

# The Abbasids | The Aghlabids: Shield of the Abbasid Dynasty

‘Caliph Harun Al-Rashid gave Ifriqiya to Ibrahim Ibn al-Aghlab as a hereditary principality to rule.’

Due to the vast size of the Abbasid Empire and the presence of several rival Islamic powers on the doorstep in 184 / 800 the Abbasids established the Aghlabid principality in North Africa to deal with the Umayyads in al-Andalus and the Idrisids in Morocco. The Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 170–93 / 786–809) gave Ifriqiya (Tunisia) to Ibrahim Ibn al-Aghlab as a hereditary principality to rule. The Aghlabids became the vassals of the Abbasids in Ifriqiya between the years 184 / 800 and 296 / 909. They rebuilt several cities and constructed many military fortifications along the Ifriqiyian coast to rebuke the Byzantines who had conquered Sicily several centuries before. They also organised civic affairs and developed communication routes between North Africa and the Middle East.

**Name:**

Great Mosque of Kairouan

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

**Details:**

Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Known also as the Mosque of 'Uqba Ibn Nafi' who was the founder of the Abbasid city of Kairouan, and the Great Mosque.

**Name:**

Great Mosque of Kairouan

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

**Details:**

Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Detail of the square, brick tower (also used as a minaret) of the Great Mosque of Kairouan, built by the Aghlabids in 221 / 836

**Name:**

Great Mosque of Kairouan

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

**Details:**

Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Interior view of the Great Mosque of Kairouan showing the columned and arched prayer hall.

**Name:**

Monastir Ribat

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 181 / AD 796 Abbasid

**Details:**

Monastir, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Ribats were fortified Islamic 'monastery-like' institutions that accommodated warrior dervishes (Muslim monks) and welcomed visits from religious scholars and ascetics.



**Name:**  
Monastir Ribat

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 181 / AD 796 Abbasid

**Details:**  
Monastir, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
The inner court of the Ribat of Monastir with a view of the tower (minaret).



**Name:**  
Monastir Ribat

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 181 / AD 796 Abbasid

**Details:**  
Monastir, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
Interior view of an arched hall in the Ribat of Monastir.



**Name:**  
Ramparts and Kasbah of Sousse

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 235 / AD 850 (kasbah), AH 244 / AD 859 (ramparts) Aghlabid, Abbasid

**Details:**  
Sousse, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
The Aghlabids chose Sousse as their naval base. The crenulations on the top edges of the ramparts of the city are influenced by Byzantine architecture.



**Name:**  
Ramparts of Sfax

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 224 / AD 859 Aghlabid, Abbasid

**Details:**  
Sfax Medina, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
Sfax is considered to be the 'Gate of the Levant' well positioned as it is, oriented towards North Africa and the Levant.