

# The Abbasids | The Aghlabids: Shield of the Abbasid Dynasty

'The Aghlabids conducted themselves in the image of their patrons – the Abbasid caliphs.'

In addition to central North Africa, Malta, Sicily and southern Italy became part of the Aghlabid domain. They considered themselves as vassals of the Abbasids, although with great autonomy, and they maintained their links with Baghdad – the Abbasid capital – with many commercial and scientific convoys despatched and received, including one that brought back the lustre tiles used to decorate the mihrab (prayer niche) of the Great Mosque of Kairouan. In return for Aghlabid loyalty, the Abbasid Caliph al-Musta'in (r. 248–52 / 862–66) ordered the construction of the dome above the mihrab in the Great Mosque of Zaytuna.



**Name:**  
Fortress of Mazzalaccar

**Dynasty:**  
Aghlabid / Fatimid / Norman?

**Details:**  
Sciacca, Sicily, Italy

**Justification:**  
A fortress near Sambuca which was built by the Aghlabids to guard the communication routes of the newly captured territories in western Sicily.

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**Name:**  
Remains of the Great Mosque in Palermo inside the Chapel of the Incoronata

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 3rd century / AD 9th century Aghlabid

**Details:**  
Palermo, Italy

**Justification:**  
The Aghlabids built a Great Mosque on this site, the column and pillar bases of which are imbedded in the walls of the apse area of the Cappella.

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**Name:**  
Great Mosque of Kairouan

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 221 / AD 836 Umayyad, Abbasid

**Details:**  
Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
The 139 lustre tiles that decorate the mosque's mihrab were transported from Iraq. The varied decorative elements that distinguish the niche reveal Byzantine influences via Umayyad art from Syria.

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**Name:**  
Coin (dinar)

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 286 / AD 899 Aghlabid

**Details:**

National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts  
Algiers, Algeria

**Justification:**

This Aghlabid gold dinar was minted in 286 / 899; it was based on Abbasid-style coinage.

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**Name:**

Great Mosque of Zaytuna

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 248 / AD 863 Aghlabid, Abbasid

**Details:**

Tunis, Tunisia

**Justification:**

The Caliph al-Musta'in ordered that a dome be built above the mihrab in the Great Mosque of Zaytuna.



**Name:**

Great Mosque of Zaytuna

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 248 / AD 863 Aghlabid, Abbasid

**Details:**

Tunis, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Detail of the mihrab at the Great Mosque of Zaytuna.



**Name:**

Great Mosque of Zaytuna

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 248 / AD 863 Aghlabid, Abbasid

**Details:**

Tunis, Tunisia

**Justification:**

Detail of the arched and columned nave of the Great Mosque of Zaytuna.

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