



HISTORY OF  
ACHITECTURE

# Fatimid's Dynasty (909–1171)



# FATIMID PERIOD (909–1171). :-

- ❖ An area including present-day Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, Egypt, and Syria In the tenth to twelfth centuries, came under the rule of the Fatimid dynasty (909–1171).
- ❖ The dynasty was founded in 909 C.E. by Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi Billah, he was 11th ismaili imaam, who claimed legitimacy through asserting his descent from the Prophet through his daughter Fātima as-Zahra and her husband Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Shi'a Imam, It took its name from Fāṭimah.
- ❖ The Fatimids entered Egypt in 972C.E.
- ❖ The Fatimids are the first Muslims to rule Egypt who were not a part of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad.
- ❖ The dynasty and its followers belonged to the Shi'a branch of Islam and in particular, to a sub-set of Shi'ism called the Ismailis or the Ismā'īliyya.
- ❖ The word "Imām" as used in Shi'a Islām means a hereditary leader of the Muslim community in the direct line of Ali ibn Abi Talib who was also the fourth Sunni Caliph.
- ❖ The Fatimids ruled over a majority Sunni population in Cairo. Tolerance was extended further to non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews, who occupied high levels in government based on expertise .
- ❖ The Fatimid's marked a new era in the history of Islam because they posed serious intellectual and political challenges to the existing order.
- ❖ Under the Fatimid period Egypt flourished and developed an extensive trade network in both the Mediterranean and the Indian ocean .
- ❖ Fatimid Caliphate combined elements of eastern and western architecture, heavily influenced by architecture from Mesopotamia and Byzantium.



# Rise OF FATIMID PERIOD:-

- ❖ The Fatimid dynasty expanded their realm and needed a capital more central than Tunisia. Egypt – a convenient centre for Syria, Palestine, Arabia and the Mediterranean Islands – presented excellent possibilities for their requirements.
- ❖ The Fatimid's conquered Egypt and built the city of al-Qahirah (Cairo) to be their new capital. The conquest of Egypt was the first series of conquests which extended Fatimid rule from Sicily ( located in the central Mediterranean Sea) to Sindh.
- ❖ After the Prophet's death (632 A.D.) the Muslims peoples split into two major parties: the Shia and the Sunni, because the Sunni believed that the Prophet did not have a successor, they elected Abu Bakr to be the first Caliph of Islam.
- ❖ The Shia, however, did not accept this theory because they firmly held that the Prophet chose Ali to succeed him both as the religious leader (Imam) and the temporal head (Caliph), They upheld the claim of Ali's lineal descendents to the Caliphate and waited for the time when the Caliphate would be restored to the rightful holders.
- ❖ The establishment of the Fatimid State fulfilled this wish which had been zealously supported by Ismaili Shiites all over the Islamic lands.
- ❖ The Fatimid state sprung into existence and rapidly expanded into an empire as a result of the widespread Ismaili propaganda carried on by the Dawat (missionary movement).
- ❖ The Dawat, during the Fatimid period, was organized into a branch of government with its own functions, structure, and hierarchy, under the directions of the chief missionary and the ultimate authority of the Caliph in his capacity as Imam.
- ❖ The peak of the Fatimid expansion came in the years 1057-9 when the Turkish general al-Basasiri went over to the Fatimid side and proclaimed the Fatimid Caliphate in Baghdad, the home of the orthodox caliphate.



# Fall of FATIMID PERIOD:-

- ❖ The declining resources accelerated the problems among the different ethnic factions, and outright civil war began, primarily between the Turks under Nasir al-Dawla ibn Hamdan and Black African troops, while the Berbers shifted alliance between the two sides.
- ❖ The Turkish forces of the Fatimid army seized most of Cairo and held the city and Caliph at ransom, while the Berber troops and remaining Sudanese forces roamed the other parts of Egypt.
- ❖ In 1073, an able soldier, Badr al-Jamālī, went to Cairo at the invitation of the caliph and seized power, Badr and his successors saved the Fāṭimid state from collapse and postponed its end for nearly a century.
- ❖ Responding to the Seljuq challenge from the East, he pursued an active policy in Syria, Arabia, and elsewhere, using both religious and worldly weapons. In Syria, however, the armies of the Fāṭimids suffered repeated defeats; in Arabia their following was reduced to insignificance. Badr's son and successor al-Afdal in effect renounced the claims of the Egyptian Fāṭimid dynasty to the universal caliphate.
- ❖ The Fāṭimids were unable to provide support, however, and the general was driven out by the Seljuq Turks.
- ❖ The Zengid ruler Nūr ad-Dīn dispatched his general, the Zengrids had replaced the Seljuks as Sultans in Syria and Iraq.
- ❖ The end of the dynasty came in 1171. The last four caliphs were no more than a local Egyptian dynasty, without power, influence, or hope. In 1171, the last caliph died. Saladin, the nominal vizier, had become the real master of Egypt, and the Fāṭimid caliphate, already dead as a religious and political force, was formally abolished.
- ❖ The another reason for their decline was adoption and retention of a religious doctrine that was ultimately unacceptable to the Sunnī majority. Fāṭimid Ismā'īlism, as a theology, was remote from the central consensus of Islām.



