

# The Muslim West | Funerary Steles: Memorials in Stone

Headstones, a status symbol

The founding of a cemetery was something that was usually done by rulers or their families. It was seen as a pious act that was pleasing to God. Although cemeteries were sometimes surrounded by a low wall, they were more commonly not enclosed. Graves were not arranged in an orderly fashion and were not necessarily marked with headstones as commemorative features such as these depended on the social standing and wealth of the deceased.



**Name:**  
Funerary stele of Abu Bakr ibn Yusuf

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 512 / AD 1118 Hammadid

**Details:**  
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts  
Algiers, Algeria

**Justification:**  
The most humble graves were marked with rough, unworked stone thrust into the ground at the head of a simple, narrow plot, while the graves of the powerful were marked with two stones, marble or ceramic steles bearing funerary inscriptions; the larger of the two at the head of the grave and the smaller one at the foot.



**Name:**  
Funerary stele

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Zirid

**Details:**  
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts  
Algiers, Algeria

**Justification:**  
The most humble graves were marked with rough, unworked stone thrust into the ground at the head of a simple, narrow plot, while the graves of the powerful were marked with two stones, marble or ceramic steles bearing funerary inscriptions; the larger of the two at the head of the grave and the smaller one at the foot.



**Name:**  
Funerary stele (gravestone)

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 495 / AD 1101 Khurasanid

**Details:**  
Sidi Qasim al-Zelliji Museum  
Tunis, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
The most humble graves were marked with rough, unworked stone thrust into the ground at the head of a simple, narrow plot, while the graves of the powerful were marked with two stones, marble or ceramic steles bearing funerary inscriptions; the larger of the two at the head of the grave and the smaller one at the foot.

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