

# The Fatimids | Mosque and Palace

'The Fatimids adopted an innovative town plan that reflected the centrality of the Shi'ite caliph.'

After the Fatimid rise to power, the caliph al-Mahdi founded the capital, al-Mahdiyya, in 308 / 914, adopting an innovative town plan that reflected the centrality of the Shi'ite caliph according to the Fatimid world view, a view that thenceforth affected the appearance of all Fatimid cities. The mosque, once at the very heart of urban living, gave way to the splendidly decorated, multi-storey palace of the caliph who was both political leader and spiritual figurehead of the Fatimid dynasty; it was he who now occupied the very heart of the city, his palace placed at the centre of the kasbah (citadel) and overlooking the main mosque near the city walls.



**Name:**  
Great Mosque of Mahdiyya

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 297 / AD 910 Fatimo-Zirid (Beginning of the dynasty)

**Details:**  
Mahdiyya, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
The first Fatimid mosque to be constructed, it became the prototype all over North Africa and Egypt.



**Name:**  
Fragment from a mosaic floor

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 303 / AD 916 Fatimid

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art  
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
The mosaic in the Qa'im Palace at Mahdiyya is considered to be the only post-Umayyad example of its kind in the Islamic world. Byzantine slaves or prisoners of war held at the Fatimid court in Mahdiyya may have laid it out.