# Eastward Shift of the Fatimid Caliphate 960-1060 CE

C. 960

C. 1060



# FATIMID Imaams:-

All Shi'a pledge to obey the Imam because they believe that the Imam is inspired, infallible and sinless.

- ❖ Ubayd Allah al-Mahdi Billah (910-934) founder of the Fatimid dynasty, was the 11th Imam for Ismailis and the 1st Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Muhammad al-Qaim Bi-Amrillah (934-946) 12th Imam, 2nd Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Isma'il al-Mansur Bi-Nasrillah (946-953) 13th Imam, 3rd Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Ma'ad al-Muizz Li-Deenilla (953-975) Egypt is conquered during his reign as 14th Imam, 4th Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Abu Mansoor Nizar al-Aziz Billah (975-996) 15th Imam, 5th Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (996-1021) 16th Imam, 6th Caliph-Imam said to have been insane.
- ❖ Alī al-Zāhir (1021-1036) 17th Imam, 7th Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Ma'ad al-Mustansir (1036-1094) 18th Imam, 8th Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Ahmad al-Musta'li (1094-1101) 19th Imam, 9th Caliph-Imam
- ❖ Mansur al-Amir Bi-Ahkamillah (1101-1130) 10th Caliph-Imam but the majority of Ismaili did not regard him as Imam, recognizing instead Nizār ibn al-Mustansir billāh as their 19th Imam.
- ❖ al-Hafiz (1130-1149) 11th Caliph
- ❖ al-Zāfir (1149-1154) 12th Caliph
- ❖ al-Fā'iz (1154-1160) 13th Caliph
- ❖ al-'Ādid (1160-1171) 14th Caliph defeated by Saladin.



# Fatimid architecture

The wealth of Fatimid architecture was found in the main cities of Mahdia (921–948), Al-Mansuriya (948–973) and Cairo(973–1169).

The heartland of architectural activity and expression during Fatimid rule was at al-Qahira, the old city of Cairo, on the eastern side of the Nile, where many of the palaces, mosques and other buildings were built.

## ⦿ **Al-Azhar Mosque:-**

The Al-Azhar Mosque was commissioned by the Caliph Al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah for the newly established capital city of Cairo. Its name is a tribute to the name of Fatima Al-Azhar, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed.[40] Jawhar al-Siqilli, commander of the Fatimid army started construction of the mosque in 970. It was the first mosque established in the city.



## Area and location and the mosque:-

The original mosque of al-Azhar was much smaller than the present building, and it was not at the exact center of the capital. Al-Qahira itself did not occupy much more than one square kilometer. The great Fatimid palace complex dominated the entire city. Al-Azhar is at a short distance from what was the main avenue, Bayn al-Qasrayn (lit., "between the two palaces")

## Architecture and Design:-

type:- Moorish architecture.

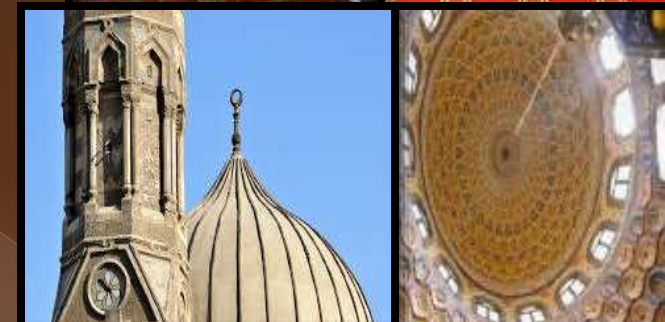
style:- Hypostyle mosque.

**ARCHADS AND ARCHES :-** The mosque originally had only three arcades around the courtyard; today it has four. This plan was common in North African and Andalusian architecture. The arcades are all carried on pre-Islamic columns with Corinthian capitals. Its original arches are round. The sanctuary had five aisles parallel to the qibla and a transept with an aisle wider and higher than the rest that runs perpendicular to the main wall, thus enhancing the prayer niche to which it leads from the courtyard to the prayer niche.

