

# The Muslim West | Andalusian-Maghrebi Art

From Emirate to ta'ifa art: simple beginnings and elaborate heights.

The tendency in Islamic art to decorate interior spaces and building façades was complemented in the art of al-Andalus and the Maghreb by the systematic use of the arch and the capital as decorative motifs. Although the horseshoe arch was the most typical of the available decorative devices, craftsmen created new styles of arches and combined them in different ways. The same was true of capitals, with craftsmen changing the proportions and embellishing the foliage seen on the Romano-Byzantine models to create their own style. The starting point for this new architecture was the Great Mosque of Córdoba.



**Name:**  
Great Mosque of Córdoba

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 169–377 / AD 786–988 Umayyad of al-Andalus, Emirate and Caliphate periods

**Details:**  
Córdoba, Spain

**Justification:**  
Pre-Islamic columns and capitals were used in the Western-emirates period along with semi-circular and horseshoe arches to give rise to a new architectural style based on dual, superimposed arcades and voussoirs of alternating colours.



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**Name:**  
Capital

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 207–38 / AD 822–52 Umayyads of al-Andalus, Emirate of 'Abd al-Rahman II

**Details:**  
National Archaeological Museum  
Madrid, Spain

**Justification:**  
The design used for the expansion of the Great Mosque of Córdoba was also adopted for subsequent expansions, by which time the style of the capitals corresponded to the taste and techniques used in Andalusia.

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**Name:**  
Capital

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira mid-4th century / AD mid-10th century (AH 300–50 / AD 912–61)  
Andalusian Caliphate

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum  
Berlin, Germany

**Justification:**  
Caliphate-period architecture, now fully Islamicised and of high technical quality, offered a full repertoire of forms in which the finely carved arabesques on walls and capitals are particularly noteworthy.



**Name:**  
Madinat al-Zahra

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 324–65 / AD 936–76 Umayyad of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

**Details:**  
Córdoba, Spain

**Justification:**  
Madinat al-Zahra, Córdoba, detail of plant arabesque.



**Name:**  
Capital

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 437–73 / AD 1046–81 Taifa kingdoms; Banu Hud dynasty, Abu Yafar Ahmad al-Muqtadir (r. AH 437–73 / AD 1046–81)

**Details:**  
National Archaeological Museum  
Madrid, Spain

**Justification:**  
The use of decorative arches became more widespread during the time of the ta'ifa kingdoms, with the appearance of mixtilinear arches and longer, narrower capitals with fine arabesque decoration based on plant forms.



**Name:**  
Aljafería Palace (Islamic part)

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 437–73 / AD 1046–81; part of the Torre del Trovador dates from the AH 3rd / AD 9th century, pre-Hud era Taifa kingdom of Banu Hud

**Details:**  
Saragossa, Spain

**Justification:**  
The Aljafería Palace in Saragossa.

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