

# The Abbasids | Abbasid Egypt

'Ibn Tulun began to hold back revenue, re-investing it in agricultural reforms and industry.'

In 254 / 868, Ahmad Ibn Tulun (r. 254–270 / 868–84), a 33 year-old Turkish soldier of the Abbasid army in Samarra, Iraq, was sent to Egypt as deputy governor with an army of some 100,000 men. Egypt was suffering from a number of political and economic difficulties caused by political unrest and the continuous drain of its resources after the death of Harun al-Rashid in 193 / 809. Ibn Tulun succeeded in stabilising the region, ensuring the flow of revenue again. Once he was promoted to Governor of Egypt in 256 / 870, however, he began to hold back the revenue, re-investing it in agricultural reforms and industry. He renovated the Nilometer, built the district of al-Qata'i' – following the model of Samarra – to accommodate his army and government, and built a mosque in his name in the city centre.



**Name:**  
Nilometer

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 247 / AD 861 Abbasid

**Details:**  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
Ibn Tulun's renovation of the Nilometer was supervised by the accomplished Copt architect, Ibn Katib al-Firghani.



**Name:**  
Nilometer

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 247 / AD 861 Abbasid

**Details:**  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
Detail of one of the arched openings for water situated half way down the shaft of the Nilometer.



**Name:**  
Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
Inspired by the Great Mosque of Samarra, the city he grew up in, Ibn Tulun sought to emulate it by using the plan of the Great Mosque as the basis of his; he also used baked clay bricks to build it, a material not commonly used in Egyptian monumental architecture.



**Name:**  
Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

Detail of the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun showing the central courtyard with its more recent domed fountain.

**Name:**

Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

Plan of the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun.

**Name:**

Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

View of one of the entrances to the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Name:**

Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

The Copt architect, Ibn Katib al-Firghani was involved in overseeing the layout and building works for Ibn Tulun's mosque.

**Name:**

Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

View of the minaret of the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun, showing clearly the influence of the Great Mosque of Samarra.

**Name:**

Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

Detail of an arched aisle with a stucco-decorated mihrab mounted between two arches at the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun.



**Name:**

Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 265 / AD 879 Tulunid State, Abbasid period

**Details:**

Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

Detail of the minaret of the Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun, showing some of the pointed arches that surround the courtyard below.

---



**Name:**

Teak Panel

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 3rd / AD 9th century Abbasid

**Details:**

The British Museum  
London, England, United Kingdom

**Justification:**

The city of Samarra inspired the architecture and decoration of many cities and monuments right across the Middle East and North Africa. This teak panel is an example of carved woodwork from Samarra.

---



**Name:**

Wooden panel

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 3rd century / AD 9th century Tulunid

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

Both the decorative motifs and carving on this Tulunid panel are typical of Samarra-inspired woodwork.

---



**Name:**

Panel

**Dynasty:**

Hegira late 3rd century / AD late 9th century Tulunid

**Details:**

Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (Medelhavsmuseet)  
Stockholm, Sweden

**Justification:**

Wood carving produced in Tulunid Egypt at the end of the 3rd / 9th century represents the culmination of the 'Samarra Style C' , although there is a tendency to break up the broad sculptured surface into smaller elements, as seen in this panel.

---