

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

'The sophisticated and highly educated women of the Zirid dynasty emulated their royal counterparts in Egypt.'

In North Africa the sophisticated and highly educated women of the Zirid (Sanhaja Berber) dynasty emulated their royal counterparts in Egypt. During the 5th / 11th century a Zirid princess added a mosque to the ribat (fortified enclosure) in Monastir; it became known as the Mosque of al-Sayyida in recognition of her work. In the library at Kairouan, there are a number of Qur'an manuscripts commissioned by Zirid princesses intended for use at the Great Mosque, among them Umm Milal's Qur'an and that of Umm al-'Ilu, the sister of the Zirid prince al-Mu'izz. A third manuscript was presented by Fatima, governess to the prince Badis Bin al-Mansur.



Name:
Pendant earring

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th–6th centuries / AD 11th–12th centuries Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
An earring that was found in Tunisia which recalls Fatimid ornamentation.



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:
Ribat and Mosque of the Sayyida

Dynasty:
Hegira mid-3rd century / AD 9th century Aghlabid and Zirid

Details:
Monastir, Tunisia

Justification:
The Mosque of al-Sayyida within the ribat at Monastir was endowed by a Zirid princess.
