

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2019
The Architecture of Asia: From Baghdad to Beijing, Kabul to Kyoto and Tehran to Tokyo
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Islamic Architecture: Miracles of Structure, Space and Surface

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Part 1 The history of early Islam and Islamic Architecture. Regional styles

610 The Prophet Muhammad receives his first revelations in Mecca.

612 Mohammad begins to preach and makes countless converts to his new monotheistic religion. He respects Christianity and Judaism.

622 The Prophet with seventy Muslim families migrates from Mecca to Medina.

628 Peace treaty between Mecca and Medina.

632, Death of the Prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr, the first caliph unites the tribes of Arabia. 634-44 Under the caliph Umar, Muslims invade Iraq, Syria, Egypt.

638, The conquest of Jerusalem. The third holiest city for Muslims after Mecca and Medina.

641 Muslims defeat the Persian Empire.

644-50 Under Uthman, Muslims conquer Cyprus, Tripoli (North Africa) and establish rule in Iran, Afghanistan and Sind (Pakistan).

656-61 The assassination of Uthman is followed by strife which leads to the rift between Sunnis and Shiites and to the murder of caliph Ali in 661.

705 – 17 Under caliph Al Walid the conquest of North Africa continues.

705 Abt al-Rahman establishes the Muslim Umayyad kingdom Spain.

Requirements for mosques: no specific architectural design but the following elements are required:

Spacious prayer hall with protection from sun and rain;

Mihrab, a niche in the **Qibla wall** in the direction of Mecca; **Minber** a pulpit;

Minaret for calling the faithful to prayer: **Water for ablutions**

Prohibited: representation of humans and animals in art

Calligraphy and abstract ornament adorn the architecture

Characteristics and elements of Islamic Architecture:

Geometric ordering, structural daring

Pendentives warped triangular elements between arches and domes

Polychrome masonry, horseshoe arches, eyvans, large recesses in walls behind arches

Domes small or absent in early mosques, then covering entire prayer hall.

Development of increasingly dominant domes of The Pantheon in Rome 80 CE. Massive structure illuminated by only one opening, Compared with The **Church of Hagia Sophia** in Constantinople. Dynamic structure; many openings; 32 meter wide dome 532-7

Selimiye Mosque, Edirne Dome 31.28 m. wide 1570.

Early shrines and mosques: Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (617-691 CE) based on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (335 CE)

House of Muhammad in Medina; Great Mosque of Samarra, Iraq (848-852) Great Mosque of Kairouan Tunisia. Late 9th century;

Mosque of Ibn Tulun Cairo 876-9; Umayyad Mosque, Damascus Syria (706-14); **Great Mosque Cordoba, Spain** begun 786 by Abt al-Rahman. Square Minarets in Spain and Morocco

Safavid ruler **Shah Abbas** (r. 1587-1629) moves capital from Qazvin in 1597 to Isfahan, plans a new city, centered onto the **Maidan** (central square), builds the **Shah Mosque** in the Maidan, 1612-13; **Ali Qapu Palace 1646** also on the Maidan 1590 Chihil Sotun Palace. **Pul i-Khaj Bridge 1650**

Part 2 Ottoman Mosques in Bursa, Edirne, and Istanbul from 1339 to 1575

Evolution of structural design. Issues of monumentality and human scale.

The significance of the **külliye** (complex of social and religious buildings around the mosque)

The architecture of **Mimar Sinan** 1538 -88. The vast mosques dominating the skyline of Istanbul show the ambitions of the sultans, valide sultans and grand viziers who built them for the glory of God. But I will show that the külliyes around the mosques, served the needs of the surrounding community and offered a sense of human scale.

The rise of the Ottomans, descendants of **Osman** (1258-1326).

Conquest of three capitals: **Bursa, Edirne** and **Constantinople** (now Istanbul) The evolution of design in the first mosques. Gradual increase in dome size and complexity.

Orhan Gazi mosque, (1339) Two domed compartments. Squinches make transition to dome

Green Mosque, transition from square walls to dome by Turkish band of triangles

Ulucami Bursa (1396) with twenty domes.

Üç Şerefeli Cami Edirne, the first with a dominant dome flanked by four others.

Conquest of Constantinople by Mehmet 1 (1453). Conversion of the Greek Orthodox Christian church of

Hagia Sophia to a mosque. Mehmet I's **Fatih Mosque** (1463-7) With a central dome and one half dome.

Beyazit II Mosque (1501). With a second half dome; following structure of Hagia Sophia

Mimar Sinan, Chief architect of **Süleyman** the Magnificent (1538-88): Trained as an engineer in the Janissary Corps. Responsible for over 100 domed mosques. Experimented boldly.

Şehzade Mosque (1543-48) central dome; four half domes to equalize the forces. Notice the weight towers over the main piers to counteract to outward thrust from the dome.

Süleymaniye Mosque (1550-57) Returns to spatial scheme of Hagia Sophia: ,

Rüstem Paşa Mosque Central dome on six arches(1561-3) Liberally ornamented with predominantly blue Iznik tiles

Selimiye Mosque Sinan's largest and most dynamic structure: dome on eight arches.

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