Women | Muslim Women as Patrons

‘Muslim women generously provided patronage for the interior enhancement of religious buildings.’

Muslim women generously provided patronage for the interior enhancement of religious buildings; in the supply of elegant Qur’ans and other high-quality mosque furnishings. One of the most admirable is the intricate, inlaid-teak prayer niche for the shrine of Sayyida Ruqayya, the patron of which was the wife of the Fatimid caliph, al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah in 527 / 1133. There are a number of Qur’anic manuscripts commissioned by Zirid princesses that were intended for use in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, among them Umm Milal’s Qur’an and that of Umm al-‘Ilu, the sister of the Zirid prince al-Mu‘izz ibn Badis. A third manuscript was presented by Fatima, governess to the prince Badis Bin al-Mansur.



Name:
Page from a Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira 410 / AD 1020 Fatimid-Zirid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
Fatima, governess to the Zirid prince Badis, endowed this Qur'an to the Great Mosque of Kairouan. Interestingly it was compiled under the supervision of another woman, 'Dura al-Katiba' – 'Dura the lady-scribe'.



Name:
Qur'anic illumination

Dynasty:
Hegira 295 / AD 907 Aghlabid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
A Qur'an manuscript that was executed and dedicated to the Great Mosque of Kairouan by a local woman.



Name:
Mihrab

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
An inscription on this mihrab (prayer niche) tells us that it was made by order of Sayyida 'Ulam al-Amiriyya (d. AH 535 / AD 1140), wife of Caliph al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah, for the tomb of Sayyida Ruqayya.



Name:
Mihrab

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Detail of the mihrab made for the Shrine of Sayyida Ruqayya; now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.



Name:
Ceramic tile with a picture of the Ka'ba

Dynasty:
Hegira last quarter of the 10th century / AD 16th century Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

Justification:
The granddaughter of Sultan Bayezid II (r. 886–918 / 1481–1512), commissioned the Nesli#ah Sultan Mosque in Istanbul, embedding this tile depicting the Ka'ba into one of the walls; the tile was still in situ right up until 1914.
