

Hagia sophia

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



In chapter twelve the remarkable church known as The Hagia Sophia was discussed briefly and I find it fascinating. I first learned about the Hagia Sophia in my art history class in high school. I have always been interested in the fact that it started as a basilica, was then a mosque and is now a museum that functions as both a mosque and a cathedral. I think that this amazing structure is proof that different religions can coexist and come together to create things that we all can cherish.

Hagia Sophia is in Istanbul, turkey which was part of the Byzantine Empire until it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. It was originally built under the rule of Justinian to function as a church in 532 A. D. Justinian had material brought over from all over his empire. Large stones were brought from far-away quarries: porphyry from Egypt, green marble from Thessaly, black stone from the Bosphorus region and yellow stone from Syria (“ The Annotated Mona Lisa”). More than ten thousand people were employed during this construction. This new church was immediately recognized as a major work of architecture, showcasing the creative insights of the architects.

Hagia Sophia is one of the greatest surviving examples of Byzantine architecture. The church’s decorated interior of mosaics and marble pillars and coverings is massive and takes ones breath away. The dome seems weightless as if held up by the unbroken row of 40 arched windows under it, which help flood the colorful interior with light. All interior surfaces are covered over with polychrome marbles, green and white with purple porphyry and gold mosaics, encrusted upon the brick. This covering hid the large pillars, giving them a brighter look. In 1453, the ottoman turks took

over and the Sultan Mehmed II ordered the building to be converted into a mosque. The bells, altar, iconostasis, and sacrificial vessels were removed, and many of the original beautiful mosaics that Justinian put in were plastered over.

The Islamic features — such as the mihrab, the minbar, and the four minarets outside — were added over the course of the Ottomans rule. It was used as a mosque until 1935, when it was converted into a museum by the Republic of Turkey. For almost 500 years the Hagia Sophia served as a model for many of the Ottoman mosques such as the Sultan Ahmed Mosque, the Sehzade Mosque, the Suleymaniye Mosque, and the Rustem Pasha Mosque. However the Hagia Sophia is still the most awe inspiring. I believethat if the ottomans had never converted the church or if the church hadn't been built under Justinian we wouldn't have the beautiful mix of architectural aspects that we have today. The fact that the church contains the beautiful gold inlayed mosaics of Justinian, the depictions of Christ, and the large medallions with the names of Muhammad and Islam's first caliphs and that they all coexist beautifully is a perfect example of the harmony between the religions. People from all over the world from all backgrounds come to worship or just visit the beautiful structure.