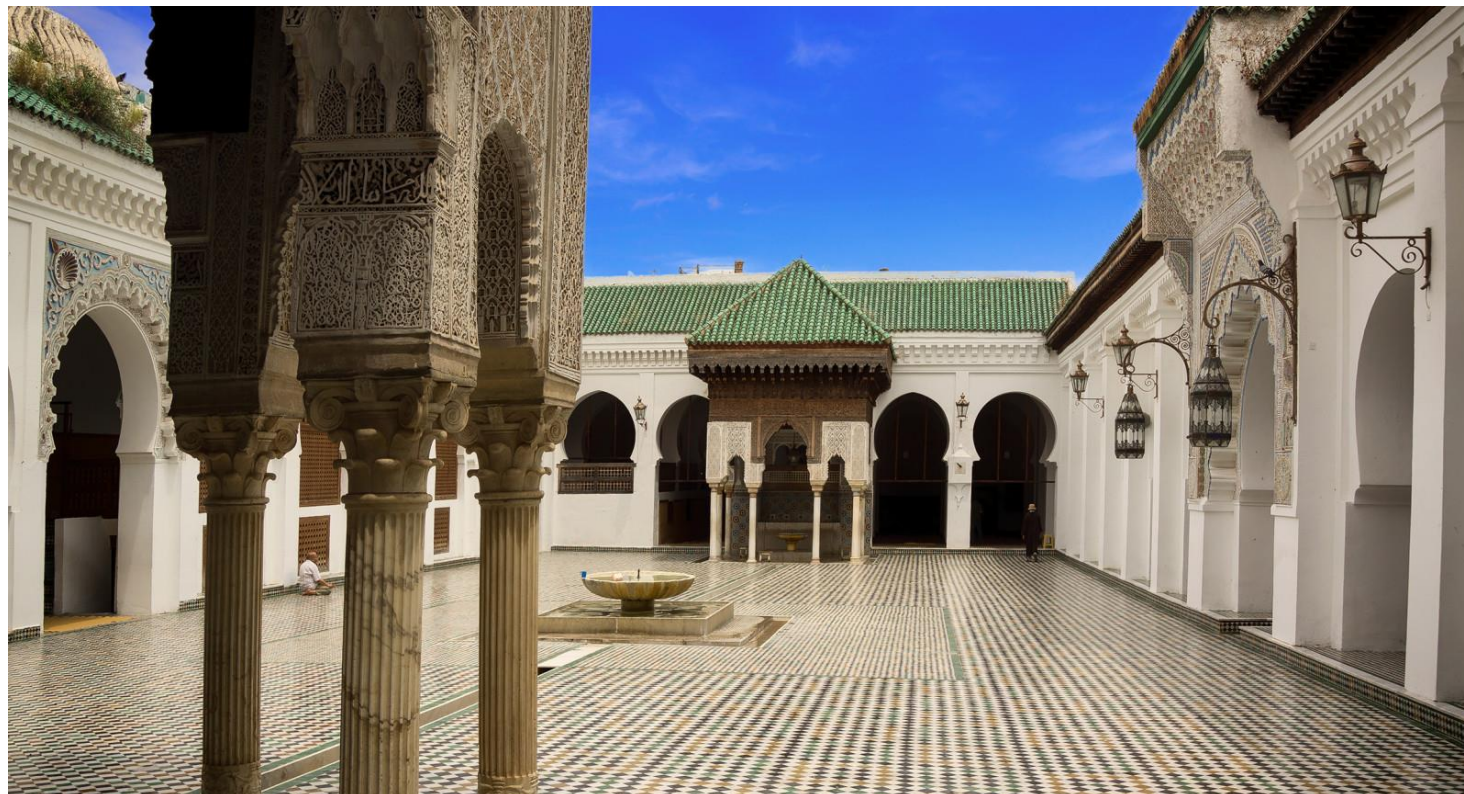
Arab Mosques (Maghrebi)

Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and School, Fez



Arab Mosques (Maghrebi)

Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and School, Fez



Arab Mosques (Maghrebi)

The Great Mosque, Tlemcen

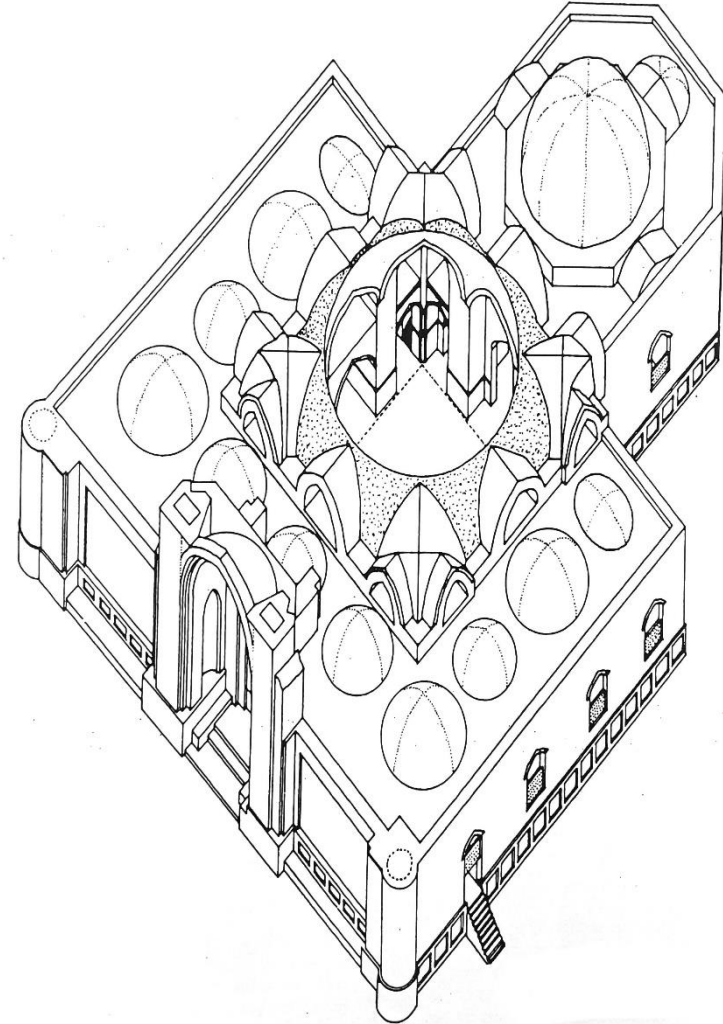
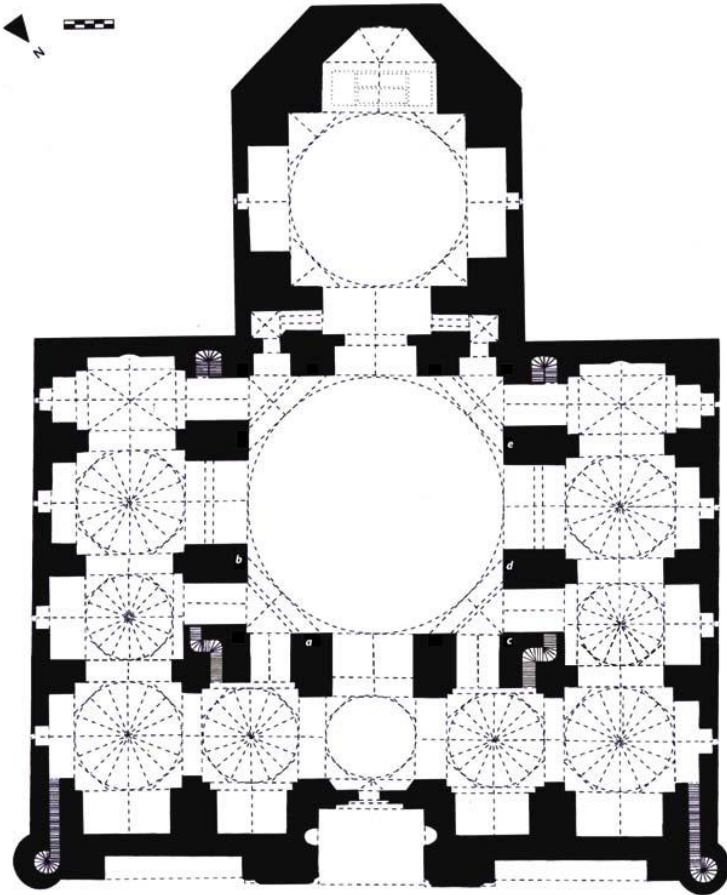


Iranian Mosques

- The early Iranian mosques were also Arab mosques.
- The basic character of the well developed Iranian mosque is the domed chamber, and the Iwan.
- The domed chamber was an effect of the Sassanian palatial architecture or the Zoroastrian fire temples, since it was not just a decorative element, but a structural and spatial organizer, transforming the space from one axis space to a two equally axes space.
- The Iwan is a vaulted open hall, with a rectangular arched façade.
- Iwan was more of a ceremonial and monumental element than religious.
- Iranian-developed mosques also used multiple minarets.

