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HYBRIDITY AND COLLAGE: THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF  
THE GREAT MOSQUE OF CORDOBA

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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## Introduction

It was not until recently that it became apparent that the two fields I have spent my entire college career studying, Environmental Studies and Art History, have melded and permeated my life in unexpected ways. The issues surrounding conservation, particularly the fixation with reaching authenticity when restoring an endangered area and the efforts taken to combat the spread of invasive species do not differ much from those surrounding the conservation of important monuments. The Great Mosque of Cordoba is a building that has been constantly transformed and sought after, each and every time because of the perceived authenticity of its interior and its history.

Curiously enough, it is often perceived as either a Muslim space or a Christian space, but hardly ever as a hybrid construction and a product of its long history as a conquered space. One wonders why such a division is present, as it is apparent to any casual tourist that the mosque is no longer a mosque, but the cathedral is uncomfortably in contact with elements of the other, therefore making the building hard to conceive as simply a cathedral.

Jim Carlton, Director of the Williams-Mystic program, shared the story of an expert of Hawaiian barnacles who received photographs from a photographer capturing the diversity in the area. He came across a photograph of a barnacle not native to Hawaii and, instead of questioning why that particular barnacle was appearing in Hawaii, sent the photograph back to the photographer telling him that he had mistakenly sent him a photograph he had not taken in Hawaii. Of course, the photographer was sure he had sent

him the correct photographs, but the expert was adamant about it being a mistake. Soon it came to be known that this white barnacle was rapidly invading the coast of Hawaii and in fact had already formed a chain around one of the islands. No one had truly noticed until an amateur photographer called the attention of the specialist. It is often surprising what is overlooked because of the level of specialty people reach. The knowledge that comes from engaging in more sophisticated knowledge might create an oversight of the bigger picture or simply the narrowing of the field.

While the history of this mosque has been thoroughly researched and written about, the same level of interest has not translated into a deeper study of the Christian transformations and how they interact with what was previously there. What is most apparent to the casual visitor has not become the study of the building. A collage of Christian and Muslim elements comes into play from one aisle to another and instead of interpreting their co-existence, becoming the specialist of one or the other seems like the plausible solution.

The Great Mosque of Cordoba has been the critical centerpiece in the conflicts between Muslim and Christian Spain, some of which continue to this day. When it was constructed it paralleled the Great Umayyad Mosque at Damascus, one of the greatest architectural achievements of Islam, politically and architecturally. But unlike the mosque in Damascus, the Cordoba mosque added a further chapter by experiencing a conversion to a Christian cathedral. Throughout history, Muslims and Christians alike have attempted to harness the power of the Cordoba mosque. Because of the complexities of such a heterogeneous region, such as al-Andalus, it is difficult to separate its Muslim past from its Catholic present. The Great Mosque of Cordoba was a central symbolic site in the conflicts between Christians and Muslims for centuries. Its

continuous architectural transformations set the stage for a contested space driven both by the inevitable difference between Catholic and Muslim spaces of worship and the shifting political power of the Muslim and Catholic traditions in Spain.

Initially the mosque stood as testimony to the expanding presence of Islamic rule on the Spanish peninsula. From the eighth to the twelfth century, the Great Mosque of Cordoba's interior and exterior spaces were enlarged in order to accommodate the growing number of worshippers in the city. The founder of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain, Abd al-Rahman I, settled in Cordoba after fleeing from Syria, where the Umayyad caliphate had fallen. In Cordoba, the population was large enough for him to have to build a congregational mosque.

With the exception of a short Christian conquest in 1146, the mosque remained in Muslim possession until the *reconquista* of Cordoba in 1236. The turning point in the mosque's history was the *reconquista*, which forever transformed the dynamic of the interior space. Without a doubt, the Great Mosque of Cordoba held significant symbolic powers connected to the political and social history of the region, which the Christian conqueror coveted, but it also offered the architectural possibilities to physically embed a Catholic cathedral into a Muslim prayer space

That motivation of choosing one space over another is what drove the restoration efforts in the twentieth century. The notion of being able to return the previous splendor of the building or being able to return it to a more original state motivated architects to continue their efforts. At this point, the question of which authenticity is the most desirable to reach is important. To reach the point of returning the building to its tenth century state would mean removing a substantial amount of art which has been embedded over the centuries. Who is to say what is authentic or worthy in the building? By this



century, the building has been in Christian possession for seven centuries, far longer than it was in Muslim hands. The notion of a hybrid space, decorated in a collage of Muslim and Christian styles rather than a dual space, can illuminate motivations for changes, social and political, which have shaped and preserved such an important monument of Western Islam.

## Chapter One: The Church of St. Vincent and the Transition into Muslim Rule

In order to trace the steps taken to build such a large and visually powerful mosque discussion must begin with the circumstances that enabled the arrival of Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula. Armies from the Near East began their quest to conquer as many lands in the West as possible in the early eighth century. In the Iberian Peninsula, Visigoth rule was showing visible signs of weakness, such as peasant uprisings and lack of administrative control. Muslim armies headed north beginning in 711 where there were far more riches to be found. By 716 the Iberian Peninsula had been almost fully conquered. While al-Andalus, as the conquered Iberian peninsula was known to Arab Muslims in the Middle Ages,<sup>1</sup> remained in Umayyad rule throughout the caliphate's reign, it was increasingly apparent how difficult it was to rule a land with such diverse peoples, especially one so remote and isolated from the seat of power in Damascus. Further, al-Andalus had no bordering Islamic state, making it difficult for Damascus to interfere effectively as problems arose, had they wished to.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Early Site*

The site on which the Great Mosque of Cordoba sits was formerly home to the Visigoth church of St. Vincent. Of the church itself, there are no preserved descriptions or records to further illuminate the accounts of Muslim writers. What is known was

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<sup>1</sup> Oleg Grabar. (2005). Early Islamic art, 650-1100. Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT :, Ashgate/Varioum, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Marianne Barriocund (1991). Moorish Architecture in Andalusia. Koln, Taschen, 26.

discovered from excavations conducted from 1931 to 1936 by Felix Hernandez, a commissioned architect and conservator of the Great Mosque of Cordoba since 1930.<sup>3</sup> His efforts were concentrated in the site of the original mosque and where St. Vincent Church once stood. Unfortunately he did not leave written accounts of his findings, but two witnesses have recounted the results of the endeavor. M. Gomez Moreno, an architect closely involved with the project, affirmed that 55 cm below the current floor were ruins of a building with a concrete floor and walls made of shoddy masonry, with three naves going east to west, a reasonable size for a seventh century basilica.<sup>4</sup>

In written sources, Muslim historians make mention of the initial expropriation of half the church for Muslim worship.<sup>5</sup> Once the number of Muslims in the city of Cordoba increased, the half of the church was no longer sufficient space to house all those who came to Friday prayers. Al-Maqqari refers to several additions made to the building in order to accommodate the growing population.<sup>6</sup> It was not until the ascent of Abd ar-Rahman I as emir of Cordoba that the situation was alleviated. He proposed buying the church for 1,000 dinars from the Arabized Christians in charge of it, but they did not

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<sup>3</sup> Manuel Nieto Cumplido. (1998). *La Catedral de Córdoba*. Córdoba, Publicaciones Obra Social y Cultural CajaSur, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 40. Torres Balbas and M. Gomez Moreno were both possible witnesses of the project. Since there are no written accounts, it is difficult to say, but they were in contact with Felix Hernandez. They were both architects. Torres Balbas wrote extensively on the Great Mosque of Cordoba. One other account from Felix Hernandez's friend, Ana Maria Vincent, published after his death in 1975, notes that he was skeptical about his findings actually being the church of St. Vincent, as he found the width of the naves 'ridiculous' and also because no other characteristic or element of a liturgical paleochristian or Visigoth building was found near the site. Fragments of Visigoth construction and paleochristian sarcophagi were found elsewhere throughout the mosque. It is unclear why Felix Hernandez was possibly skeptical about the remains of St. Vincent. The evidence which has survived, whether it is historical accounts or archeological remains, points to the existence of a seventh century Visigoth church.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 36.

*'al conquistar los mulmanes al-Andalus ajustaron su conducta a lo que hicieron en Siria Abu 'Ubayda ben al-Yarrah y Jalib ben al-Walid...cuando expropiaron a los cristianos la mitad de la iglesia mayor que estaba dentro de la medina de Cordoba, bajo el muro, y a la que llamaban Shant Bunyant (=San Vincente).* "Once the Muslims had conquered al-Andalus they adjusted their leadership to what Abu 'Ubayda ben al-Yarrah y Jalib ben al-Walid did in Syria...when they expropriated from the Christians half of the major church that was inside of the city of Cordoba, behind the wall, and which they called St. Vincent."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 58.

agree to the deal until he agreed to allow them to rebuild the churches outside the city that the Muslims had demolished.<sup>7</sup> By the year 785, the transaction had taken place.

### *The Cordoban Emirate*

Abd ar-Rahman I, the first emir of Cordoba, arrived to al-Andalus in 755 after fleeing the fall of the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus in 750, and succeeded in establishing an emirate which honored the legacy of his family. He built the Great Mosque of Cordoba, not only because Cordoban Muslims were large in number and required an appropriate worship space, but also because he was following in the architectural Umayyad tradition. The Umayyad period in early Islamic architecture is significant, as it established a visual repertoire for the caliphate and the success of Islam over Christianity. In their buildings, most prominently the Great Mosque of Damascus built between 709 and 715, they continued the Late Antique architectural tradition by building in the classical Roman imperial style.<sup>8</sup> They often built in a basilica plan with a series of arches and columns. Furthermore, they also appropriated Roman *temenos* towers throughout cities in Syria in order to call the faithful to prayer, but also to announce the presence of a new faith to the non-Muslim majority.<sup>9</sup> The continuation of Late Antique style influenced the decoration of their palaces and mosques in mosaic, such as Khirbat al-Mafjar and the Great Mosque of Damascus.

In 750, however, Umayyad rule was toppled by the Abbasids, who succeeded in murdering almost every single member of the Umayyad family. The young Abd al-Rahman I, barely twenty years old, managed to flee to northern Morocco, the birthplace

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 60. Ibn Idari and al-Maqqari both write about this episode in the history of the church of St. Vincent. Their accounts are incredibly similar.

<sup>8</sup> Grabar, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 9.

of his Nafza-Berber mother.<sup>10</sup> Soon thereafter he moved to Spain, where he counted on the support of Syrian *mawali* (Umayyad clients) and Andalusī Berbers. His connections were crucial to his ascent to power, but no more so than the prestige of his family lineage. Spain's remoteness allowed Abd al-Rahman I to be successful in his quest to become emir of Cordoba, as Spain took no part in the turbulent events leading to the fall of the Umayyad caliphate. Spain, to Abd al-Rahman I's fortune, had remained loyal to the Umayyads, at least in name. In 756, nicknamed 'the immigrant,' he was proclaimed emir of al-Andalus in what was then the Great Mosque of Cordoba

### *The Second Umayyad Caliphate*

Until Abd ar-Rahman III's proclamation as caliph in 929, the emirate had been relatively unconcerned with the distant Abbasid caliphate. Their detachment from the caliphate could be read as a way of quietly subverting it or as accepting that there could only be one caliph, therefore honoring the title itself.<sup>11</sup> Abd ar-Rahman III's military victories advantageously occurred in a politically unfavorable climate for the Abbasids. The time was ripe for such a proclamation, as the Abbasids struggled to control their empire and the Fatimids were encroaching upon the peninsula from Qayrawan, Northern Africa.<sup>12</sup> In a strategic move, he capitalized on the chaos that had ensued by moving in on Northern Africa. He effectively secured allies with enemies of the Fatimids who could have otherwise proved problematic for his reign.

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<sup>10</sup> Barricund, 30.

<sup>11</sup> David J. Wasserstein, (1993). The Caliphate in the West: An Islamic Political Institution in the Iberian Peninsula. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 9. The idea seems plausible, if only because Abd al-Rahman I established an emirate and did not take the title of caliph which, by that point, had belonged to his family. The Umayyads did not forget what the Abbasids had done, as they made it a point to call themselves 'sons of caliphs.' However, given the circumstances, it was not until Abd al-Rahman III became emir that it seemed possible politically and militarily to take the title of caliph.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 10.

After the military campaigns, Abd al-Rahman ordered that imams in every mosque in his domain invoke God's blessing on the caliph referring to him as the Commander of the Faithful. This was a powerful and widely recognized mode of legitimating the ruler by broadcasting his title and asserting sovereignty in front of the male population.<sup>13</sup> The title of caliph was thereon passed down until 1031 when their power had dwindled, giving way to the *taifas*, a period of decentralization and warring regions that characterized Islamic rule in Spain in the eleventh century.

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<sup>13</sup>Janina M. Safran The second Umayyad Caliphate : the Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus. Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 19.

## Chapter Two: The Flourishing of the Great Mosque of Cordoba

### *Mosque Architecture—the Hypostyle Mosque*

The earliest type of mosque is the hypostyle, a prayer hall with vertical supports or columns which support a low-lying roof. Often, the prayer hall's aisles open onto an enclosed courtyard. A mosque is not in itself a holy space, as a Christian church is, but rather what is sacred is the direction of the *qibla* wall which faces towards Mecca and announces to worshippers the direction for prayer. On the *qibla* wall, a niche or recess called the *mihrab* is found, another essential element of a mosque. Often, the *mihrab* is the most lavishly decorated part of the mosque, therefore making it the most prominent feature, as it is on the *qibla* wall and most clearly demarcates the direction of prayer. To the right of the *mihrab* is a *minbar*, a raised seat from which the imam delivers a sermon, the *khutba*, at Friday noon prayers. The prayer hall would also contain a *maqsura*, an enclosed or screened area for the ruler.