**DOME:** There were three domes, one over the prayer niche and the two others at the corners of the qibla wall, but none has survived.

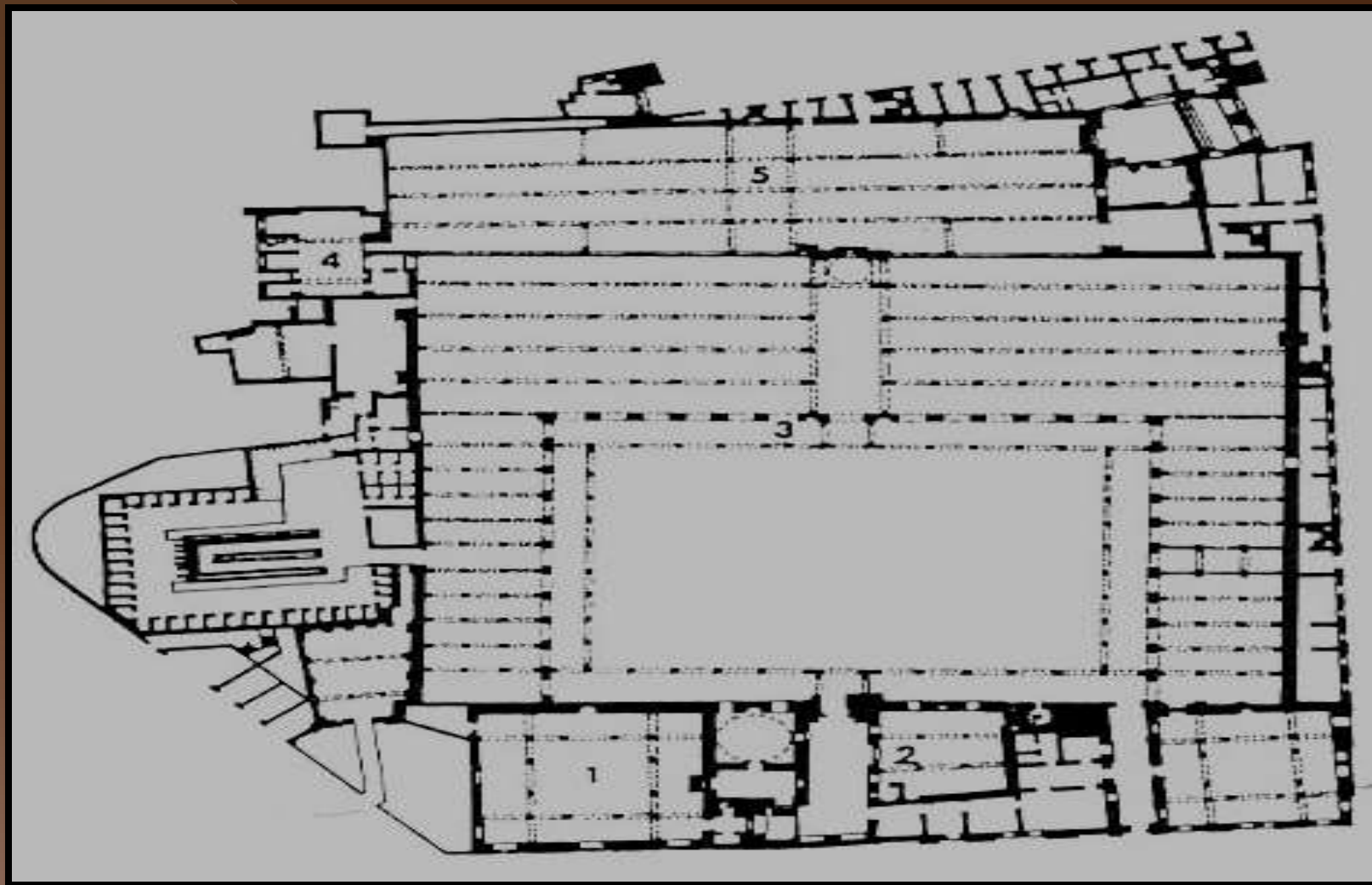
**MINARET:-** The original minaret was a small construction standing above the main entrance and built of brick.

**AISLE AND COUTYARD:-** The mosque initially built as a prayer hall with five aisles and a modest central courtyard, the mosque has since been expanded multiple times with additional installations completely surrounding the original structure.