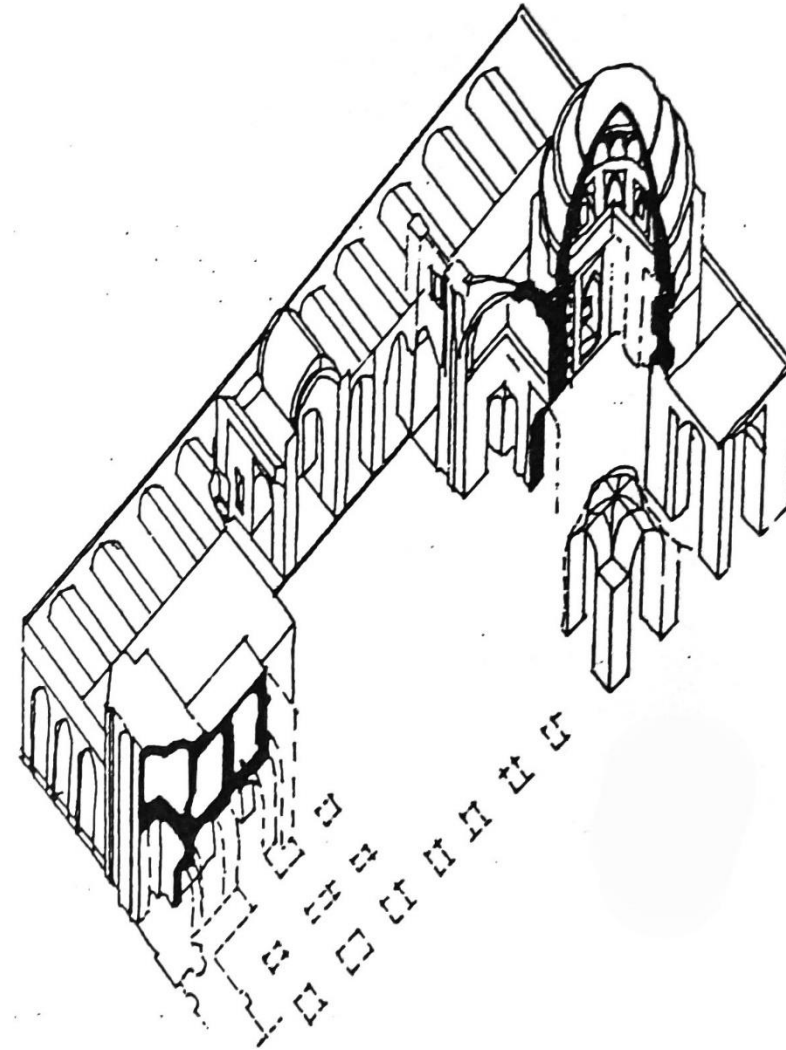
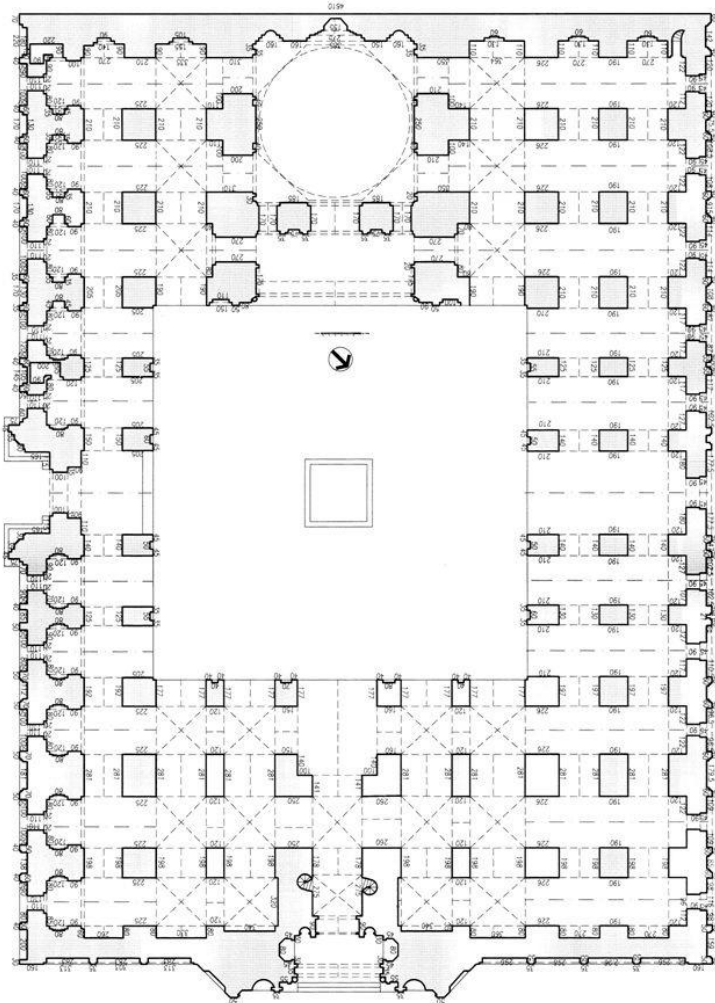
Iranian Mosques (Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid)

Blue Mosque, Tabriz



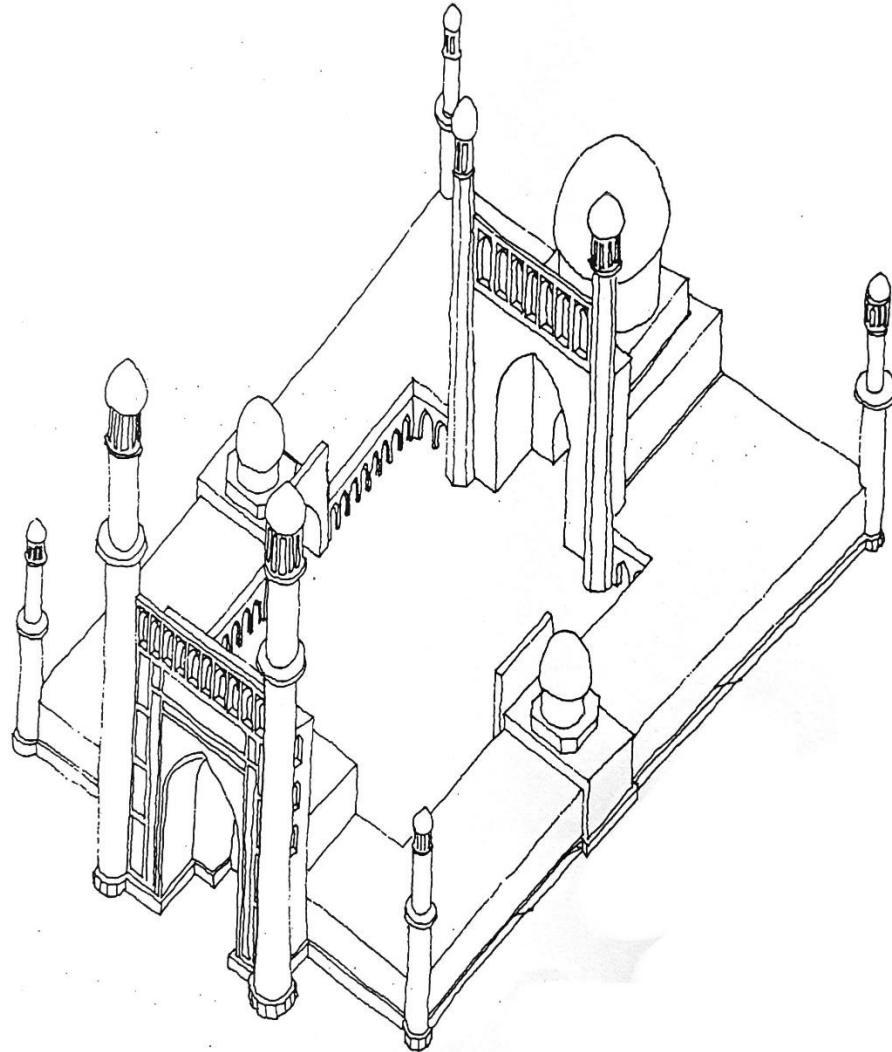
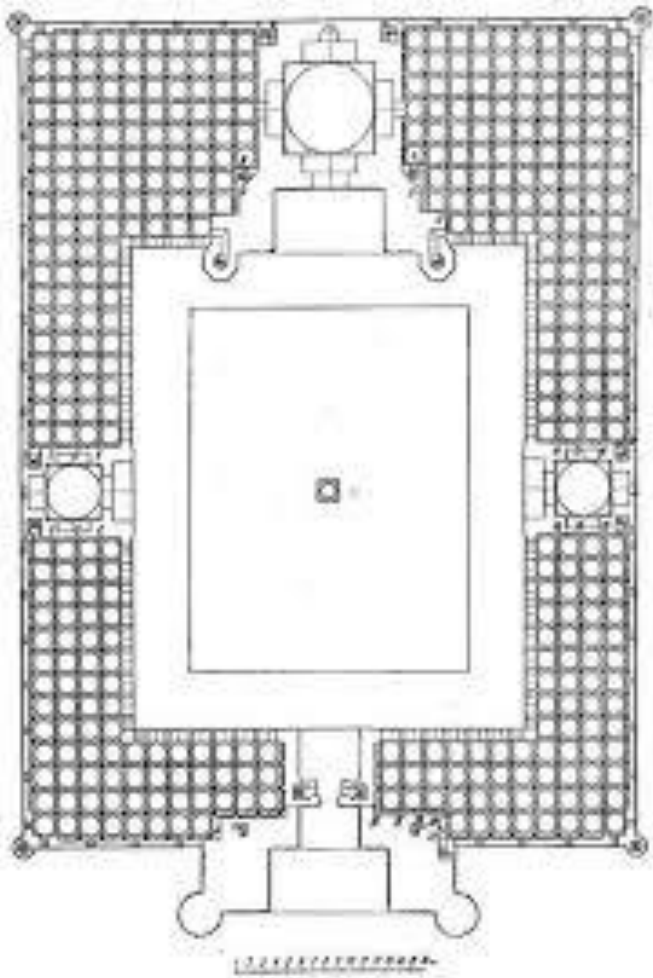
Iranian Mosques (Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid)