Particularly important to this study is the Great Mosque of Damascus, which was built by the Umayyad caliph al-Walid in 715 and is one of the earliest examples of a hypostyle mosque (Figure 4). As was often the case in the construction of early mosques, the site of the mosque was a former church and pre-Islamic *temenos*, a sacred walled area surrounding a temple. The three-aisled, 160 meters long, mosque was most advantageously built against the southern wall of the *temenos*, which constituted the *qibla* wall. Two of the *temenos*' earlier towers were appropriated into the new construction. The prayer hall was composed by a system of double-tiered arcades which were built

from reused columns. Leading to the *qibla* was a wider nave, similar to a basilica with a clerestory level, and a dome above the *mihrab*. A colonnaded portico opened onto a courtyard outside of the prayer hall. The façade was marked by a grand entrance at the axis of the building, directly leading to the wider nave and to the *mihrab*. Most impressive was the lavish decoration found inside and outside the mosque, particularly mosaics, gilding, and colored and carved marble.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Great Mosque of Cordoba—an Umayyad mosque*

Upon his arrival, Abd ar-Rahman I the entered what was then the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the section facing south in the church of St. Vincent.<sup>15</sup> Muslims and Christians shared the building for worship until the space could not accommodate the growing Muslim population. The part of the church occupied by Christians was bought at a high price and the agreement that they could rebuild the churches torn down as a consequence of the Muslim conquest.<sup>16</sup> Soon after the transaction took place, from 786 to 787, Abd ar-Rahman I began building Cordoba's own hypostyle congregational mosque on the site of the church and construction was reportedly finished within a year. At the price of 80,000 dinars, he built a mosque large enough to house 5,000 worshippers. The entirety of the building, including the fortifying walls surrounding the prayer hall and courtyard, measured 79.021 m wide and 78.88 m long, making it an almost perfect square.<sup>17</sup> Measured from the inside, the rectangular prayer hall was 73.77 meters wide and 36.72 meters long. Both the prayer hall and the courtyard, including the exterior

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<sup>14</sup> F. Barry Flood. (2001). The Great Mosque of Damascus : Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture. Leiden Boston, Brill, 2. From his descriptions and attached architectural plans.

<sup>15</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1998), 56.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 60-61.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 64. Measurements are from Felix-Hernandez's excavations in the 1930s. He thoroughly excavated the site of the original mosque.



walls, totaled a surface area of 4, 924.74 m<sup>2</sup>. At the time, it was the mosque with the largest prayer hall and second largest surface area, only second to Qayrawan, originally built in 670-680, which had a courtyard measuring 3,120 m<sup>2</sup> alone.<sup>18</sup>

Inside the prayer hall were eleven aisles and eleven bays perpendicular to the *qibla* wall, with an axial nave leading to the *mihrab* wider than the rest (Figure 1). This central nave measured 7.82 meters wide, thus requiring the two outer aisles to be narrower. The east nave was 5.50 meters wide, while the west nave was 5.48 meters wide. All of the aisles in between measured anywhere from 6.76 meters to 6.91 meters. During Felix Hernandez's excavations, when these measurements were taken, he also found that the east and west wall were not parallel, but rather that they converged in relation to the axis of the central nave, which explains some of the variation in aisle width.<sup>19</sup> The south and south walls were not exactly parallel, but close.

As in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, despite the fact that the columns were salvaged from ruins, which were plentiful in the eighth century, they were carefully chosen as to make them as uniform as possible (Figure 2). Slight variations in height were undoubtedly an issue, though height adjustments were not difficult. The columns' heights were adjusted by placing them on cruciform bases.<sup>20</sup> Each aisle was composed of eleven bays, making it a grand total of 120 columns for the entirety of the building. Every column was carved from marble; most were smooth, while a few had vertical or spiral grooves, though they were not configured into the building in any particular way. Their colors ranged from white or gray with white grain, or gray or red. As with the carved

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan., Ed. (1994). The Mosque : History, Architectural Development and Regional Diversity. New York, Thames and Hudson, 102.

columns, there is no indication that columns were placed in any particular pattern with regards to color.

The iconic horseshoe and rounded arches themselves are constructed from stone and brick voussoirs that alternate between white and red. Every arch was formed by seven alternating stone voussoirs and eight groups of 3 red bricks in between them (Figure 3).<sup>21</sup> Beginning from the bottom, the cruciform base allowed for a uniform height. The capitals, all from the first to seventh centuries, were predominantly Corinthian. There have been extensive studies done on the capitals, and though it has been hard to say with any accuracy which ones might be from the church of St. Vincent, there are definitely fifth to seventh century capitals in the original mosque.<sup>22</sup> On top of the capitals sit cymatia, a feature that allowed wider pilasters because their inverted pyramid and square shaped surface provided more surface area from which to build on. Of the 120 cymatia in the original mosque, twenty-three have been identified as Visigoth molding salvaged from ruins.

Upon first glance, the viewer is led to believe that both arches provide the necessary support to bear the weight of the roof and the walls, but rather, it is the rounded top arch built onto a pilaster that holds the weight. Square-shaped pilasters built onto the cymatia are wider than the capitals and columns, therefore able to carry more weight. At eye-level, there is a uniform weightlessness created by the relatively thin columns. Far less attention is sought by the unassuming stone pilasters that carry the upper rounded arches built upon them. The bottom horseshoe arches are mostly decorative. However, the pilasters were not merely functional, as there was some effort to soften their

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 93. Brick measures .20 meters wide, .39 meters long, and .04 meters thick.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 76.

appearance by carving cylindrical rolls on the protruding edges, once again shielding their width and heaviness in contrast to the columns.<sup>23</sup>

Also important to note are the original floor and ceiling. Currently, the ceiling height is 9.47 meters, a full 1.20 meters higher than the original, according to Felix Hernandez. His excavations also discovered that the true floor of the mosque was made of quicklime dyed a fine and deep red ocher or *almagra*, as it was called in Spain,<sup>24</sup> covered by rugs.

There are no certifiable remains of the original *mihrab*, though it is speculated to have been no more than a simple niche on the *qibla* wall. Felix Hernandez, as he was excavating the first western aisle of al-Mansur's addition, found remains of a niche that could have possibly been from the original mosque's *mihrab*.<sup>25</sup> However, he believed them to be part of the east door of the original mosque that was demolished when al-Mansur began his expansion. The remains were a convex molding of acanthus leaf motif, the symbol of the Cordoba caliphate. In any case, the pieces were not found beyond the spot where the original mosque's *qibla* wall would have stood, making it quite plausible that they could have been part of the *mihrab*.

In the time of the original mosque the exterior portal of St. Sebastian, the oldest left standing, exited to the west side towards the Alcazar. Originally built with the rest of the construction in the eighth century, what remains of it today is the result of repairs performed in the ninth century. The portal itself does not differ much from the interior

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 43. The last two aisles of the foundational mosque did not feature carved cylindrical rolls on the edges of the pilasters, but rather, a rounded edge. This change could have been intentional from the inception of the foundational mosque, but

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 75. M. Gomez Moreno, another architect, believed it to be the remains of the *mihrab* niche.

space since it follows the motif of the stone and brick arch decoration.<sup>26</sup> Further repairs of this portal were completed once the mosque was a cathedral.

The first enlargement was carried about by Abd ar-Rahman II and finished in the mid-ninth century.<sup>27</sup> He had previously been interested in the original mosque in 833 by repairing decaying areas. His subsequent enlargement in 848 added approximately 27.18 meters in depth by building south, beginning from the location of the previous *qibla*. Eighty columns were added, thus adding eight more columns per aisle, as this addition was to perfectly match with the existing aisles. In terms of decoration, eleven columns were specially crafted for the mosque, which added a level of local craftsmanship that preserved the integrity of the building.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, most of the columns in the extension were again salvaged from Roman and Visigoth ruins, as with the original mosque, though these columns did not have a base. Today, only fifty of the eighty columns survive because Christian architectural interventions in the building were most heavily concentrated in this part of the mosque.

Al-Hakam II's demolished Abd ar-Rahman II's *qibla* wall in the tenth century in order to preserve the symmetry set by the original mosque. What little is known is once again information from Felix Hernandez, who discovered that the *mihrab* projected in a rectangle outwards from the southern wall (Figure 9). Also, it is known that he believed that the four columns flanking the current *mihrab* were salvaged from Abd ar-Rahman's *mihrab* with the particular purpose of reusing them in the new location. Since they form part of the lot that were especially crafted for the Abd ar-Rahman II's mosque, their

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 98 It is interesting to note that the portal is also the oldest in Hispano-Muslim Spain history.

<sup>27</sup> K.A.C. Creswell. (1940). "The Great Mosque of Cordoba" In Early Muslim Architecture: Umayyads, Early Abbasids and Tulunids. Oxford, 140 Creswell sites Ibn Adhari's accounts of the building process and notes that Ibn Adhari gives two different completion dates for the project, 833 and 848.

<sup>28</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1998), 140. Cumplido cites one of the accounts of the last architect allowed to conduct excavations in the mosque, M. Gomez Moreno.

capitals are carved with inter-lacing acanthus leaves, once believed to be Roman because of their superior quality (Figure 10).<sup>29</sup>

In order to preserve the symmetry established by original square-shaped mosque, Abd ar-Rahman II's expansion also included an enlargement of the patio. At this time, the mosque measured approximately 129.21 meters from north to south and approximately 79.23 meters from east to west (Figure 5). The prayer hall alone increased by 2,018 m<sup>2</sup> for a total of 4,727 m<sup>2</sup>. Once the enlargement was completed, the mosque was able to hold 9,486 worshippers, almost twice as many as the foundational mosque. Abd ar-Rahman's son Muhammad continued with the finishing touches of the project.

Demolishing the *qibla* wall and continuing building southwards were more practical than extending eastwards or westwards. Adding more square footage to the side of the mosque would have meant demolishing the fortifying walls, including the portals surrounding the mosque. Also, an expansion to either side would tamper with the harmonious, processional character of the original mosque. The elegant axis formed by the main portal, the central aisle, and the *mihrab* would be disrupted. Abd al-Rahman's project architect must have considered all of these questions and thus decided to build southwards despite having to build a new *mihrab*. Abd ar-Rahman II's extension followed the canon established by the original mosque in that it continued to use the system of arches on columns and the same configuration of aisles.

The second enlargement was ordered by the second caliph of Cordoba, al-Hakam beginning in 962 and ending in 966 (Figure 7). From the time he became caliph, he occupied himself with the mosque. In fact, the enlargement of the mosque was his first

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 136. Cumplido quotes L. Torres Balbas description of the column capitals.

order of business.<sup>30</sup> He made the same decision as Abd ar-Rahman II, to extend the southern end of the prayer hall by 36 meters, add 11 aisles, and build an ornate *qibla* wall and *mihrab*. After the dome above the *mihrab* was completed in 965, the mosaic decoration of the *qibla* wall began. At the request of al-Hakam, the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople sent craftsmen to carry out the work. The dispatch of mosaics and Byzantine craftsmen was not uncommon, as they were held in high regard; however, it is significant to note that al-Hakam mirrored al-Walid's order to have Byzantine craftsmen and material to be sent to him from Constantinople for his mosque at Damascus.<sup>31</sup> Since the former, and original, *qibla* wall had to be demolished in order to extend the mosque further south, al-Hakam ordered the four columns flanking the original *mihrab* to be saved and place in the same manner in his new *mihrab*.

Again, with this new construction, the uniformity of the aisles and arch system was preserved, but the addition far surpassed the beauty of the original mosque (Figure 6). Given the number of changes and innovations made to the building, it is almost as if al-Hakam II built an entirely new mosque. First, 134 columns were especially crafted for the building, alternating between dark and light in every aisle. Local marble was used to carve the columns, each 64 cm in diameter. The capitals carved for the mosque were not as ornate as some of the Roman or Visigoth capitals salvaged for the original mosque, though they were beautifully painted and some still show the residue of red tint that once covered them. Continuing with the uniformity of the last extension, al-Hakam's columns also do not have bases.

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<sup>30</sup> Creswell, 142. Creswell, like Janina Saffran and Nuha Khoury, tell the story that al-Hakam first gave the orders to enlarge the mosque.

<sup>31</sup> Flood, 20-21. Flood discusses the sources recounting the order of the mosaics for the Great Mosque at Damascus. The account of the exchange between al-Walid and the Byzantine emperor was already in existence by the 9<sup>th</sup> century, therefore he does not doubt their legitimacy. In fact, he proposes that the later accounts contain more details, rather than embellishment of the facts.

One of the most elaborate decorative innovations of the new construction was made in the axial nave so carefully preserved throughout every subsequent transformation. The inside of the arches of the axial nave feature intricately carved pilasters which add another distinction to the processional nave leading one to the *mihrab* (Figure 8). Above the arches, carved into stone, are several Quranic passages which also lead the procession towards the *mihrab*.

The interlocking lobed arches with ornate floral patterns carved into plaster culminate the axial nave's progression towards the qibla wall. As opposed to the horseshoe and rounded arches found elsewhere in the mosque, these arches with five lobules, provide the central focus for the sumptuous mosaic on the qibla wall. It was an adequate marker to denote the arrival to the focal point of the mosque, not only because of its rich decoration, but because it is where prayer was to be oriented. While all of this is apparent to the eye, this system of arches is also there for a more practical reason: for support of the cupolas, domes, and heavy lanterns above the *qibla* wall.<sup>32</sup> The addition of more columns and interlocking arches was necessary, but the canonical system of red brick and white stone would have given the space the heaviness the original system tried to avoid since the time of the original mosque. The lobed arches, coupled with the floral decoration, give the illusion of airiness, as well as providing a frame from which to see the luminous mosaic of the *mihrab*.

The motifs were similar to the decoration in the axial nave. Floral patterns and Quranic inscriptions were prominent in the decorative scheme. Directly in front and above the *mihrab*, a golden cupola was illuminated by a lantern, which served to make the entire wall shimmer. Al-Hakam was concerned with honoring the tradition of his

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<sup>32</sup> L. Torres Balbas. (1965). La Mezquita de Cordoba y las ruinas de Madinat al-Zahra. Madrid, Editorial Plus-Ultra, 11.

predecessors, not only by paralleling al-Walid's demand for Byzantium's involvement with the decoration of his mosque, but also by symbolically keeping and placing four columns of the previous *mihrab* on either side of the entrance of his *mihrab*. The transformation under al-Hakam II was the costliest, as well as the most pre-meditated. Every element of the mosque seems to be in conversation with one another, which is innovative, as the previous additions did not go as far as to create new decorative features or place such emphasis on one part of the mosque.

