

The Fatimids | The Decorative Arts

'The material wealth of the Fatimid era was also apparent in the coinage.'

Fatimid wood-carving is characterised by an intricate high-relief technique and the vibrancy of its often figurative scenes executed in a variety of indigenous and imported woods. Occasionally the finished panels were painted, varnished and treated so that they were fire retardant. On occasion, wooden doors were also covered with decorated copper sheets. Ivories and other types of bone were also carved and used as inlays on a variety of products. The material wealth of the Fatimid era was also apparent in the coinage. Fatimid gold dinars, silver dirhams and copper fils were widely traded. The accuracy of these coins was measured by glass weights that were embossed with the relevant denomination and the name of the ruler.



Name:
Wooden panel

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

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Exquisite wood carvings, delicately ornamented with animals, birds and abstract motifs, were designed to enhance Fatimid interiors.



Name:
Door wings of al-Hakim bi-Amrillah

Dynasty:
Hegira 386–411 / AD 996–1021 Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The Fatimids took the maintenance of religious sites very seriously. This door from al-Azhar Mosque was restored and enhanced by the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim.



Name:
Coin (dinar)

Dynasty:
Hegira 403 / AD 1012 Fatimid; reign of al-Hakim

Details:
Museum of Civilisations | Museum of Oriental Art "Giuseppe Tucci"
Rome, Italy

Justification:
The gold dinar, the silver dirham and the copper fils were the three official currencies for Muslims throughout the Middle East and North Africa.



Name:
Token or weight

Dynasty:

Hegira 411–27 / AD 1020–35 Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Civilisations | Museum of Oriental Art "Giuseppe Tucci"

Rome, Italy

Justification:

A glass weight, used to measure the weight of gold, silver and copper coinage. An officially struck gold dinar should weigh 4.6 grams.

**Name:**

Glass weights

Dynasty:

J.16547. Hegira 411–27 / AD 1021–36; J.16546. Hegira 427–87 / AD 1036–94

J.16547. Fatimid (Al-Zahir); J.16546. Fatimid (Al-Mustansir)

Details:

Jordan Archaeological Museum

Amman, Jordan

Justification:

A glass weight, used to measure the weight of gold, silver and copper coinage. An officially struck gold dinar should weigh 4.6 grams