Friday Mosque, Varamin



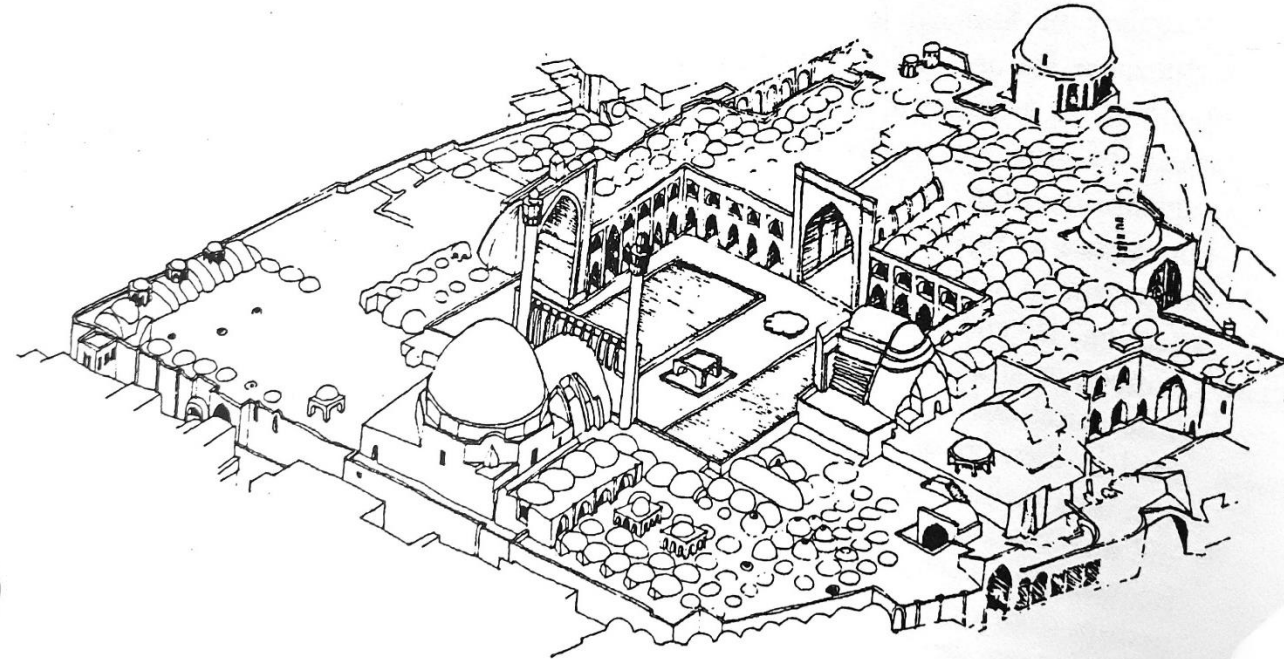
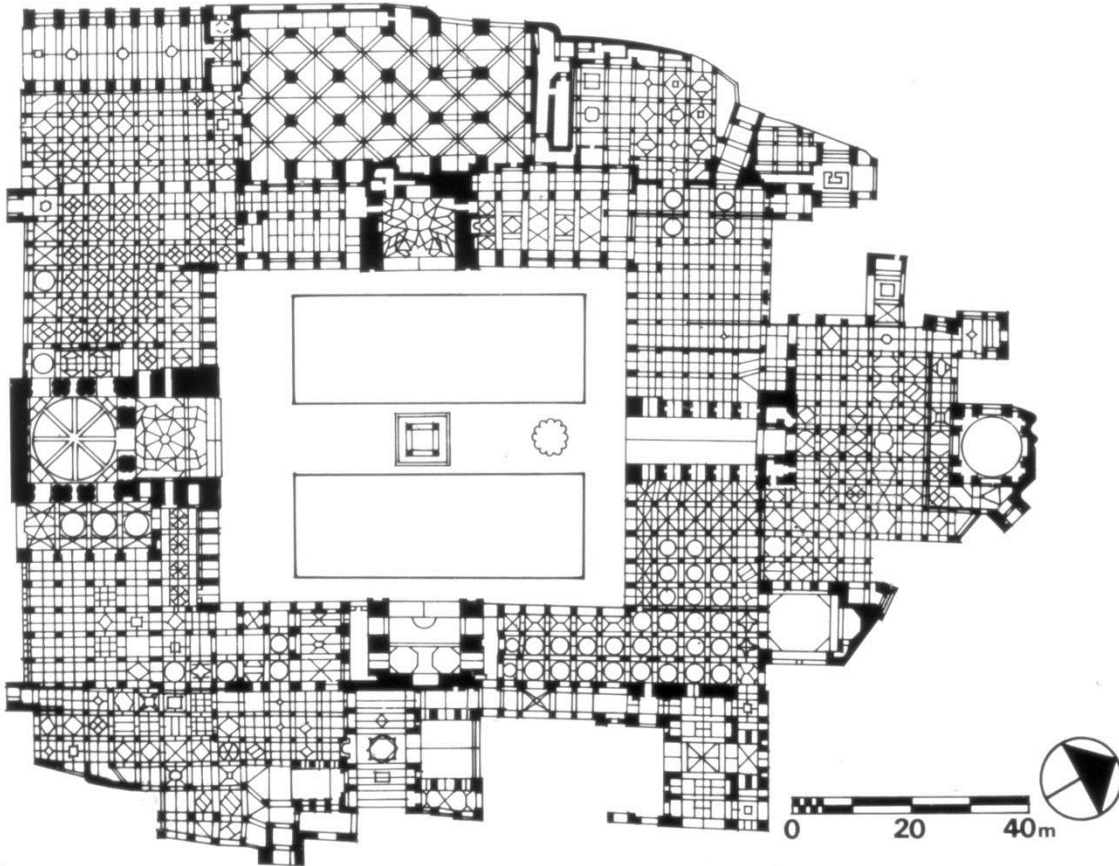
Iranian Mosques (Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid)

Bibi-Khanym Mosque, Samarkand



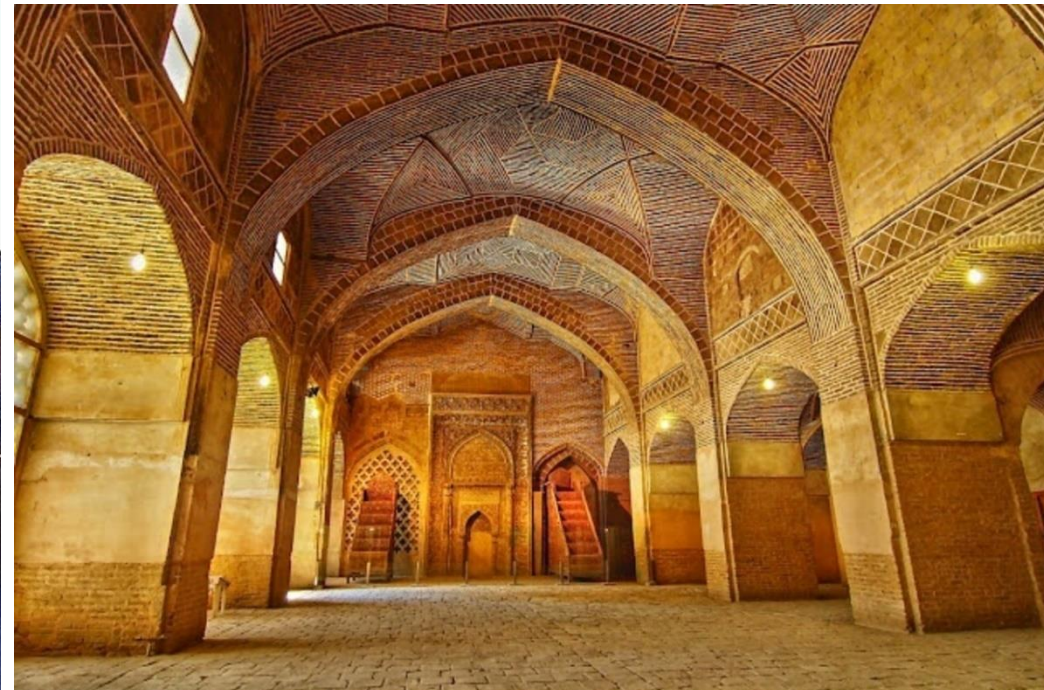
Iranian Mosques (Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid)