What had been a building noted for its size and ingenuity became spectacular in its decorative program. The axial nave's centrality was reaffirmed by the new arches leading to the splendid *qibla* and the newly carved columns and capitals were beautiful in their uniformity. The motifs of the alternating white and red horseshoe and rounded arches and the classical column as the base for the construction is repeated simultaneously at the entrance of the *mihrab*, inside the *mihrab*, and the entablature framing the *mihrab*'s entrance. Al-Hakam's addition could be interpreted as the keystone in the history of the mosque. What survives in the imagination of whoever experiences the building are the innovations of this tenth century building project.

During 987-88, al-Mansur, the regent of the young caliph al-Hisham II, had the mosque significantly enlarged eastward which disrupted the perfect axial alignment set forth from the original mosque (Figure 12). The enlargement was necessary as the population had increased due to an influx of immigrant Berber tribes. To the west lay the Alcazar, blocking expansion, while to the east there were houses that could be demolished to make room for the expansion.<sup>33</sup> Al-Mansur now added eight more aisles, making a grand total 19 aisles to date. Since the courtyard had to be likewise enlarged,

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<sup>33</sup> Creswell, 144.



this meant that seven more entrances were added to the portico of the foundational mosque. This new construction maintained the uniformity set forth by previous projects, but it did not add any new decorative feature or innovation (Figure 11). The purpose seemed to enlarge in order to accommodate the population, as this new addition allowed for 40,000 worshippers, though, it was enlarged at a time when the caliphate's power was in decline.

Over the period of two hundred years, the Great Mosque of Cordoba earned its title as the greatest mosque in the West. The constant addition and expansion of walls and columns provide clear markers for the kind of transformations it went through. While deeply rooted in the style and sense of purpose of the original mosque of Abd ar-Rahman I, it evolved into a mosque that reflected the political history of Cordoba, but also the architectural and artistic strides made in the span of time since its foundation. Further interventions in the space perpetuated the subtraction and subsequent addition so familiar to the history of this building.

#### *Conquest of 1146*

There is little written about the Christian conquest of Cordoba in 1146 by Alfonso VII. The short, one year occupation does not seem to have left a lasting influence on later military campaigns or on the *reconquista* of 1236. In any case, political rule in Cordoba in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was murky, at best. The second Umayyad caliphate had dissolved and smaller city states, or *taifas*, were soon to take hold of al-Andalus.

Changes or physical damages made to the Great Mosque of Cordoba during the 1030s and 1040s have not been documented; making it decidedly difficult to understand under what conditions subsequent rulers received the mosque. However, there was

damage done to the building during the first *fitna* or civil war ending in 1030. After that date, there is little documented about the state of the building during Jahwarid, Abbadid, and Almoravid control.<sup>34</sup> In the 1120s and 1130s, foreign rulers trying to establish their power in Cordoba often found themselves amidst rebellions by the locals, as they seemed to prefer the authority of local, religious elites.

During the reign of the Almoravids in Cordoba, there are not any indications that the Great Mosque was tampered with, though skilled craftsmen in the city were willing to work for them. Their commissions for *minbars* for mosques in Marrakech and Fez, as well as their reuse of marble columns and capitals found in Cordoba for the rebuilding of their mosque at Granada (1116-17) and the Qarawiyyin mosque (1134-44), did point to the keen necessity to show that they exerted control in the city. Not too long after their building projects, their power was severely threatened by the Cordoba qadi Abu Ja'far b. Hamdin. He led a rebellion in 1145, expelled the remaining representatives of the Almoravid dynasty, who managed to regain the city once again in the same year, only to have it seized by Alfonso VII.<sup>35</sup>

The earliest surviving source for this event was written by Muhammad b. Ayyub b. Ghalib, a Grenadine geographical historian from the twelfth century.

The Christians entered this venerated mosque when they conquered Cordoba in the year 540 [1145-46], at the time of the second *fitna*. Then God permitted their departure approximately nine days later. And they carried off the golden and silver apples that were on the minaret, and about half of the *minbar*, leaving the rest. The fittings and silver chandeliers were plundered at the time of their invasion. On the other hand, the golden door from the *maqsura* was pilfered along with the treasury of the mosque during the first *fitna*

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<sup>34</sup> Heather L. Ecker (2003). "The Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." *Muqarnas* 20. Ecker focuses on the Almoravid and Almohad possible interventions in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, as the Almoravids created artwork out of Cordoba during their tumultuous reign and the Almohads took it upon themselves to attempt to restore the city of Cordoba starting in 1149.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 115-116.

[1009-10]. A trustworthy person from Cordoba told me, "I entered with a group of people into the mosque the second day after the departure of the Christians from Cordoba. We gathered around what remained of the *minbar* in order to lower it from that place. When we moved it, we found underneath a quantity of white sand in the amount that two beasts of burden could transport. The sand looked like silver filings. We wanted to remove it in order to clean the place, but a knowledgeable shaykh told us that the sand was from Galicia—may God annihilate it—and that Ibn Abi 'Amir had transported it. So we let it be."<sup>36</sup>

The account makes mention of the Great Mosque having been plundered twice—once by Muslims and the second by Christians. This is the extent of the information of the physical state of the building in the twelfth century. Other Christian sources, Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, archbishop of Toledo, as well as Lucas, bishop of Tuy, wrote about the siege of the city, though omitted any details about possible plundering. They did, however, write about Ibn Ghaniya's surrender of the city of Cordoba. Jimenez de Rada wrote that Ibn Ghaniya offered the keys to the city, swearing to his loyalty on the "*libro de Mahomat, a que dizen ell Alcoran*." Lucas detailed the surrender pact in which Alfonso VII could have the city with the condition that "the Muslims would live in it [Cordoba], and the Christians would be in the tower of that city."<sup>37</sup>

Accounts state that the Christian army only had access to the *medina*, one of two fortified zones in the city. The other zone, *la ajerquia*, the urban dwellings, was off-limits. Ibn Ganiya had essentially ceded the city and the mosque for the right of Muslims to stay in their city.<sup>38</sup> Muslim population then stayed in the *ajerquia*, while the Christian population stayed in the *medina*.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 116. Ecker's source is Ibn Ghalib's *Farhat al-anfus*, p. 299.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 116. From Lucas de Tuy, *Cronica de Espana por Lucas, Obispo de Tuy*, ed. Julio Puyol (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1926), cap. 79, pp. 393-97.

<sup>38</sup> Ecker, 116.

<sup>39</sup> Manuel Nieto Cumplido. (1989). *Historia de la iglesia en Córdoba. Reconquista y Restauración (1146-1326)*, 36

By August of 1146, Alfonso returned to Toledo, after Ibn Ganiya promised him to keep the city of Cordoba on the condition that he would return it once he returned to city.<sup>40</sup> As far as it is documented, Ibn Ganiya respected the authority of Alfonso VII and ruled the city under the monarch well into 1148. Once he became unhappy with the annual sum of money he was paid, however, he betrayed Alfonso. He plotted with Abu Ishaq, an Almohad, gave him the city, and fled to Granada till his death.<sup>41</sup> Alfonso VII fruitlessly tried to take Cordoba once again in 1150 but accepted his defeat within three months.<sup>42</sup>

### *Consequences of 1146 Conquest*

After Ibn Ganiya and the Christian forces had left Cordoba, the Almohads took it upon themselves to establish their seat of power in the grand and mythical city. Up until the Christian conquest and then the Almohad caliphate, the three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, co-existed in Andalucia. However, the Almohads had a different kind of reign in mind. After the caliph Abd al-Mumin conquered Marrakech in Morocco he announced that he would no longer allow Muslim states to house synagogues nor churches. All of them had to be demolished. After his victory in Alarcos in 1195, his successor, Ya'qub al-Mansur followed the same procedure and took pride in leaving no synagogue or church standing.<sup>43</sup>

In the year 1162, the Almohads moved to Cordoba. Abd al-Mumin believed that Cordoba should be his seat of power, as it is strategically situated closer to the center of the country and above all, because it had been the great capital of the Umayyads. Traces

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 41.

of their city still remained. Remarkably, al-Mumin brought in architects and masons, including Ahmad b. Baso, future architect of the congregational mosque in Seville. The chronicler Ibn Sahib al-Salah attributes the single-handed restoration of Cordoba to Baso. According to him, Baso repaired and restored palaces, houses, in addition to building new palaces.<sup>44</sup> No one is sure of exactly what was restored by Baso, though it is likely that he took part in restoring the damaged *minbar*, as Ambrosio de Morales described it in great detail when he saw it in the sixteenth century. There are also a few clues in Ibn Ghalib's chronicles that note the Almohad's intervention with the *sahn*.<sup>45</sup> Not long after the Almohads had attempted to revive Cordoba to its original splendor they decided to move to Sevilla in 1163. Al-Mumins son, Yusuf, had governed Seville since 1155 and preferred to remain in the city.

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<sup>44</sup> Ecker, 117.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 117.

## Chapter Three: The *Reconquista* and the Cathedral of Cordoba

### *Reconquista of 1236*

The road to winning Cordoba was long and arduous. Fernando III, king of Castile from 1217 to 1252 and Leon from 1230 to 1252, and his friend Muhammad al-Bayyasi gentleman of Baeza, a convert from Islam, formed a strategic plan to seize Cordoba. While their plans did not include the take over of the city until 1225, they surrounded the outskirts and devastated the vineyards and agricultural land on several occasions.<sup>46</sup> Fernando III's military campaign included destabilizing the reign of the Almohad kingdom by first seizing cities such as Jaen, Andujar, and Martos, all of which surrounded Cordoba. By 1227, Almohad power had been greatly reduced to the cities due to Fernando III's strategy in the outlying provinces. The palpable instability of the region poured into Cordoba. By 1229 the citizens of Cordoba had ousted the last Almohad governor, killed him, and proclaimed Ibn Hud, a figure deeply involved in the governance of the city, as the new ruler.

Ibn Hud was not successful in appeasing the people of Cordoba, thus when Fernando III decided seize the city, his task was greatly simplified by the unhappiness of the population. There are several accounts of the fall of Cordoba and in particular they emphasize the involvement Muslim dissent in the capture of their city and of their mosque. One account noted that certain Cordoban citizens, discontented with the matter in which the city was ruled hired *almogávares*, mercenaries who sacked Moorish lands,

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<sup>46</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1989), 50.

and promised them the Ajerquía should they strike upon the city. Another account attributed the capture of the city to the confession of Muslim citizens of the insufficient defenses of the city. The prisoners were also said to offer them the Ajerquia should the Christians oust those who were in power. Al-Himyari, a Muslim geographer, wrote much later:

Las bellezas de esta ciudad y su splendor eran demasiado grandes para atreverme a su narración. Pero su fortuna decayó, su estrella comenzo a palidecer, la situación del Islam se hizo más y más débil en la Península donde la discordia se infiltró en la vida de los musulmanes: fue entonces cuando los cristianos se adueñaron de Córdoba y establecieron allí su autoridad.<sup>47</sup>

At the beginning of January, 1236, *almogávares* had been able to take a hold of the Ajerquia and it was not long before Fernando III militarized the area with forces from Castile and Leon. Ibn Hud had not been in the city while these events were taking place, but he returned with military back-up, many of whom were Christians indebted to him. As the battle progressed, it became increasingly apparent that Ibn Hud was incapable of saving the city of Cordoba, regardless of accounts that his men far outnumbered Fernando III's men. Fernando III had also strategically closed off the bridge crossing the Guadalquivir in order to prevent anything or anyone to leave or enter; hence, the population of Cordoba became famished.

Instead of taking the city by force and risk losing the riches of the mosque and infrastructure, Fernando III made an agreement with the king of Jaen, enemy of Ibn Hud, to take the city of Cordoba under certain stipulations, particularly royalties given to the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 53. Cited from al-Himyari's *Kitab al-Rawd al-Mitar*, p. 319.

"The beauty and splendor of this city were too great to attempt to narrate them. But its fortune decayed, its star began to pale, Islam's situation became weaker and weaker in the Peninsula where discord infiltrated the lives of Muslims: it was then when the Christians took ownership of Cordoba and established their authority."

king of Jaen. Once the agreement had been reached, Muslims began fleeing the city, and the keys to the city were given to Fernando III.<sup>48</sup> Fernando III was fully aware of the significance of his victory. He had regained the city that had been held captive since the last Visigoth king. In order to mark the momentous occasion, he decided to march across the city gates with a cross in front of the procession, rather than his royal crest. The symbolic move set the tone for the *reconquista* as far more than a fight for land or riches, but rather a fight to rightfully return Cordoba to Christian dominion.

Don Lupe Fitero, future bishop of the city, had the honor to carry the cross into the city, across the courtyard of the Great Mosque and up the minaret built by Cordoba's first caliph Abd ar-Rahman III.<sup>49</sup> According to Christian accounts, once Muslims realized the shift in power and religion, tears fell from their eyes, while Christians rejoiced.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Consecration of the Great Mosque of Cordoba*

The same day the cross was carried to the top of the minaret, Lupe Fitero entered the mosque of Cordoba with the intention of preparing it for consecration. The occasion was also special, as the day of the saints Pedro and Pablo happened to fall at the same time and festivities were planned. By the time the Great Mosque of Cordoba was consecrated, conquests in other cities, such as Toledo, had already seen their mosques converted into churches. The process was familiar not only to the church but also to the mosque, since almost a century before it had also been consecrated, though no recollection of that event seemed to survive in the *reconquista* of 1236.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 62.



The consecration was described in detail in accounts of the ceremony. In order for a building to be consecrated as a church, it required complete purification of the exterior, the consecration of the altar, and the celebration of mass. Several bishops arrived at Cordoba in order to take part in the ceremony. The process began at the *Puerta del Perdon* by mixing holy water with salt and singing an antifona, or a traditional liturgical song, calling upon the help of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After consecrating the space in and around the mosque, they began the consecration process for the altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and finally concluded with mass. Fernando III was not present throughout any part of the consecration, though he did attend mass the next day and witnessed the blessing of the city of Cordoba.<sup>52</sup> The consecration into a cathedral was not fully finished until June of 1239 when the first bishop of Cordoba, Lupe Fitero, was consecrated into his seat at the Cathedral of Cordoba.