# Plan of the mosque:-



## ○ DECORATION AND ADDED ELEMENTS:-

- The most important Fatimid works, however, were carried out during the rule of the Caliph al-Hafiz li-Din Allah (1129-49), who added an arcade around the courtyard to give the mosque four arcades, the fourth composed of only one aisle on the northwestern side. The arches of this new courtyard facade differ from the original arches. They are called keel arches.
- Original decorations include the conch of the prayer niche and the stucco inscriptions and arabesques on the arcades.
- On the wall facing the prayer niche, a naturalistic representation of a palm tree is repeated. Windows with geometric grills framed with bands of Kufic inscriptions appear to date from the foundation of the mosque.
- Caliph al-Hakim restored the mosque, donating a new wooden door which is now in the Cairo Islamic Museum.
- Caliph al-Amir donated a wooden prayer niche, now also at the museum.



## ◉ Restoration of the mosque:-

The architectural style of the mosque shows the influence of all arts that have passed through Egypt. It was renovated and expanded several times during the Fatimid era but during the Ayyubid era the mosque was completely neglected because it represented Shiites, while the Ayyubid was Sunni. But during the Mamluk period, especially during the reign of Sultan Babars, Al-Azhar mosque regained its luster after a great restoration project.

### **Ayyubid and Mamluk Restorations:-**

- Salah al-DIn removed the Fatimid silver belt from the prayer niche.
- The earthquake, significant in Cairo's architectural history because of the restorations of monuments that followed, also damaged al-Azhar. Amir Salar restored the prayer niche and redecorated its spandrel.
- In addition to restorations of individual structures, new buildings were added regularly to al-Azhar, for example the three madrasas of the Mamluk period.
- The madrasa of Amir Aqbugha, built in 1340 on the left side of the entrance, has its original portal, a minaret, and qibla wall decoration, including glass mosaics in the prayer niche and window recesses, where a vase and stylized plant motif is repeated.

### **Ottoman Restorations:-**

- The most important of these was Amir Abd al-Raman Katkhuda's enlargement in 1753, when the area of the mosque behind the original prayer niche was widened.
- He added a new facade, the one we see today, with its double round arches and the typical Ottoman cypress tree carved above them.
- He also had three minarets built, two of which have survived on the southern and eastern walls.
- On the southern facade, he added a portal similar to the Gothic portal of al-Nasir Muhammad's madrasa at the Nahhasin mosque.

## ○ Al-Hakim Mosque:-

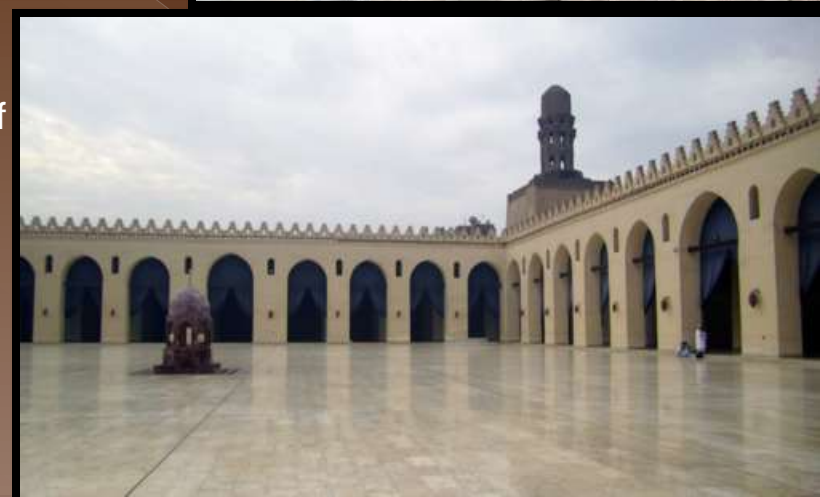
- Anwar Mosque, literally The Enlightened Mosque) also Al-Hakim Mosque is a major Islamic religious site in Cairo, Egypt.
- This is an important example of Fatimid architecture and architectural decoration, played a critical role in Fatimid ceremonial and procession.
- Emphasized the religious and political role of the Fatimid caliph.
- The mosque was originally built as an enclosure by the Fatimid vizier Gawhar Al-Siqilli .



## Significant architectural elements :-

The mosque of Al Hakim is famous for three main architectural characteristics.

- The first is the memorial entrance with its huge size and fabulous decorations. This entrance is the first of its kind to be built in Egypt and there isn't any other mosque entrances that can be compared to it except the one of Al Mahdeya Mosque in Tunisia.
- The second beautiful architectural aspects of this mosque is its wide white marble floor that reflects the mosque itself from inside. A lot of flocks of birds are usually seen flying around the mosque and standing on its amazing floor as they drink water from its fountain.
- The third and most and unparalleled feature of Al Hakim Mosque is its uniquely designed two minarets which are located at the North and South corners of its western entrance. Originally the two minarets stood independent of the brick walls at the corners.