Friday Mosque, Isfahan



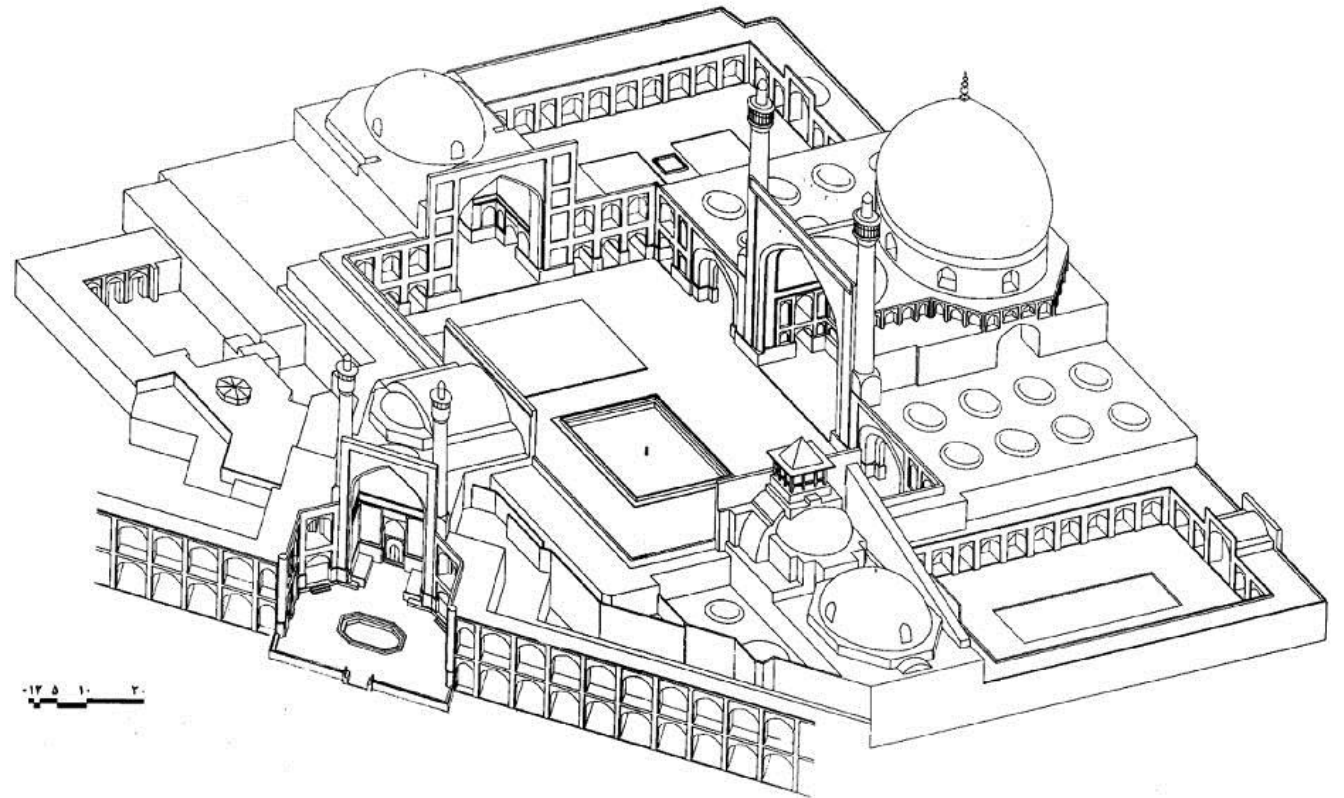
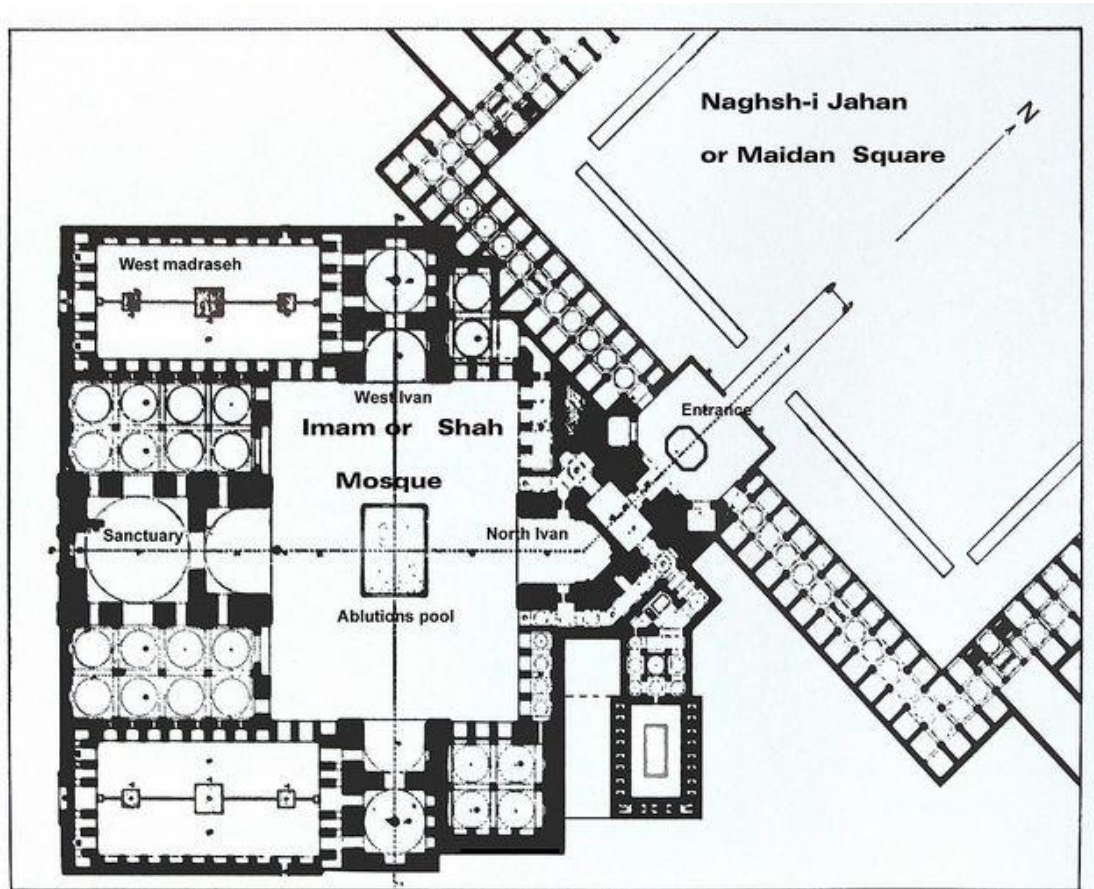
Iranian Mosques (Seljuk, Ilkhanid, Timurid)

Friday Mosque, Isfahan

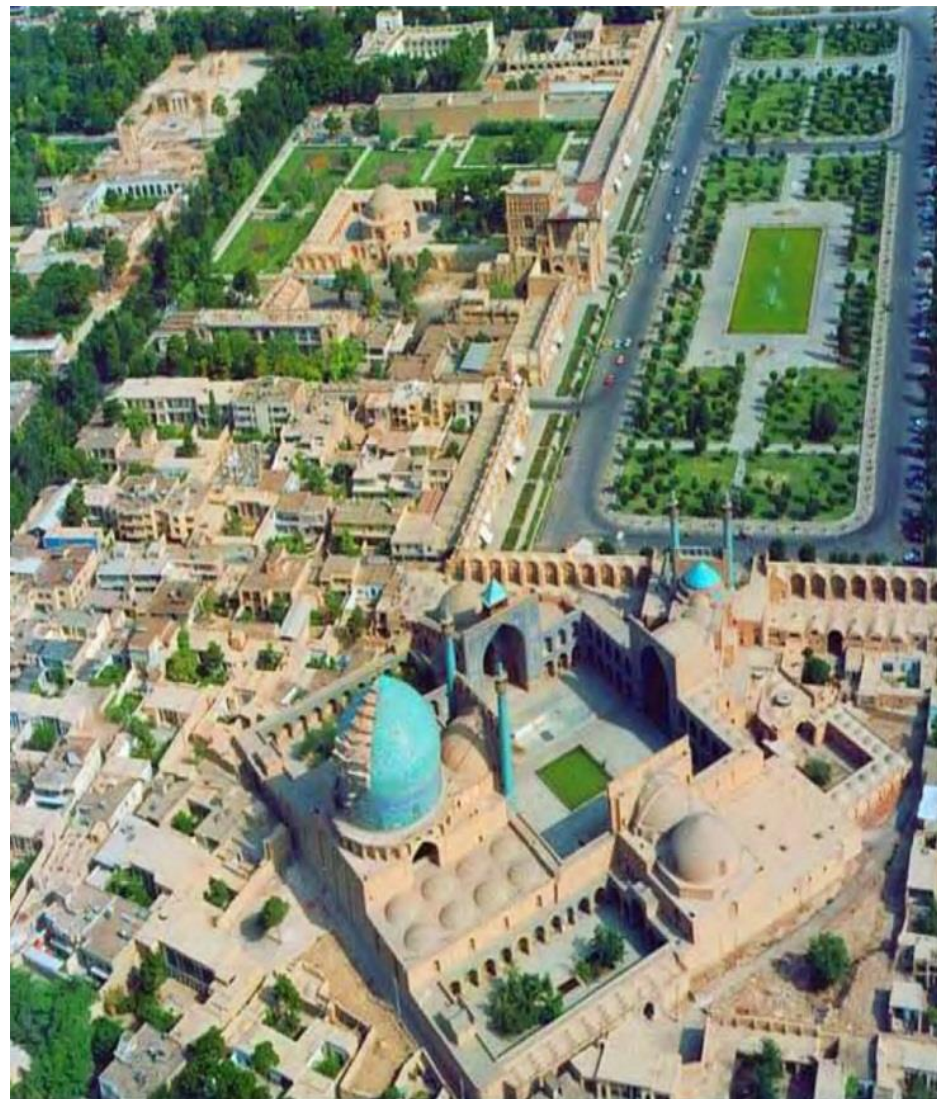


Iranian Mosques (Safavid)