After the consecration of the mosque, the interior space was modified in order to perform the functions of the church. Primarily, the aisles that opened onto the courtyard were shut so as to prevent desacrilegization of the church space. Five portals remained open: the ones at either end of the mosque, aisle eighteen (nave Santa Maria del Pilar) and two (nave del Sagrario), and the ancient axial nave leading to the *mihrab*.<sup>53</sup> Next, chapels along east and west aisles were built, as well as on the north and south walls. Chapels along the west, south, and east side were built from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Furthermore, altars were advantageously placed along the divisional pillars of Abd ar-Rahman II's expansion and also along the dividing pillars between the al-Mansur's expansions and the ones that preceded his.

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<sup>52</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1998), 338.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 341.

### *Our Lady of Villaviciosa Chapel*

After the *reconquista* until the construction of a new cathedral, what is currently the chapel of Our Lady of Villaviciosa was the main liturgical space (Figure 13). This was where the ceremony for the dedication of the cathedral to the Virgin Mary and first mass were conducted. As far as can be deduced, the site was chosen because it was under a skylight in al-Hakam II's expansion.<sup>54</sup> Light was necessary in order to conduct mass and it gave preeminence to that precise location, as opposed to the darker aisles of the mosque. Because of such a rapid turnover from mosque to cathedral, the choice of location was mostly pragmatic. By the end of the thirteenth century, decoration for the altar had begun to be planned, starting from the presbytery (Figure 14). In between the interlacing arches on the east, frescoes were painted, which only a fraction of one of them survives today, the face of Jesus Christ.<sup>55</sup>

The new cathedral, in order to face east, went against the processional flow from north to south of the mosque, and instead had to create its own processional direction by embedding itself within the arch structure. The chorus was three bays wide, with the processional flow to the altar created by two rows of arches in the middle, and the seats for the bishop's council at the outer bays. Aisle nineteen, the closest to the west wall and thus narrower than the ones in the middle, was the only aisle from which processions could enter the space. Two small gates also opened onto aisle eighteen.

Before the major shift from the chapel of Villaviciosa to a grander, much brighter, cathedral space in 1489, major changes were made by the bishop R. Ramirez of Arellano to the chapel in order to better accommodate the needs of the church. These changes included clearing the arches and columns in the middle of the designated liturgical space,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 450.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 450.

demolishing interlacing arches on the east side and replacing them with ostentatious gothic arches, and a rose window at the feet of the chapel, surrounded by four windows. By 1496 the project had been realized. While the events leading to the construction of the new cathedral point towards a general disapproval of the project, R. Ramirez's project foreshadowed the major changes to happen only twenty five years after their completion. What was so carefully planned before, in terms the cathedral's function within the aisles of the mosque, was no longer relevant. With the removal of the columns, the pre-existing architectural plan no longer could dictate how the space had to be maneuvered. The space allotted since the thirteenth century ceased to be suitable for the bishops in the fifteenth and sixteenth century leading to actual destruction of the mosque's interior space, which had not been done intentionally before.

#### *A New Cathedral: 1521-1607*

As soon as the news that the bishop Alfonso Manrique (1516-1523) and his purveyor Pedro Ponce de Leon proposed building a new cathedral in the heart of the mosque reached the council of Cordoba in 1521, they quickly reacted against their actions.<sup>56</sup> Their main arguments against the building project were of course the loyalty they and the citizens of the city felt towards the building. The city's history was embedded in every stone and brick of the building. But also a major argument was the fact that many noblemen's chapels and burial sites would be disrupted in the relocation process. Since they were conglomerated around the chapel of Villaviciosa, the new construction would undoubtedly undermine the location of their chapels and tombs, usurping the level of importance garnered by the proximity to the liturgical space.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 506-07.

However, the council only made that argument to those directly affected, i.e. the nobility, including the king, and kept it from the general populace.

The major protagonists spearheading the project, Manrique and Ponce de Leon, were to some extent familiar with the construction of cathedral spaces, either through their travels or experiencing transformations first hand. Alfonso Manrique had traveled extensively throughout Europe and seemed to have in mind what a true cathedral space must resemble. Likewise, Ponce de Leon lived through the final stages of the transformation of the Almohad mosque in Sevilla, of which virtually nothing of the mosque was preserved.

In the summer of the year 1521, Ponce de Leon made an appearance at the chapel of San Clemente, where the Catholic council was conducting a meeting. He delivered the message from the bishop expressing his wish for a new cathedral that was not in the corner of the building, therefore taking a secondary role, but rather a commanding space in the middle of the mosque.<sup>57</sup> After a year since the request, the Catholic council was still not sure about the project. However, in 1523 there is a document allowing the use of the old city hospital as a shelter for those men working on the cathedral. It does not specify where these workers came from or why they needed shelter. Perhaps the workforce needed to be so large that the craftsmen from Cordoba were not enough or perhaps others were willing to work for less. In the same year, building material was beginning to be gathered. In true Cordoban fashion, the quarry from which 5,000 ashlar were recovered was the old caliphal palace Madinat al-Zahra that was by then in ruins.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the advances being made by the bishop and his purveyor, in April of 1523, the council of Cordoba issued a proclamation threatening to punish by death those

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 503.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 504. Masonry was also taken from the site in order to build the monastery of San Jeronimo.

craftsmen involved with the erection of the new cathedral in the mosque. It states, "*la obra que se desfase es de calidad que no se podria bolver a fazer en la bondad e perfeccion questa fecha.*"<sup>59</sup> They drafted an act sent to King Carlos I, which stated the grievances of the nobility, as well as citing a previous instance when there were proposed changes for the cathedral, but Queen Isabel the Catholic intervened.<sup>60</sup> They also reiterated the fact that their building was unique in the world and important for the city of Cordoba.

Alfonso Manrique took only a few days to retaliate by excommunicating the entire council of Cordoba and threatening others who stood in the way of his building project. Unfortunately, Manrique did follow through his threats, while the council of Cordoba did not act on its threat. In June 1523 three more workmen were hired by the architect Hernan Ruiz I and were housed in the old city hospital. From then on, demolishing the interior proceeded at a steady pace, from April to August. In September, the conflict seemed to have subsided, perhaps a consequence from Carlos I's intervention. He must not have been displeased with the project since before the building began in September, he appointed Alfonso Manrique to the archdiocese in Seville. Juan Alvarez of Toledo succeeded him.

The new bishop was no stranger to overseeing building projects. His last post included the construction of a church in the San Esteban convent of Salamanca.<sup>61</sup> The most pressing challenge for the bishops overseeing the building of the cathedral was

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 506. "The work of art which is being defaced is of quality that would not be able to be emulated in such peace and perfection with which it is now."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 505. Nieto Cumplido makes mention of the fact that no records of Isabel's intervention exist in the records of the cathedral.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 507. Nieto Cumplido comments on his personal research into the church of the convent and finds similarities between the floor plan of the church and the cathedral.

securing funding sources. Much of the funding came from indulgences, some as close as Toledo and others as far as Rome.<sup>62</sup>

### *The Cathedral of Cordoba*

Hernan Ruiz I and his descendents were the architects in charge of building a cathedral the bishop felt worthy of having. Building took place over the span of eighty-three years, from 1523 through 1606. Alfonso Manrique only oversaw the demolishing of the interior space. Juan Alvarez de Toledo erected the chapel of San Bernabe and had begun building the sacristy of the major altar, by then almost surpassing the height of the roof of the mosque. By the year 1537 decoration began to emerge in the construction, such as the relief on the east aisles by the altar depicting the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Also, by this point it became apparent that in order to keep building upwards, several buttresses had to be built. Thus far, the pillars from the enlargements of Abd ar-Rahman II and al-Hakam II, only 13.7 meters tall, had been sufficient to retain structural stability.

Information about the progress of the building project becomes scarce after the year 1541, when Leopoldo of Austria became bishop, and the building process sped up significantly. During this time, Hernan Ruiz II, son of Hernan Ruiz I, concentrated on building the transept and the major chapel. When the height surpassed 27 meters between 1564 and 1568, Hernan Ruiz II built 8 flying buttresses, and 9 arches along the southern and northern end with columns that had been removed from the mosque. Plaster decoration on the walls and ceilings were executed in 1602, which were a sign that the building was nearly completed. The project finally was completed in 1607 under the care of Bishop Ochoa.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 508-509.

One of the motivating factors for the building of both cathedrals was the issue of light coming into the building.<sup>63</sup> The height and the windows completely brightened the cathedral space in direct contrast with the rest of the building which basks in darkness (Figure 16). Architecturally, the new cathedral was not embedded into the space, but rather it replaced five bays in a total of ten aisles, without counting the number of changes which had to be made surrounding the cathedral in order to make it structurally sound.

Most of the disruption was caused to Abd ar-Rahman II's enlargement and the first four western aisles of Al-Mansur's enlargement. The cathedral faces east, or rather the closest it can, as the mosque faces southeast. The main altar was built in al-Mansur's addition, the transept cuts across the eastern edge of Abd ar-Rahman II's addition, and the chorus and trascoro overtake almost the entirety of addition. Additionally, the north and south aisles flanking the chorus, act as lesser aisles useful for processions which enter at either side of the transept. They were also modified to have gothic and baroque rib-vaulting, a feature striking to behold next to an aisle of the former mosque (Figure 15).

#### *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Restorations*

Ricardo Velazquez Bosco was by far the most important restorer and architect to work on the Cathedral of Cordoba. He focused on those parts of the monument that had either completely disappeared and he had enough knowledge to create once again or those which were severely deteriorated. It was extremely important to him to have enough knowledge to carry through with his projects. His research for the projects included reading accounts of people linked to the Cathedral in the past, whether

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 527.

craftsmen or clergymen. He was further informed by his archeological findings during his restorations.<sup>64</sup>

One of the most significant restorations he endeavored was the demolishing of the eighteenth-century vaulting of the axial nave leading towards al-Hakam II's mihrab. He replaced them with wooden ceilings elaborately carved and painted that were probably not too dissimilar to the original roof (Figure 17). Next, he turned his attention toward the floors. There he decided to use white marble, which was definitely not historically accurate, as the floor of the original mosque was dirt, but in this instance he let his imagination win and decided that white marble brought certain dignity and grandeur to the building. To this day, the floor has been leveled, but slabs of marble still cover the floor of almost the entirety of the former mosque.

His next two projects were also incredibly important to the overall aspect of the cathedral. In 1912 he began the restoration of the *mihrab* and Villaviciosa chapel. The first restoration of the *mihrab* was attempted in 1815 by the pontificate Pedro de Trevilla under the direction of the Italian architect Duroni. Velazquez Bosco said of the restoration:

Para colocar los altares y retablos, y su sujecion a la pared, destruyeron en gran parte los mosaicos de vidrio, que regalados por el emperador de Bizancio decoraban y decoran aun la fachada y la boveda central del vestibulo del mihrab, destruyendo en esta toda la parte baja de las dovelas del arco entrada del mihrab y gran parte de la ornamentacion que lo recuadraba, obra que fue restaurada a principios del siglo XIX imitando con bastante acierto el mosaico de vidrio con pintura y pequeños pedazos de cristal ordinario, aunque en los motivos de la decoracion no acertara a imitar or reproducir los de la epoca del califato.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Gabriel R. Cabrero. (1985). "Dieciséis proyectos de Ricardo Velázquez Bosco. La Mezquita-Catedral de Córdoba." *Arquitectura*(256): 47-56.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 53. "In order to place paintings to the wall, they destroyed in great part the glass mosaics that were a gift from the emperor of Byzantium and still decorate the wall and the central ceiling of the *mihrab*. In turn they destroyed the lower voussoirs of the arch of the *mihrab* and much of the decoration which surrounded



The voussoirs restored in the nineteenth century were well executed, though Velazquez Bosco attributed their lack of historical accuracy to unavailable archeological evidence in the nineteenth-century. He sent two Cordoban craftsmen to learn the art of mosaics in Venice where it was still being practiced. Additionally, he often took the initiative to educate craftsmen with techniques long forgotten, but essential to restoration work of this caliber. He hoped to achieve the utmost accuracy in his restoration.

Velazquez Bosco did not shy away from expressing his extreme distaste for the current cathedral. Perhaps that is why he took it upon himself to restore the section of the former cathedral, or the chapel of Villaviciosa. Along with the finest craftsmen and artists, he restored the eastern wall of the altar which consisted of interlacing lobed arches. He cited the fact that this cathedral had demolished such few aisles, as if to suggest that it avoided being an intrusive neighbor next to the system of arcades of the mosque.

Along with the excavations of Felix Hernandez, Velazquez Bosco contributed to the twentieth-century life of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. Felix Hernandez's excavations uncovered details, such as accurate measurements, materials used, and archeological artifacts. Velazquez Bosco preoccupied himself with reestablishing the splendor of the mosque before the intrusion of Christian building on a massive scale. While it is no doubt that Cordobans had always been concerned with the well-being of their crowning jewel, the twentieth century most acutely points to the shift from

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it, work of art that was already restored at the beginning of the nineteenth century by accurately imitating the glass mosaic with paint and small pieces of ordinary crystal, even if the intention was not to imitate or reproduce the decoration of the caliphate age."

proclaiming ownership of the space architecturally to giving precedence to the true vision and art of the original building.

## Chapter Four: The Hybrid Mosque/Cathedral Space

The mosque's architectural history merely lays the groundwork for our understanding of its rich life as a Muslim and then Christian monument. Both entities have been stakeholders in the attempts to harness the dynastic and legitimating power of the mosque in order to draw on its symbolism for their campaigns. While architecturally the building seems in direct opposition—there is grand cathedral piercing the heart of the mosque, after all—the creases in its historical existence surface the deeper we probe into its role in Cordoba. The echoes of Damascus were still heard in the tenth century and they were as relevant as they ever were, while the excellence of Moorish craftsmen was keenly sought even after the *reconquista*. The outcome of these elements is a dynamic building which has flourished into a distinctly complex and rich monument under Christian rule.

### *Two Umayyad Mosques*

Al-Andalus never erased its connection with the Umayyad caliphate and the connections between Damascus and Cordoba only kept becoming relevant as the caliphate in Cordoba was consolidated in the tenth century. Parallels were constantly drawn between their beginnings as a church, architectural style, and decorative program. Abd ar-Rahman I was familiar with the Damascene caliphate's mosque. After their power had been usurped by the Abbasids and he had risen to power in al-Andalus, it was

inevitable that he mimicked or attempted to recreate some of the great Umayyad achievements.

