The Fatimids | Mosque and Palace

‘The Fatimids adopted an innovative town plan that reflected the centrality of the Shi‘ite caliph.’

After the Fatimid rise to power, the caliph al-Mahdi founded the capital, al-Mahdiyya, in 308 / 914, adopting an innovative town plan that reflected the centrality of the Shi‘ite caliph according to the Fatimid world view, a view that thenceforth affected the appearance of all Fatimid cities. The mosque, once at the very heart of urban living, gave way to the splendidly decorated, multi-storey palace of the caliph who was both political leader and spiritual figurehead of the Fatimid dynasty; it was he who now occupied the very heart of the city, his palace placed at the centre of the kasbah (citadel) and overlooking the main mosque near the city walls.



Name:
Great Mosque of Mahdiyya

Dynasty:
Hegira 297 / AD 910 Fatimo-Zirid (Beginning of the dynasty)

Details:
Mahdiyya, Tunisia

Justification:
The first Fatimid mosque to be constructed, it became the prototype all over North Africa and Egypt.



Name:
Fragment from a mosaic floor

Dynasty:
Hegira 303 / AD 916 Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
The mosaic in the Qa'im Palace at Mahdiyya is considered to be the only post-Umayyad example of its kind in the Islamic world. Byzantine slaves or prisoners of war held at the Fatimid court in Mahdiyya may have laid it out.