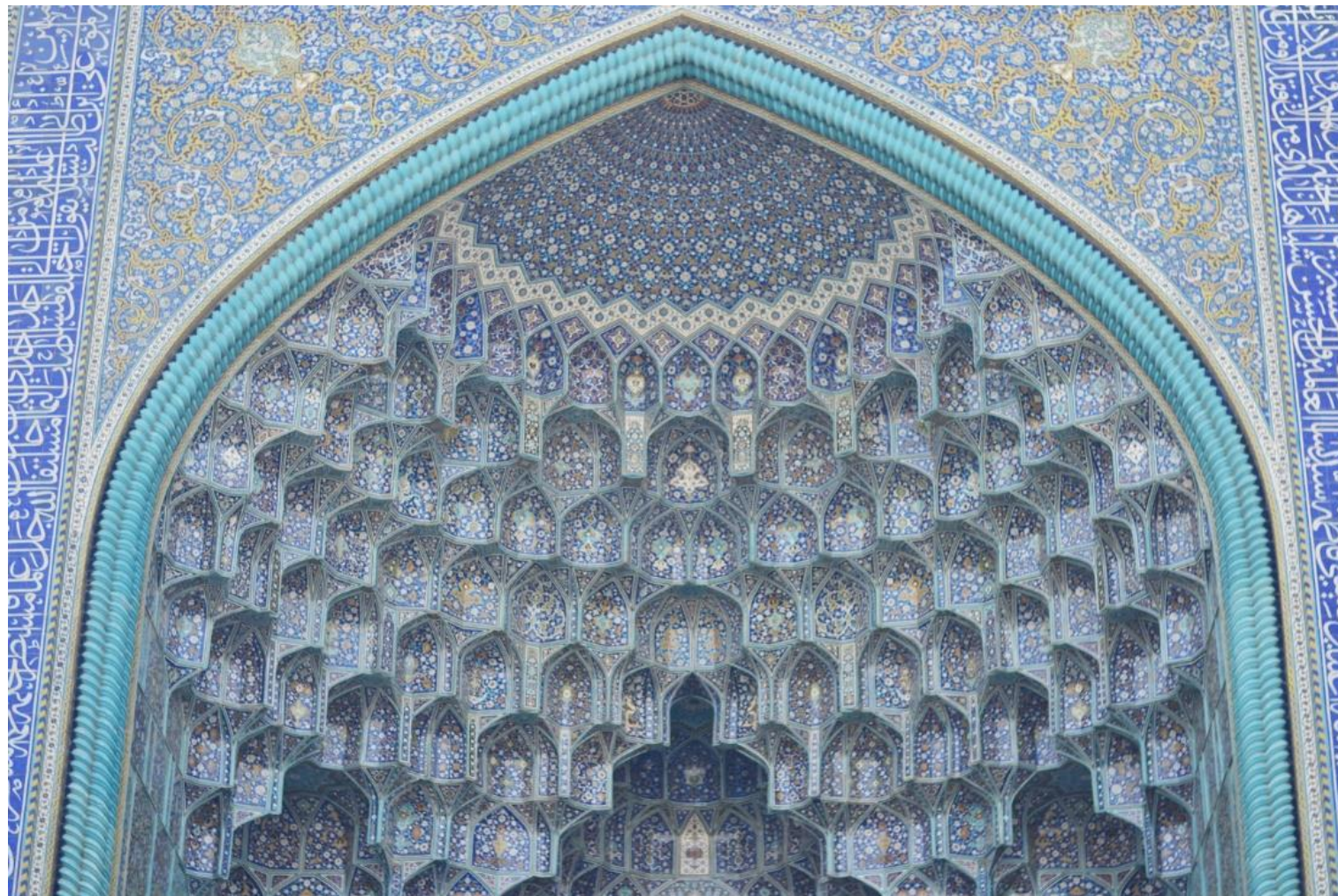
Imam (Shah) Mosque, Isfahan



Iranian Mosques (Safavid)

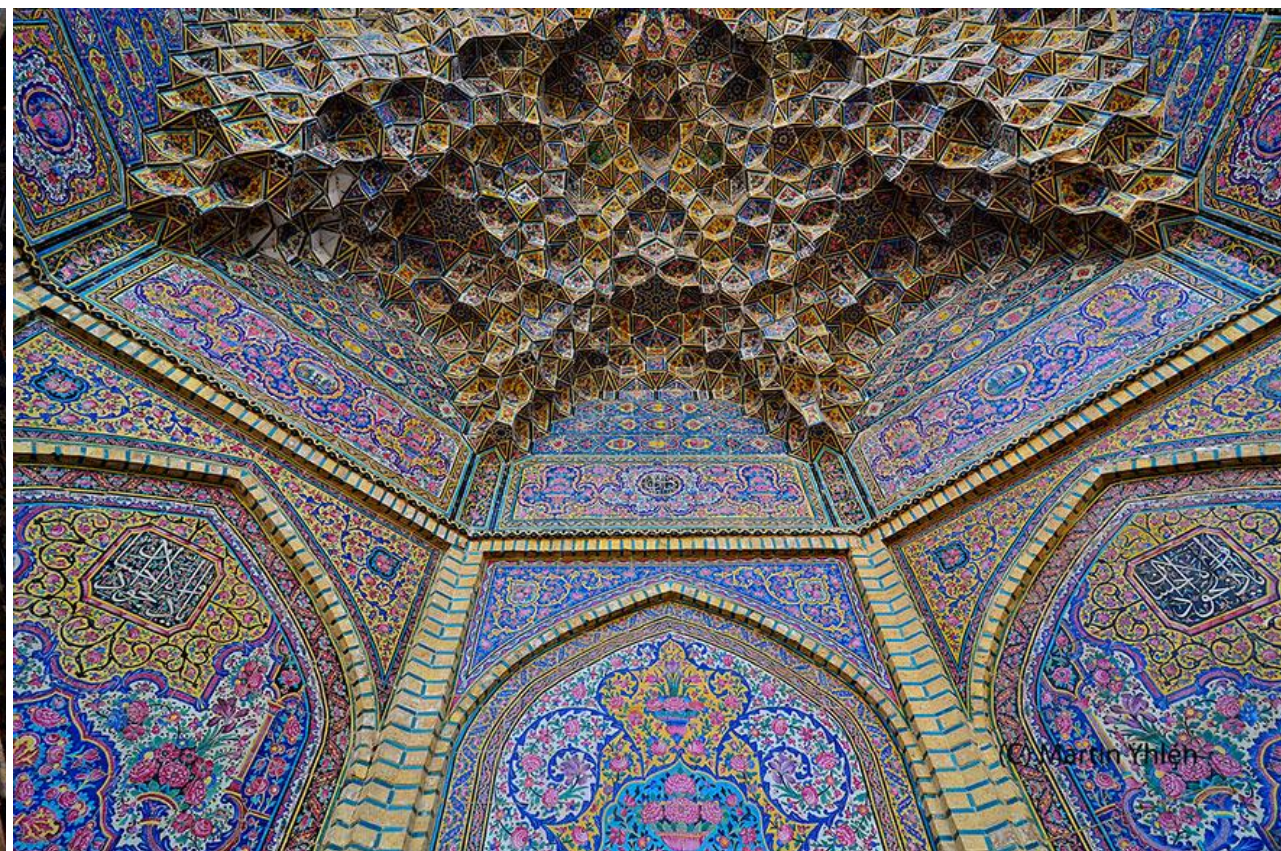
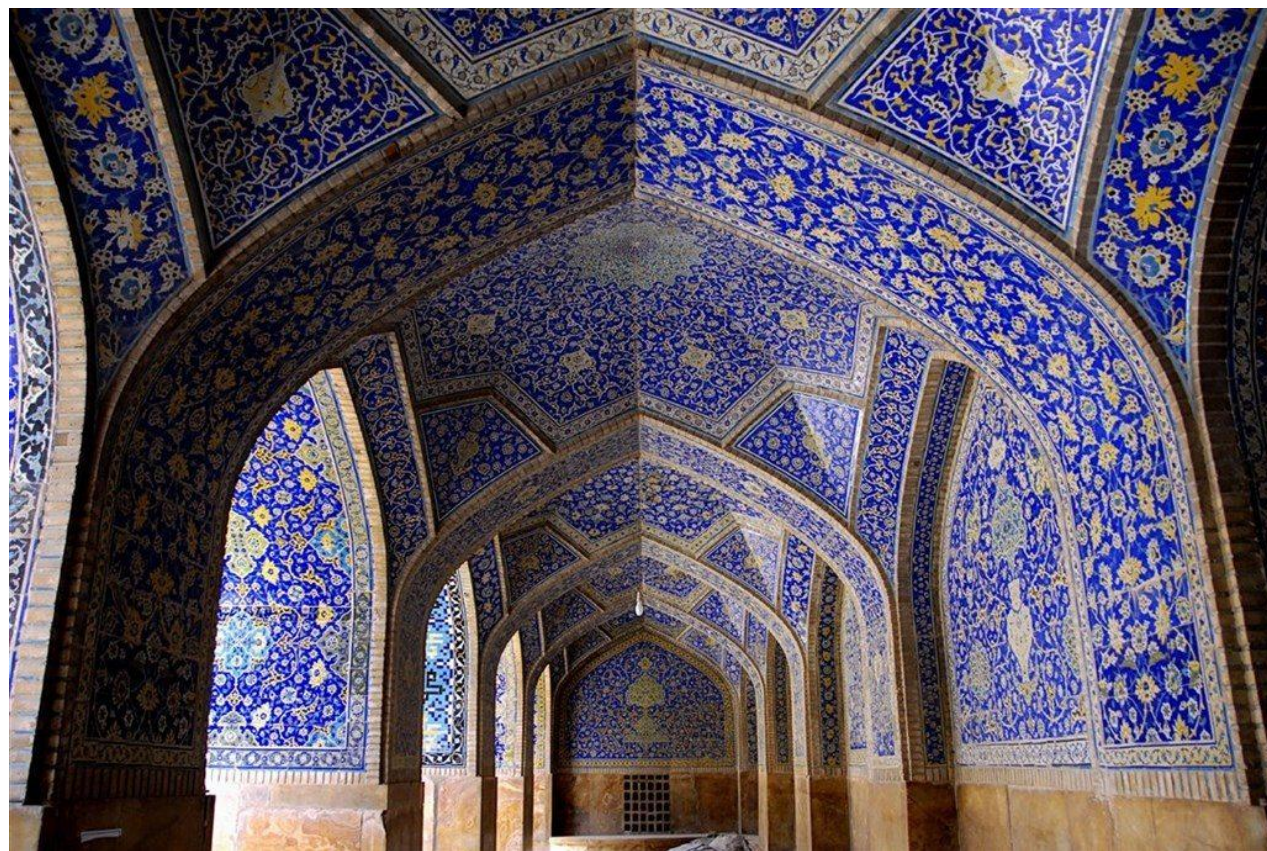