The stories of both mosques' beginnings as Christian churches closely paralleled each other. Both were understood to have begun in a shared space, Muslims and Christians worshipping in proximity to each other. In Damascus, the *temenos* served as the religious site for pagans, Christians, and Muslims before al-Walid purchased the church in order to build a grand mosque. In the same fashion, Abd ar-Rahman I approached the Arabized Christians of the city and purchased the rest of St. Vincent church, its southern end already in use as a mosque, at a hefty price. Both stories underline that they were peaceful transactions.<sup>66</sup> Gradually, in both bases, Muslim worshippers had far exceeded the capacity of the original buildings they shared and had faced the decision of building a grander worship space. In fact, both takeovers include a pact which allows Christians to rebuild the churches that had been pillaged by Muslims as another form of compensation for the appropriation of their building into Muslim hands. In Damascus, Christians were compensated for the church of St. John by the return of churches confiscated during the Muslim conquest of the city. Christians were reported to have built at least one church in a site given as compensation.<sup>67</sup> Cordoban sources likewise reported that Abd ar-Rahman I was successful in purchasing the church of St. Vincent by "*el cumplimiento del pacto por el cual habian capitulado, y*

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<sup>66</sup> Flood, 1-2. Flood does not discard the possibility of the space taken by force. In Cordoba, however, accounts do not mention the taking of St. Vincent by force.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 1. Cited from Sauvaire, Henri, "Description de Damas," *Journal Asiatique*, mars-avril & juin 1896, pp. 185-285, 368-459.

*permitiendoles la reedificacion de aquellas iglesias de las afueras de Cordoba que les habian sido demolidas en en el tiempo de la conquista.”*<sup>68</sup>

The alignment of both of the stories elevated the Great Mosque of Cordoba and Abd ar-Rahman I as upholders of Islam. In the Iberian Peninsula, the rule had been taken from the Visigoth kings and it was only natural that religion followed, particularly in the form of a large urban mosque on a religiously charged site. In fact, al-Walid is said to have addressed the city of Damascus by citing the several elements which gave Damascenes their superiority, the last being the mosque endowed by him to the city.<sup>69</sup> Clearly, the similarities of the inception of both sites pronounce the importance of the mosque to the city’s population, but primarily to the prowess of the ruler who was able to not only to supercede the Christian building, but build an entirely new building particular to the needs of the city.

Architecturally, while not identical, they share the same vocabulary and scheme of reused columns and arches and the wide-central nave leading to the *qibla*. Most compelling, however, are the parallels between their Byzantine influenced decorative schemes. When the mosque of Damascus was being built, early Islam had not yet established a visual culture. They found themselves in the position of appropriating from other sources, one of which was Byzantium. For instance, the pearl motif found throughout the mosaic decorating the Great Mosque of Damascus was part of the iconography of the heavenly city and is closely associated with the iconography of Heavenly Jerusalem in mosaics found in Rome and Ravenna.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1998), 60. Nieto Cumplido cites both Ibn Idari and al-Maqqari. Their accounts contain the same details. “the fulfillment of the pact previously agreed upon and allowing the reedification of those churches in the outskirts of Cordoba which had been demolished in the time of the Muslim conquest.”

<sup>69</sup> Flood, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 25-28.

Early accounts of the transactions between al-Walid and the Byzantine emperor make mention of a gift consisting of one hundred thousand mithqals of gold, forty mule loads of mosaics, and a thousand laborers.<sup>71</sup> A later account in the twelfth century cited al-Walid as stating: "Send me two hundred *rumi* workers, for I want to construct a mosque the like of which has never been built in any other capital and which will have no equal after me. If you do not do this, I will invade you with my armies and will destroy the churches within my territory, including the churches of Jerusalem, Edessa and all the other *rumi* monuments."<sup>72</sup> The Byzantine emperor assented.

Although two centuries later, after the emirate had been transformed into a counter-caliphate, there was again a turn to the Byzantine ruler and artistic tradition to underline the claims of their rule. Al-Hakam's decorative scheme in his tenth century mosque enlargement followed the precedent set by al-Walid in Damascus, though al-Walid's decoration went on the outside and al-Hakam ordered the finest mosaics for his *mihrab*.<sup>73</sup> From the beginning of his reign as caliph, he was zealous about completing a grand building project for the mosque. In a public ceremony he announced the endowment of a large portion of his private funds he inherited from the first caliph, Abd ar-Rahman III, were to be contributed to an extensive enlargement to the mosque.<sup>74</sup> Al-Hakam, therefore, framed his enlargement through the lenses of a greater Umayyad history, not to mention architectural and artistic language. The caliphate in al-Andalus had only been in existence about thirty years by then, requiring that caliphs continually

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 21. *rumi* workers are Byzantine workers

<sup>73</sup> Nuha N. N. Khoury. (1996). "The Meaning of the Great Mosque of Cordoba in the Tenth Century." *Muqarnas* 13: 80-98. Khoury goes an in depth analysis of what the mosaic decoration actually means. He connects the mosque with Medina and Damascus, as well as interprets the inscriptions through the frame of the establishment of caliphal legitimacy.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

recalled their lineage and make it clear that since al-Walid's great mosque, architectural standards, and much less leadership standards, had deteriorated.

### *Relics and 'Consecration'*

In the tenth century one of the most prized possessions of the Great Mosque of Cordoba were the four leaves of Uthman's *mushaf* stained from his bloody murder in Medina. Their appearance in the tenth century is extremely significant, as it further establishes the strong ties between the Umayyad past in Syria and the Umayyad present in Cordoba. Uthman was the ancestor of the Umayyad clan and it was in revenge for his murder that the Umayyads participated in the civil war they eventually won. Also significant are the connections which are drawn between the Cordoban site and the battle of Siffin between Mu'awiya and Ali, a civil war of major importance in which Mu'awiya's troops demanded justice for Caliph Uthman's murder by raising copies of the Qu'ran on their spears; eventually, this resulted in the establishment of the Umayyad caliphate in 661. In Cordoba, at the time of Abd ar-Rahman I, seventy Muslims were martyred at the mosque's site before he took control of Cordoba.

The circulation of these stories, or myths, during the tenth century further proves the point that the main interest in al-Andalus was the establishment of the legitimacy of their caliphate. They attempted to harness every single shred of legitimating power the Cordoban site had in its previous history. Whether each story is historically accurate is of importance, of course, but also, it is important to note that their sheer circulation marked a definitive atmosphere of the desire of the first caliphs of al-Andalus to establish an equally rich and meaningful history through their mosque. In a sense, they were also building a visual and cultural history.

The zeal with which the Umayyads pursued their aims at times came strikingly close to the acts and rituals familiar to Christians. Scholars have argued that the layout of the Cordoban mosque suggests the development of processional customs that are otherwise unknown in Islam and are likely developed in imitation of Christian practices. The four leaves of Uthman's *mushaf*, for example, were carried out of the treasury of the mosque, which unusually had a double *qibla* wall, in a candle lit ceremonial procession.<sup>75</sup> Their parade through the most visually significant parts of the mosque, the whole mosque, not only al-Hakam's enlargement, points to an imbued 'holiness' of Uthman's Quran. Such acts have been read as a type of consecration of the mosque.<sup>76</sup> The idea of consecrating a mosque is problematic in the sense that the mosque is not holy nor can it be made holy. In a mosque, there is not the Christian doctrine of purification or the sacred and profane. Theoretically, a mosque can be any building, as exemplified by the use of churches as temporary mosques. Similarly, a mosque could potentially be converted to another use. There is no intrinsic sacrality in the building, as there is in a church and altar once consecrated. The *mihrab* and the *qibla* are symbolic and essential, but they are not imbued with the holiness of an altar.

At a later date, the religiously reforming Almohads practiced a type of purification in the mosques they acquired. They were purifying the space from contamination which they viewed as innovations.<sup>77</sup> Their judgment of the need of consecration underlines the impression that some activities in the mosques of their predecessors in Spain were seen as un-Islamic. As the Christians, they later engaged in a

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>77</sup> Ecker, 117.



purification of the site and building from those influences which did not fit or were in opposition to their beliefs.

### *Conversion of the Mosque to a Cathedral*

The momentous victory of Fernando III by capturing the city of Cordoba meant being in possession of the seat of the second Umayyad caliphate that had once ruled over the entire peninsula. By the time he seized the city, only the historical memory of the tenth century caliphate remained, but it was literally embodied in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the greatest mosque the Western world had seen. Fernando III's worries regarding the capture of Cordoba signaled his desire to keep the city intact, or at least keep the Great Mosque intact, as it was a splendid war trophy. The royal council advised him to agree on a peace treaty with the enemy of Cordoba's ruler, Muhammed Ibn Nasr, so he could be assured that the city would not be pillaged by the Cordobans, particularly their gold buried and their mosque burnt. Muslims were able to leave the city once the peace treaty was signed and the keys of the city were given to Fernando III.<sup>78</sup>

The immediate consecration of the space, and especially the symbolic placement of the cross at the top of Abd ar-Rahman III's minaret by Lupe Fitero, first bishop of Cordoba, pointed to the tendency to use the building to proclaim and certify the legitimacy of rule. Ironically, this was in part a claim of supercession, but it necessitated the presence of that which was superseded, Muslim and Christian elements were thus always present for those harnessing the dynastic power of the mosque. Such a beautiful and large architectural space was sought after for symbolism, as if the residue of Abd ar-Rahman III's caliphate would rub off on those who were in possession of the mosque. It

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<sup>78</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1989), 59-60.

is also important to remember that the actual conversion of the population was a slow process so that Muslim memory as well as Muslim workmen played a continuing role in the conversion process.

First, then, it is important to deeply consider the historical, and even mythical, power which ensured that the mosque was not demolished. The Umayyad caliphate spent a large part of the tenth century establishing their legitimacy, not only through their words, processions, and military victories, but also with their care and devotion to their mosque. When Cordoba was conquered it is certainly possible that the conquerors might simply have destroyed the old mosque, as they did in other cities like Seville. But they did not. It seems it was a more powerful gesture to consecrate the mosque and within it embed a series of altars, chapels, tombs, and a cathedral, than to destroy such a large and iconic building. Building a large cathedral, without a doubt, would have been unfeasible for Cordoba at the time, but it is also clear that the Christian community in Cordoba did not need a large space. Most of the population had been uprooted, the agricultural lands must not have been in stellar condition, as the *reconquista* tampered with agriculture in its attempts to cripple their enemies<sup>79</sup>, and there were many more cities and provinces to besiege before the treasury could afford a large building project. It made practical sense to use the interior space, rather than begin anew on such a large site. But it certainly must also have been the iconic features of the building and the ease with which the chapel of Villaviciosa was embedded into al-Hakam II's enlargement that made it more likely that it would survive.

It is not the only example of the *reconquista* consecrating a mosque into a Christian space. In this particular case, they advantageously placed their initial cathedral

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 50-54.

altar where most light penetrated into the building. Churches, unlike mosques, needed a vast amount of light in order to conduct mass, processions, and other liturgical obligations. Though the altar had to face east, essentially going against the grain of the existing aisles, the bays between the aisles were wide enough that each potentially formed a nave. The directionality was then originally modified by the emphasis on the altar, rather than the removal or construction of any architectural elements in the mosque. As the decades progressed, a choir and organ were added, as well as more windows.<sup>80</sup> However, the fact still remained that the circumstances and needs of the church dictated the particular space it could use.

The set of choices that were made in order to host a liturgical space within a mosque are within the realm of probability and signal to a conscientious occupation of the space as a whole, though this should not be confused for a respect for the preservation of the building's integrity and beauty as a mosque. Once the space was consecrated, it was continually modified through altars, tombs, and chapels and transformed into a cathedral in its functions. However, as with the cathedral, the chapels, altars and tombs were built or placed in locations directly dictated by the mosque's architecture. For example, the chapels on the eastern and western walls were relatively easy to build, as they essentially required closing the aisle and partitioning it according to the width of the bays.

There were building constraints of course, particularly since the mosque had such a clear processional direction, but there were clear advantages to harnessing the opportunities afforded by the way the building was already built. Also, altars were first built on pillars, which were wide and ensured that paintings could be placed. They were

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<sup>80</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1998), 450-451.

particularly prominent in a mosque heavily dominated by thin arches, further making them a compelling choice to place the first altars.

### *Mudéjar Craftsmen after the Reconquista*

It is significant also to recall that it is likely that a fair amount of this earlier conversion work was in fact done by Muslim craftsmen who possessed the requisite skills for such work. Sixteen years after the *reconquista*, the first accounts of restoration have been preserved. Under Alfonso X, the cathedral went through a series of renovations performed by Moorish craftsmen hired by the bishop beginning in 1260.<sup>81</sup> “You should know that the chapter of the church of Cordoba sent me charters of the king, Don Alfonso, my father, in which he ordered that the church of Santa Maria of Cordoba should have a Moorish lime burner and another, a roof-tile and brick maker, for the works.”<sup>82</sup> In 1290, Sancho IV confirms the hiring of Muslim craftsmen for the restoration of the cathedral of Santa Maria. In order to guarantee money granted to the project, Alfonso X wrote a charter which describes the state of the building, “...in the above mentioned church of Santa Maria, there was much damage in the woodwork, and....it needed to be repaired in many ways, and...there is a need for us to impose some remedy there in the case that it should be lost because, if not, the ruin of such a noble church would be a loss.”<sup>83</sup> Regardless of his efforts, the church was not able to afford enough craftsmen to ensure the building would not collapse. Alfonso X’s solution then was to impose a labor tax unique to Cordoba in which specific types of Muslim craftsmen in Cordoba would be bound to a duty of restoring the cathedral two days a year.

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<sup>81</sup> Ecker, 121. The repopulation of Muslims in Cordoba, according to Ecker, has not been fully studied.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 122. Ecker provides the translated primary documents in the appendix.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 122.