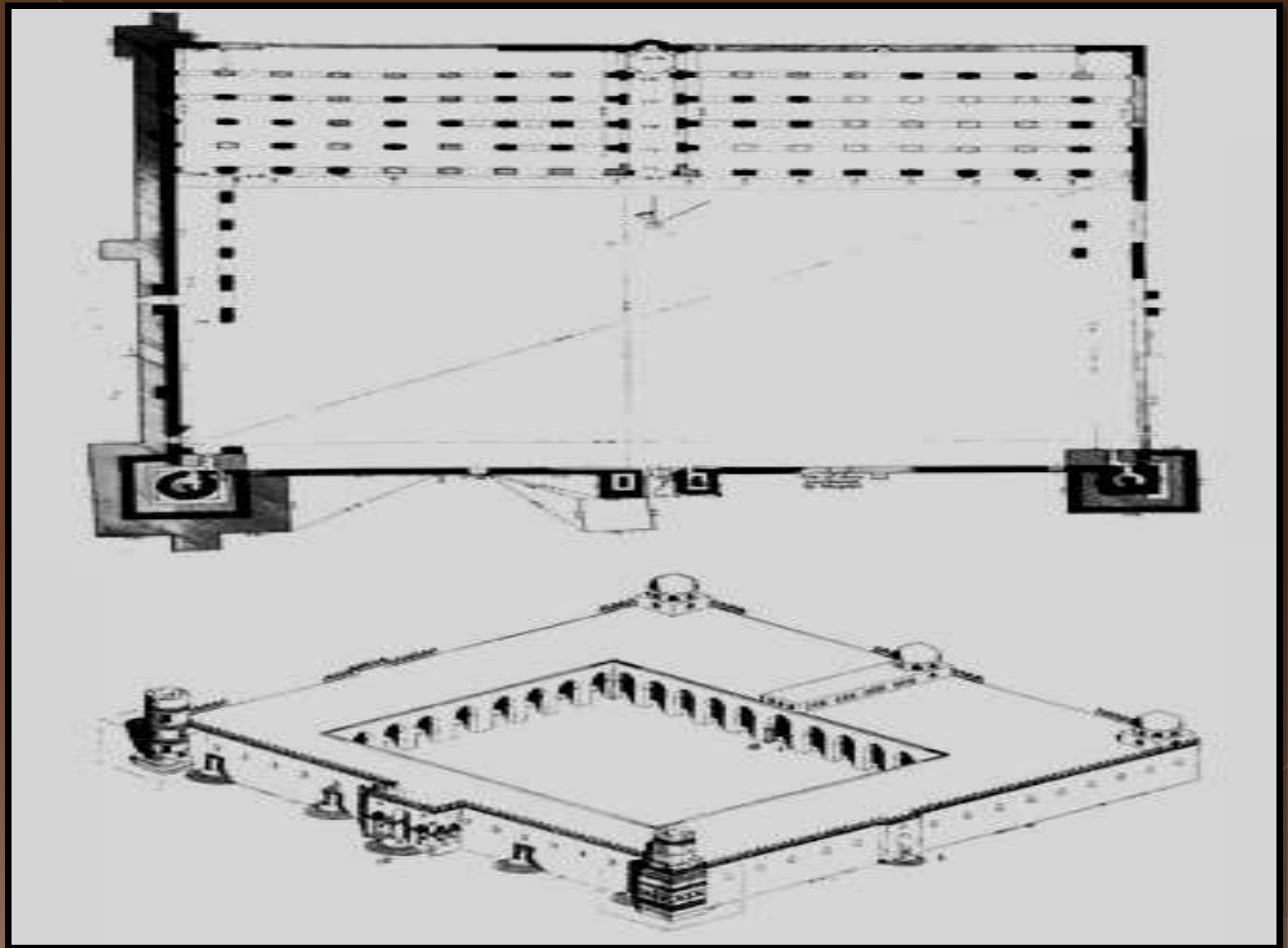


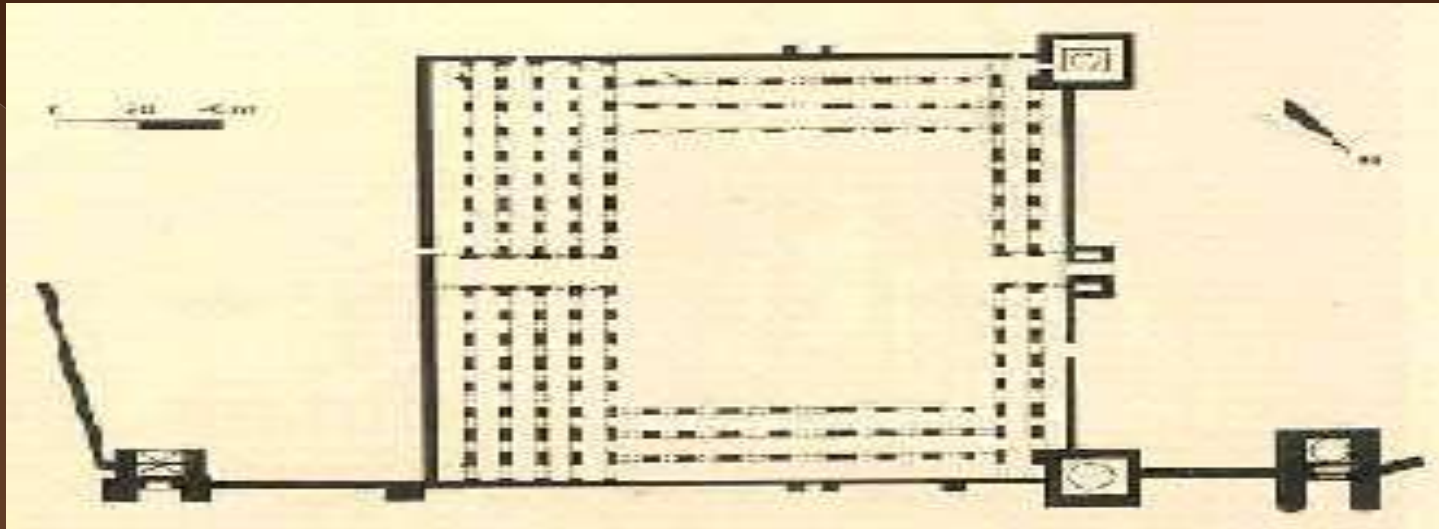
## Other exterior and interior elements :-

- The central nave in front of the mihrab was enlarged and raised higher above the roof accentuating its importance and it was pierced with clerestory windows as at Al Aqsa in Jerusalem.
- The mihrab itself was defined by a semi-circular dome raised on squinches and standing at the centre of two corner domes of similar design.
- The mosque courtyard or Sahn is a large open area surrounded by a covered arcade (porticoes), three riwaqs deep except from the north western side which is only two riwaqs wide. The boundary walls around the courtyard and on the exterior are surmounted by battlements.



# Plan and view of the mosque:-





- Mosque of Al Hakim was not always used as a mosque or a prayer area as it was used for many other purposes through its history because of its wide space.
- The Mosque of Al Hakim was used as a prison for the crusaders and a horse stable in the reign of Salah El Din and a storage area for food and weapon in the period of the French occupation of Egypt by Napoleon Bona Parte.
- The Mosque of Al Hakim was even used as a school in the times of the former Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser.
- Today, the mosque receives numerous visitors from around the world to view the fascinating ancient Islamic architecture. The mosque is also still used for prayer until this day.



## ○ Al-Aqmar Mosque:-

Al-Aqmar Mosque, also called Gray mosque, Egypt dating from the Fatimid era.

## ○ Location:-

Aqmar Mosque is located on al-Muizz li Din Allah Street, in the Jamaliyya district. At the time it was built, its location was to the north of the Eastern Fatimid Palace, which is now extinct, Cairo, Egypt.

## ○ Patron(s):

Caliph al-Amir bi-Ahkam Allah (r. AH 495–525 / AD 1101–31).

- Al-Aqmar Mosque is considered one of the most beautiful Fatimid mosques and the oldest of the remaining examples of small mosques in Egypt.