Imam (Shah) Mosque, Isfahan



Iranian Mosques (Safavid)

Imam (Shah) Mosque, Isfahan

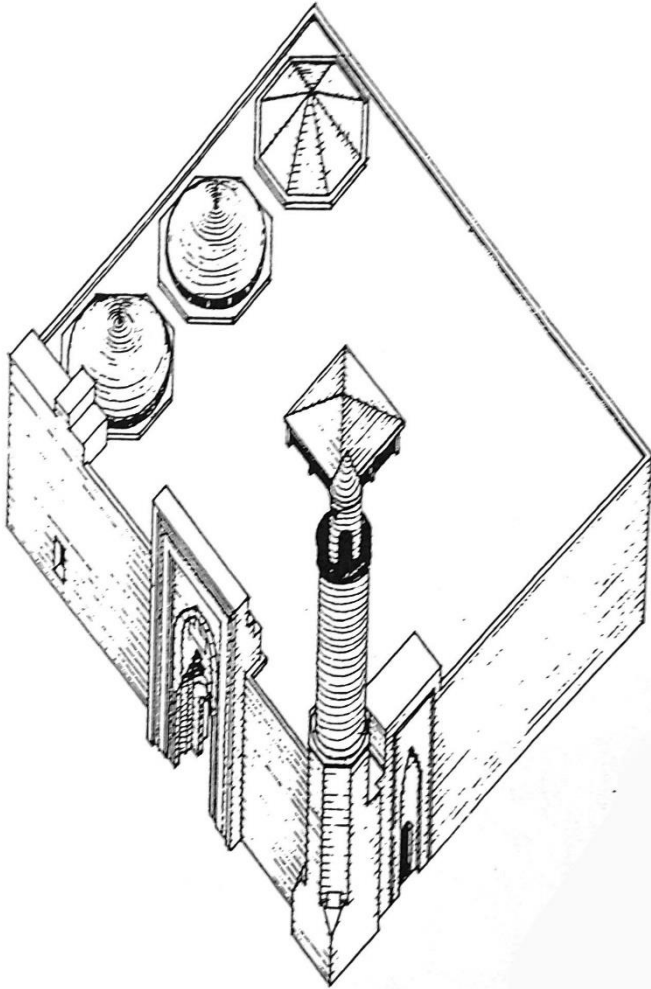


Turkish Mosques

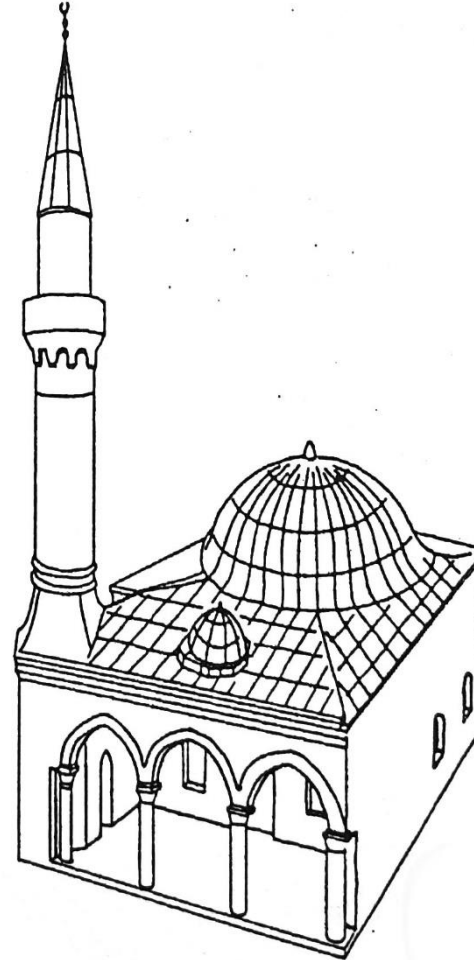
- Early Turkish mosques were similar to the Arab mosques.
- Then the idea of the domed chamber developed like the Iranian type.
- Later the dome would develop into a very different solution, minimizing the effect of the courtyard, and emphasizing the interior articulation.
- The first mosques used a single dome over the praying hall. Later they viewed the “multiple-dome” solution.
- The mature Ottoman style, depends on the central dome, which is buttressed by semi domes. Its location is central to the mosque, reducing the importance of the mihrab.
- The Turkish mosques also had distinctive pencil minarets, along with a decorated exterior.

Turkish Mosques (Early)

