

The Muslim West | Funerary Steles: Memorials in Stone

Decorative headstones

A new type of stele appeared under the Almoravids, first in al-Andalus and then in the Maghreb. This type was characterised by a carved decorative horseshoe arch supported on columns as a symbolic representation of the mihrab. A funerary inscription would appear within the arch, which in the example seen here (as in others), is limited to the name, lineage and titles of the deceased, the date of death, the profession of faith (Shahada), verses from the Qur'an and religious invocations.



Name:
Gravestone

Dynasty:
Hegira 435 / AD 1044 Taifa Kingdoms

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

Justification:
Judging from surviving examples, this type of decorated stele was available only to wealthy people of high social standing. It was used until the Marinid period, to whose artistic style the horseshoe arch can be attributed.



Name:
Funerary stele

Dynasty:
Hegira 547 / AD 1152 Almoravid

Details:
National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:
Judging from surviving examples, this type of decorated stele was available only to wealthy people of high social standing. It was used until the Marinid period, to whose artistic style the horseshoe arch can be attributed.



Name:
Tombstone

Dynasty:
Hegira 7th century / AD 13th century From the Moorish community after the Christian conquest of Évora in AH 560 / AD 1165

Details:
Évora Museum
Évora, Portugal

Justification:
Judging from surviving examples, this type of decorated stele was available only to wealthy people of high social standing. It was used until the Marinid period, to whose artistic style the horseshoe arch can be attributed.



Name:
Funerary stele

Dynasty:
Hegira 706 / AD 1307 Marinid

Details:
Museum of Archaeology
Rabat, Morocco

Justification:
Judging from surviving examples, this type of decorated stele was available only to wealthy people of high social standing. It was used until the Marinid period, to whose artistic style the horseshoe arch can be attributed.
