

The Fatimids | Royal Women: Granddaughters of Fatima al-Zahra'

'The Fatimids accorded the royal princesses a life of luxury and responsibility.'

In reverence to their descent from Fatima al-Zahra', the daughter of the Prophet and wife of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib, the Fatimids accorded the royal princesses a life of luxury and responsibility, entrusting them important roles in public and political life. This attitude affected generally the treatment of women in contemporary society. Many women of the court held important political posts, and the sister of Caliph al-Hakim bi Amrillah, Sitt al-Mulk, even governed Egypt for four years in place of her infant brother. Many Fatimid women of rank managed their own wealth and were active in commercial business, owning ships that transported goods far and wide. Lavish lifestyles attested to their personal wealth: one princess by the name of 'Abda left so many chests filled with gems, jewellery and treasures that 14 kg of wax was needed to seal them and 30 reams of paper to list their contents.



Name:
Pair of earrings

Dynasty:
Around hegira 5th–6th century / AD 11th–12th century Fatimid

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
These exquisite earrings would have been worn by women of the Fatimid elite.



Name:
Pair of earrings

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
These exquisite earrings would have been worn by women of the Fatimid elite.



Name:
A pair of earrings

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
These exquisite earrings would have been worn by women of the Fatimid elite.



Name:
Two gold bracelets

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AH 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

Gold bracelets decorated with embossing and fine filigree work.



Name:

Pendant

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:

A Fatimid-period pendant showing influences of Byzantine enamelling, illustrating the mutual artistic borrowing and innovations that existed between the two royal courts.



Name:

Pendant

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

A brooch found at Fustat. Its enamelled inscription reads 'God is the best protector'.



Name:

Ivory casket with painted figural decoration

Dynasty:

Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Normans in Sicily, southern Italy

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:

A box that probably contained gems, jewellery or women's make-up accessories.



Name:

Brooch

Dynasty:

Around hegira 5th–6th century / AD 11th–12th century Fatimid

Details:

National Museum of Damascus

Damascus, Syria

Justification:

Fatimid jewellers used both sophisticated techniques and an array of precious stones to stunning effect.



Name:

One of a pair of earrings

Dynasty:

Around hegira 5th–6th / AD 11th–12th century Fatimid

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

Fatimid jewellers used both sophisticated techniques and an array of precious stones to stunning effect.
