

Overlapping arches as a decorative and an architectural element in Islamic architecture

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Abstract:

Islamic Architecture is characterized by its richness in many elements that were used in both architectural and decorative aspects such as the arches that were not innovations of Muslim architect, but were found in the buildings of the ancient civilizations and were inherited after that in Islamic architecture. The Muslim architect developed the arches in his buildings and presented them in new shapes. Among the various shapes of arches that appeared in Islamic architecture a formation that is composed of the overlapping of these arches with each other. What increased the importance of this formation is that the Muslim architect adapted it to have an architectural role beside their decorative aspects. The purpose of this paper is to study the usage of overlapping arches as a decorative and architectural element in Islamic architecture. The study looked into the origins of this element by investigating its earliest examples in ancient civilizations to determine how it emerged in Islamic architecture. Furthermore, the study traced back the initial attempts in Islamic architecture to use this element in both decorative and architectural roles, along with an assumption that its usage as architectural element is entrenched in Islamic architecture, as well as the arguments that support this assumption. Further to that, the research clarified the numerous shapes of overlapping arches used as decorative motifs in Islamic architecture and backed these shapes with examples to illustrate each of them. In addition, the paper also identified the cases where overlapping arches performed an architectural role in Islamic architecture. Finally, the paper clarified how the use of overlapping arches both as a decorative and architectural element moved to European architecture as an influence of Islamic architecture.

Keywords:

Overlapping, Arches, Origin, Islamic architecture, Decorative element, architectural role, influences