It pleases us greatly that the noble church of Santa Maria of the city of Cordoba should be better protected and not collapse, nor anything belonging to it be destroyed. I judge it to be appropriate and order that all the Moorish carpenters, masons, and sawyers that there are in Cordoba should work, each one of them, two days of the year in the works of the above-mentioned church. And any Moor who would like to be excused from this, we order the magistrates and the chief of police that they arrest him and that they make him do it.<sup>84</sup>

Moors were already subjected to a range of taxes, including tithes on agriculture and livestock production, the poll tax, ecclesiastical tithes on lands rented from Christians, land tax, and daily fees for market stalls.<sup>85</sup> In turn, they were guaranteed the rights stipulated in the surrender pacts of the *reconquista*, primarily the rights to their own law and legal representatives, the right to access necessary establishments such as baths, shops public ovens, mills and warehouse, and the right to the same fiscal schedule they had under Almohad administration. Moorish lime burners, however, enjoyed a tax-free status in 1281 which indicated how valuable they were to the process of restoration of the building and in turn, how important its well-being was to Alfonso X.<sup>86</sup>

Christian craftsmen were probably envious of the tax free status of some Muslim craftsmen, though the number of actual Christian craftsmen was probably not high.<sup>87</sup> Then again, the size of the Muslim population at the time is not known, and much less how many of them were masons or carpenters. What is clear, nonetheless, is how far Alfonso X and the church would go to demand and coerce the work of Muslim workers. Their craft must have been seen as exceptional and far above the work of Christian

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 122-123.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 123. The tax-free status for lime burners was a product of a pact made between Alfonso X in 1260 and these artisans. No documentation survives, but Sancho IV, heir to the throne, wrote a charter on this matter twenty-one years later which reconfirms the special status of lime burners in Cordoba.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 124-125. Ecker recognizes the lack of information when it comes to population size in 1236, though she puts forth an estimate, which she considers low, of 500 Muslim men in the 1250s. She deduces the number by the tribute each Muslim person had to pay, one maravedi per head, and probably only counting adult males the tribute was 500 maravedis. She goes on to speculate that if one fourth of these men were masons or carpenters, the concession of the church would be worth 250, if every Muslim craftsmen fulfilled his tax obligation.

craftsmen, at least in Cordoba. It also points to an acute realization that the building techniques of Muslims were on some level unknown to Christians. Even if the mosque had been consecrated into a cathedral, Alfonso X's call for Muslim workers was due to the fact that the building remained in some ways distinctly Muslim monument to Christians. They had appropriated it, of course, but significantly, there always seems to be the clear awareness of that appropriation and the decorative scheme had the feel of a collage.

Further proof of *mudejar* involvement with the transformation of the mosque is the work they often did in chapels. In particular, the Capilla Real, or Royal Chapel, is done in a mudejar style built in two stages. Mudejar building took place in the first stage in 1312 before the '*maestros alarifes*,' or master craftsmen, left to Granada.<sup>88</sup> The chapel was 8.92 meters by 5.59 meters and two staircases leading from the presbytery of the old cathedral accessed the interior.

### *Christian Rituals within the Mosque*

There are two particularly compelling examples of how Christian life had intertwined in the mosque's interior space. According to Nieto Cumplido, there were two locations throughout the mosque that were used frequently. One of the chapels, Capilla de la Concepcion, was the baptistery, while the *mihrab* niche is said to have housed the Host.<sup>89</sup> Conceivably, the minbar, which was left in its original location, could have been used for a pulpit, though it is also possible it served the purpose of a war trophy. These crystallizing moments perfectly exemplify how one faith invades the space of the other

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<sup>88</sup> Nieto Cumplido (1998), 460. Nieto Cumplido mention that the master craftstment leave for Granada, though he does not explore or mention the reasons for their departure.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 118.

and unique dynamic is achieved in the building. These creases in its history are harder to see through the lens of pure architectural history, and instead there needs to be an understanding of the functions performed within the building, how they conformed to what the building leads one to do, and to the liturgical and canonical needs of the religious community that controlled it. Christian's storing the host in the *mihrab* as if it was a chamber or a safety cabinet dissuades any illusions that the building was ever or will ever be solely Christian or Muslim once again. The church's willingness to adopt such an iconic and particular place for Islam could also be read as a blatant disregard for the symbolism of the space as a Muslim building. Again, it is the appropriation of the monument which is what is most important.

As with the Byzantine mosaics, the church, in this case, used the vocabulary and the tools of Islam to conduct their liturgical activity and create a particular tradition in Cordoba. When such invasions of the other occur—from Muslim to Christian and from Christian to Muslim—it is no wonder that at first the clergy seemed perfectly content with the idea of an embedded cathedral, rather than an imposing building which would create its own flow and its own spaces. Once the cathedral was completed in the seventeenth century, arguably the rest of the building became less relevant. Perhaps this is why only one or two centuries afterwards there would be a willingness to begin restoration on the building to return it to its dignified Islamic state.

### *Shifting Interests—the Sixteenth Century Cathedral*

After witnessing the series of events leading to the construction of an entirely new cathedral in the sixteenth century, the choices made in the past become more significant in their willingness to work with the building, rather than against it. What the thirteenth

century achieved was a visible hybrid, rather than a complete transformation. Without a doubt, the mosque's elegant progression towards the *qibla* and the unbroken succession of columns was heavily disrupted by the Christian liturgical needs of the church, but those elements would have been completely lost had the church not been able to conduct their business in the existing building. After the *reconquista* was successful, it was incredibly important for the building to join in the interest of the church in order to ensure its survival. No longer could the mosque be seen as simply a mosque, but rather a space continually being transformed by its new inhabitants who had legitimately begun to understand and create a routine within the mosque.

In the sixteenth century, there was an apparent breakdown in the joint interests of the cathedral. Alfonso Manrique, the newly appointed bishop, proposed building a new cathedral in 1521. In his view the location of the cathedral in the space was not prominent enough to conduct the large scale processions he envisioned.<sup>90</sup> Undoubtedly, the post-*reconquista* cathedral was small and confined to space that was not conducive towards expansion. Only the nineteenth aisle, that farthest west, was adequate for processional entrances. Though the columns of two aisles had been removed, the chorus was not large enough to house the hierarchy of churchmen who took part in religious activity in the cathedral.

As we know from the objections to the plan, voiced both by the city council and later by king, Manrique envisioned a cathedral which was untrue to the sentiment and fabric of Cordoban society. However, his duty as bishop was to ensure an adequate liturgical space. The reaction by the council of the city was telling. On a purely rational level, their argument was to preserve the chapels and burials that had already been

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 506-507.



erected by rich patrons they undoubtedly counted on financially.<sup>91</sup> They were placing themselves as the protectors of the patrons of those chapels and burials. Strategically, this meant that the city's powerful, as well as the king, had a stake in the proceedings. However, their threats to craftsmen willing to work for the church in the new construction presumably stemmed from the desire to preserve the building as it was. They perceived it to be one of the noblest buildings ever built. In that judgment it is difficult to calculate how important a role was played by the fact that it was constructed by Muslims and Byzantine craftsmen, but that was certainly part of its identity, not to mention that the city's history was basically inscribed in every single material of construction of the building. The collective memory of the city valued their mosque, much in the same way that Fernando III placed value upon it. In any case, the sensibilities of the church had changed. It is possible that the Umayyad legacy which had given the building an added layer of importance and symbolism was no longer enough to make its possessors feel a sense of responsibility to its well being. After all, in the thirteenth century the residue of Muslim rule was still palpable, but in the sixteenth century, after almost three hundred years since the *reconquista*, the preoccupations shifted away from relative loyalty to the iconic building into a desire to give architectural preeminence to the Christian faith.

#### *Significance of Restoration Efforts*

Unfortunately, no record of what was restored under Alfonso X has survived, though the concern with the integrity of the building—structurally and decoratively—was echoed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by architects seeking to restore the splendor of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. It is safe to assume that Alfonso X's

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 506-507.

restorations were most concerned with structural integrity. He did not want the building to collapse or the roof to rot, but his concerns were not necessarily to retain the authenticity of the Muslim building. Ricardo Velazquez Bosco, a renowned architect at the time, was one of the earliest examples of an architect willing to restore some semblance of the dramatic beauty and effect of the mosque that had been lost under layers of Christian modifications. Velazquez Bosco was in search of that authenticity in every restorative effort in the building.

The prominence of the building was not solely concentrated in Cordoba or the surrounding regions by the twentieth century. When Felix Hernandez, an architect commissioned to excavate in the cathedral in 1930, began his excavations in 1932 they were quickly brought to a halt by the Excavations Superior Council due to a plea by a concerned councilman. An archeologist and an engineer were then dispatched to the cathedral in order to inspect Felix Hernandez's proceedings and essentially protect the building. The Madrid newspaper *La Luz* ran two stories in 1932 calling attention to the excavation. Both were clear with their message against the excavation, as they saw it as a threat to the building as a whole. The first story related the problem of uneven columns due to the extraction of the soil, while the second was pure sensationalist journalism. In the December 28<sup>th</sup> front page there appeared a composed photograph of the columns of the mosque collapsing with the headline reading "*Esta mañana, y sin que aun se sepan las causas, se ha derrumbado la Mezquita de Cordoba. De las mil doscientas columnas no quedan en pie mas que doce.*"<sup>92</sup> To add to the dramatic headline, the photograph pictured four dead bodies sprawled among the rubble of collapsed arches. This, of course, was not true, but it echoed some of the discomfort surrounding the excavations.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 38. "This morning, and for still unknown reasons, the mosque of Cordoba has collapsed. Of the 1,200 columns only 12 remain standing."

Newspapers were not the only ones to denounce the most recent interventions in the mosque, but also the Catholic periodical *El Defensor de Cordoba* ran a story saying, “*Pobre Catedral! Que mal ha hecho a esos arquitectos que un dia si y otro tambien hacen calicatas para averiguar no sabemos que, pero con indudable peligro de las cosas, de detalles que son ya sustanciales con la historia de Cordoba?*”<sup>93</sup> *El Defensor* not only lamented the architects tampering with their cathedral, but also the doubt implied of the existence of the church of St. Vincent by conducting excavations.

The role of the press in the twentieth century marks the threshold from which we can see the mosque/cathedral as more than a symbol of importance for Cordoba, but from which it entered the consciousness of the public at large. The architects involved in the restorative efforts were, in a sense, allowing the citizens of Cordoba and of Spain to envision the mosque as closely as it once stood. *El Defensor's* distaste for the knowledge they had seen as legitimate and a well-established fact can also perhaps imply that the cathedral, more than before, was an iconic monument that the church could not harness or suppress as it did in the past.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 39, “Poor Cathedral! What has it done to those architects that one day or another dig pits in order to investigate who knows what, but with certain danger, of details that are already made certain by the history of Cordoba?”

## Conclusion: The Great Mosque of Cordoba Today

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of speaking to Finbarr Barry Flood, a wonderful scholar and professor of Islamic Art, about my passionate interest in the transformations of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. He was very gracious and helpful in letting me know how much we actually know about this building. He lamented, like many others, that the Great Mosque of Cordoba is mostly studied as a Muslim building, and that sometimes its later history is overlooked by those studying Islamic Art. Reflecting upon that conversation I am once again reminded by the assumptions we make about experts and of Professor Carlton's story about barnacles. As I embarked on my research project I was not fully aware of what was there and what was missing.

What I was pursuing was the sense of wonder I felt upon entering a building that felt like a collage, rather than a mosque or a cathedral. I started thinking about the building as housing two opposing sides, but then later realized that the transformations from one to decade or century to another could not easily be explained through the rhetoric of Muslim versus Christian space. What was visible, most clearly, was a collage, a monument which through its evolution had grown into a building where Muslim and Christian elements co-existed and needed one another.

The restoration efforts made by Velazquez Bosco and Felix Hernandez have no doubt contributed to our knowledge of how the mosque was built and how it once looked under Muslim rule. I cannot help but think, however, that by the twentieth century the

Great Mosque of Cordoba had been the Cathedral of Cordoba for seven hundred years, twice as much time as it had spent as a mosque. The urgency of conservation, of returning the building to its original or authentic state, is then problematic. This building's life span had endured more transformations as a Christian building than it ever did as a Muslim building. Is it then worth restoring the Christian elements rather than the Muslim elements?

These issues are not solely present in this building, of course, but are the questions that arise with any building which is reused. For example, last Fall I took part in the environmental planning project to move Kellogg House from its current location to a more visible site. Part of the project was to convert the historical home into a green building. As we delved deeper into the research of what it would take to make a green building, we realized that it was expensive to modify the house to the extent that we needed to if we wanted to achieve our goal. Further, as we examined the house for original features, we quickly realized how difficult that was in itself. We had to decide whether an Art Deco window was worth preserving or whether it simply was not historical enough. At what point, as concerned conservationists, would we have reached an acceptable level of authenticity? And more importantly, was the house able to fulfill the needs of the community or would starting anew be a better option?

Of course, the building is valuable in itself as it is a historic Williamstown home. No doubt, Fernando III and subsequent rulers realized how historically valuable the Great Mosque of Cordoba truly was and how preserving it and modifying it to Christian needs was a far better answer than starting anew. Unlike Kellogg House, Christian liturgical needs were easily met within the former mosque and thus its existence as a converted Christian space began.

As more or less a casual tourist last summer, I felt the problems and complexities facing the building were palpable, but not until recently was I able to fully understand them. Upon entering the building the energy in the air, not only created by pamphlets or travel guides but also by the expectations of the crowds of people waiting to enter, is one of entering a tenth century mosque built during the Muslim conquest of al-Andalus. Once inside the realization strikes that the space is peppered and layered with Christian elements better suited for a Renaissance or Baroque cathedral, instead of a tenth century mosque.

In December of 2006 the Islamic Board of Cordoba received an answer to their request to make the Cathedral of Cordoba into an ecumenical temple. The bishop of Cordoba did not accept the request and released a statement saying that joint use of temples or buildings would generate confusion amongst the faithful.<sup>94</sup> In the letter from the Islamic Board they stated, "What we wanted was not to take over that holy place, but to create in it, together with you and other faiths, an ecumenical space unique in the world which would have been of great significance in bringing peace to humanity." Today, security guards often stop Muslim worshippers from praying inside the cathedral. I was witness to a few instances when security had to be alerted and people had to be discouraged from praying.

The request does not seem quite so out of the ordinary if the recent twentieth century attempts to "re-Islamicize" the space are taken as factors for why the space still remains a mosque in the eyes of some. Its arches are beautifully conserved, the *qibla* continues to shine, the axial nave is no longer impeded by the former cathedral, and darkness continues to consume almost the entirety of the building. In fact, entrance is free

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<sup>94</sup> British Broadcasting Co. "Spain's Cathedral Shuns Muslim Plea." December 28, 2006. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6213665.stm>> Accessed May 7 2007.

in the mornings for mass but there is the distinct warning that admission is only for the cathedral and not for the ancient mosque. Even within the rhetoric of the church, the building still holds some of its duality; at least as far as the tourist trade is concerned.

