

The Fatimids | Mosque and Palace

‘Fatimid mosques were designed to shine, like beacons, of Shi’ite propaganda.’

The Fatimid dynasty made great efforts to construct, furnish and maintain mosques in order to disseminate their Shi’ite beliefs. Whether at Mahdiyya, or in their splendid capital Cairo – with imposing complexes like the mosques of al-Azhar and al-Aqmar – or in regions as far a field as Sicily, Fatimid mosques were designed to shine, like beacons, of Shi’ite propaganda. Architecturally the Fatimid mosque is distinct: a protruding entrance reminiscent of Roman ‘victory arches’; a carved, stone dome, and a facade with inscriptions (Shi’ite in content) written in kufic script, but most notable of all, is the absence of a minaret.



Name:
Mosque of al-Azhar

Dynasty:
Hegira 359–61 / AD 970–72 Fatimid

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Al-Azhar Mosque, based on that at Mahdiyya in Tunisia, was the first Fatimid mosque in Cairo, built as a centre for the propagation of Fatimid Shi’ite theology. Later it was appropriated for Sunnism and became the largest Islamic university in the world.



Name:
Aqmar Mosque

Dynasty:
Hegira 519 / AD 1125 Fatimid

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Al-Aqmar Mosque is the oldest surviving small mosque in Egypt.



Name:
Mosque of al-Hakim bi Amrillah

Dynasty:
Construction of the building began during the period AH 365–86 / AD 975–96 and ended in AH 403 / AD 1012 Fatimid

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Until 480 / 1017 the stone-and-brick Mosque of al-Hakim bi Amrillah stood outside the city walls. It was the first Fatimid building to have stone-carved decoration.



Name:
Mosque

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th century / AD 12th century Fatimid

Details:

Segesta, Italy

Justification:

The archaeological remains of a mosque at Segesta mark the only sacred Islamic building extant in Sicily. The layout recalls Aghlabid and Fatimid mosques in North Africa.

**Name:**

Column with kufic inscription

Dynasty:

Around Hegira 5th / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Regional Gallery of Sicilia, Abatellis Palace
Palermo, Italy

Justification:

A column that originally graced a Fatimid mosque in Palermo; its decoration is typical of the period.

**Name:**

Column with kufic inscription

Dynasty:

Around Hegira 5th / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Regional Gallery of Sicilia, Abatellis Palace
Palermo, Italy

Justification:
