

Jonathan Bloom, **Arts of the city Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt**, AUC Cairo, 2007.

The Fatimid palace city of Cairo is less like those of the Umayyads or the Abbasids who were a result of single military campaigns, but rather similar to urban city capitals such as Saladin's Capital city in Cairo or AlHambra or the Topkapi who evolved organically and irregularly. P. 66.



37 Pair of wooden doors ordered by al-Hakim for al-Azhar in 1010. Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art

A door made by al-Hakim for the Al-Azhar mosque in 976. It is currently at the MIA. It is 3.25x1 m.

It is composed of three horizontal and four vertical panels for each door leaf.

Symmetrical arabesque motifs in the Abbasid bevelled cut style remnant from the Tulunid period. This bevelled style set within an overall geometric composition of the door is indicative of the transitioning in style from the Abbasid Tulunid aesthetic to a more distinct Fatimid style. Yet it also bespeaks the versatility and adaptability of Egyptian craftsmanship to new aesthetic demands. P. 65.

It is impossible to determine the exact location of the door at the time of its installation.

According to Bloom, Al-Aziz could have raised the central aisle during his reign, which would explain the “ungainly and inelegantly coupled columns and arches” in this area. P.63

reign, which would explain the “ungainly and inelegantly coupled columns and arches” in this area.



Creswell also has another photo of the same panel (Pl. 33, MAE, v.2). The B&W image better shows the effect of bevelling on the motifs and the details of its composition. It is executed with exquisite proportions and a masterful degree of detail and craftsmanship.



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Later panels from the Western Palace, built by the Caliph al-Aziz billah, were similar but even more well designed and executed with greater precision and knowledge of the evolving arabesque style where the amalgamation of geometric and floral manifests itself splendidly.

Other contemporary examples are even more sophisticated in every respect. The doors of al-Fakahani (1150 & 1736). The portable mihrab of Sayyida Ruqayya, the cenotaph of al Hussein and al-Imam al-Shaf'i as well as the door panels of the Santa Barbara church are but a few examples illustrating the degree of sophistication attained by contemporary and later examples of Fatimid wooden panels.