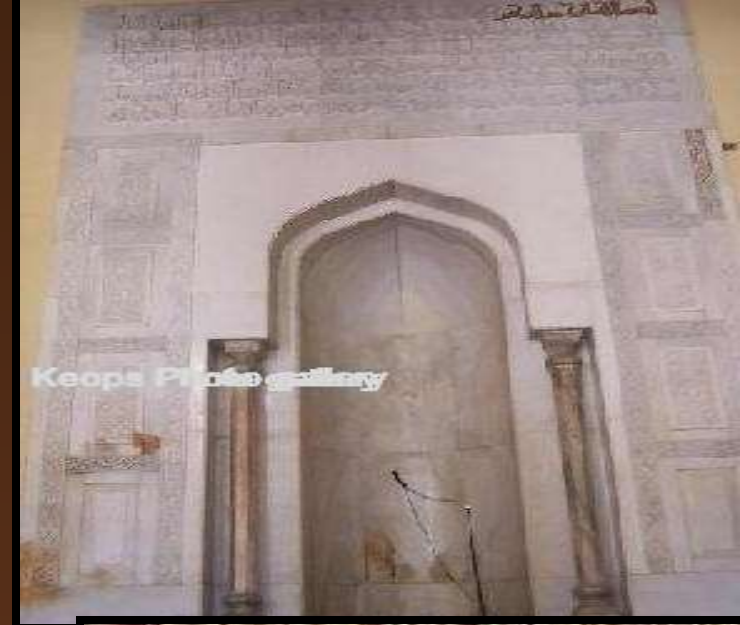


## ○ Architectural features of the mosque:-

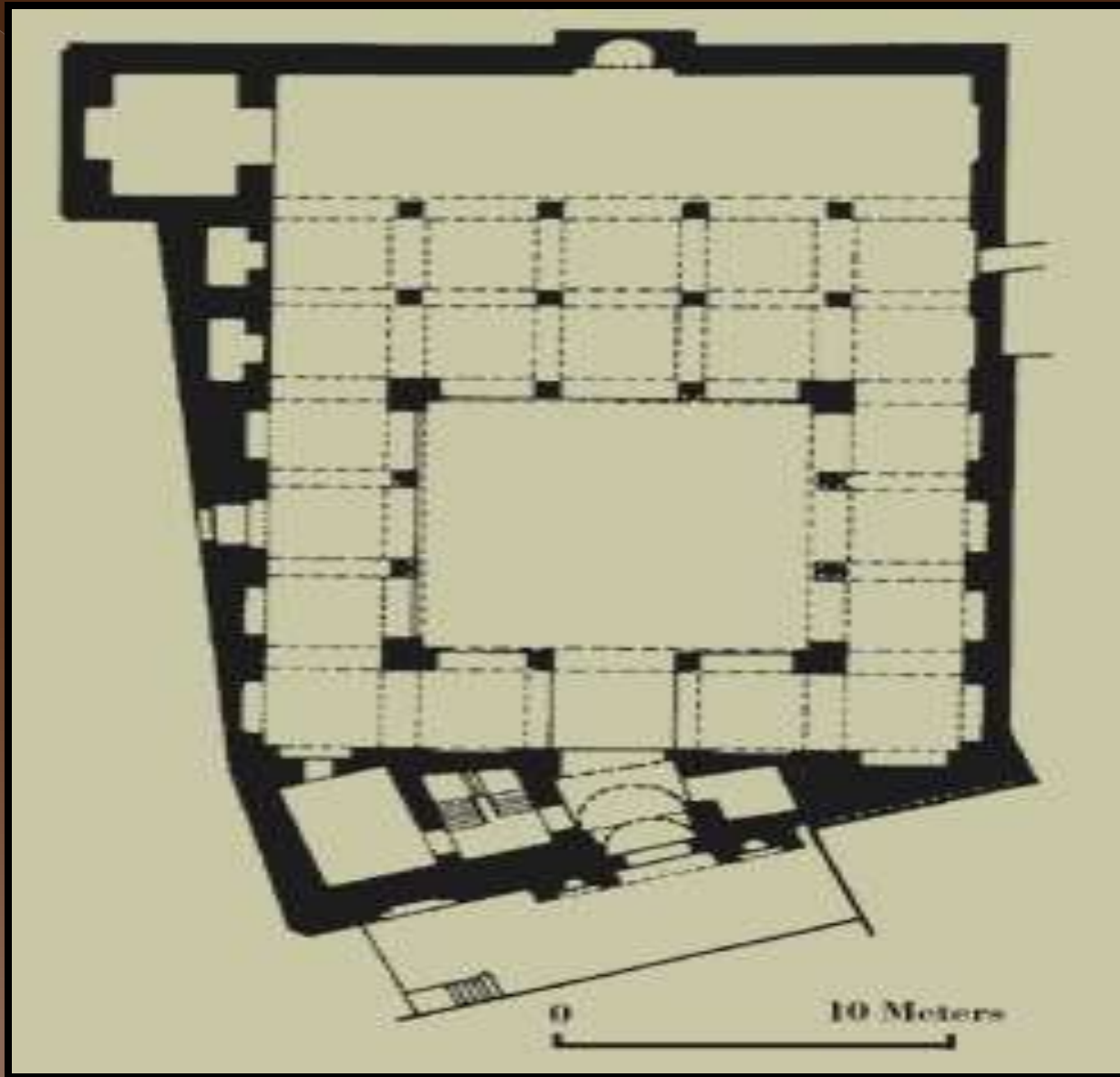
- The most prominent of its distinctive features is its western façade, among the oldest stone facades, decorated in this rich varied style, in Islamic architecture in Egypt.
- Possibly the decorative elements on the façade of the projecting portal of al-Hakim Mosque in Cairo (built AH 403 / AD 1012) influenced the construction and decoration of the entrance to this building.
- On the façade and on the entrance, the decoration has been carved out symmetrically and includes a number of components including shell forms, blind-arched niches borne on spiral columns, in addition to vases, rosettes and diamond shapes.
- The façade also consists of chamfered-edged niches (muqarnas).
- The façade is also embellished with inscription bands carved in the floriated kufic script.
- To the left of the entrance is a minaret that was constructed in AH 799 / AD 1396, built by order of Amir Yalbugha al-Salimi, who was in the service of Sultan al-Zahir Barquq who reigned twice.