However, while the initial reaction is a confusion for what the building authentically is, Muslim or Christian, upon further consideration it becomes strikingly clear that both of faiths have been intertwined in the history of the building long enough to create a distinct architectural style. Oleg Grabar, in an essay about Spanish Muslim art titled "Two Paradoxes of Islamic Art," describes the mosque of Cordoba as a mosque contemporary with other hypostyle mosques, particularly in the Muslim West, but "few other mosques are designed in such a way that everything in it, even later additions like the Christian chapels and the church, had to be done in the harmonic key of the constructions of the early ninth century."<sup>95</sup> He points to the care with which the first transformations were made and how they succeeded in fitting into the larger fabric of the building. The decision to preserve the building had been made and rather than both faiths being in opposition, they were ultimately bound in a symbiotic relationship which has given way for a distinct hybrid building still sought by many travelers and captured in the collective memory of Muslims and Christians alike.

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<sup>95</sup> Grabar, 269-270.

## FIGURES

Figures for Chapters One to Four<sup>96</sup>

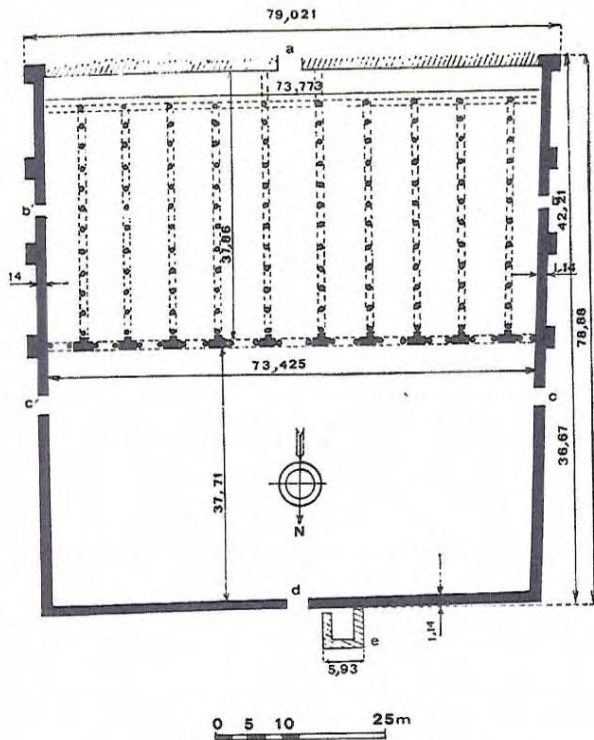


Figure 1. Original mosque's floor plan, drawn by Felix Hernandez.



Figure 2. Abd ar-Rahman I's original mosque, view of columns and bases.

<sup>96</sup> All images from Nieto Cumplido unless otherwise noted.



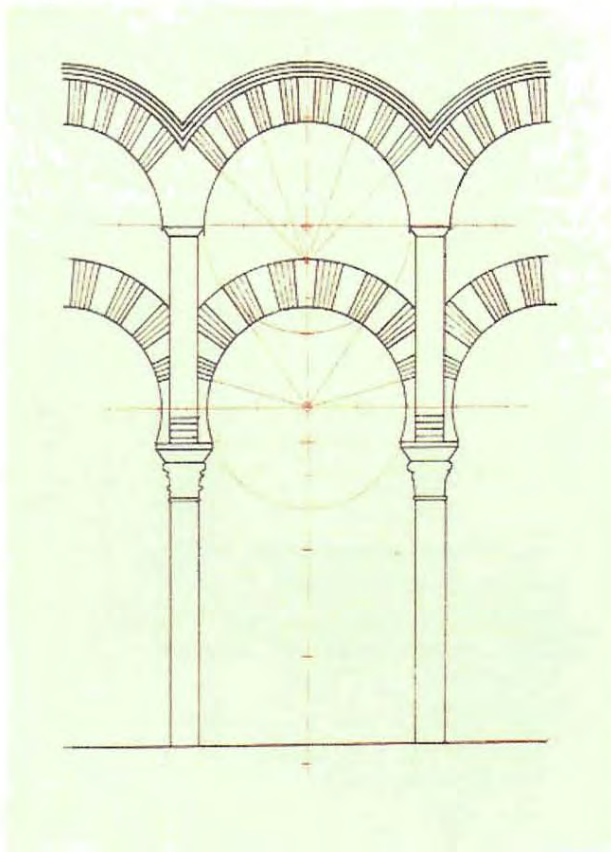


Figure 3. Drawing of double-tiered arch system, after Felix Hernandez.

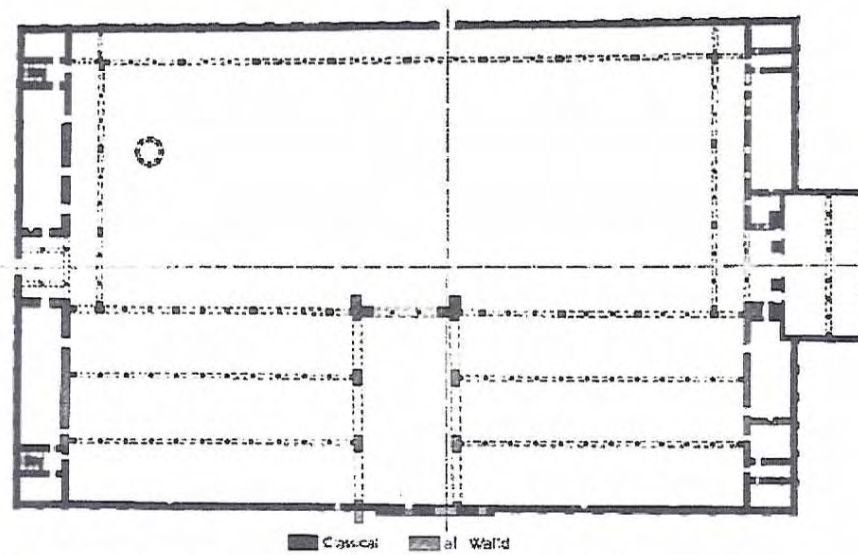


Figure 4. Great Mosque of Damascus, floor plan<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Flood, 334.



Figure 5. Abd ar-Rahman II's enlargement

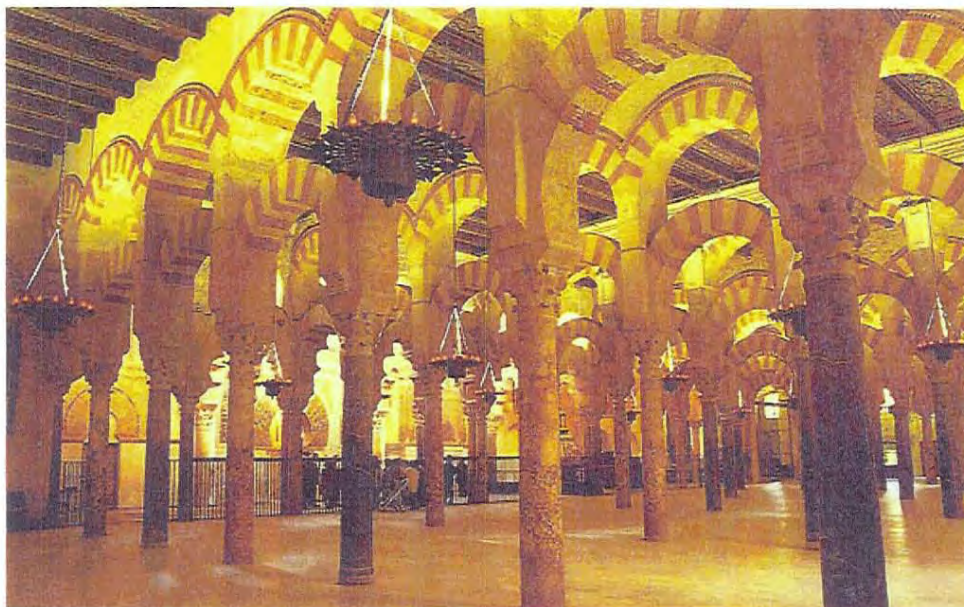


Figure 6. Al-Hakam II's arches and columns, especially made for the mosque.





Figure 7. Al-Hakam's enlargement in relation to the entirety of the mosque



Figure 8. Axial nave of al-Hakam II

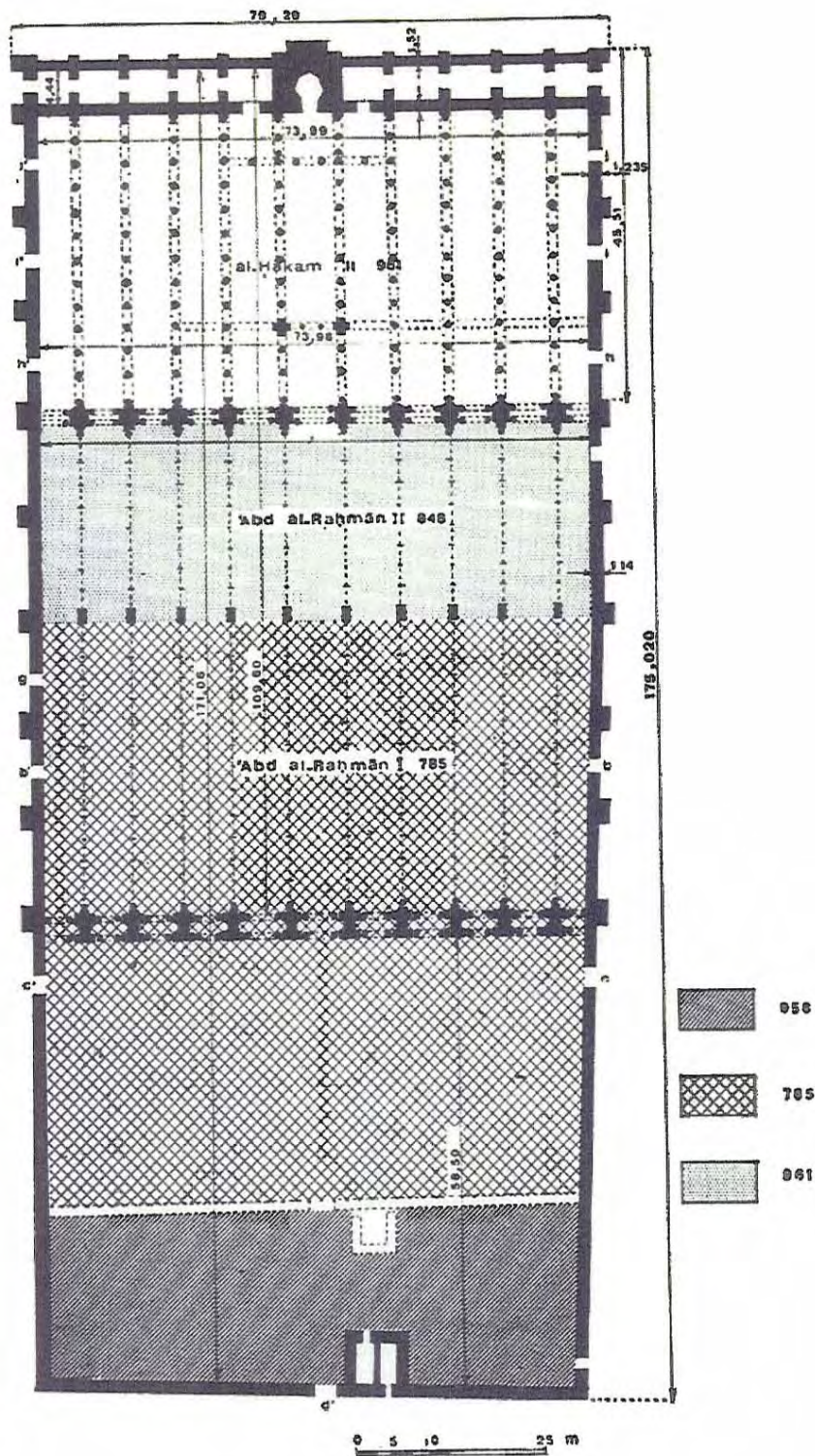


Figure 9. Enlargements to the date of al-Hakam II's tenth century mosque





Figure 10. Abd ar-Rahman II's *mihrab* columns as placed at the entrance of al-Hakam II's *mihrab* niche.



