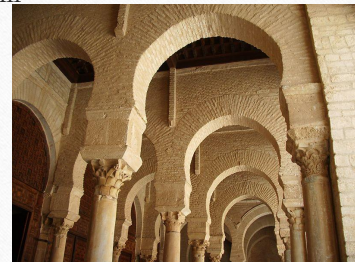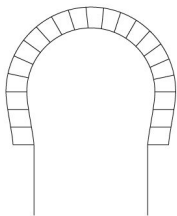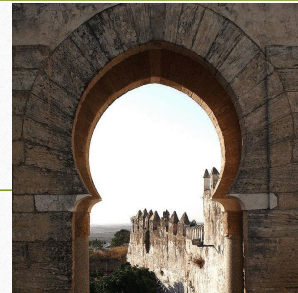# Islamic Architecture

Local cultures will have their own impact on architecture as Islam spreads but some elements of Islamic architecture are traceable no matter how much local influence is injected.

Horseshoe Arch

- Origin unknown

- Some say Umayyad, others say Visigoth (Spain), and still others say Byzantine or Sassanid
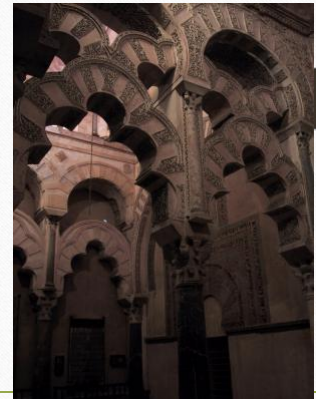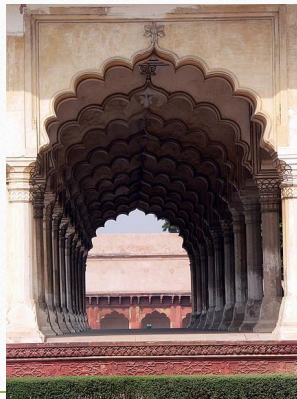
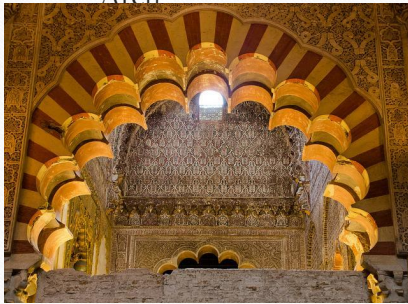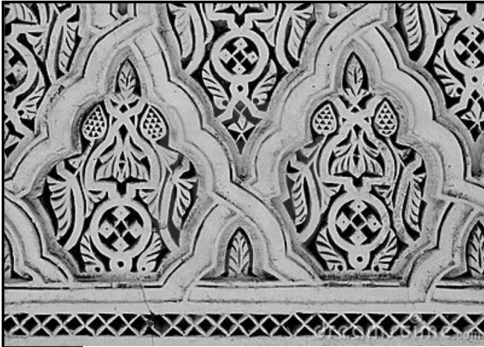Compare to this Roman Arch

Pointed Arch

- First used by Byzantines it will become the characteristic arch of Islamic Architecture

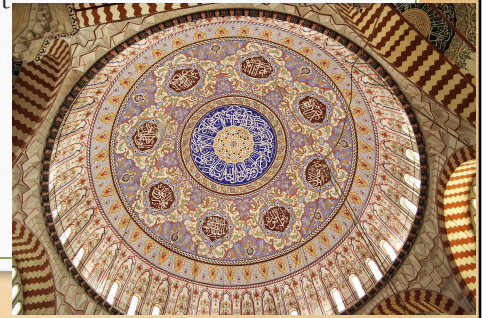- Later it becomes a center of Gothic Medieval Architecture
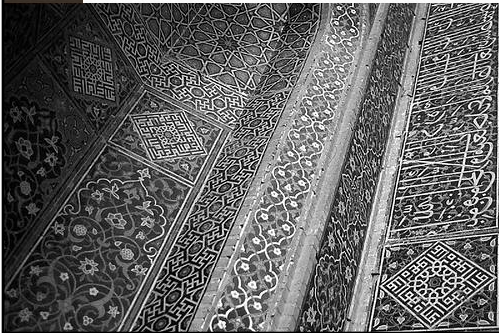
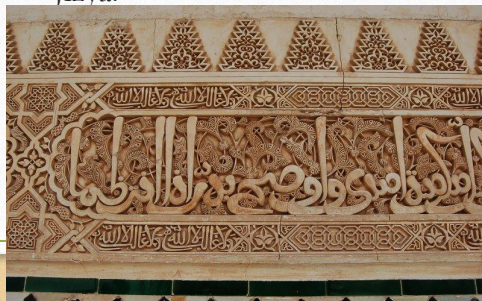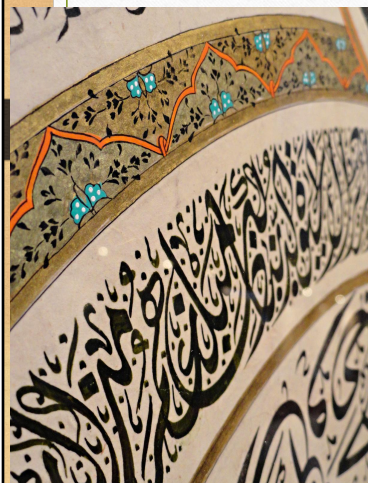# Scalloped Arch