- The colonnades of the mosque with the exception of that, which precedes the mihrab are covered with small shallow domes, built of brick.
- The transition zones of all the domes consist of spherical-triangular pendentives.
- One of the most distinguishing aspects of the floor plan of this mosque is its response to the street alignment, which deviates from the direction of the qibla, and where the western façade of the building and the entrance lies.



# Plan of the mosque:-



## ○ **Restoration:-**

- The mosque was exposed to encroachments in the AH 13th / AD 19th century, the most prominent of which led to the loss of the right-hand side of the western façade, which was replaced by a residential building.
- In the 20th century the building that had encroached on the mosque was pulled down. The façade of the mosque was then restored to its original form based on the features of the left-hand side of the façade, which was supposed to be identical to that on the right.

## ○ Cairo fortification:-

- The Saladin Citadel of Cairo is a medieval Islamic fortification in Cairo, Egypt.

## ○ Location:-

The location, on Mokattam hill near the center of Cairo, was once famous for its fresh breeze and grand views of the city. It is now a preserved historic site, with mosques and museums.



## ○ Fortification purpose:-

A new city wall was built around Cairo on the orders of the vizier Badr al-Jamali (r. 1074–1094). Cairo had expanded beyond the original city walls, and the city faced threats from the east, notably by the Turkoman Atsiz ibn Uvaq, commander of the Seljuk army.

## ○ Gates of the wall:-

Three of the gates in the new walls have survived: Bab al-Nasr (1087), Bab al-Futuh (1087) and Bab Zuweila (1092). Bab al-Futuh and Bab Zuweila were built at the northern and southern ends of Muizz Street, the main axis of Fatimid Cairo.



**Bab al-Futuh** is a gate in the north wall of the old city, built in 1087.

- It stands at the northern end of Muizz Street.
- The name "Futuh" means "conquest", the gate had rounded towers, with both of their façades incorporating a design of two parallel carved lines with loops between them.
- No earlier use of this decorative style is known, although it became common in the Mamluk period.
- There are carved brackets above the entrance arch, two of which have the head of a ram. This appears to be a survival of pre-Islamic symbolism. However, Fatimid arabesques decorate the brackets.

**Bab al-Nasr** is a massive fortified gate built in 1087 with rectangular stone towers.

- The name means "Gate of Victory".
- The entrance vestibule is cross-vaulted.
- There are two shallow domes over the upper levels of the towers.
- The walls are decorated with shields and swords, possibly Byzantine in design.





**Bab Zuweila** (or Zuwayla) is a medieval gate built in 1092.

- It is the last remaining southern gate from the walls of Fatimid Cairo. The gate is today commonly called Bawabet El Metwalli.
- Its name comes from bab, meaning "door", and Zuwayla, the name of a North African tribe.
- The towers are semi-circular.
- Their inner flanks have lobed arches as decorations, a North African motif introduced to Egypt by the Fatimids.



# Fatimid artwork:-

- The artwork from this period exemplifies the creativity and ingenuity of Fatimid craftsmen.
- The technique of lusterware on ceramic, developed originally in Iraq, was revived in Egypt and Syria.
- Some lusterware pieces from this period are signed by their makers, an indication of the esteem in which the craftsmen were held.
- Wood carving and jewelry were executed with equal skill and inventiveness.
- Fatimid artists created new decorative motifs and made greater use of figural forms, both human and animal.
- Figures were stylized but lively, while traditional vegetal and geometric decoration maintained their abstract quality.



Thank you