Figure 11. Al-Mansur's expansion, aisle



Figure 12. Al-Mansur's addition relative to the ones that preceded it

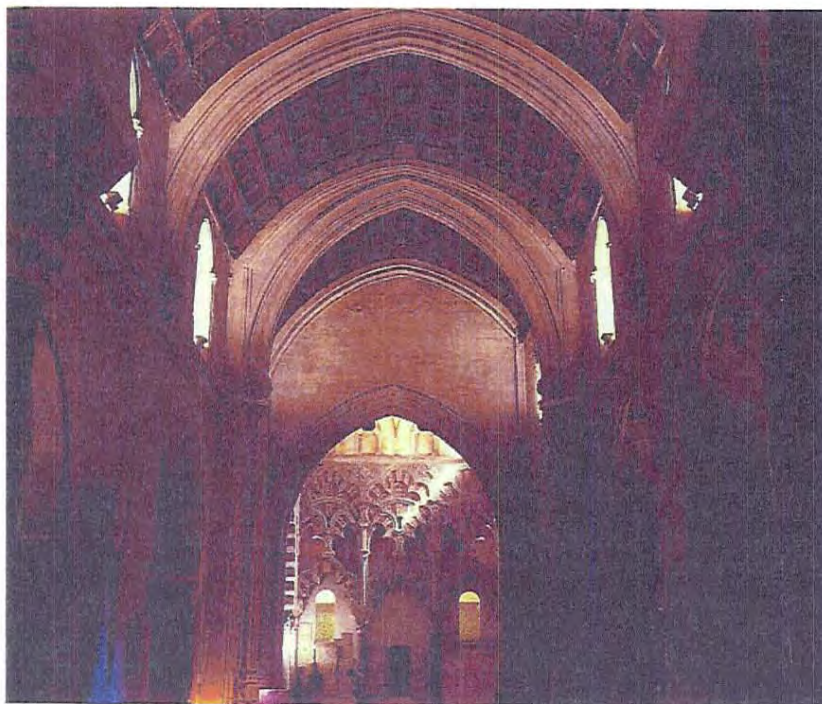


Figure 13. Villaviciosa Chapel, nave towards altar



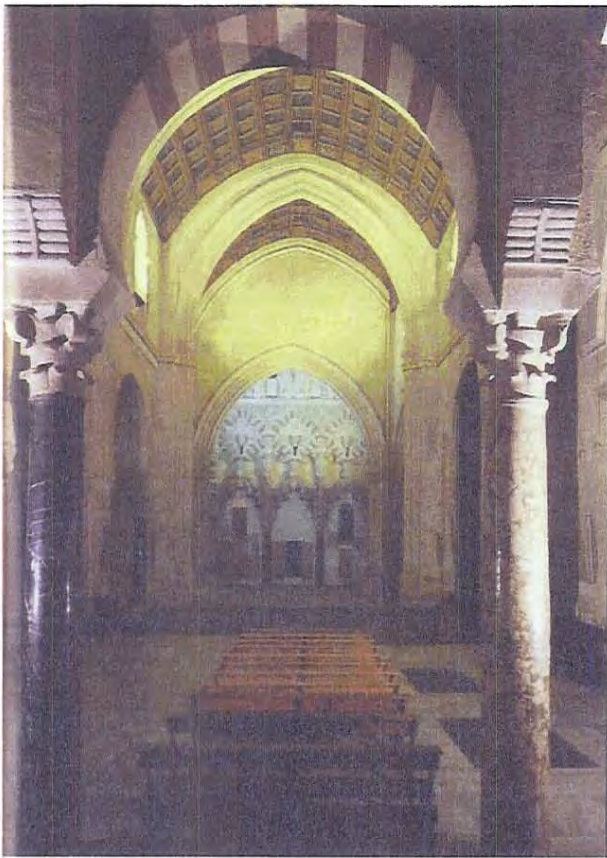


Figure 14. Villaviciosa Chapel, view from westernmost aisle to altar

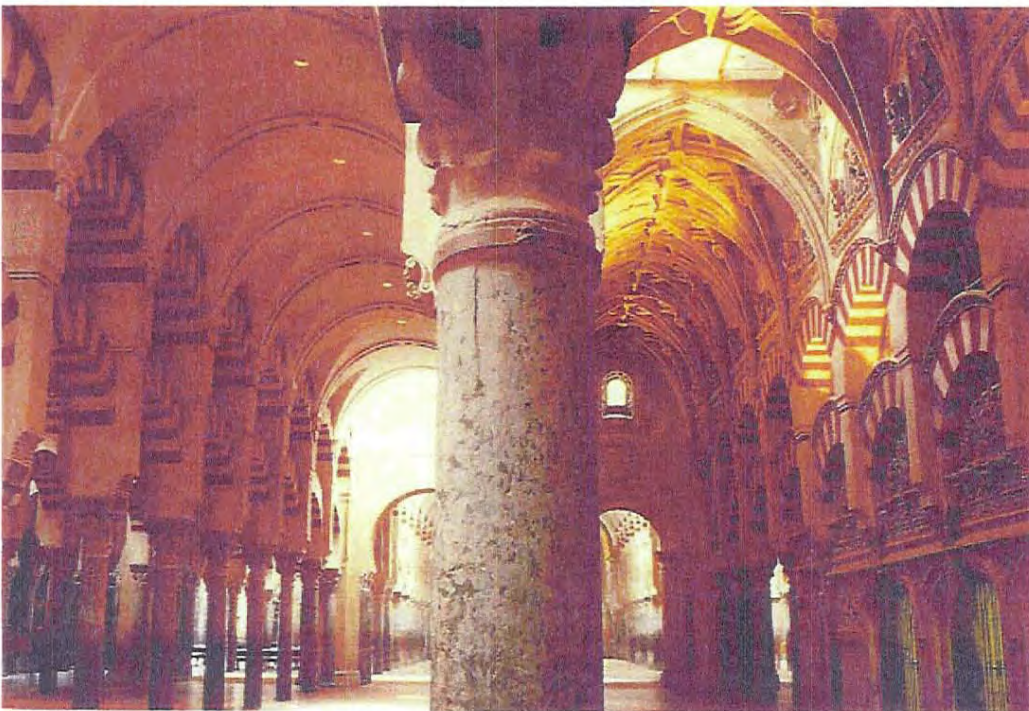


Figure 15. Al-Mansur's addition and rib-vaulting of aisle behind the altar



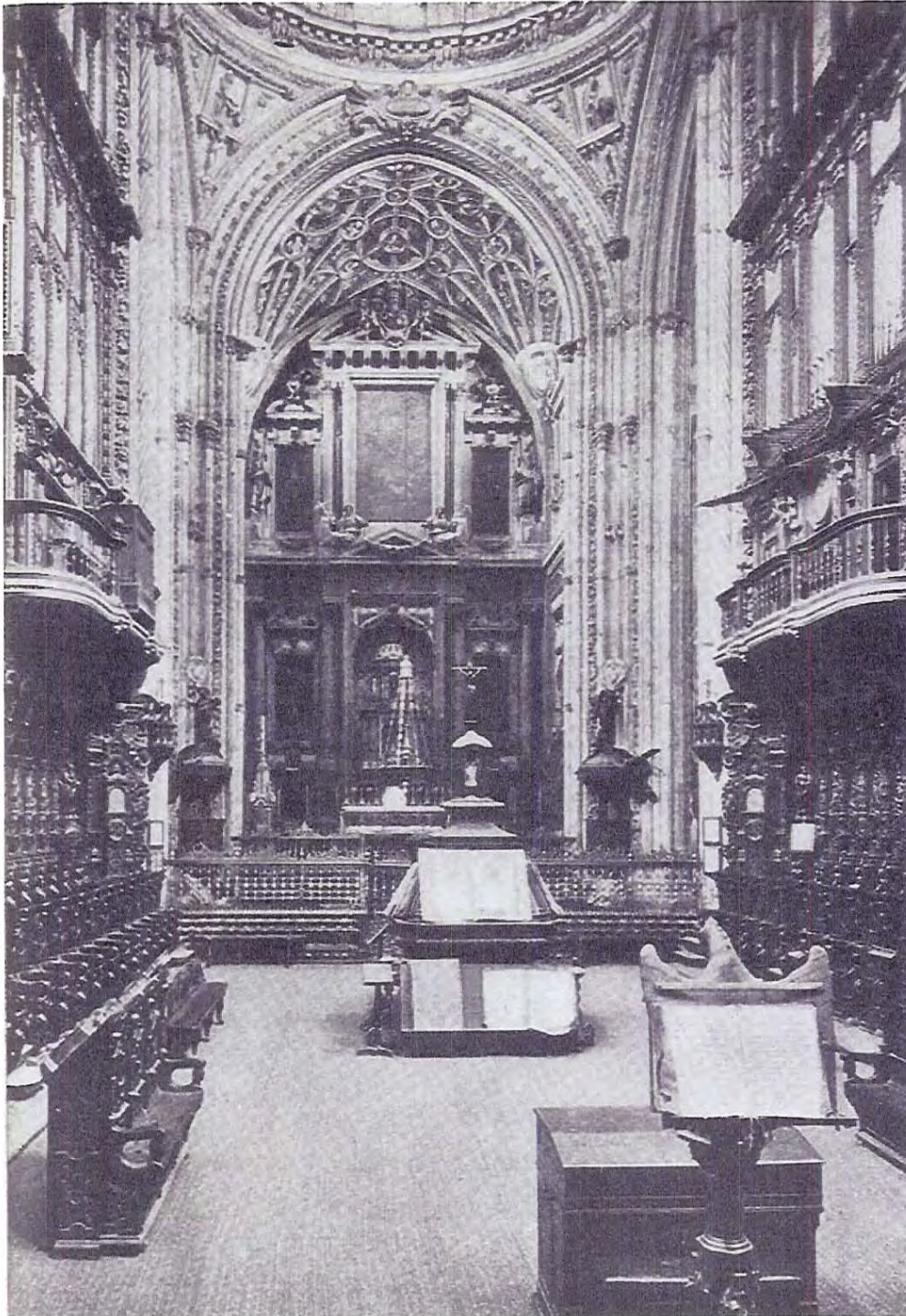


Figure 16. Chorus of sixteenth century cathedral, view towards altar<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Torres Balbas, 107.



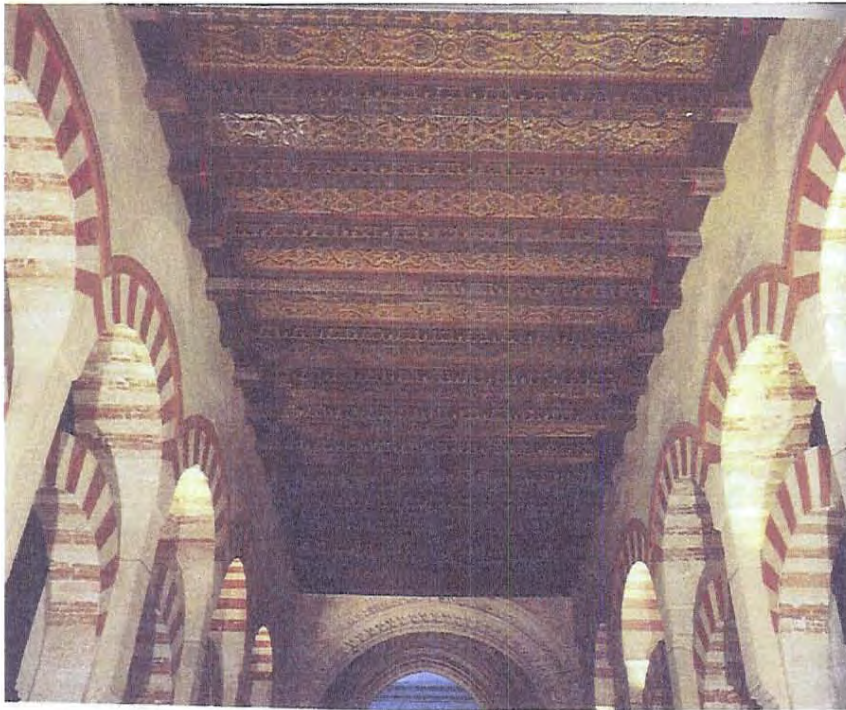
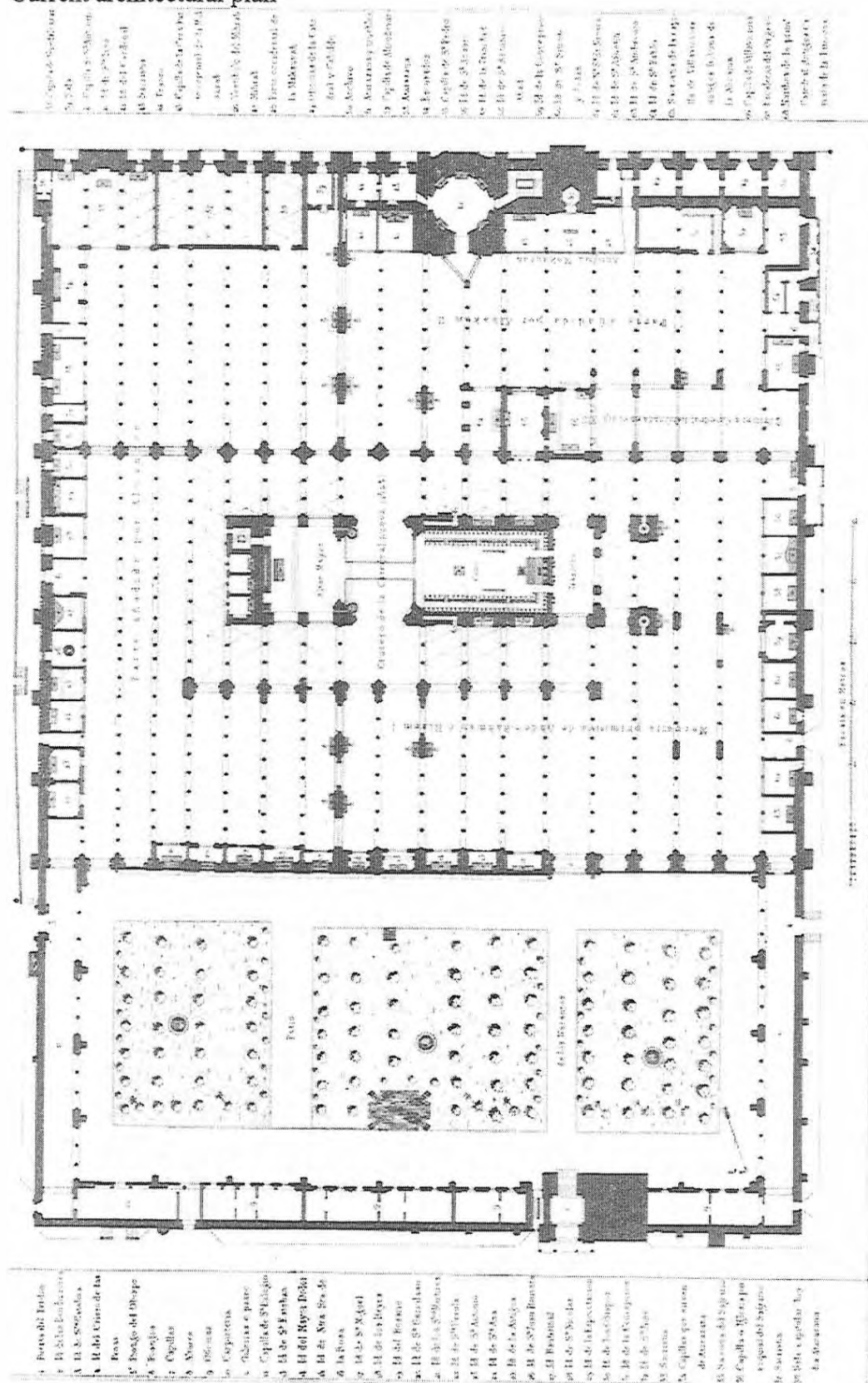


Figure 17. Restored roof by Velazquez Bosco

## APPENDIX

Current architectural plan



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