1- 'Ala' al-Din Mosque, Nigde

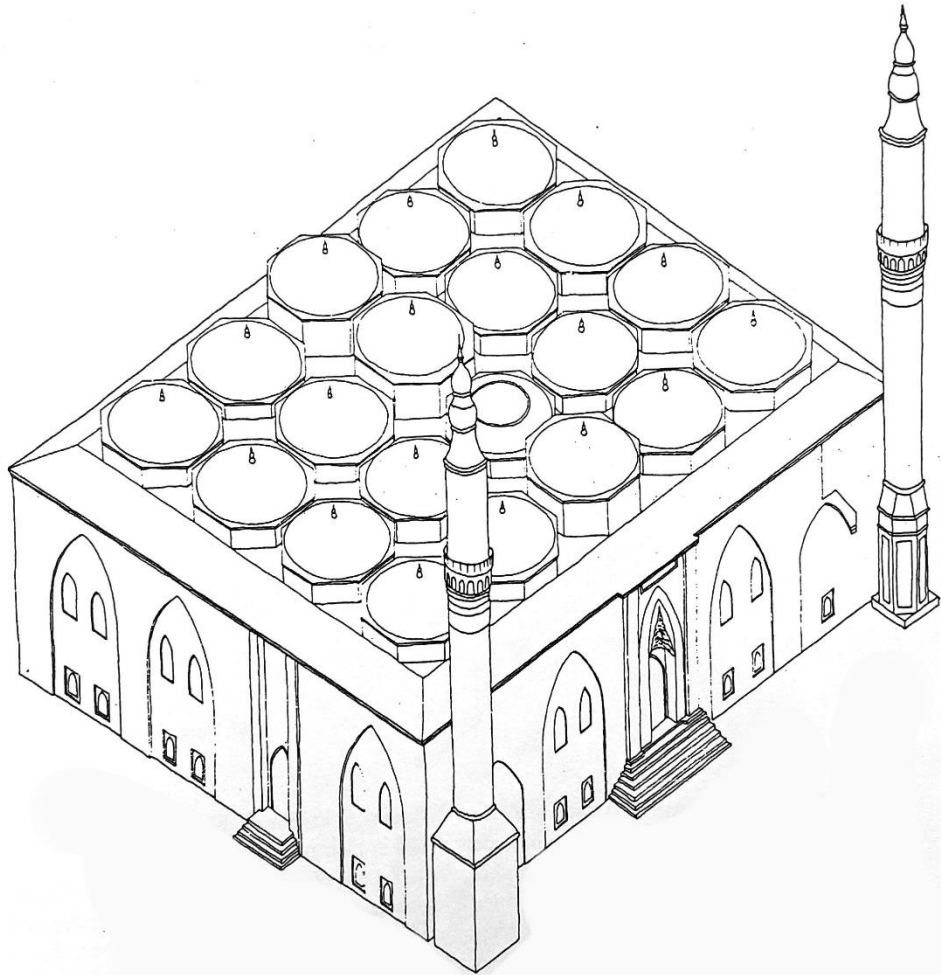


2- Yesil Cami, Iznik

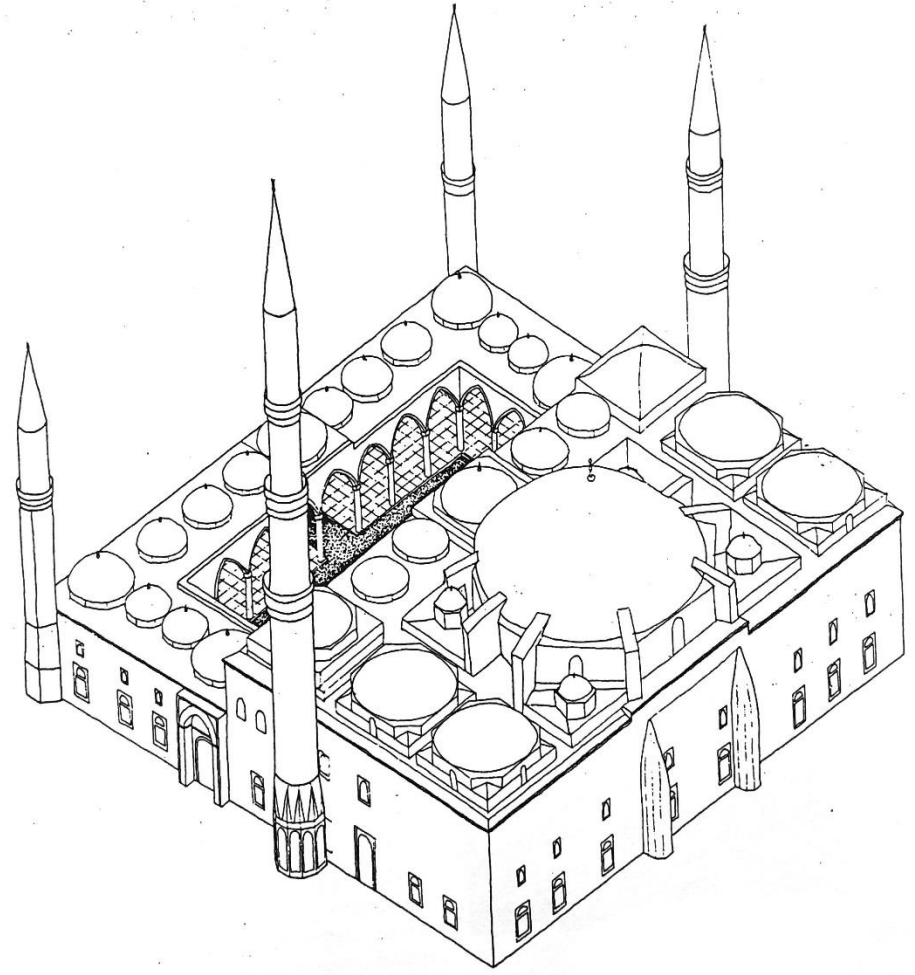


Turkish Mosques (Early)

3- Great Mosque (Ulu Cami), Bursa

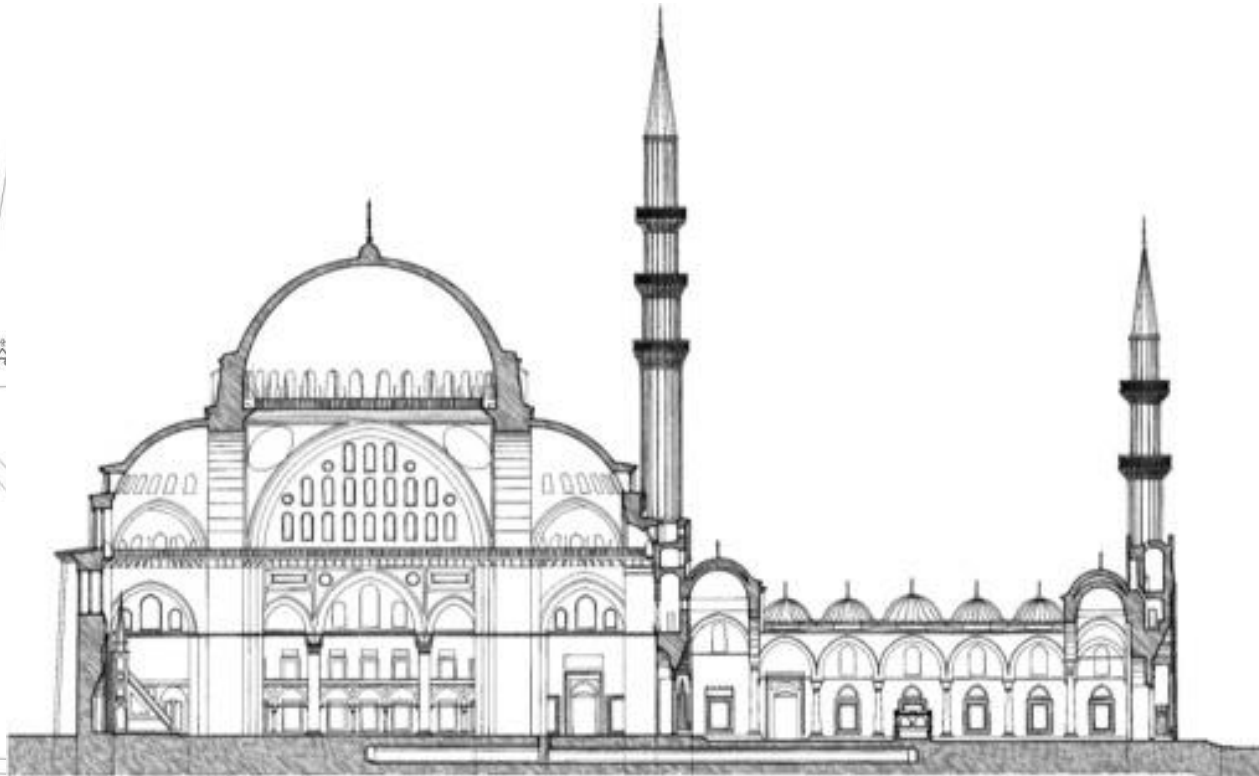
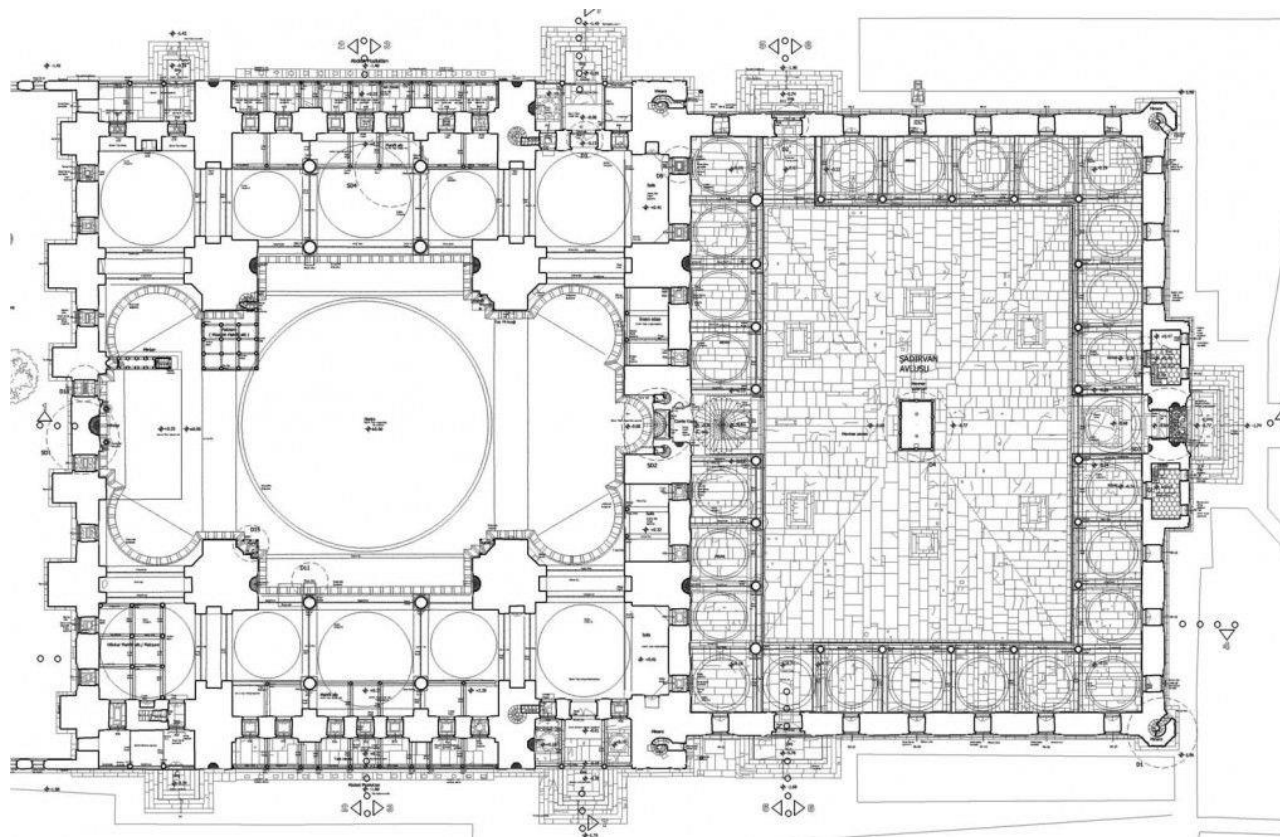


4- Uc Serefli Mosque, Edirne



Turkish Mosques (Ottoman)