- Variation on the Horseshoe Arch

Arabesque

- Means repeating geometrical patterns
- Major feature of Islamic Architecture due to fact that they do not depict living things in their art.

Calligraphy

- Quotations from Qur'an
- Emphasizes Islam and the unification of their empire due to fact all had to learn Arabic to become Muslim or pay Jizya.

Hypostyle

- Greek word meaning "under columns
- Not specific to Islam but used extensively in a mosque's prayer hall which had to be a large room
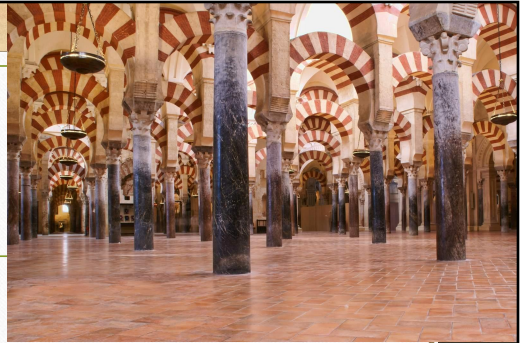
Minaret

- Used to call Muslims to prayer
- Word originates from the term for "an object that gives light"
- First mosques did not have minarets.
- Can vary drastically depending on local cultural influences

Oldest Standing Minaret

Large Courtyards

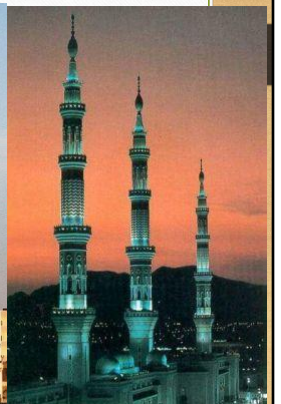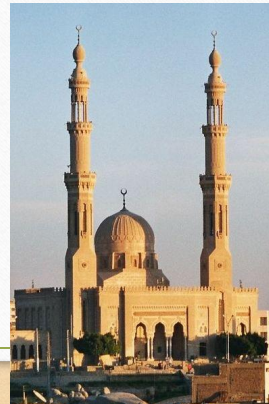- The actual meeting place in the first mosque Muhammad built had a courtyard which is where the people gathered to pray.

- Mosques are multipurpose buildings and serve religious, political and cultural roles. Courtyard= Town Square

- Symbolically separates the outside world from the prayer hall (mentally prepare)

Large Domes

Dome of the Madarsa-i-Shah at Isfahan (Iran)

- Again, not a unique feature of Muslim architecture as the Greeks and Romans perfected the dome

- The Dome of the Rock (right) is one of the holiest sites of Islam and was patterned off of nearby Byzantine churches and Byzantine workers help to build it.

- Sometimes the domes are pointed at the top.

Mihrab

- Is a niche built into the wall of the Mosque which is usually accompanied by a pulpit

- The Mihrab indicates the direction of the Kaaba (الكعبة) in Mecca which is the direction Muslims face when they pray.

Other Elements

- Bright Colors

- Symmetric Design

- Ablution Fountains

- Focus put into interiors rather than exteriors "beauty of the veil"
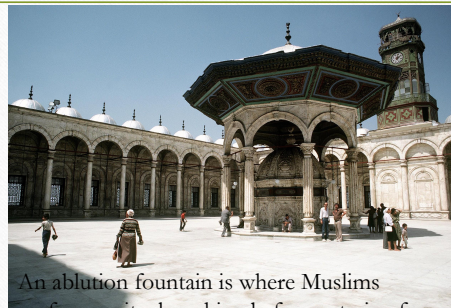
An ablution fountain is where Muslims perform a ritual washing before entering for prayer. It is usually located in the courtyard.

What Islamic Elements can you see?

- Virtual Tours of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.