Suleimaniye Mosque, Istanbul



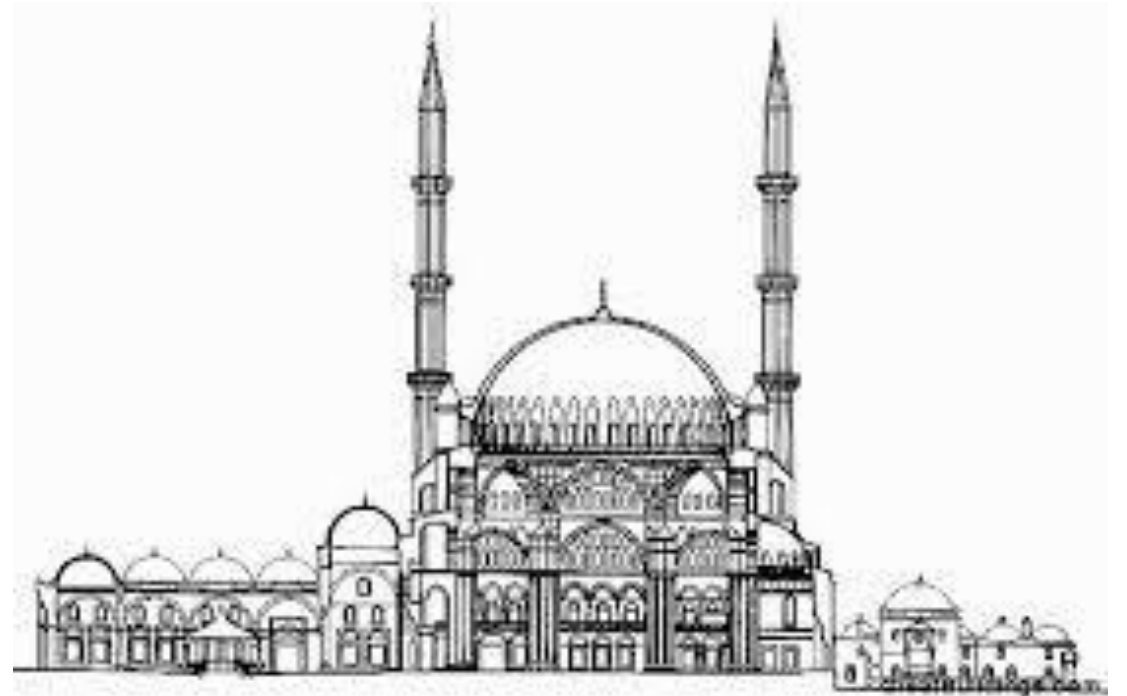
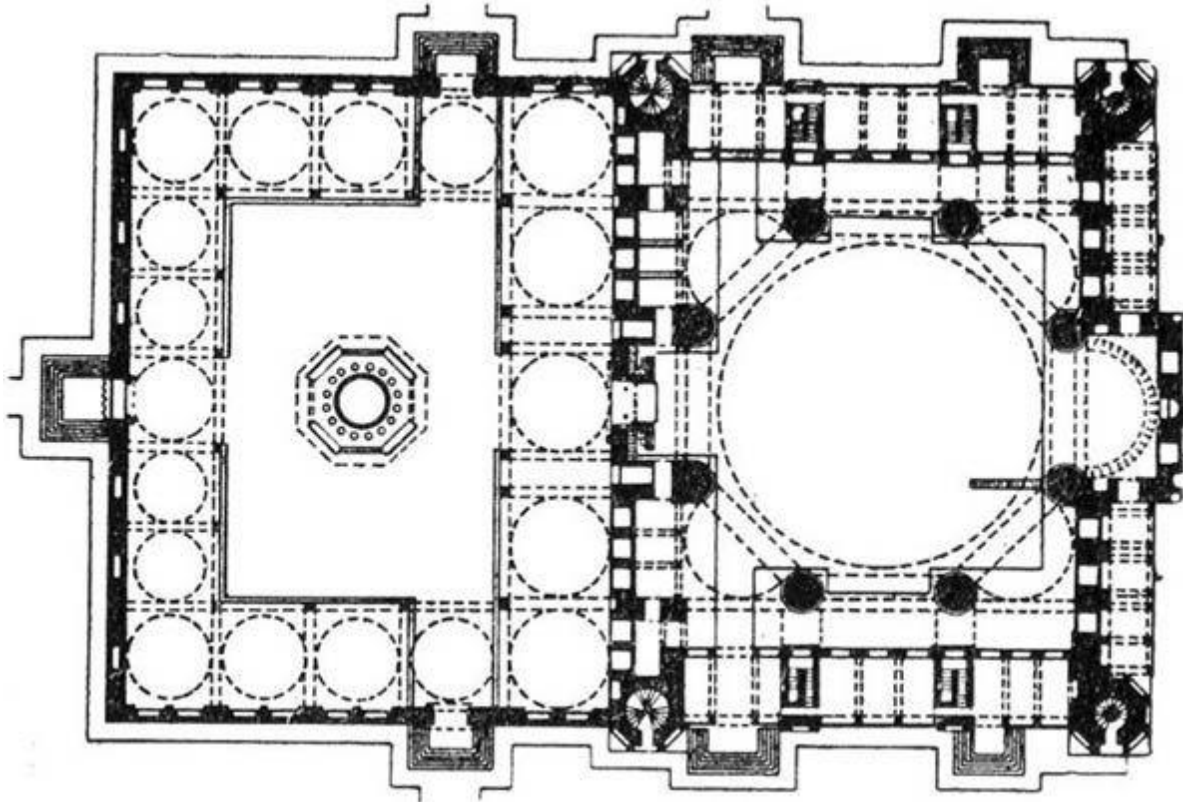
Turkish Mosques (Ottoman)

Suleimaniye Mosque, Istanbul



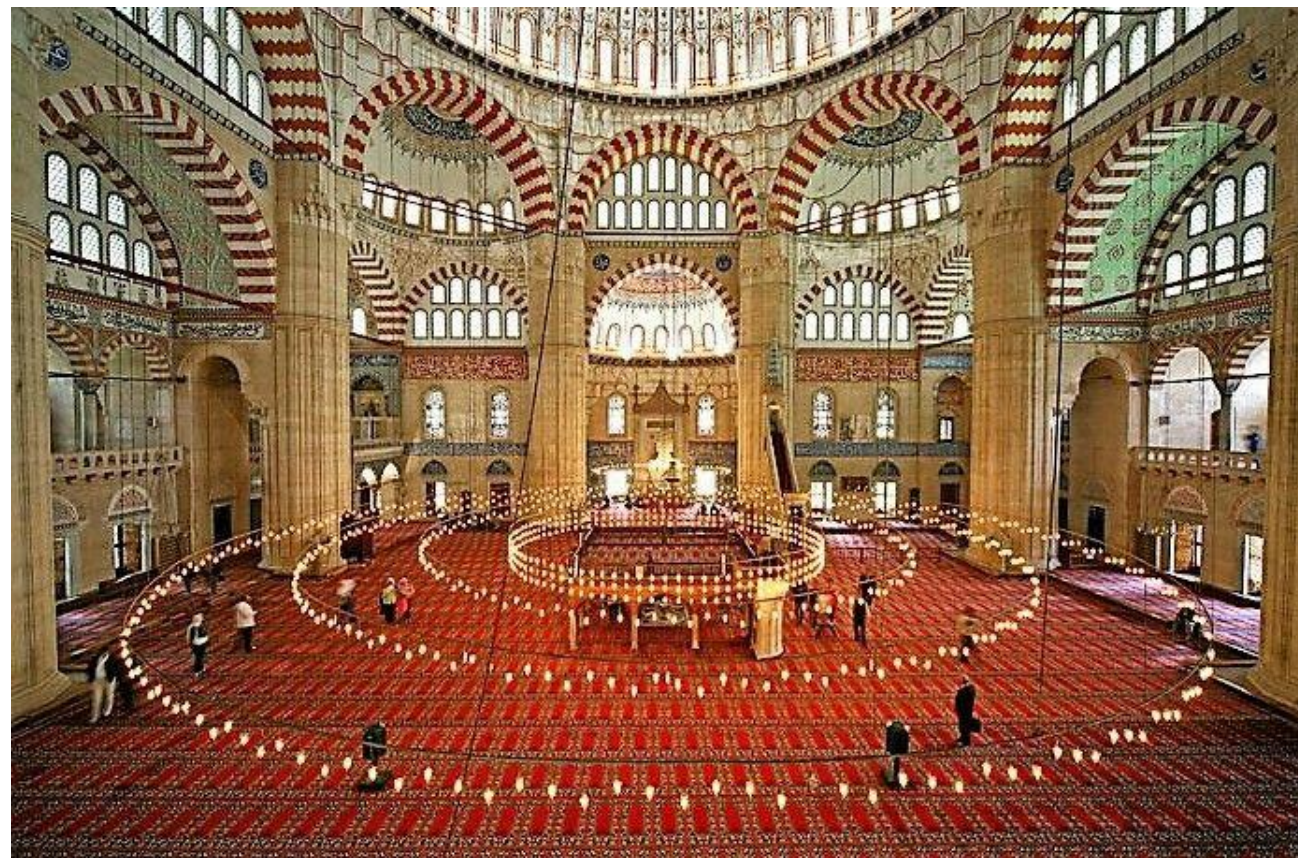
Turkish Mosques (Ottoman)

Selimiye Mosque, Edirne



Turkish Mosques (Ottoman)

Selimiye Mosque, Edirne



Mosques

- Mosques are the basic buildings in Islamic architecture.
- The amount of diversity in these buildings is huge.
- There are many other locations where micro-techniques were developed.